

ROUND THEATRE HOUSE



**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES LINEUP FOR
THE NEWLY RENAMED**

**BONNIE HAMMERSCHLAG
NATIONAL CAPITAL NEW PLAY FESTIVAL**

**BAD BOOKS
World Premiere by Sharyn Rothstein**

**Also featuring
DEVELOPMENTAL READINGS OF NEW WORKS by**

**Beth Hyland, Sam Mueller, Harrison David Rivers
and Eliana Theologides Rodriguez**

April 2 – 27, 2025

Bethesda, Md. (March 4, 2025) – Round House Theatre is pleased to announce the 2025 lineup for the newly renamed **Bonnie Hammerschlag National Capital New Play Festival** (April 2 – 27, 2025). The fourth annual festival of new work will feature the world premiere of Sharyn Rothstein's timely play, ***Bad Books***, directed by Ryan Rilette and featuring DC favorites Kate Eastwood Norris and Holly Twyford. Additionally, the festival will include four free developmental readings by playwrights **Beth Hyland** (*Fires, Ohio; Seagulls*), **Sam Mueller** (*Laced; 70.3*), **Harrison David Rivers** (*This Bitter Earth; We Are Continuous*), and **Eliana Theologides Rodriguez** (*Marble Rooftop; Emma Has Church; Poor Queenie*). For further information and the full schedule, please visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/Festival.

Having worked with Sharyn, Holly and Kate on a developmental reading of *Bad Books* during the 2023 Festival—and then further developing it with Sharyn at the National New Play Network's Showcase of New American Plays in 2024—I'm thrilled for DMV audiences to finally see this phenomenal new play, starring two of the area's most celebrated actors," says **Artistic Director Ryan Rilette**. "I'm also excited for audiences to see the work of the four incredibly talented playwrights whose plays we'll be developing during this year's festival. These playwrights are the future of American theatre, and their work gives us a glimpse into where new plays are headed."

Round House is also proud to announce the renaming of the theatre's annual festival to the Bonnie Hammerschlag National Capital New Play Festival. Hammerschlag, an avid supporter of the DC-area theatre community, served for many years as a Round House trustee and chair of the theatre's annual gala.

"This year is a really big birthday, and my husband Alan wanted to do something really special to celebrate. He knew that supporting the important work of Round House's New Play Festival would make my heart twitter," says Bonnie Hammerschlag. "Naming this Festival is a meaningful way to continue my work with the theatre and celebrate our commitment to new voices. I am truly honored."

"Bonnie has been one of Round House's biggest fans for decades and served on our Board for many years, so this gift, championing the future of the American theatre, is a fitting continuation of her legacy," says **Managing Director Ed Zakreski**. "We are incredibly honored by Bonnie and Alan's great generosity."

Press night for ***Bad Books*** is Monday, April 7. **Please see below for complete program details and ticket information.** (For additional festival information, including details on the developmental readings that join these world premieres on the schedule, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/Festival.)

Bad Books

When a troubled teen is given a controversial book, his mother visits the local library to discuss “appropriate” reading material with the librarian. However, their reasonable discussion quickly becomes a heated confrontation, sparking a dramatic chain reaction of unexpected consequences. With both heartbreak and humor.

Holly Twyford (*A Doll’s House, Part 2* and *Or,*) and **Kate Eastwood Norris** (*Ink* and *The Tempest*), who earlier this year performed together in *Summer, 1976* at Studio Theatre, will reunite for their tenth joint project. **Kimberly Gilbert** is the understudy. The cast is joined by a brilliant creative team, including Playwright **Sharyn Rothstein**; Director **Ryan Rilette**; Scenic Designer **Meghan Raham**; Costume Designer **Ivania Stack**; Lighting Designer **Colin K. Bills**; Sound Designer **Darron L West**; Props Coordinator **AnnaMae Durham**; Casting Director **Sarah Cooney**; Dramaturg **Naysan Mojgani**; and Production Stage Manager **Che Wernsman**.

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE & PLAY INFORMATION

Thursday, April 10 & Saturday, April 12 | Developmental Reading

Baby Shower Katie

By Beth Hyland

Directed by Morgan Gould

In this hilarious comedy, best friends Rebecca and Hannah are at a crossroads: Rebecca desperately wants to have a child, but Hannah can’t imagine anything worse. Over the course of four baby showers (held for three different women named Katie), Rebecca and Hannah are confronted by their different dreams, the absurd expectations placed on mothers, and the terror and uncertainty that can accompany pregnancy.

Friday, April 11 & Sunday, April 13 | Developmental Reading

PIN.

By Sam Mueller

Directed by Caitlin Sullivan

Nonbinary high school athlete Jo Wagner has been kicked off their wrestling team for being on testosterone, but their rival MJ McKinnon is determined to have one final showdown before graduation. As the local community becomes more invested in their rivalry, their final, “unofficial” match causes both fascination and conflict. With joy, insight, and nuance, Sam Mueller questions the arbitrary nature of gender binaries and imagines a world in which nonbinary and trans kids can thrive.

Thursday, April 17 & Saturday, April 19 | Developmental Reading

Indian Princesses

By Eliana Theologides Rodriguez

Directed by Miranda Cornell

Five young girls of color and their white fathers sign up for a Native American-themed father-daughter program designed to strengthen their bonds. Frustrations and tension grow during a

series of increasingly chaotic excursions as the girls try to form friendships and express themselves while their fathers are reluctant to talk about race and diversity. Inspired by real-life experiences from Rodriguez's childhood, *Indian Princesses* is a poignant and hilarious celebration of complicated identities and complex conversations.

Friday, April 18 & Sunday, April 20 | Developmental Reading

Proximity

By Harrison David Rivers

Directed by Paige Hernandez

Ulises and Ezra are recently divorced and trying to navigate the COVID-19 lockdown with their two young children. Irie and Elliott are still together but straining under the pressures of marriage, parenthood, and the pandemic. When Irie loses her temper in an aggravating virtual PTA meeting, she and Ezra form a much-needed connection. This funny and beautiful play explores isolation, the messiness of parenting, and the importance of relationships with empathy and insight.

**Tickets for developmental play readings are free, but reservations are required.*

Reservations open to subscribers and donors on March 5, followed by the general public on March 12.

MAIN STAGE PRODUCTION INFORMATION

APRIL 2-27, 2025 | World Premiere on the Main Stage

Bad Books

By Sharyn Rothstein

Directed by Ryan Rilette

When a troubled teen is given a controversial book, his mother visits the local library to discuss "appropriate" reading material with the librarian. However, their reasonable discussion quickly turns into a heated confrontation, sparking a dramatic chain reaction of unexpected consequences. With both heartbreak and humor, Sharyn Rothstein offers compassion and empathy as an antidote to the deep debates that divide us. Staged in the round, this brilliant world premiere challenges us to see past our political divisions and first impressions, and asks us what it truly means to care for our children.

Bad Books is produced at Round House Theatre as part of a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere. Other Partner Theaters are Florida Studio Theatre (Sarasota, Florida), Curious Theatre Company (Denver, Colorado), and Williamston Theatre (Williamston, Michigan). For more information, please visit nnpn.org.

ARTIST INFORMATION (*Bad Books*)

Sharyn Rothstein (Playwright) is an award-winning playwright and television writer. Her newest play, *Bad Books*, is a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere play, and will be produced at theatres across America this year. Sharyn is currently a writer and co-executive producer on *SUITS LA*, the spin-off of the hit legal drama *SUITS*, for which she wrote and produced for five seasons. Sharyn was also a writer and co-executive producer on

AMC's *Orphan Black: Echoes*, and has developed shows for Apple, AMC, and Bravo. Her Helen Hayes Award-nominated musical adaptation of the beloved film *Hester Street* (with music and lyrics by Joel Waggoner) was produced at DC's Theater J in Spring 2024. Her play *By the Water* was first produced by Manhattan Theater Club and Ars Nova and was the recipient of the American Theater Critics Association Francesca Primus Prize. Her audio drama *Deep Fake* was recently released on Audible. Sharyn holds an MFA in dramatic writing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and a master's in public health from Hunter College.

Ryan Rilette (Director) is in his thirteenth season as Artistic Director of Round House Theatre. For Round House, he has directed *The Seafarer*, "*We declare you a terrorist...*", *Throw Me on the Burnpile and Light Me Up*, *Homebound*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Oslo*, *Small Mouth Sounds*, "*Master Harold*"...and the Boys, *The Book of Will*, *Angels in America: Perestroika*, *The Night Alive*, *Fool for Love*, *This*, and *How to Write a New Book for the Bible*. He also acted in *Ink* and *Uncle Vanya* at Round House, has directed at theatres throughout the country, and has acted in a handful of TV shows and films. During his tenure at Round House, he has produced seven of the highest grossing seasons in the theatre's history. His productions have received 82 Helen Hayes Awards nominations and 21 Helen Hayes Awards. Ryan created the theatre's Equal Play Commissioning program, Resident Artist program, Fair Play pay scale for artists, and Free Play ticketing program. Prior to joining Round House, Ryan served as Producing Director of Marin Theatre Company, Producing Artistic Director of Southern Rep Theatre, and co-founder and Artistic Director of Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company. He is the former Board President of the National New Play Network.

CAST INFORMATION (ALPHABETICAL)

Kate Eastwood Norris (The Librarian/The Manager/The Editor) is happy to return to Round House Theatre, last seen in *Ink*, *The Tempest*, and *A Body of Water*. Locally, Kate has performed with Studio Theatre, The Shakespeare Theatre, Folger Theatre, Arena Stage, and Woolly Mammoth Theatre (company member). Regional credits include roles at Berkeley Rep, Portland Center Stage, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Syracuse Stage, The Humana Festival, Gulfshore Playhouse, Florida Stage, Two River Theater, Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre, Delaware Theatre Company, Arden Theatre Company, The Wilma Theatre, and two Humana Festivals at Actor's Theatre of Louisville. Kate has received two Helen Hayes Awards, the Mary Goldwater Award, and the Barrymore Award for her acting and is also a 2023 recipient of the Anderson Hopkins Award for Excellence in DC Theatre.

Holly Twyford (The Mother) returns for her fifth show at Round House Theatre and her tenth collaboration with Kate Eastwood Norris. Previous Round House productions include *The Sisterhood*, *Living Out, Or*, (for which she received a Helen Hayes nomination), and, most recently, *A Doll's House, Part 2*. Holly has performed in over 80 productions in Washington, DC-area theatres including Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Studio Theatre, and Signature Theatre, and nationally. She has been nominated for multiple Helen Hayes Awards and is a five-time recipient. She was honored with Shakespeare Theatre Company's Emery Battis Award for Acting Excellence for her

portrayal of Anna in Harold Pinter's *Old Times*. Holly is proud to be a charter member of Studio Theatre's Cabinet, a Ford's Theatre Associate Artist, and a Lunt-Fontanne Fellow.

PERFORMANCE DATES AND TIMES:

Bad Books runs from **April 2 – 27, 2025**. Visit RoundHouseTheatre.org for full performance schedule.

WHERE:

Round House Theatre, 4545 East-West Highway in Bethesda (one block from Wisconsin Avenue and Metro's Bethesda station). For directions, parking, and public transportation info, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/Visit-Us/.

FESTIVAL TICKETS & PACKAGES:

Full festival information, including the event schedule and additional programming, may be found at RoundHouseTheatre.org/Festival. Tickets for the world premiere production of *Bad Books* are on sale now and can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100, ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org, or visiting the box office. Tickets for the developmental play readings are free but require a reservation.

- **Industry Weekends (APR 12 – 13 and APR 19 – 20):** Our professional colleagues from around the country are invited to join us for Industry Weekends in celebration of these exciting new plays. Each weekend has been planned to allow guests to attend the main stage world premiere, as well as two readings, while leaving plenty of time to catch up with other guests and artists. Contact literary@roundhousetheatre.org for more information.
- **Free Play** – free tickets for students ages 13 through college: Round House Theatre's Free Play initiative ties into our greater strategy to develop theatre audiences of tomorrow by providing rich, meaningful arts experiences today. For more information, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/FreePlay or email Education@RoundHouseTheatre.org.
- **On the House** – community ticket access program: Round House's next step to remove barriers that can make it difficult for some members of our community to experience our work is On the House, which provides complimentary group tickets to 501©(3) nonprofit organizations and community-serving organizations with a 501©(3) fiscal sponsor. For more information, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage/On-The-House or email Community@RoundHouseTheatre.org.
- **Pay-What-You-Can performances:** PWYC tickets go on sale online or by phone only (no walk-up sales) beginning one week before the first performance of each show. The patron decides the admission price. Limit of two tickets per order. PWYC tickets are subject to availability. PWYC dates for *Bad Books*: Wed, Apr 2 at 7:30pm; Sat, Apr 5 at 2pm

- **Blue Star Theatre Program:** Active-duty military personnel, veterans, and their immediate family qualify for a \$10 discount off the single ticket price. Learn more at RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage/Tickets.
- **2-For-1 Tuesday:** For all Tuesday performances of *Bad Books*, all seats are buy one, get one free. 2-for-1 Tuesday tickets are available online or by phone (9240.644.1100) with promo code TWOFORONE beginning one week before the first performance of each show. Discounts may not be combined. Not valid on previously purchased tickets
- **Group Sales:** Groups of 10 or more can save 10% off the single ticket price and are exempt from single ticket fees. These tickets must be reserved and purchased in advance by calling 240.644.1100 or emailing GroupSales@RoundHouseTheatre.org.

ROUND HOUSE THEATRE HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

Round House Theatre no longer requires that audience members wear masks for most performances in our theatre. However, masks are required for certain performances and for events in other Round House spaces, including our Event Room. We continue to strongly recommend masks as the best way for individuals to protect themselves from COVID-19 and other seasonal viruses, and we ask our audience members to respect the choices of others. Round House will offer mask-required performances of *Bad Books* for audience members who may prefer a fully masked environment on April 22 and 26 (matinee).

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 50,000 patrons each year at our theatre in Bethesda. Round House has been nominated for 231 Helen Hayes Awards and has won 52, 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 ages 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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