



**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE CLOSES ITS 47TH SEASON WITH THE
REGIONAL PREMIERE OF**

KING JAMES

A Slam Dunk Exploration of Friendship and Fandom

**WRITTEN BY RAJIV JOSEPH
DIRECTED BY ROB RUGGIERO**

Featuring Blake Anthony Morris and Gregory Perri

Presented in partnership with TheaterWorks Hartford and Barrington Stage
Company

May 28 – June 22

Bethesda, MD (May 7, 2025) Round House Theatre closes its 2024-2025 Season with the regional premiere of ***King James***, written by Pulitzer Prize finalist **Rajiv Joseph** and directed by **Rob Ruggiero**. Featuring **Blake Anthony Morris and Gregory Perri**, this heartfelt comedy explores the friendship between two seemingly different men, a Cleveland bartender with Cavaliers tickets he needs to sell, and a writer who has recently published a short story and wants to buy tickets for the Cleveland Cavaliers 2003–2004 season, the first season with LeBron James playing. As their team experiences highs and lows, so does their friendship. The production, presented in partnership with **TheaterWorks Hartford** and **Barrington Stage**

Company runs from **May 28 – June 22, 2025**. Tickets are on sale now at [Round House Theatre](#) or by calling the box office at (240) 644-1100.

“Rajiv Joseph has written a wonderfully funny, heartfelt, and timely love letter to male friendship. You don’t need to be a sports enthusiast to appreciate this play—it’s a story about two friends, brought together by their passion for sports, that captures the emotional complexities of friendship with lots of humor, warmth, and depth,” **says Artistic Director Ryan Rilette**.

Starring **Blake Anthony Morris** (*The Hot Wing King* at Studio Theatre; *King James* at George Street Playhouse) as Shawn and **Gregory Perri** (*Smart People* at Arena Stage; *King James* at TheatreWorks Hartford) as Matt, the play transfers from TheaterWorks Hartford and will transfer to Barrington Stage Company after its run at Round House Theatre.

“I want to capture the essence of friendship in a way that truly resonates with audiences,” **says director Rob Ruggiero**. “Rajiv’s play is some of the best writing I’ve encountered — it’s funny, honest, and deeply moving. It’s also rare in how it centers male friendship and explores the unique challenges that come with it. At its heart, it’s about the emotional bonds that grow through shared passions and experiences.”

The cast is joined by a dynamic creative team that includes Scenic Designer **Luke Cantarella**, Costume Designer **Danielle Preston**, Lighting Designer **John Lasiter**, Sound Designer **Kevin Lee Alexander**, Dramaturg **Naysan Mojjani**, Casting Director **Sarah Cooney**, and Production Stage Manager **Rebecca Talisman**.

Tickets may be purchased by calling 240.644.1100 or ordering online at [RoundHouseTheatre.org](#). Round House Theatre is located at 4545 East-West Highway, one block from Wisconsin Avenue and the Bethesda station on Metro’s Red Line.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Rajiv Joseph (Playwright) was a 2010 Pulitzer Prize finalist for Drama for his play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* and was awarded a grant for Outstanding New American Play by the National Endowment for the Arts. He has twice won the Obie Award for Best New American Play, first in 2016 with *Guards at the Taj* (also a 2016 Lortel Winner for Best Play) and for *Describe the Night*. Other plays include *Archduke*, *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *Animals Out of Paper*, *The Lake Effect*, *The North Pool* and *Mr. Wolf*. Joseph has been awarded artistic grants from the Whiting Foundation, United States Artists and the Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust. He is currently a Language Lecturer at NYU with the School of Art and Public Policy and the Expository Writing Program. He served for three years in the Peace Corps in Senegal, West Africa, and now lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Rob Ruggiero (Director) is now in his 13th season as artistic director at TheaterWorks Hartford. Rob has directed dozens of Hartford-area premieres, including *Fever Dreams*, *The Garbologists*, *Fun Home*, *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, *Next to Normal*, *Relativity* (starring Richard Dreyfuss), and *Christmas on the Rocks*, which he also conceived. Broadway: *Looped* (starring Valerie Harper); *High* (starring Kathleen Turner, premiered at TWH). Rob conceived and directed the musical revue *Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn*, which ran off-Broadway, and conceived and directed the musical *Eliza*, which saw sold-out runs in 24 regional theaters and a National Tour. His work can also be seen across the country at Goodspeed, The Muny, St. Louis Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, among other regional theaters. Rob also directed *Fiddler on the Roof* in Athens, Greece.

CAST INFORMATION (ALPHABETICAL)

CAST LIST (alphabetical order):

Blake Anthony Morris (Shawn) is a Brooklyn-based storyteller from the South Side of Chicago. His Off-Broadway credits include *Ain't No Mo'* (Public Theater). Regional credits include *King James* (George Street); *Toni Stone* (Huntington); *The Hot Wing King* (Studio Theatre); *48Hours in Harlem* (The National Black Theater); *Byhalia, Mississippi* (The Kennedy Center); *King Hedley II* (Two River Theater); *On the Grounds of Belonging* (Long Wharf Theatre); and *Kings of*

Harlem (Kelly Strayhorn Theater). TV credits include *POSE*, *Jessica Jones*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago PD*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Good Fight*, *FBI*, and *Blue Bloods*. Blake has an MFA in Acting from UC Irvine.

Gregory Perri (Matt) is thrilled to make his Round House Theatre debut in *King James*. Having just transferred this production from TheaterWorks Hartford, he also served as the understudy for Matt in MTC's off-Broadway production of *King James*. DC credits include *Smart People* at Arena Stage. Other select NY credits include *Good People* for MTC (u/s - Broadway); *Idea Of Me* at the Cherry Lane Theater; and *A Loss of Roses* for the Peccadillo Theater Company. Select regional credits include *The Whipping Man* at Syracuse Stage; *Macbeth* and *The Comedy of Errors* at Shakespeare on the Sound; and *The Dog in the Dressing Room* at the Schoolhouse Theater. Select TV credits include *The Other Two*, *New Amsterdam*, *FBI: Most Wanted*, *The Jack and Triumph Show*, and *The Good Wife*. Select film credits include *Not Fade Away*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *All is Bright*, *Bastards of Young*, and *Thinking with Richard*. MFA: Rutgers University.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

King James

Written by Rajiv Joseph

Directed by Rob Ruggiero

May 28-June 22, 2025

King James runs from May 28-June 22 2025. Performances are Tuesday through Thursday at 7:30 pm, Friday and Saturday at 8:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 pm.

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

ABOUT THE PLAY: At first glance, Shawn and Matt couldn't be more different. However, when they discover they are both diehard Cleveland Cavaliers fans, they quickly form a close bond

over their shared love of basketball—and the breathtaking talents of NBA star LeBron James. Over the course of many years, their relationship ebbs and flows with the fortunes of their beloved team. This witty and energetic comedy is a “wonderfully daring, imaginative, and compassionate” (*The New York Times*) celebration of the enduring power of sports fandom and unexpected friendships, written by Pulitzer Prize finalist Rajiv Joseph (*Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*).

Presented in partnership with TheaterWorks Hartford and Barrington Stage Company.

The 2024-2025 Season is sponsored by Linda J. Ravdin and Don Shapero.

ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCES

Round House Theatre is committed to providing full access to patrons with disabilities. Our theatre is ADA accessible and is enabled with the following features. Performance dates for open captioned and audio described performances may be found below, and [full information about accessibility at Round House may be found here](#).

- **Audio described performance:** June 7 at 2:00 pm
- **Open captioned performance:** June 8 at 2:00 pm; June 14 at 2:00 pm
- **Mask-required performances:** June 17 at 7:30pm; June 21 at 2:00 pm

DISCUSSION EVENTS

- **Post-Show Discussions:** Stick around after the performance to hear about the rehearsal process, background on the play, and how a script is transformed into the performance you saw. (May 28, May 29, Jun 8, Jun 15)
- **Director Discussion (7:15 pm):** On Friday evenings during preview week, arrive early to hear from the director of the production. (May 30)
- **Designer Discussion (6:45 pm):** On Wednesday evenings during preview week, arrive early to hear from members of the production's design team. (May 28)

- **Teen Night:** Join us for dinner followed by a pre-show discussion before the show and attend a performance of the play followed by a post-show activity. (May 30)

Tickets can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100, ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org, or visiting the box office. Available ticket discounts include:

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

Round House Theatre will host **Pride Night** at *King James* on **Thursday, June 5**.

ACCESSIBLE TICKETS

- 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(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and community-serving organizations with a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. For more information, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage/On-TheHouse 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 three weeks before the first performance of each show. The patron decides the admission price. Limit of two tickets per order. PWYC tickets are available for performances on May 28 at 7:30pm and May 31 at 2:00pm and are subject to availability.
- 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 *King James*, all seats are buy one, get one free. 2-for-1 Tuesday tickets are available online or by phone (240.644.1100) with promo code TWOFORONE. 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 a limited number of mask-required performances for audience members who may prefer a fully masked environment. Masks are required for performances of *King James* on June 17 (7:30 pm) and 21 (2:00 pm).

ABOUT ROUND HOUSE THEATRE

Round House Theatre is one of the leading professional theatres in the Washington, DC area, producing a season of new plays, modern classics, and musicals 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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