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Statement on the death of Jerry B. Whiddon

Founding member and former artistic director of Round House Theatre and founding member of Street 70

Bethesda, Md. (October 17, 2025) – We are deeply saddened by the passing of Jerry B. Whiddon, long-time artistic director of Round House Theatre and founding member of Street 70, who died on October 17 at age 77, surrounded by family and friends. The cause of death was complications of Alzheimer’s disease.

“It is difficult to overstate Jerry’s impact on the history and growth of this organization,” **says Artistic Director Ryan Rilette**. “Beyond his two decades of leadership, which marked a period of profound growth for Round House, Jerry’s artistic point of view—as both an actor and a director—was experienced in performances all over the region. He was a visionary and a dear friend, and he will be deeply missed.”

In 1970, freshly armed with a theatre degree from Towson University, Whiddon became a founding member of the new Street 70, the Rockville city program that, in 1973, became associated with the Montgomery County Department of Recreation—and that would

eventually become Round House Theatre. Street 70 was "literally a street theatre," Whiddon told the *Washington Post* in 1998. "We performed at intersections. In shopping center parking lots. There was lots of touring, lots of classes." Whiddon became artistic director of Street 70 in 1977, the same season that it was rechristened as Round House Theatre. A year later, he relinquished the role to Jeffrey B. Davis and moved to New York to pursue an acting career, though he continued to perform at Round House.

In 1985, recently married to Jean Brown and expecting their first child, Whiddon returned to Maryland to assume the role of Round House's Producing Artistic Director, serving in that capacity until 2005.

Whiddon's years at Round House's helm were transformative for the company, including the expansion into an independent non-profit entity, the transition of the theatre to a LORT-D union house, and the move from the former venue on Bushey Drive in Silver Spring to our current home in downtown Bethesda and Education Center in downtown Silver Spring.

Whiddon directed 23 productions at Round House (including *Our Town* with Pat Carroll, the production that opened Round House's current building) and appeared on stage numerous times, including favorite roles in *An Almost Holy Picture*, *The Weir*, and *Uncle Vanya* receiving multiple Helen Hayes Award nominations across acting and directing categories. He acted and/or directed at theatres across the region, including Adventure Theatre, Arena Stage, Bay Theatre, Everyman Theatre, Folger Theatre, the Kennedy Center, Olney Theatre, Studio Theatre, and Theater J, as well as Off and Off-Off Broadway.

"It always matters to me that the artists are at the center of everything we do," **said Whiddon in 2002.** "Creating the environment where they can each be their best, bring their best, and explore the outer edges of their abilities brings me no end of joy."

Whiddon is survived by his wife of 42 years, Jean Whiddon (Lewes, DE); daughters Amelia (Jon) DeBord (Brooklyn, NY) and Hannah (fiancé Matthew Axell-House) Whiddon (Lewes, DE); grandsons Cole and Tate DeBord; and brother William Whiddon (Ashburn, VA).

A memorial service celebrating the life of Jerry Whiddon will be held at Round House Theatre (4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD) on Monday, December 15 at 1pm. His family asks that those wishing to commemorate Jerry consider a memorial donation to Round House Theatre, his artistic home for so many years.

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