

Round House Theatre Teen Performance Company/The Sarah Metzger Memorial Play Information Sheet 2024-2025

THE PROGRAM:

The Round House Theatre Teen Performance Company is a pre-professional program for the next generation of theater artists. The program exposes high school theatre artists to all the elements that are required to bring a professional production to the stage and culminates in a world premiere production on the Round House Theatre stage. In addition to working on the production, company members gain behind-the-scenes access to RHT productions and attend special events and master classes with RHT artists and staff.

The production is directed, designed, stage managed, and performed by the students of the Teen Performance Company working closely with experienced professional artists and practitioners as mentors and produced by the Round House Theatre. It provides high school students with the unique opportunity to collaborate with their peers in a professional setting working on a world premiere play.

The Teen Performance Program seeks to inspire, teach, guide, and support young theater artists in the professional play-making process. We encourage the development of critical life skills: time management, forward thinking, communication, collaboration, and creative problem solving.

The play this year will be *Gallows Humor* by teen playwright Fin Davis.

REQUIREMENTS:

- The Teen Performance Company is FREE for participants.
- Students must be in the 9-12 grade as of Fall of 2024.
- Participation is through interview or audition only.
- Students must commit to the program for the full season. Additional information on the time commitment is included later in this packet.
- Participation in this program includes the following required dates:
 - **Feb 20-23, 2025:** Move to stage and technical rehearsals for the entire company
 - **Feb 25-27, 2025:** Dress Rehearsals
 - **Feb 28-March 2, 2025:** Performances

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING?

- In the Teen Performance Company, you can act, direct, design, dramaturg or stage manage in a professional theatre setting. You exercise creative freedom over your ideas and learn hands-on techniques for navigating every step of the production process. Our TPC mentors support you every step of the way, providing the expertise to guide you over the course of the year.
- You become a part of the Round House family and are invited to observe professional rehearsals and meetings, and participate in special events. We consider our teen artists to be a central part of our company and seek to include you in every aspect of theatre making.
- While you will be specializing in a single discipline, we believe that all our teen artists should get an inside look at every aspect of this craft. You will engage in a series of master classes to teach you about the many aspects of bringing a professional production to the stage.
- You will meet and work with other students who care about theatre as much as you do! TPC typically includes 24 teens from ten to twelve schools from across our area.
- We all know college is on your mind. As a member of TPC, you will demonstrate commitment, collaboration, dedication, and the ability to multitask. Mentors regularly write recommendations for students.

WHAT POSITIONS ARE FILLED BY STUDENT COMPANY MEMBERS?

- Director – Guides and oversees the production artistically. They conceive and develop the unique world within which the playwright’s words come to life.
- Dramaturg/Assistant Director – Compiles research for the production, creating packets of background information for the artists and writing articles and supporting materials for the audience. Supports the director and acting company during the rehearsal process.
- Stage Manager – The record keeper and organizer of the production. Also “calls” the show in performance from the booth.
- Assistant Stage Manager – Assists the stage manager and acts as crew chief.
- Run Crew – Runs lights, sound and/or backstage. Also involved in light hang and focus and other technical elements of the show.
- Costume Designer – Envisions the costume design for the show and works with the RHT costume shop manager to realize those designs.
- Lighting Designer – creates the stage lighting for the play, by writing light cues working from a plot created in partnership with their mentor.
- Sound Designer – creates or finds all the music and sound for the show, and working with their mentor, programs them in to Qlab for the run of the show. Can, but does not have to, include composing.
- Set & Properties Designer – works with the RHT staff to create the set & properties for the show.
- Actor – performer in the show.

Students in all positions are members of the Teen Performance Company, and attend all classes and special events. Depending on their school’s requirements, students may be able to receive SSL hours through participating in the show.

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT?

Please note that events take place at the RHT Education Center in Silver Spring AND at Round House Theatre at 4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda. Company members are responsible for their travel to and from all events.

- **June/July/August 2024:** Interviews for artistic positions
- **September 2024:** Auditions for the acting company
- **September-December 2024:** The full company participates in Master Classes to develop essential skills for the production process and participates in the play development process by attending readings and workshops with the playwright. The company will also attend rehearsals and special events. Director and Production Team begin the initial planning and production process, as well as mentor meetings.
- **December-February 2025:** Rehearsals for actors, director and stage manager happen 3-4 times per week. Designers meet 3-5 times per month until we reach tech. Rehearsal schedules are developed with the company’s schedule in mind, but continue to include Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons.
- Participation in this program includes the following **required** dates for the **FULL COMPANY**:
 - **Feb 20-23, 2025:** Move to stage and technical rehearsals for the entire company
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- Company members should plan on being available for Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons on a regular basis, with additional meetings/classes/rehearsals to be determined after we have a full company. RHT will make every effort to accommodate conflicts that students provide at the beginning of the program.
- In general, we find that students are able to participate in the Fall shows at their schools or other venues.
- Unless the student is sick or there is a family emergency, we expect students to be present and on-time, unless they have a pre-approved conflict.
- All required TPC activities are outside of regular school hours except one Friday Student Matinee during performance week.

WHY IS THE PRODUCTION CALLED THE SARAH PLAY?

The Sarah Play honors the memory of Sarah Emily Metzger, an active member of the theatre community in her school and at Round House. One of the Round House family's lasting memories of Sarah is that, while still a high school student, she independently mounted a full-scale theatre production. Wishing to expand on the opportunities offered by her high school's theater department, Sarah worked to raise funds, secure facilities and a production staff, market and promote her production, and direct a full-length play.

Sarah passed away in a car accident her freshman year at University of Michigan. After her passing, Sarah's family worked with Round House to create and fund an annual program that would serve as a tribute to this inspiring young woman. The resulting Sarah Metzger Memorial Play was established by the Metzger family and friends to celebrate the memory of Sarah Metzger. It was created to provide similarly motivated high school students with a unique opportunity.

Through this program more than 425 students have taken part in producing a play at Round House over the past 21 years – and thanks to the generosity of donors, all activities of this program continue to be free of charge to students.

OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How is the Teen Performance Company at Round House different from just doing a play?

This program is tied to the RHT Mainstage and its award-winning company. The adult artists you will be working with are accomplished professionals and teachers applying their craft at RHT, and other professional stages across DC and the nation. You will get to know and work with people in all theatrical disciplines, and learn about all areas of theatre, regardless of your role.

How do the adult mentors work with the students?

Mentors are available at every step to guide the process and support the students. Our focus is on teaching the process of a professional production and providing the training to be successful, as well as on the growth of each student professionally and personally. Mentors function as an artistic sounding board and confidant. Their primary concern is supporting the student's artistic vision for the production and reinforcing the independence of the student in their choices.

Guest Artist that also work on the RHT Mainstage act as Master Class teachers, providing concentrated training to the entire company on a particular discipline in the arts.

Do I have to have a lot of experience to apply?

The program is designed to take students at every level and prepare them to participate in a final production. We encourage students of varying backgrounds to apply regardless of your prior experience.

What if I have other after school activities or other conflicts?

At the beginning of the process and before finalizing the schedule, all students are asked to provide their conflicts. If you are accepted into the company, every effort will be made to schedule around those conflicts. New conflicts must be approved by the Director of Education.

What are the “special events”?

Special events include activities such as teen nights for RHT Mainstage productions, discussions, dress rehearsals, and the Round House Theatre gala.

Tell me about Round House.

Now in its 45th season, Round House Theatre is one of the “Big Six” professional theatres in the Washington, DC area, with “a renovation matching [its] upgrade in recent years as a purveyor of dramatic art” (Peter Marks, *The Washington Post*). A nonprofit professional LORT theatre with an annual budget of over \$8 million, located in suburban Washington, DC (Bethesda and Silver Spring, MD), Round House produces a six-show season of new plays, modern classics, and musicals for more than 50,000 patrons each year at its recently renovated 350-seat theatre in Bethesda, in addition to providing educational programs for more than 5,000 students of all ages at its six-classroom Education Center in Silver Spring, in schools throughout Montgomery County, and at the Bethesda theatre.

OUR MISSION

Round House is a theatre for everyone. We enrich our community through bold, outstanding theatrical and educational experiences that inspire empathy and demand conversation.

OUR VALUES

Theatre for Everyone. We are a theatre of and for our community, committed to Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility. We believe that engaging in the arts is essential to the human experience and that arts education should be available to all. Therefore, we intentionally and rigorously work to break down barriers to attending, learning, and creating theatre—including those based in race, gender, sexuality, ability, and economics. We amplify voices that have been historically under-represented and under-resourced by the theatre field and strive to incorporate anti-racist and anti-sexist practices across all aspects of our work.

Artistic Ambition We hold ourselves to the highest professional standards in all our work. We aim to be an important voice in the theatrical world by creating art locally that has an impact globally.

Community. We believe that we enhance our communities through our collaborative artistry both on stage and in the classroom. We invest locally—in both talent and products. We create civic dialogues with art at the center and endeavor to be the artistic home for our community. We consider our communities to encompass Bethesda, Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland, the Washington theatrical community, and the broad Washington metropolitan area.

Empathy. We believe that fostering empathy creates stronger communities and that communities thrive when they represent a wide and diverse set of stories and viewpoints that reflect the breadth of human experience. We challenge audiences and theatre-makers to awaken their empathy through artistic risk on the stage and in the classroom.

Integrity. We believe in treating everyone with respect—staff, artists, students, trustees, and patrons. We endeavor to create a supportive culture that allows our teams to do their best work with an appropriate work/life balance. We are transparent about achieving our mission-based artistic and education initiatives and are committed to doing so in a financially responsible manner.

WHAT DO STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THE TEEN PERFORMANCE COMPANY/SARAH PLAY?

"I joined the TPC as a freshman, a late addition to the company as assistant stage manager. Just over two years later, Round House feels like a second home—one where I feel supported and empowered to explore; learn; and push boundaries, both personal and artistic."

"Participating in TPC taught me more about theatre and collaboration than anything else I did during high school. Since going to college, I've grown even more thankful for having the opportunity to develop new work in such an encouraging environment, and I catch myself referencing my time in the company often."

"TPC has enabled me to learn about all aspects of theatre, some I've come to love and some I don't care much for, but most importantly, it formed my strongest friendships and created my best memories."

"The Teen Performance Company is inseparable from my high school experience, and I've grown a lot alongside and through the Teen Performance Company. Anyone can recognize that the Teen Performance Company is a unique experience. Not many theatres offer a program for teens with such high level masterclasses and in depth theatre training all while students put on a play at as high a level as we've been able to do each year. Through this program I've seen many of my peers grow as artists and people."

"Being in TPC was such a unique opportunity because young actors typically aren't able to experience the process of putting up a piece of new, professional work. From beginning to end we were immersed in professional settings, showing what the process is for real world actors".

"The mentorship in the Sarah Play program is beyond belief. Being able to work one-on-one with professionals in *all* facets of the theatrical experience is absolutely life-changing. And to top it off, they treat you like you are serious about theater, and like you know what you're doing, no matter the discipline and no matter your experience. They challenge you, and they push you to give an effort that even you didn't know you could."

"As an actor in the Sarah Play, this was the first time in my life that I felt successful. Truly successful. This experience has shown me that I can accomplish great things artistically and it made me a believer in my own abilities."

"It truly is a program like no other. Where else would I have been able to have workshopped two plays with the playwrights and been in two world premieres?! I was able to learn from professionals who are experts in all different parts of theatre. I learned about art forms like lighting and costume design that I, as an actor, would never have been able to do in my high school program. I was compelled to come back because of the level of respect the Round House mentors have for students and the respect we have for them. We are all there to learn and do something we love and the Teen Performance Company manages to capture that energy and use it in a way that always results in an incredible performance that we can all be proud of."

"I fully enjoyed the Teen Nights and think they contributed a lot to the experience. I loved being able to see a show and TALK with the actors afterward and ask them questions. Seeing a show with other theater teens was very cool."

"I am leaving this experience with a lot of tips on acting and theater professionally which I'm so grateful to have for the next steps in my life/career."

"I just found the mentorship really astonishing. As a high school student, you get to witness all different stages of a professional production."

"It's so incredible to be able to meet these teens from around the greater DC area who are in love with the same thing you are. Some of my best friends have come from the Sarah Play, and these are friends who are now studying theater at schools across the country."

"It's been the best theatre program I've ever done because it doesn't show you one aspect of theatre, it shows you every aspect. I did it last year and it was amazing so I did it again this year."

"The Sarah Play hit me at a really particular time in my life where I had a little bit of experience directing. I still think about some of the things my 3 mentors told me as they watched some of my rehearsals and gave me feedback."

"I had the pleasure and privilege to direct *Beach Week* in 2017. The investment and trust that [Director of Education] Danisha Crosby and the rest of the Round House team gave me by entrusting me with directing a play was really impactful. It showed me that this was something really important to me. *Beach Week* had such a huge impact on my life, especially being able to collaborate with [writer] Diana Metzger."

"You get to meet other high school students who have the same interests as you, you get to see how a play comes together from the ground up and you get to have fun doing what you have a passion for with like-minded peers."

"I think the Sarah Play's mentorship program is super unique and special. You have access to so many different experienced and helpful professionals from a wide variety of fields, letting you learn about all the different parts that go into producing a play whether it be acting or design or crew work."

"My involvement with The Sarah Play helped me gain a deeper understanding of the actor's role in professional theater. I thought I knew what it meant to be professional- now I really do!"

"Directing the Sarah Play has been the most inspiring and exhilarating theatrical experience I have ever had. The Sarah Play is truly one of the best theater programs for students in the country, offering a unique opportunity for students to experiment, learn, and grow. This learning and growth is fostered through the mentors' commitment to the show and to the student team."

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