



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A dark blue rectangular graphic with the text "ROUND HOUSE THEATRE 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON" in cyan, bold, sans-serif font. The word "SEASON" is significantly larger than the other words.

**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE
50TH ANNIVERSARY
SEASON**

**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY SEASON
2026-2027 SEASON CELEBRATES LEGACY OF BOLD AND COMPELLING PROGRAMMING**

August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*
Co-production with Olney Theatre Center

Beth Hyland's *Baby Shower Katie*
World premiere

**Leslye Headland's *Cult of Love* • Alex Lin's *Chinese Republicans*
Sean Daniels's *The White Chip***
Regional premieres

Plus...

50 for 50
50 free community events celebrating Round House's 50th anniversary

A new visual identity
A contemporary look for the next fifty years

BETHESDA, Md., March 25, 2026 — Round House Theatre Artistic Director Ryan Rilette and Executive Director Ed Zakreski proudly announce the company's 2026-2027 Season and 50th anniversary celebrations, alongside a new brand identity as Round House looks to the next fifty years.

The **2026-2027 lineup** honors a legacy of bold programming that challenges, inspires, and speaks to the moment while never losing sight of humanity. These powerful and timely plays—including two world premieres, three regional premieres, and a major co-production of an August Wilson classic—explore legacy, identity, and what happens when our trust in the systems we expect to support us begins to fracture. In addition, a robust lineup of free events—titled **50 for 50**—will take place throughout the season, from staged readings and master classes to backstage access and free tickets to selected performances, and more. Additional details will be announced this summer.

“As we mark Round House’s 50th anniversary, we’re celebrating not just five decades of bold work, but the spirit of collaboration and partnership that has defined this theatre since its earliest days,” says **Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director**. “This milestone season is a celebration of everything that makes us who we are. It honors our legacy while looking toward the future with work that reflects the world we live in and will ultimately resonate with audiences.”

ON STAGE: The 2026-2027 Season

Opening the season is ***Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*** by August Wilson, a playwright who has been central to Round House’s artistic identity for decades. Reuniting two Helen Hayes Award winners for *Fela!* (director Lili-Anne Brown and actor Melody Betts in the title role), the play—widely considered one of Wilson’s most searing works—is a blistering examination of authorship, exploitation, and theft of Black artistry. The production will be presented at Round House in partnership with Olney Theatre Center. **(September 9 - October 11, 2026)**

Following the success of *Rules for Living* and *A Hanukkah Carol*, Round House once again offers audiences an alternative to traditional holiday fare with ***Cult of Love***, the acclaimed Broadway hit by Leslye Headland. Directed by Round House Artistic Director Ryan Rilette, this darkly funny family drama set during the holidays balances humor and discomfort while exploring the tensions that surface when families gather. **(November 18 - December 27, 2026)**

Following its off-Broadway premiere at Roundabout Theatre Company in February, Alex Lin’s ***Chinese Republicans*** comes to Round House in its first regional production. This sharp comedy from an exciting new playwright tells a truly American story centering on Chinese-American women navigating corporate ambition and generational expectations, and explores how striving for success can conflict with identity and belonging in systems that still expect assimilation, especially for women of color. **(January 27 - February 21, 2027)**

The sixth annual Bonnie Hammerschlag National Capital New Play Festival returns with the world premiere of ***Baby Shower Katie*** by Beth Hyland on the mainstage. Previously presented as a workshop in the 2025 Festival, this hilarious new work explores friendship, motherhood, and the unspoken violences of expectation, asking what happens when the life we are told to want no longer fits the person we are becoming. *Baby Shower Katie* is a co-world premiere with Primary Stages, New York City. **(April 14 - May 9, 2027)**

The season concludes with ***The White Chip*** by Sean Daniels, an inventive and unflinching autobiographical play about addiction, recovery, and the stories we tell ourselves to survive. After acclaimed runs off-Broadway and in London, Daniels will direct the production for the first time, bringing an added layer of personal perspective to a story already deeply lived. Told with theatricality, humor, and brutal honesty, the play asks what it means to rebuild a life after you have burned it down—and whether redemption is possible without illusion. **(June 2 - July 3, 2027)**

The season also features the 25th anniversary of the annual Sarah Metzger Memorial Play, with Round House's Teen Performance Company presenting ***The Camp Silver Lake Jamboree Massacre***, the playwriting debut of former Round House Associate Artistic Director **Naysan Mojgani**. Blending horror and dark comedy, the play follows teenage survivors battling supernatural forces and the deeper truths that emerge in the wake of trauma. Using the slasher genre as its gateway, it offers a thrilling and theatrical exploration of teen identity. **(March 5 - 7, 2027)**

50 FOR 50: Free Theatrical Experiences Celebrating a Golden Anniversary

To mark our 50th anniversary, Round House will share 50 free theatrical experiences to honor the community we call home, celebrating where we've been and expressing what we believe: that theatre belongs to everyone. **50 for 50** is Round House's way of opening the doors wider in this anniversary year.

Throughout the season, audiences, students, artists, and neighbors will have opportunities to connect with Round House in a range of ways, including staged and developmental readings, master classes, homecoming celebrations, tech rehearsal look-ins, backstage tours, student and teen events, and more. Details and dates will be announced in summer 2026. Visit **RoundHouseTheatre.org/50for50** for more information.

"Celebrating our 50th anniversary season is a moment of reflection for all of us at Round House Theatre. It is about recognizing the artists, audiences, and supporters who have shaped Round House into one of the region's leading theatres," says **Ed Zakreski, Executive Director**. "As we step into our next fifty years,

we welcome the opportunity to continue our commitment to telling stories that challenge, inspire conversations, and bring people together in our space.”

LOOKING FORWARD: A New Visual Identity

In advance of our 50th anniversary season, Round House is unveiling a refreshed brand identity reflective of the bold, innovative work that epitomizes Round House today.

“Round House’s first 50 years were a period of profound growth and change, from our earliest days as a Rockville city program to our current status as a major regional theatre—and our ‘look’ grew and changed with us. Today, we’re thrilled to unveil a new visual identity that beautifully reflects who Round House is now, and that will grow with us as we enter our next 50 years,” says **Hannah Grove-DeJarnett, Director of Marketing and Communications**. “We’ve thoroughly enjoyed working with Abbott Miller and his team at Pentagram, whose design work for arts and culture organizations is second to none.”

“Our new visual identity for Round House took inspiration from the emphatic display type on 20th-century British and American playbills, as well as the distinctive script of typewriters. The vertical lines that frame ROUND HOUSE evoke a stage curtain: in animated form, the curtains open and close to announce the plays,” explains **Abbott Miller, Partner at Pentagram**. “Our work included workshops and interviews with the many communities and audiences of the theatre, conversations that showed enormous respect for the ambition and commitment shown by Round House. The visual identity allows individual plays to express their specific character, but the identity and integrity of the theatre is equally important. This led us to emphasize the importance of an identifiable ‘house style’ that expresses the consistently thoughtful, dynamic, and committed nature of the theatre and its audiences.”

Additional information about Round House’s 2026-2027 Season may be found at RoundHouseTheatre.org. Subscriptions are on sale now, with tickets to individual productions on sale in mid-July. Complete information about *50 for 50* events will be announced in summer 2026.

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2026-2027 SEASON DETAILS

August Wilson's
MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM
Directed by Lili-Anne Brown
September 9 - October 11, 2026

Set in 1920s Chicago and pulsing with rousing blues music, wry comedy, and poetic insight, August Wilson's acclaimed play follows trailblazing singer Ma Rainey and her band during a fraught recording session. As conflicts flare over art, power, and control, the struggle between the musicians and studio executives grows to a shattering finale. Don't miss this explosive and thrilling "genuine American masterpiece" (Chicago Reader)—reuniting two Helen Hayes Award winners for Fela!, director Lili-Anne Brown and actor Melody Betts in the title role—that takes a searing look at the racial exploitation at the heart of the music industry and celebrates the cathartic power of the blues. *Co-produced with Olney Theatre Center.*

CULT OF LOVE
By Leslye Headland
Directed by Ryan Rilette
November 18 - December 27, 2026 | Regional premiere

Celebrate the holidays with the Broadway sensation *Cult of Love*! In this darkly funny, music-filled play, four adult siblings (and their partners) return home for Christmas Eve, carrying secrets, resentments, and competing ideas of what family demands. As the singing and celebration give way to confrontation, old wounds reopen and new revelations emerge. Leslye Headland's "stormy, compassionate, [and] cuttngly observant" (*TimeOut NY*) play interrogates the complexity of family loyalty, the power of religion, and what it truly means to love one another.

CHINESE REPUBLICANS
By Alex Lin
January 27 - February 21, 2027 | Regional premiere

Every month, a group of Chinese-American businesswomen meet for lunch to discuss strategy, success, and survival in the world of corporate finance. When Katie, the bright-eyed youngest member of their group, starts to question the personal cost of climbing the corporate ladder, the other women desperately try to steer her toward the choices they believe she should make. Fresh from its off-Broadway premiere, this "stiletto-sharp and barkingly funny" (*New York Theatre Guide*) story of ambition, identity, and power examines how to survive within systems that reward achievement while demanding assimilation.

BABY SHOWER KATIE
By Beth Hyland
Directed by Jessica Fisch
April 14 - May 9, 2027 | World premiere

The Bonnie Hammerschlag National Capital New Play Festival returns with the hilarious world premiere of *Baby Shower Katie*. Best friends Rebecca and Hannah are at a crossroads: Rebecca desperately wants a child, while Hannah can't imagine anything worse. Across four baby showers, thrown for three different women named Katie, Rebecca and Hannah are forced to confront their divergent dreams, the absurd expectations placed on mothers, and the terror and uncertainty that can surround pregnancy. Beth Hyland's irreverent new comedy asks what happens when the life we have been told to want no longer

fits the person we are becoming. *Part of the Bonnie Hammerschlag National Capital New Play Festival. Co-world premiere with Primary Stages, New York City.*

The 25th Annual Sarah Metzger Memorial Play
THE CAMP SILVER LAKE JAMBOREE MASSACRE
By Naysan Mojtani

Directed, performed & stage-managed by the Round House Theatre Teen Performance Company
March 5 - 7, 2027 | World premiere

Blending horror and dark comedy, this world premiere play, written for the Round House Teen Performance Company, follows teenage survivors battling supernatural forces and the deeper truths that emerge in the wake of trauma. Using the slasher genre as its gateway, *The Camp Silver Lake Jamboree Massacre* offers a thrilling and theatrical exploration of teen identity.

THE WHITE CHIP

Written & directed by Sean Daniels
June 2 - July 3, 2027 | Regional premiere

Steven, a prolific director and rising star in the American theatre, has built a life that looks enviable from the outside. But beneath it, he is struggling to balance professional success, family, and an addiction that is spinning out of control. When he can no longer disguise his alcoholism with charm, talent, and artistic productivity, he is forced to confront the wreckage it has caused and begin the long work of rebuilding. Inventive, funny, and unflinching, *The White Chip* is Sean Daniels' autobiographical play about what it means to rebuild a life after you have burned it down. For the first time, Daniels will also direct his "witty, fizzy" (*New York Theatre Guide*) hit play, bringing a new level of personal perspective to the story.

TICKET INFORMATION

Subscription packages for Round House Theatre's 2026-2027 Season are now available for purchase online at RoundHouseTheatre.org, or by calling the Box Office at 240.644.1100. Subscribers enjoy the best prices and the best seats on their preferred night, with benefits including free ticket exchanges, waived single ticket fees, and more. Tickets for individual productions will be available for sale in mid-July.

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 256 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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