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Photos for *The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* available here:

<https://roundhousetheatre.egnyte.com/fl/gwkXud5t6K>

Password: AKFest2021

Photos for *The Catastrophist* available here:

[roundhousetheatre.egnyte.com/fl/IQHJ60uc20](https://roundhousetheatre.egnyte.com/fl/IQHJ60uc20)

Password: CATASTROPHIST2021

## **ROUND HOUSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES TWO VIRTUAL SEASON EXTENSIONS**

**ADRIENNE KENNEDY FESTIVAL EXTENDED THROUGH APRIL 30,  
*THE CATASTROPHIST* EXTENDED THROUGH JULY 25**

Bethesda, Md. (February 23, 2021) – After enthusiastic audience and critical response, Round House Theatre is thrilled to announce the extension of two productions from the 2020-2021 Winter Season, which were originally scheduled to close on February 28, 2021.

***The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence***, which features four plays produced in association with McCarter Theatre Center, will now be available on demand through April 30, 2021. ***The Catastrophist*** by **Lauren Gunderson**, a world premiere co-produced with Marin Theatre Company, will now be available on demand through July 25, 2021. Tickets are on sale now. See *page 3 for programming details*.

*The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* is digital festival celebrating the award-winning experimentalist, with four of Kennedy's plays produced as virtual theatrical experiences: ***He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box*** directed by **Nicole A. Watson**, ***Sleep Deprivation Chamber*** directed by **Raymond O. Caldwell**, ***Ohio State Murders*** directed by **Valerie Curtis-Newton**, and the world premiere of ***Etta and Ella on the Upper West Side*** directed by **Timothy Douglas**. Four dynamic panel discussions reflecting on Kennedy's lasting influence are now archived on the Round House YouTube channel and will also remain available for free viewing. *The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* has garnered nationwide acclaim from audiences, educators, and critics:

“Kennedy’s work is unusually **well suited to filmic treatment**: when her characters speak, they not only advance the plot but impart **lush and unlikely images**...one of

our greatest and least definable living playwrights, **restlessly inventive and ruthlessly unshy** about the pressures exerted by history upon our lives."

– *The New Yorker*

"An **outstanding online festival** of plays by the 89-year-old Kennedy, a great, eternally undersung American dramatist...a theatre artist of **unique stageworthy imagination**, who has earned this platform" – *The Washington Post*

"The online event offers **a welcome opportunity to experience Kennedy's dramatic resplendence** beyond the page...all four plays are now available for viewing, and it's best to experience them side by side" – *Los Angeles Times*

*The Catastrophist* by Lauren Gunderson, directed by Marin Theatre Company Artistic Director **Jasson Minadakis** and starring **William DeMeritt** (HBO's *The Normal Heart*), is a world premiere digital co-production based on the life and work of "virus hunter" **Nathan Wolfe**. A leader in the efforts to track and combat global outbreaks like Ebola and swine flu, Nathan proposed a plan to protect the economy from pandemics years before the COVID-19 outbreak. The timely and intimate play, written by America's most produced playwright and produced entirely during the pandemic, has received nationwide acclaim from audiences and critics:

"A subtle blend of film and live theatre...*The Catastrophist* sheds compassionate light on the all-too-human tendency to ignore catastrophe until it is too late.

**There's no risk, and plenty of reward, in watching this essential lesson.**" – *The Economist*

"**Head exploding...a freewheeling, virtuoso science lesson**—the kind where you don't just absorb fun facts but recalibrate your mental ordering of the universe and your place in it." – *San Francisco Chronicle*

"[*The Catastrophist*] **has the urgency of a news alert from Anthony S. Fauci**...the play reminds you that the best lecturers sometimes possess the traits of a great performer." – *The Washington Post*

Round House Theatre's 2020-2021 Season also includes the live, weeklong kickoff of the national tour of *American Dreams* (October 5 – 11, 2020) and [a recently announced lineup of three fully staged productions](#) that will premiere this Spring: Colman Domingo's **A Boy and His Soul**, Lucy Alibar's **Throw Me On the Burnpile And Light Me Up**, and Young Jean Lee's **We're Gonna Die**. For more information, visit [RoundHouseTheatre.org](http://RoundHouseTheatre.org).

## **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

### ***The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence***

**Available for streaming through April 30, 2021**

Hailed as “American theatre’s greatest and least compromising experimentalist” (*New York Times*), Adrienne Kennedy is one of the most prolific and widely studied living playwrights. Since bursting onto the scene in 1964 with *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, Kennedy’s enthralling lyrical dramas have influenced generations of storytellers, from Suzan-Lori Parks to Robert O’Hara, Shonda Rhimes to Jeremy O. Harris. Despite her outsized influence, three Obie Awards, and induction into the Theater Hall of Fame, Adrienne Kennedy is not a household name. This festival is a celebration of why she should be. Round House Theatre and McCarter Theater Center team up to shine a light on four deeply personal stories from Kennedy’s astonishing body of work with four weeks of virtual theatrical experiences and dynamic conversations, offering audiences the opportunity to discover Kennedy’s singular voice—a startling mix of the surreal with the all too real.

*The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* is sponsored by the RPM Fund.

### ***He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box***

**By Adrienne Kennedy**

**Directed by Nicole A. Watson**

It is 1941, and Kay and Chris are in love. Yet the letters they exchange are not tender professions, but painful reminiscences—of Chris’ wealthy white father who laid the architecture for local segregation, of Kay’s brutalized Black mother whose death remains a mystery, and of the myriad forces that separate them. Written in 2018, Adrienne Kennedy’s newest work is a brief but expansive memory play that conjures “dread, romance and a tragic surrealism all at once” (*New York Times*). *He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box* is a heartbreaking collage of family memories, historical specters, and theatrical allusions, hypnotically woven together with a poetry that is distinctively Kennedy’s own.

### ***Sleep Deprivation Chamber***

**By Adam P. Kennedy and Adrienne Kennedy**

**Directed by Raymond O. Caldwell**

“I’m an American citizen, could you please let me up and breathe?” Teddy Alexander gasps out these words to the police officer who has beaten, dragged, and pinned him in the driveway of his family’s Arlington home—all because of a broken taillight. Teddy is a young Black college student studying theatre, but his senior year becomes a waking nightmare when the officer accuses him of assault. Written by Adrienne Kennedy and her own son, Adam, the semi-autobiographical drama shifts between Teddy’s trial and the

unrelenting letters his sleepless mother writes in his defense. Although it won the Obie Award for Best New American Play nearly 25 years ago, *Sleep Deprivation Chamber* is a chilling meditation on race and powerlessness that remains painfully relevant today.

***Ohio State Murders***

**By Adrienne Kennedy**

**Directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton**

When asked by Ohio State University to speak about the violent imagery in her work, Suzanne Alexander answers with her own story of brutality and betrayal. The accomplished writer attended Ohio State in the 1950s, but instead of academic sanctuary and self-discovery, Suzanne experienced a dark landscape of pain—not only exploitation, kidnapping, and murder, but also the insidious violence of segregation, ostracization, and misogynoir. Blending captivating monologue with haunting memories, *Ohio State Murders* is a poignant reminder of human cruelty, past and present.

***Etta and Ella on the Upper West Side | World Premiere***

**By Adrienne Kennedy**

**Directed by Timothy Douglas**

Etta and Ella Harrison are astoundingly gifted scholars, deeply connected sisters, and dangerously bitter rivals. They frequently write and teach together, and even their separate works are unnervingly similar, often sourced from their own family history. Now, after a lifetime of competition, they are on the verge of destroying each other. Adrienne Kennedy intricately blends monologue, dialogue, voiceover, and prose to create an experience that is part experimental play, part narrative thriller, and wholly unforgettable. Set against the gothic backdrop of their academic New York world, *Etta and Ella on the Upper West Side* is a taut, kaleidoscopic tale of ambition and madness—brought to theatrical life for the very first time.

TICKET INFORMATION

*The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* features four plays, which will be available to view on demand until April 30, 2021. Festival passes to all four plays are available for \$60 (with ticket handling fees waived), and tickets to each individual show are available for \$15.

Tickets can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100 or ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org. If you have any questions, our Box Office associates will be happy to assist you. Associates are working remotely, Monday through Friday, 11:00am – 5:00pm.

## ABOUT MCCARTER THEATRE CENTER

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Sarah Rasmussen and Managing Director Michael S. Rosenberg, McCarter's mission is to create world-class theater and present the finest artists for the community engagement, education, and entertainment. Winner of the 1994 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, world premieres include Christopher Durang's *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (2013 Tony Award for Best Play); Tarell Alvin McCarey's *The Brother/Sister Plays*, Emily Mann's *Having Our Say*, and Danai Gurira's *The Convert*. During COVID-19, McCarter has pivoted to offer virtual programming to a global audience, including [McCarter@HOME](#) and [McCarter Online Classes](#). Visit the digital stage at [mccarter.org](#).

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### ***The Catastrophist***

**By Lauren Gunderson**

**Based on the life and work of Dr. Nathan Wolfe**

**Available for streaming through July 25, 2021 | World Premiere**

How do you plan for catastrophe? Virologist Nathan Wolfe, named one of *TIME*'s 100 Most Influential People in the World for his work tracking Ebola and swine flu, proposed pandemic insurance years before the novel coronavirus outbreak. No one bought it. Now, in a post-COVID world, we hear his story—presented entirely digitally. *The Book of Will* playwright Lauren Gunderson returns with a time-jumping tale based on the life and work of Nathan Wolfe (who also happens to be her husband). A deep dive into the profundities of scientific exploration and the harrowing realities of facing your own mortality, *The Catastrophist* is a world premiere theatrical experience built of and for this moment in time.

## TICKET INFORMATION

*The Catastrophist* runs through Sunday, July 25, 2021. Tickets for on-demand streaming are available for \$30. Tickets can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100 or ordering online at [RoundHouseTheatre.org](#). If you have any questions, our Box Office associates will be happy to assist you. Associates are working remotely, Monday through Friday, 11:00am – 5:00pm.

## ABOUT MARIN THEATRE COMPANY

Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area's premier mid-sized theatre and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay, producing a six-show season focused on new American plays. MTC is committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, two nationally recognized annual playwriting awards and readings and workshops by the

nation's best emerging and established playwrights. MTC's numerous education programs serve more than 4,500 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. Marin Theatre Company believe in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theatre, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community and believes that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

#### 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 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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