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**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES LINEUP FOR THE
BONNIE HAMMERSCHLAG NATIONAL CAPITAL NEW PLAY FESTIVAL**

NOTHING UP MY SLEEVE...SIMPLE DECEPTIONS FOR CURIOUS HUMANS

**A World Premiere Theatrical Magic Experience
written and directed by Aaron Posner,
starring master illusionist Dendy**

**Also featuring
DEVELOPMENTAL READINGS OF NEW WORKS
by Lauren M. Gunderson, JuCoby Johnson, Matthew Capodicasa, and Eliana
Theologides Rodriguez**

FEBRUARY 11 - MARCH 15, 2026

Bethesda, Md. (January 13, 2025) – Round House Theatre announces the 2026 Bonnie Hammerschlag National Capital New Play Festival (February 11 – March 15). The fifth annual

festival of new work will feature the world premiere of *Nothing Up My Sleeve, Simple Deceptions For Curious Humans* an original magic-infused theatrical event featuring captivating storytelling, jaw-dropping tricks, and mind-bending surprises. Co-written and directed by Aaron Posner and starring co-writer and illusionist Dendy, best known regionally for his mesmerizing, magic-infused portrayal of Ariel in Round House's celebrated production of *The Tempest* (co-directed by Posner), *Nothing Up My Sleeve* is an exhilarating experience that will transport audiences into a world of magic. The festival will also include four developmental readings by playwrights **Lauren M. Gunderson** (*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*; *The Book of Will*; *The Catastrophist*), **JuCoby Johnson** (*How It's Gon Be*; 5), **Matthew Capodicasa** (*The Scenarios*; *Next/Life*; *All the People You've Been*), and **Eliana Theologides Rodriguez** (*Indian Princesses*; *Emma Has Church*; *Poor Queenie*). For further information and the full schedule, visit www.roundhousetheatre.org.

"This show is not about grand illusion and razzmatazz! It's quite a lot simpler and more unassuming," says director and playwright Aaron Posner. "Dendy's tricks are very human scale. He invites you into a relationship with him that feels open and genuine, and is... except that he ends up doing all kinds of impossible things. I think there's something so wonderful about being fooled by the boy next door that just makes the magic he does even more wonderful."

"I'm thrilled for this year's festival of new work featuring some of the bold, imaginative voices that are shaping American theatre," says **Round House Theatre artistic director Ryan Rilette**. "It's also a pleasure to welcome Aaron Posner and Dendy back to Round House after their stunning production of *The Tempest* in 2022."

The 2025-2026 Season is sponsored by Linda J. Ravdin & Don Shapero and David & Sherry Smith. Lead Sponsors: Lisa Mezzetti and Jan & Carole Klein. Sponsors: John & Rachel King, Robert Hebda, and John & Val Wheeler. The Great Tomsoni Sponsors: Leslie Grizzard & Joseph Hale and Don McMinn & Harv Lester. Performance Sponsor: Nan Beckley.

Nothing Up My Sleeve

Master illusionist Dendy and acclaimed playwright/director Aaron Posner reunite after their smash-hit collaboration on *The Tempest* for a spellbinding new one-man show. Part dazzling magic act, part deeply personal journey, *Nothing Up My Sleeve* pulls back the curtain on the history of magic while exploring Dendy's own path to becoming a magician.

The cast is joined by a brilliant creative team, including Co-Playwright and Director **Aaron Posner**; Scenic and Projection Designer **Dan Conway**; Costume Designer **Jeannette Christiansen**; Lighting Designer **Thom Weaver**; Sound Designer **Sartje Pickett**; Casting Director **Sarah Cooney**; Production Stage Manager **Che Wernsman**, Production Assistants **Carrie Edick** and **Elena Zimmerman**; Associate Scenic Designer **Brandon Roak**; Associate Projection Designer **Andrés Poch**; and Associate Lighting Designer **Yannick Godts**.

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE & PLAY INFORMATION

**Tickets for developmental play readings are free, but reservations are required. Reservations open to subscribers and donors on January 26, followed by the general public on January 29.*

Thursday, February 26 & Saturday, February 28 | Developmental Reading

The Cave

By Lauren M. Gunderson

Music by Bree Lowdermilk

Directed by Ryan Rilette

While World War II is raging across Europe, four French teenagers (and their dog) make an extraordinary discovery in the woods: a cave full of shockingly well-preserved prehistoric cave paintings. This heartfelt new musical tells the true story of the discovery of the Lascaux Cave Paintings and explores the complexities of human history. *A Round House Theatre commission.*

Friday, February 27 & Sunday, March 1 | Developmental Reading

Help! Help! Want. Want. Want.

by JuCoby Johnson

Director TBD

Charleigh is lonely, hurting, and aching for a change. When she flees to a tiny AirBnB in the woods for some much-needed solo time, an encounter with a mysterious stranger conjures ghosts of Charleigh's past and forces her to face her present pain. *Help! Help! Want. Want. Want.* is a poetic meditation on love, regret, and choosing life.

Thursday, March 5 & Saturday, March 7 | Developmental Reading

Noise in the Line

By Matthew Capodicasa

Directed by Jared Mezzocchi

While fighting Stage IV cancer, Graham coped by repeatedly listening to a podcast narrated by Blaine and his sister, who shared Graham's diagnosis. Graham managed to beat the cancer, but now he and his wife Thora are struggling to move on from the stress of his time in the hospital. When Graham unexpectedly meets Blaise in real life, the ripple effects change everyone's lives. This unique theatrical experience will be told through Bluetooth headsets, providing an intimate and personalized experience between the actors and the audience.

Friday, March 6 & Sunday, March 8 | Developmental Reading

Marble Rooftop

By Eliana Theologides Rodriguez

Director TBD

During a dance team bonding sleepover, seven teenagers navigate power imbalances and tenuous friendships. As the alcohol flows, multiple shocking revelations make the evening increasingly tense. When a pair of unexpected guests arrive downstairs, the atmosphere of competition and bravado turns dangerous. With raw honesty, *Marble Rooftop* explores the brutality and vulnerability of teenage girlhood.

MAIN STAGE PRODUCTION INFORMATION

February 11 - March 15 | World Premiere on the Main Stage

Nothing Up My Sleeve

By Aaron Posner and Dendy

Directed by Aaron Posner

Master illusionist Dendy and acclaimed playwright/director Aaron Posner reunite after their smash-hit collaboration on *The Tempest* for a spellbinding new one-man show. Part dazzling magic act, part deeply personal journey, *Nothing Up My Sleeve* pulls back the curtain on the history of magic while exploring Dendy's own path to becoming a magician. Prepare to be amazed, inspired, and transported into a world where the impossible becomes reality. Featuring captivating storytelling, jaw-dropping tricks, and mind-bending surprises, this exhilarating experience will leave audiences believing in magic again.

ARTIST INFORMATION (*Nothing Up My Sleeve*)

Aaron Posner (Co-Writer and Director) is a theatre director, playwright, former artistic director of two major regional theaters, and a tenured full professor at American University. Aaron has directed nearly 200 productions at major regional theatres across the country, including most major theatres in the DMV. Previously at Round House: *The Tempest* (with Teller), *Or, Stage Kiss*, and his Mark Twain musical (with composer James Sugg) *A Murder, A Mystery & A Marriage*. His many published and produced plays include *Stupid Fucking Bird*, *Life Sucks*, *No Sisters*, *JQA*, *District Merchants*, *The Chosen*, *My Name Is Asher Lev*, *The Gift of Nothing*, *Me... Jane: The Adventures of Young Jane Goodall*, and more. He has won more than 20 regional theatre awards, including six Helen Hayes Awards, two Barrymore Awards, a Jeff Award, an Eliot Norton Award, an Outer Circle Critics Award, and the John Gassner Prize.

Dendy (Co-Writer, Magic Designer, and Performer) is a magician, actor, playwright, and magic designer. He returns to Round House Theatre, where he previously appeared as Ariel in *The Tempest*. Other DC acting credits include *The Fantasticks* at Arena Stage. His work has been seen at theatres across the country, including American Repertory Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, the Smith Center, Tanglewood Music Festival, Folger Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, South Coast Repertory, and Atlantic Theatre Company. His magic designs have been seen on Broadway in the revival of Sondheim's *Company* and *Once Upon a One More Time* and featured on Netflix, including the Adam Sandler film *The Week Of*. He has worked with Penn & Teller, the longest-running headliners in Las Vegas history, and appears on *Penn & Teller: Fool Us* on The CW. Dendy has received a Jeff Award nomination and two Helen Hayes Award nominations for his work as an actor. Find him on Instagram @natedendy.

PERFORMANCE DATES AND TIMES:

Nothing Up My Sleeve runs from February 11-March 15, 2026.

Visit RoundHouseTheatre.org for full performance schedule.

Audio-Described performances: Feb 21 (matinee)

Open-Captioned performances: Feb 22, Feb 28 (matinee)

Masks are required at the following performance: Mar 10

Post-Show Discussions: Feb 11, Feb 12, Feb 22, Mar 1

Director Discussion: Feb 13 at 6:45 pm

Designer Discussion: Feb 11 at 6:45 pm

Teen Night: Feb 13

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 *Nothing Up My Sleeve* 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 (FEB 27-MAR 1 and MAR 6-8):** 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 *Nothing Up My Sleeve* are **February 11 and 14 (matinee)**.
- **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 *Nothing Up My Sleeve* 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.

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
