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## ROUND HOUSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES 2021-2022 SEASON

**44th SEASON INCLUDES AMERICAN PREMIERE OF HIT WEST END DRAMEDY,  
LAUNCH OF MAJOR NEW PLAY FESTIVAL WITH TWO WORLD PREMIERES,  
D.C. PREMIERE OF NEW JOCELYN BIOH PLAY,  
GALA WITH BROADWAY LEADING LADY KELLI O'HARA, AND MORE**

**BETHESDA, Md., July 1, 2021** – Artistic Director Ryan Rilette and Managing Director Ed Zakreski are thrilled to announce the full six-show lineup for Round House Theatre's 44th Season. Following a historic season of digital performances—including the Drama League-nominated festival *The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* and the world premiere of Lauren Gunderson's *The Catastrophist*—Round House is excited to welcome audiences back into its Bethesda theatre for live, in-person productions with a slate of shows designed to transport them around the world.

Artistic Director **Ryan Rilette** shares, "For the last year and a half, we've all been stuck at home, unable to travel anywhere. But at the same time, we are connected to the entire world through the shared experience of the pandemic. That is the logic of this season: we are welcoming audiences back to live performance with a theatrical journey around the world, offering stories that combine the universal with the specific, which is one of the strengths of the theatrical form. And each of these stories does so in incredibly theatrical ways."

### **THE 2021-2022 Season**

The season begins with the regional premiere of *Quixote Nuevo* (September 8 – October 3, 2021) by celebrated playwright **Octavio Solis**. The spirited, contemporary adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* transports the classic character to the modern-day border between the United States and Mexico.

Acclaimed director **Lisa Portes** will bring this bittersweet and riotously funny production to life on stage. Filled with lively Tejano music, bilingual wordplay, and puppetry, the highly theatrical season opener exemplifies Round House's commitment to producing works that tell vital stories.

Round House audiences will then travel from San Francisco to Beijing in ***The Great Leap*** (November 10 – December 5, 2021) by **Lauren Yee**. Inspired by events from her father's life, Yee collides the historical with the personal to follow an American college basketball team that goes to post-Cultural Revolution China for a "friendship" game. 2019 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award winner **Jennifer Chang** will direct this contemporary fable, which employs the energy and rhythms of a basketball game to explore the different approaches to sports, life, and politics in China and the US.

Next is the US premiere of ***Nine Night*** (January 5 – 30, 2022) by **Natasha Gordon**, who became the first Black British female playwright on the West End with the play's triumphant 2018 transfer from the National Theatre. Gordon's debut play centers on the traditional Jamaican funerary celebration of "Nine Nights," as a British-Jamaican family and community unite to mark the passing of their matriarch with an extended wake full of food, music, and revelry. **Timothy Douglas** will direct this uproarious and touching "kitchen dramedy."

Round House will continue its commitment to producing compelling new work with the inaugural year of an annual **National Capital New Play Festival** (see page 3 for additional information), headlined by a pair of world premieres presented in rotating repertory. A 2019 selection at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference, ***it's not a trip it's a journey*** (April 5 – May 8, 2022) by **Charly Evon Simpson** follows four Black friends from New York to the Grand Canyon, visiting all the unique and bizarre places in between. Former Associate Artistic Director **Nicole A. Watson**, who helmed the wildly popular *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* in 2019, returns to Round House to direct this moving roadtrip adventure that deftly examines friendship, gender, and race in America.

In ***"We declare you a terrorist..."*** (April 7 – May 8, 2022), playwright **Tim J. Lord** takes the real events of the infamous 2002 Moscow theatre hostage crisis and refines them into a taut, four-person thriller. Employing elements of both live theatre and film, ***"We declare you a terrorist..."*** will be co-directed by Artistic Director **Ryan Rilette** and **Jared Mezzocchi**, the team behind 2019's smash hit *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, which became the third best-selling show in Round House history.

To close the season, ***Nollywood Dreams*** (June 8 – July 3, 2022) by **Jocelyn Bioh** will take audiences to Nigeria and pull back the curtain on one of the most prolific film industries in the world. Shortly after its New York world premiere, this brand new work by the writer of the Helen Hayes Award-winning *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play* will grace the Round House stage. **Raymond O. Caldwell** will direct the charming romantic comedy, an effervescent and endearing take on a familiar Cinderella story in a less-familiar setting. *See page 4 for full season production details.*

### **National Capital New Play Festival**

In April 2022, Round House will launch the National Capital New Play Festival, a regional celebration of new plays that will be an annual part of the Theatre’s programming. In service of Round House’s longstanding investment in diversifying the voices that are amplified through live theatre, the festival seeks to nurture relationships with both established and early-career playwrights while cultivating an interest in new work among audiences in the DC metro area and demystifying the new play development process.

The 2022 festival will feature two **world premiere productions** (*it’s not a trip it’s a journey* and “*We declare you a terrorist...*”) presented in rep as part of the main stage season, as well as four plays presented as **developmental readings** (titles to be announced), **panel discussions**, and a **reading by Round House’s Teen Performance Company** of a commissioned play which will be produced by the TPC the following season. Full schedule and details will be announced at a later date.

### **2022 Broadway in Bethesda Gala**

Tony Award-winning Broadway star **Kelli O’Hara** will headline the 2022 **Broadway in Bethesda** gala on Saturday, May 14, 2022, at Round House Theatre. The annual fundraiser will feature a performance by the seven-time Tony nominee, who won the 2015 award for Best Actress in a Musical for her performance as Anna Leonowens in *The King and I*, as well as a seated dinner and live auction. Proceeds from the event will benefit the theatre’s artistic programming and educational initiatives. Tickets and sponsorships for the event will be available beginning in January 2022. For more information, contact the Development Department at [Development@RoundHouseTheatre.org](mailto:Development@RoundHouseTheatre.org) or 240.644.1403.

### **The 20th Annual Sarah Metzger Memorial Play**

Following the creation of its own virtual production during the pandemic season, Round House’s **Teen Performance Company**, a pre-professional program for up-and-coming theatre artists, will return in 2022 with **TIKTOK (a period piece)** by **Stefanie Kuo** (February 25 – 27, 2022), an exploration of how young influencers

shape and are shaped by the dominant social media platform of their generation. TPC members attend master classes and Round House events in the fall, and then direct, design, stage manage, and acts in the annual Sarah Metzger Memorial Play on the Round House Theatre stage in the spring. The Sarah Play Metzger Memorial Play was established by the Metzger family and friends to celebrate the memory of Sarah Metzger, an inspiring and active member of the theatre community, who was killed in an automobile accident during her freshman year of college.

“We all miss live theatre deeply, and we want to welcome audiences back with productions that offer ways to come together again,” adds Managing Director **Ed Zakreski**. “By embracing music and movement, imagination and immersion, community and collaboration, the 2021–2022 Season reminds us of all the things that make theatre a vital art form. We look forward to sharing those experiences with the DC community—in person—once again.”

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## **2021-2022 SEASON DETAILS**

### MUSIC-FILLED MODERN EPIC

#### ***Quixote Nuevo***

**By Octavio Solis**

**Directed by Lisa Portes | Regional Premiere**

**SEP 8 – OCT 3, 2021**

“Make room for *Quixote Nuevo*,” raves *The Boston Globe*. This inspired adaptation—set to the spirited sounds of Tejano music—reimagines Cervantes’ beloved knight Don Quixote as a brilliant, bilingual professor whose fantasies take center stage in a Texas border town. Along with his trusty sidekick, this modern-day Quixote journeys through the desert, tilting at patrol drones instead of windmills as he searches for long-lost love. With humor and pageantry, *Quixote Nuevo* breathes new life into one of literature’s most vibrant characters to ask the classic question: when times are tough, how do we keep dreaming?

### SOCIO-POLITICAL FABLE

#### ***The Great Leap***

**By Lauren Yee**

**Directed by Jennifer Chang**

**NOV 10 – DEC 5, 2021 | Regional Premiere**

It’s 1989, the San Francisco University basketball team is headed to China for a “friendship” game, and plucky high school star Manfred pesters aging coach Saul enough to talk his way onto the team. Landing in Beijing just

before the Tiananmen Square uprising, Manfred, Saul, and their Chinese translator/coach Wen Chang are forced to explore their different approaches to basketball and life and to reconcile their own converging histories. Inspired by her father’s short-lived basketball career, playwright Lauren Yee applies her signature technique of colliding the personal with the historical, creating a “stunning” (*LA Times*), unforgettable fable and reminding us that the best stories—even if they aren’t real—can still be true.

HIT WEST END KITCHEN DRAMEDY

***Nine Night***

**By Natasha Gordon**

**Directed by Timothy Douglas**

**JAN 5 – 30, 2022 | U.S. Premiere**

Family matriarch Gloria has died, and her family gathers for the traditional Jamaican Nine Night, a multi-day celebration (and endurance test) full of food, revelry, and a nonstop parade of mourners. Natasha Gordon’s debut play—a popular triumph in its 2018 National Theatre premiere and subsequent West End run—explores the tensions of inhabiting two cultures, the inescapable bonds of family, and the many layers of grief in an “exuberantly funny” (*The Guardian*) and profoundly relatable story of the ties that bind. Raved *The Guardian*’s Michael Billington, “Playwrighting debuts don’t come much better than this.”

WITTY & HEARTWARMING ADVENTURE

***it’s not a trip it’s a journey***

**By Charly Evon Simpson**

**Directed by Nicole A. Watson**

**APR 5 – MAY 8, 2022 | World Premiere**

June needs a journey. Like, now. So, she convinces her friends to ditch New York City (and their cellphones) for an impromptu road trip to the Grand Canyon. As the four wildly different friends travel through the wondrous and not-so-wondrous sights of the United States, they must come together to contend with being Black, femme, and American...all at the same time. An intimate play with vast ambitions, *it’s not a trip it’s a journey* is about road trips, friendships, and finding the difference between surviving and thriving. (*Part of the National Capital New Play Festival.*)

NAIL-BITING POLITICAL THRILLER

***“We declare you a terrorist...”***

**By Tim J. Lord**

**Directed by Ryan Rilette & Jared Mezzocchi**

**APR 7 – MAY 8, 2022 | World Premiere**

Moscow, 2002: halfway through Putin’s first official term as president. After he brutally crushes a rebellion in the territory of Chechnya, a group of Chechen insurgents hijack a blockbuster musical and take the entire audience of nearly 800 people—including the playwright—hostage. Based on the real events of the Dubrovka Theater hostage crisis, “*We declare you a terrorist...*” follows the playwright as he comes to terms with that tragic night at the theatre. This taut political thriller is brought to life through live theatre and film by co-directors Ryan Rilette and Jared Mezzocchi, the team behind the runaway hit *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. (Part of the National Capital New Play Festival.)

**RAGS-TO-RICHES ROM-COM**

***Nollywood Dreams***

**By Jocelyn Bioh**

**Directed by Raymond O. Caldwell**

**JUN 8 – JUL 3, 2022 | Regional Premiere**

It’s the ‘90s in Lagos, Nigeria, and Ayamma has big dreams. Despite working in her parents’ travel agency, she spends every spare minute imagining her big break. When she lands an audition with the hottest director in Nigeria’s booming film industry, Ayamma finds herself at odds with his former leading lady—and relishing the charms of Nollywood biggest dreamboat. Hot on the heels of its New York world premiere, the author of the beloved, Helen Hayes Award-winning *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play* brings to Round House a warm, hilarious new romantic comedy about following your instincts and your heart.

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**SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

Subscription packages for Round House Theatre’s 2021-2022 Season are now available for purchase online at **RoundHouseTheatre.org**, or by calling the Box Office at **240.644.1100**. Subscribers get the best seats on their preferred night, with benefits including free ticket exchanges, waived single ticket fees, and more. Tickets for individual productions will be available for sale in early August.

**HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Round House Theatre has prioritized the health and safety of our artists, audiences, students, and staff. Round House has not yet determined whether socially distanced seating or other mandatory policies will be in effect for Fall 2021 performances. As we prepare to return to live performances, we are actively monitoring conditions and recommendations from local and CDC officials and

will continue to update our policies as circumstances require. Details and current policies may be found at [RoundHouseTheatre.org/Safety](http://RoundHouseTheatre.org/Safety).

#### ABOUT ROUND HOUSE THEATRE

Round House Theatre is one of the leading professional theatres in the Washington, D.C. area, producing a season of new plays, modern classics, and musicals for more than 40,000 patrons each year at our theatre in Bethesda. Round House has been nominated for 197 Helen Hayes Awards and has won 37, including four Outstanding Resident Play Awards and the Charles MacArthur Award for Original New Play in 2016. Round House's lifelong learning and education programs serve more than 5,000 students each year at its Education Center in Silver Spring, in schools throughout Montgomery County, and at our Bethesda theatre. Cornerstone programs include Free Play, which provides free tickets for students age 13-college, the Teen Performance Company, which culminates in the student-produced Sarah Metzger Memorial Play, Summer Camp for students in grades K-12, and a full slate of classes for adults and youth.

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