



THE ROUNABOUT

**G A L A**  2023

HONORING

**SCOTT ELLIS**

Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre

**AMY SHERMAN-PALLADINO AND DANIEL PALLADINO**

Ovation Award for Excellence in Philanthropy

AND

**BLACK THEATRE UNITED**

Illumination Award for Humanitarian Action

WITH SPECIAL CONCERT PERFORMANCE BY

**SUTTON FOSTER**

**MONDAY MARCH 6**

Ziegfeld Ballroom | New York City

Congratulations to  
Roundabout Theatre Company  
on a fantastic season of theatre.

**VICKI GROSS** and **JONATHAN LEVINE**

# THE ROUNDABOUT GALA

## HONORING

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Jason Robards Award for  
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and Daniel Palladino**  
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## WITH SPECIAL CONCERT PERFORMANCE BY

**Sutton Foster**

## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CEO

Todd Haimes

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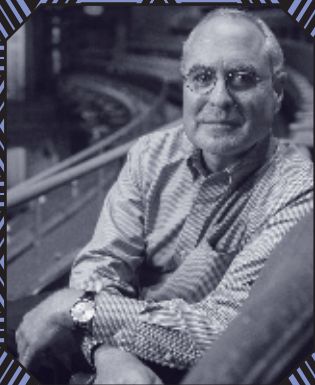
Dr. Taylor W. Lawrence and  
Dr. Ryan P. Shelhamer

Roundabout thanks all of the artists and technicians who have generously donated their time to tonight's event and helped make this evening possible. We wish to express our gratitude to the Performers' Unions: Actors' Equity Association, American Guild of Musical Artists, American Guild of Variety Artists, and SAG-AFTRA through Theatre Authority, Inc. for their cooperation in permitting the artists to appear on this program.

Gala proceeds benefit Roundabout Theatre Company's many initiatives including our education programs.



**LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CEO**  
Todd Haimes



**T**heatre is built on bravery. It has always relied on it—from artists, producers, supporters, and, yes, audiences. And this past year, the courage and commitment of Roundabout’s creators, donors, leaders, subscribers, and employees has been like nothing I’ve witnessed before.

Despite many challenges—financial, medical, and cultural—we all created a year of remarkable shows and vital connections with students, audiences, and each other. Tonight, we celebrate.

It thrills me to inaugurate our Illumination Award for Humanitarian Action by saluting Black Theatre United. This consortium of Black theatre professionals is doing vital work to push the theatre forward. Its recognition tonight is even more special to me because so many of BTU’s founders are Roundabout family and friends, including Senior Resident Director Kenny Leon and Board Members LaChanze and Vanessa Williams.

Scott Ellis, this year’s Jason Robards Award honoree, has been part of Roundabout for so long and through so many extraordinary shows that he has become part of the very heartbeat of the company. Scott has been my closest artistic collaborator for over 30 years, as well as a dear friend. Congratulations, Scott.

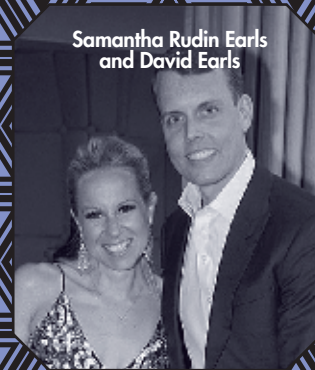
We first met the marvelous Amy Sherman-Palladino & Daniel Palladino in 2014, when their support of our revival of *Violet* was so integral to making the production possible. We discovered a pair of true theatre lovers and advocates; we cherish their ongoing connection to Roundabout.

And, of course, that remarkable show starred Sutton Foster, who had lit up our stages three years earlier in *Anything Goes*. I know you’ll join me in welcoming her back to Roundabout as our special guest star.

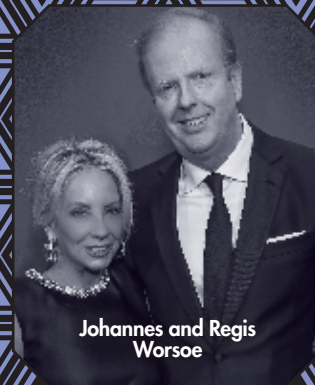
All of you joining us tonight demonstrated dedication to our mission that leaves me in awe. In particular, please join me in thanking Gala Chairs Samantha Rudin Earls & David Earls, and Johannes & Regis Worsoe, and our inspiringly and tirelessly supportive Board and Leadership Council.

Thank you for joining us.

**LETTER FROM THE GALA CHAIRS**  
Samantha Rudin Earls and David Earls  
Johannes “Johs” and Regis Worsoe



Samantha Rudin Earls  
and David Earls



Johannes and Regis  
Worsoe

**W**elcome to the 2023 Roundabout Gala! Tonight is a celebration of theatre, a celebration of connection, and, of course, a celebration of all of you. As the evening’s

**Co-Chairs, we salute our supporters and our guests; tonight’s honorees, Black Theatre United, Amy Sherman-Palladino, Daniel Palladino, and Scott Ellis; and tonight’s headliner Sutton Foster.**

This year, Roundabout brought new works and a classic Tony Award-winning musical to our New York stages, presented the second year of our nationally acclaimed Refocus Project; and launched tours of *1776* and *A Soldier’s Play* to share our work with theatregoers nationwide. At the same time, our Education programs, including backstage career training for young adults and expanded community partnerships to reach ever more diverse populations, help us use the power of theatre throughout our city. All of this work is the direct beneficiary of your participation tonight, and all year long.

There are many members of the Roundabout family that we want to spotlight tonight, including:

- ◆ Gala Vice Chairs: Elizabeth Armstrong; Jeff Barker, Bank of America; Cynthia and Ron Beck; Bloomberg Philanthropies; Roxanne and Scott Bok; Karen McKeel Calby; John and Colleen Cook; Susan and Ed Forst; Sylvia Golden; Jeanne and Tom Hagerty; Tom and Kitty Patterson Kempner; Stephanie and Ron Kramer; Dr. Taylor W. Lawrence and Dr. Ryan P. Shelhamer; Alan P. Mark and Jeffrey Fraenkel; Iva Mills; Janet and Marvin Rosen; Beryl Snyder and Steven Trost; Mary Solomon; Jennifer and Owen Thomas; Diane and Tom Tuft; and Frances and Paul Turner
- ◆ Gala Auction Chairs: Wendy Barker, Colleen Cook, and Sylvia Golden
- ◆ Capital One for sponsoring the Education Paddle Raise
- ◆ Dr. Taylor W. Lawrence and Dr. Ryan P. Shelhamer for underwriting the concert performance by Sutton Foster.

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors, we thank all of you for your generosity to Roundabout and your ongoing belief in theatre.

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THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 GALA DONORS *As of February 13, 2023*

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# AWARDS

FOR EXCELLENCE

2023

◆ **SCOTT ELLIS** ◆  
**JASON ROBARDS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THEATRE**

The Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre is given to individuals and organizations who have made an indelible impact on the theatre world. It is named to honor his lifelong commitment to theatre and his incredible support of Roundabout both on stage and off.

In 1994, Jason Robards made his Roundabout debut in the first New York revival of Harold Pinter's *No Man's Land* with his dear friend, Christopher Plummer. Soon after, he and Chris joined Roundabout's Board of Directors and worked tirelessly to support Artistic Director Todd Haimes' idea to create a second, Off-Broadway stage that would be a home to new plays by today's greatest writers. He became our distinguished Artist-in-Residence during the inaugural 1995-96 season at the Laura Pels Theatre with performances in Pinter's *Moonlight* and Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney* and served as a member of Roundabout's Board until his death in 2000.

◆ **AMY SHERMAN-PALLADINO and DANIEL PALLADINO** ◆  
**OVATION AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PHILANTHROPY**

The Ovation Award for Excellence in Philanthropy is awarded to those who are committed to promoting the

essential work of a cultural not-for-profit like Roundabout: spotlighting classics from the past, cultivating new works of the present, and educating minds for the future.

The Ovation Award, introduced in 2017 to recipient Dr. Leonard Tow, honors individuals who have committed to growing New York City arts and culture with their philanthropy to Roundabout and the theatre community.

◆ **BLACK THEATRE UNITED** ◆  
**ILLUMINATION AWARD FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

This year marks the inaugural Illumination Award for Humanitarian Action, introduced to honor recipient Black Theatre United for their work to create a more just and inclusive theatre industry.

Black Theatre United was founded to build pathways of access and opportunities for Black and other students and industry professionals historically marginalized in the theatre community. As members of the Black theatre community, they stand together to help protect Black people, Black theatre, and Black lives of all shapes and orientations in communities across the country. Their voices are united to educate, empower, and inspire through excellence and activism in the pursuit of justice and equality.

**2023**  
**Scott Ellis**

**Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino**

**Black Theatre United**

**2022**  
 Chita Rivera

**2021**  
 The Honorable Charles E. Schumer, United States Senator, in *Gratitude for the Save our Stages Act*

**2020**  
 Alan Cumming  
 Michael Kors and Lance Le Pere

**2019**  
 John Lithgow

**2018**  
 Jessica Lange

**2017**  
 Frank Langella  
 Dr. Leonard Tow

**2016**  
 Audra McDonald  
 Tom Tuft

**2015**  
 Helen Mirren

**2014**  
 Sam Mendes

**2012**  
 Rob Marshall

**2011**  
 Alec Baldwin

**2009**  
 Bank of America  
 Douglas Durst, The Durst Organization

**2007**  
 Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg

Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Council of the City of New York

**2005**  
 Stephen Sondheim

**2004**  
 John Kander  
 Fred Ebb

**2002**  
 Christopher Plummer

*The award was designed by sculptor Arthur Carter, whose bronze and steel sculptures have been exhibited in New York, Paris, and around the globe.*

**WITH BLACK THEATRE UNITED,  
THE ROAD TO INCLUSIVE THEATRE  
IS A SHARED ONE**

by **ABBIE WHITE**



**BLACK THEATRE UNITED**



**FOR Black Theatre United (BTU) founding member LaChanze, Roundabout's 1995 revival of *Company* was one of the first times she could step onstage as a character — that of Marta — where race didn't matter. "Not only was I excited and proud, I was also very nervous," the Tony winner**

recalls. "But I was so grateful to Todd [Haimes] and Roundabout Theatre Company for trusting me with this role."

For Todd Haimes, Roundabout's Artistic Director/CEO, it was a choice that would lead to an industry relationship spanning decades, and, in the midst of a sea of change around inclusion in the larger industry, an invaluable partner. LaChanze would become a Roundabout Board Member and help launch, through BTU, joint efforts like The Refocus Project, a playreading series that in 2021 spotlighted overlooked 20th-century plays from the Black American community.

According to Haimes, she's an artist who cares "deeply about the community" and has had a "profound impact on our institutions." Ahead of accepting BTU's Illumination Award for Humanitarian Action, LaChanze sat down with Haimes to talk about their shared work in theatre's equity and inclusion space and the challenges in that realm and beyond for theatres and Black artists ahead.

**Todd, can you talk about why BTU was chosen for this year's special gala honor and LaChanze, what does it mean for you and your fellow BTU creatives to receive this honor so early on in your organization's history?**

**TODD HAIMES** There's been a lot of advocates for change in the last few years, but I think that [Black Theatre United] has played a leadership role in the enormous

desire to try to do the right thing and make changes. I think that BTU really made an extraordinary effort both to push [the industry] but also to do it in a totally collaborative way. Working together to make change, we can accomplish so much more than being enemies. I really feel like they're in a partnership, and not just with Roundabout, but the entire Broadway community.

**LACHANZE** So many of our founding members have been in the theatre community, as [Brian] Stokes [Mitchell] likes to say, a combined 500 years. So we have made friendships with, worked alongside, or worked under so many theatre owners, producers, and creatives. We feel like these are our friends, our colleagues. No one's the enemy out here. And as Black artists, we've been in support of so many causes in the theatre community, whether it be Latinx issues or LGBTQ issues. So we felt after the murder of George Floyd, we wanted our allies to help us make this change. We are not out here on our own fighting, so we have to lock arms with everyone and stand together in order for the change to happen. Being such a young organization and having done as much as we've been able to do, I believe, is because of our alliances and our friendships that not only have faith in our mission but also want to see this change in the theatre. This means a tremendous amount to us. It affirms we are doing the work that's needed and that there's room for it.



**What makes your respective organizations' mission and approach different from others doing similar work in the New York theatre industry right now?**

**TODD HAIMES** We have a program called the Roundabout Underground, which is a small theatre dedicated to giving young American playwrights — now almost exclusively BIPOC — the opportunity to have their voices heard. We do a play in front of 60 people in the Black Box Theatre and we get *The New York Times* and other major outlets to review it. And we've found that critics come in with a totally different approach than shows in a 500-seat theatre — playwrights have been met with enormous praise. It changes their lives. Another thing that we do is commission a writer's second play before we do the first one. It occurred to me, after sadly having had this experience, that a young playwright gets a bad review for their first play and it can be shockingly demoralizing. That we commission their second play before they've done the first encourages them. It tells them that they're not permanently tied to us, but they always have a home here. We also have one of the largest education programs of any theatre in America. Ours goes out into the public school system and we spend nearly \$5 million a year just on the program. We've found that by incorporating ourselves intensively into the education of a relatively small group of people, we can make a profound difference in their lives.

**LACHANZE** One of the ways we have wanted to move forward differently and create a sense of inclusion and belonging that isn't based on typical models of what we have experienced is getting a commitment from other theatre makers — every department of the industry — to bring everyone together to decide

on how we move forward. So we had a series of meetings that spanned six months where we created the New Deal. We all got together and didn't leave until we agreed on areas that we can change. It wasn't a legally binding document, but when you see the list of signatories on the New Deal, that's what separates Black Theatre United in this time of global shift. We actually got signatures on a document that we've all agreed to on why and how this industry needs to move forward. And not only our industry. We're hoping that our commercial theatre and not-for-profit theatre community can model for other industries what anti-bias looks like. The New Deal and the anti-bias training we're developing are to make us all aware of the way we speak, the way we think, and how it influences who we hire and who we work with. We're trying to build the future of Broadway so that these new audiences that we're cultivating now feel like they belong in the space.

**Todd, you spoke about the importance of artists and theatres not operating as enemies. What kind of influence has that approach to collaboration had on Roundabout's inclusion work?**

**TODD HAIMES** I think that post-George Floyd, the community really did a lot of self-reflection. I can't speak for everybody, but I think that you fall into a pattern where you just do what you've always done. We tended to hire the same people over and over again — actors, designers, directors who were largely white. It made us realize that we really have to get out of that pattern and take action. The New Deal is really helpful when you're trying to make a change — to have a set of guidelines that are aspirational, for you to aim for, as opposed to just saying, "We should have

more Black writers." Yes, we should have more Black writers, but are we trying for one-third or one-half of stories told on the stage to be Black stories? Are we trying to have some composition — some majority, some not — always be represented? Are we trying to have boards of directors that are not all white? The New Deal has forced us in a good way to establish our own written parameters of where we want to be five years from now. We decided we wanted to have 30% BIPOC Board Members — we want to have more, but it gives us something to aim for.

**LaChanze, you emphasized BTU's collaboration with allies. How is doing that as an industry insider versus an outside critic more impactful?**

**WE ARE NOT OUT HERE ON OUR OWN FIGHTING, SO WE HAVE TO LOCK ARMS WITH EVERYONE AND STAND TOGETHER IN ORDER FOR THE CHANGE TO HAPPEN.**

LaChanze

**LACHANZE** I've been working in this business for almost 40 years with so many people. I know what it feels like to be onstage, to be backstage. I know what it feels like to go out and portray a character who is Black and have an all-white audience. And for those of us who have been doing it, we know exactly how to speak to each other. We also can speak to the generations coming up that may have a different perspective on how to get something done. With our combined wisdom with the foundership and membership of BTU,



Audra McDonald at the Lena Horne Theatre unveiling ceremony, 2022. Photo by Slaven Vlasic

Brian Stokes Mitchell at the James Earl Jones Theatre unveiling ceremony, 2022.



LaChanze in *Company*, 1995.  
Photo by Carol Rosegg

Brandon Michael Hall, LaChanze, and Chuck Cooper in *Trouble in Mind*, 2021.  
Photo by Joan Marcus



we can speak to a producer who may not understand why it's important to have a Black wig person when you're dealing with natural hair. Or how to make a specific script change that may reference a Black person in a certain way and make the writer aware of why this is appropriate or inappropriate. And it's because we speak to them directly without shame or blame. We are educating and teaching. That's a part of our mission at BTU. We stand, like Wendell Pierce likes to say, in concert, not competition. And because of my personal advocacy, I need to be on the ground. I need to be sitting on boards and helping to move the needle forward. We can't sit by and wait for someone else to do it. It's time for me to pay it forward in a way that can have lasting change for the generations coming up and to model for them.

**Roundabout and BTU work with artists beyond Broadway. How is the inclusion work there important to the pipeline of change on Broadway?**

**TODD HAIMES** On Broadway the stakes are incredibly high financially, so to take a young playwright, BIPOC or otherwise, and plopping them there — even if it's a good play — is not doing them the best service. Some of the best work has been done not just at Roundabout, but all programs around the city and frankly, regional theatres around the country. As much as I love Broadway,

**WE'RE TRYING TO BUILD THE FUTURE OF BROADWAY SO THAT THESE NEW AUDIENCES THAT WE'RE CULTIVATING NOW FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG IN THE SPACE.**

LaChanze

in terms of the riskiest, most exciting things that are being done with young artists, a majority of them are being done Off-Broadway and Off-off-Broadway. That goes for stage managers and for other backstage people, too. There are only a certain number of Black backstage managers, because of the racism that's existed, who are experienced enough to helm a Broadway show without destroying themselves. The food chain ensures this will change. In 10 years, there will be many Black stage managers who have worked at Roundabout, at Atlantic, and Off-off-Broadway, who will be doing big musicals on Broadway.

**LACHANZE** I started my career at a dinner theatre while people were eating their steaks and salads. I started my career in the spaces that were not-for-profit, that were much smaller regionally. I also see that that is where hope is born. That's where inspiration is born in these young artists that are taking the risk. We know historically the percentage of success is not that great, so I feel that these artists taking the risks to tell their stories — to insist on authenticity to them and their experiences — are the foundation of where we can all go.

**Looking ahead, what are the biggest challenges Black artists and not-for-profits are facing right now?**

**LACHANZE** One of the most significant challenges for Black theatremakers is convincing the larger community that you know what you are. Sometimes when you work with people who you love that may not be Black on a play about the Black experience, you may be trying to convince a person who already has a vision or a sensitivity because they believe they have researched and they know other Black people. We spend a lot of time micromanaging just that element

of, no *this* is what it means to be a Black person in *this* space. My experience is not the same as someone else's experience. We're sort of lumped into one group of expectations about how we express ourselves. It's, "Here's what Black looks like," and oftentimes, it's one level of one community or one group of people and we're homogenized into that group when in actuality, there's an entire spectrum of what it feels like to be Black in a room. Personally, that's hugely offensive, but it happens quite often. It's an insensitivity that is born of ignorance that has been perpetuated because of racial biases. So the conflict and the struggle for us right now is to expand the understanding and awareness of what Black really is.

**TODD HAIMES** Our financial base has allowed us to take as many risks as we wanted to take based on having that audience and an amount of money to start with. But when I think about the challenges facing us in the macro-sense as an institution, subscription is a dying concept, and, unfortunately, COVID accelerated that process dramatically. In addition, it's become harder in general, post-COVID, to sell plays as opposed to commercial tourist musicals. We can all make suppositions about why that's the case, but it's definitely the case. And for altruistic and purely practical reasons, we are committed to developing a younger audience and audiences of color. But I think we haven't yet learned how to outreach to those communities. It's not like we're not trying, we just haven't succeeded yet. It's not just saying, "There's a Black person on stage, now automatically, the Black audience will come into these theatres that have traditionally been 'white theatres.'" It involves a much more sophisticated marketing and outreach program and I think we're only at the beginning of figuring it out. There are a lot of growing pains. ♦





Amy Sherman-Palladino on the set of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. Photo courtesy Amazon Studios

A TRIBUTE TO

# AMY SHERMAN-PALLADINO AND DANIEL PALLADINO

by LEIGH SILVERMAN



Daniel Palladino with Marin Hinkle on the set of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. Photo courtesy Amazon Studios

**have to be honest, I was not a *Gilmore Girls* watcher. I loved the idea of *Bunheads*, which brought Sutton Foster to television, but similarly, I never saw it before I met them. So, for those of you who might be like I was, uninitiated to the brilliant and be-hatted duo, here is my unofficial, incredibly selective, brief history of Amy Sherman-Palladino and Dan Palladino:**

They are both Los Angeles natives and grew up in and around dance classes, comedy clubs, and theatres. They met writing on *Roseanne*. Dan wrote on *Who's the Boss* and also wrote and produced on *Family Guy*. Amy also wrote on *Veronica's Closet*. In the late 90's they were like, "This is bullshit; we have more talent between us than anyone we've worked for," and they set out to create, produce, write, and direct their own shows. *Gilmore Girls* premiered in 2000 and ran for seven years (and has since been successfully rebooted), then *Bunheads*, then *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. In 2018, after season one of *Maisel*, Amy became the first woman in history to win in both the comedy writing and directing categories at the same Emmys. In my opinion, *Maisel's* first season redefined the streaming world.

Every show Amy and Dan have created has broken the mold for female characters on television. They conceive and produce stories that center quick-witted, quick-talking, lovable, ambitious women repeatedly making messes and intrepidly finding their way.

Amy says the mantra in the *Roseanne* writers' room was, "Make the big small. And the small big." It's a mantra she carries forward into everything she does. Also, she swears a fuck-ton.

Also, she loves a weird tangent. And Halloween. Amy

is never happier than while perched on her stoop, fully costumed, handing out thousands and thousands of pieces of candy.

Amy and Dan's dialogue is loquacious. Many actors talk about how exhausting it is to speak their rapid-

**THEIR DIRECTING STYLE IS FULL-BODIED, BESPOKE, AUDACIOUS, AND DEEPLY THEATRICAL.**

fire lines, over and over, without dropping a word. They get winded, they say, as if running a marathon. Amy and Dan write characters who are hyper-verbal, hyper-literate, hyped up on wordplay, alliteration and Judaism, and who are starving for food, attention, or both.

Their directing style is full-bodied, bespoke, audacious, and deeply theatrical. Many *Maisel* episodes feel like a Broadway musical. Their scenes are crammed with carefully chosen, always ravishing, scenery, props, and costumes. Their transitions are wittily scored, frequently before shooting begins. Actors are routinely





Daniel Palladino on the set of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.  
Photo courtesy Amazon Studios

**THEY UNDERSTAND HOW THE ALCHEMY OF PERFECT BANTER, A BEAUTIFUL DANCE, A BLAST OF SPECTACLE, AND A REALLY SURPRISING LAUGH CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING.**

found twirling or dancing and moving at breakneck, dare-to-keep-up pace. Amy and Dan work every second of every day, participating in every decision on every level on every project while still managing to provide their cast and crew with strong leadership, unparalleled rigor, and a true sense of play. They work in at least four time zones—simultaneously shooting, writing on future episodes, editing whatever they shot a month ago, and in pre-production on something for the future.

Post-*Bunheads* and pre-*Maisel*, Amy and Dan moved to Brooklyn. This was 2014. In addition to all they were doing in TV, they wanted to be part of the Broadway community. When I heard they were joining the producing team that was transferring *Violet* to the American Airlines Theatre, I figured they would be Hollywood-types and I wouldn't have much to do with them. But Amy and Dan wanted to come to rehearsal.

Now, I'm used to commercial producers stopping by, eating snacks, maybe waiting for a break to chat. On their first day in the room, Amy and Dan sat in the back with their laptops open, then left before talking to anyone. Honestly, it made me a touch nervous. I was sure they were taking notes, waiting to swoop in, wanting to direct, maybe even spying for Todd.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

Amy and Dan came back the next day, and the next. They definitely would eat snacks and hang out and talk, but mostly they just watched. Day after day they were there, quietly sitting in the back, smiling, hats on, laptops open, sometimes typing but mostly just watching. I was astonished to learn that after years in Hollywood, Amy and Dan were fending off disillusionment and simply wanted to be in a rehearsal room again. They loved theatre folk, they loved rehearsal, and wanted to experience, from the inside, how the show got made.

Amy and Dan became part of our company. Along with Roundabout and our other incredible producers, they celebrated our success and ensured we had a cast album, and they made sure we got a number on the Tonys. *Violet* had been conceived as a one-night concert for Encores, and it turned into my first Broadway musical, and my first Tony nomination. *Violet* happened, thanks in big part, to Amy and Dan's insistence that Sutton's jaw-dropping performance in that incredible show had to be seen. And that's who Amy and Dan are. They love the energy and immediacy of theatre, and they somehow manage to bottle it inside the television they make.

In Christmas of 2005, in a war zone in Ramadi, Iraq, a group of American soldiers were watching DVDs of *Gilmore Girls*. The light-hearted, female-centered show was their escape and joy from the daily violence they were ensconced in. They were genuine fans. And one of the soldiers, Luke, goes online to try and buy his buddies show merchandise for Christmas and was surprised he couldn't find anything for men. So, he writes an incredible fan letter to Amy, which miraculously reaches her, and at the end of the note he complains that he tried to buy something for his friends, but they only sold girl's shirts, and "What gives?" And a few weeks later five boxes arrive for Luke with show jackets from *Gilmore Girls*. And a personal letter from Amy. \*\*

Amy and Dan are the BEST kind of show people. They are passionate about entertainment. They understand how the alchemy of perfect banter, a beautiful dance,

**THEY LOVED THEATRE FOLK, THEY LOVED REHEARSAL, AND WANTED TO EXPERIENCE, FROM THE INSIDE, HOW THE SHOW GOT MADE.**

Sutton Foster and Colin Donnell in *Violet*, 2014.  
Photo by Joan Marcus



a blast of spectacle, and a really surprising laugh can change everything.

And speaking of food, please, please give Amy some fucking cheese. ♦

\*\*A beautiful, more detailed version of this story can be heard on This American Life. Thanks to Ira Glass for sharing this story in episode 606.





## SCOTT ELLIS

### A HOME FOR “THE TRAVELING DIRECTOR”

by KELLI O'HARA

*On the occasion of Roundabout Deputy Artistic Director Scott Ellis receiving tonight's Jason Robards Award, actress Kelli O'Hara—who worked with Ellis most recently on Roundabout's 2019 production of Kiss Me, Kate—recently sat down with the director to discuss his Roundabout career. These are excerpts of that conversation.*

# IN

this era when everyone in show business is the “busiest person in show business,” Scott Ellis may actually BE that person. *Take Me Out* actors Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Jesse Williams call him “The Traveling Director.” He’s like Harold

Hill stepping right off the train, popping open a briefcase, and getting to work. I’ll add in throwing on a baseball cap and hoodie and popping in a hard candy (no time for breakfast). If you want to read up on his every project, good luck. Even Google can’t keep up. No Wikipedia writer, IMDb-page author, theatre blogger, or internet troll could ever keep track of such a genre-jumping, jet-setting schedule.

It’s enviable, of course, but also elusive, which makes it enviable again. The sheer amount of his work from New York to Hollywood may be of interest to The Guinness Book people, but the fact that he does it all without any discernible self-promotion makes it even more so. That’s right. You won’t find him on social media. Indeed, he is just too busy! And did I mention he is also the doting father of teenage twins? He is THAT kind of busy.

It might be surprising, then, to know that he is unfailingly reachable to his friends and colleagues, ever dependable, and bedrock-loyal. In this business, we all promise to keep in touch when a show closes, but Scott actually keeps that promise. And if you want to find him, he’ll be right where he belongs, “behind a table, surrounded by great people,” often at Roundabout Theatre Company, where he has been fulfilling promises for over 30 years. He might be The Traveling Director, but Scott Ellis always finds his way home.

“If you work with Scott Ellis, there are 3 things that are guaranteed:

1. It will be a wildly collaborative experience.
2. It will be the most supportive rehearsal room you could ever imagine.
3. Debra Monk will always call at some point during the day.”

—Jesse Tyler Ferguson

**First of all, congratulations on the amazing Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre. It’s about time! How does it feel?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** Ha! Getting this makes me so uncomfortable. I just keep thinking, “But are we selling tickets? Selling tables? Is this even the right time to do this?” It’s just so uncomfortable. Even having this interview doesn’t feel right to me, so I’m glad to be talking to a friend. And it really means so much to me that Todd [Haimes] wants this for me. It really does. I might get a little emotional.

**You have directed most of these galas over the years. So who is directing this one?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** I have no idea. Seriously. I ask all sorts of questions while trying to seem like I’m not worried about it, not curious at all. I was just thinking the other day about what I might say at the event. The first thing that came to mind was, “Keep it short!” But really, I do want to talk about it being like a home to me. Roundabout. That so important to me.



**From the outside looking in, it doesn't seem like you have time to be the Deputy Artistic Director of Roundabout or any theatre company for that matter, so how is it possible?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** I always say this is the best experience one could ever have because it's all a win-win-win for me. I'm in this incredible organization. I get to choose and explore pieces that I want to do. I'm not only allowed but encouraged to go out and work in other places, in television and other theatres. So they have created a perfect environment for being an artist. I always have a place to come back to. A home really, not even knowing I was looking for one. But once I was here, I had this home, and, like any great home, it allowed me to go explore. They wanted me to open a door, explore the world, and then know I could come back to it.

Oh wait, my phone is ringing.

**Let me guess. Is it Deb Monk?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** Of course it's Deb Monk. We talk every single day. She says hi, Kelli.

**Hi, Deb.**

"If you are a friend of Scott Ellis' you inherently become a friend of Deb Monk as well."

—Jesse Tyler Ferguson

**Back to the interview. What began your relationship with Roundabout?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** I did a show with Susan Stroman and David Thompson called *Flora the Red Menace* by John Kander and Fred Ebb. It was the first show we had done together, and we loved John and Fred so much. So we put together a revue of their work called *...And The World Goes Round*. Todd Haimes happened to

see the show and asked me to come in for a meeting with him. I was just a young kid, and he offered me a job directing a play called *The Show-Off*. I would have taken anything with him, but at that exact time, we were going up to Canada to do *...And The World Goes Round* again. So I had to say no to a Broadway show! Kill me!

So when I returned, I came back to him with a new idea. I loved the idea of doing the musical *She Loves Me*, but Roundabout had never done a musical before. There was so much to learn, to take on, to *risk*. There were many many questions coming at me. Then one day during the process, the questions just stopped. It was only later that Todd admitted to having the realization that we were in so deep by that point, that if the show had NOT been a success, Roundabout would never do another musical. Ever. It just wouldn't be possible. Of course, I didn't know that going in. I was just like, "Let's do a show!" Thank God it was a success. That's how it all started.

Actually, I asked Todd to write the liner notes on the original *She Loves Me* album. It's a beautiful liner note because he talks about the experience of coming in, sitting there and watching the show...and...I'm getting emotional again.

We were both just so young, just starting. Roundabout had just moved uptown from the Criterion. So it was just beginning. *She Loves Me* was a huge success for them without knowing what they had gotten themselves into. But it led to so much.

**You have since directed so many amazing plays for Roundabout, but you came into the job from the world of musicals, directing and creating *...And the World***

**THEY [ROUNDAABOUT] WANTED ME TO OPEN A DOOR, EXPLORE THE WORLD, AND THEN KNOW I COULD COME BACK TO IT.**

**Goes Round and performing in many others, such as *The Rink* before that. Was it a hard sell in this business to promote yourself as a serious play director?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** Again, it goes back to Todd. And Roundabout, who never, ever batted an eyelash. It was like, "Oh, is that something you are interested in doing? All right, then we will give that a chance." That's it. I never sensed, throughout my time here, that I was judged if I wanted to try something new. BELIEVE ME, there were shows I did that were NOT successful, and there were some shows we explored that we both thought "Nah, I don't think so," but if there was something I was passionate about, and wanted to try, I could. I knew, after *She Loves Me*, that I wanted to be able to do plays as well. There was never any question or limitation.

**Do you think that opportunity and the safe home in which to do it led you away from acting and encouraged you to stay in the world of directing?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** Actually, it was back while I was doing *The Rink*. I had approached John [Kander] and Fred [Ebb] about doing *Flora*. It was a show that I knew, it dealt with communism, I grew up with the record, I thought it was very interesting, and it was the first show they ever wrote. I had to go to [agent] Sam Cohn and ask him for the rights—He was like, "And who are you?"—but I



Scott and Todd Haimes, 2022 Gala.  
Photo by Yumi Matsuo Studio

Scott, Will Chase and Kelli O'Hara, *Kiss Me*, *Kate* rehearsal, 2019.  
Photo by Jenny Anderson

Scott, Jamie Brewer, Debra Monk, and Mark Blum, *Amy and the Orphans* rehearsal, 2018.  
Photo by Jenny Anderson







**IF I'M SMART ENOUGH,  
I SURROUND MYSELF  
WITH REALLY GREAT  
COLLABORATORS, AND WE  
ALL HELP EACH OTHER.**

The cast of *Twelve Angry Men*, 2004.  
Photo by Joan Marcus

Gavin Creel and Jane Krakowski in *She Loves Me*, 2016.  
Photo by Joan Marcus

Scott with Todd Haimes and Helen Mirren, *A Month in the Country* opening night, 1995.  
Photo by Shevett Studio

Scott with Stephen Sondheim and Todd Haimes, 2005 Gala honoring Sondheim.  
Photo by Shevett Studio

got them. I remember one day at the Vineyard Theatre, sitting behind the tech table, and John coming up to me, tapping me on the shoulder and saying, "You know, you're very good at this." I remember thinking, "I'm comfortable here." I felt very at home, and at that moment I thought, "Wow, maybe I could do this. I could direct." And at that same time, I had been cast in the only non-singing role in *Mack and Mabel* at the Paper Mill Playhouse. I remember being in that show, having finished *Flora the Red Menace*, and walking around thinking, "I'm done. I'm not doing this anymore. I'm going to direct now."

**And of all the shows you directed for Roundabout, which would you say changed you, scared you, taught you the most?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** I think they all teach you something, whether or not they are successful. But I guess if I could pick one, it would be [2004's] *Twelve Angry Men*, and it was because it hadn't been done on Broadway. I knew it had been done in London so I got the script but

realized it couldn't be right. It wasn't good. So I went to the estate and was able to get the *original* script, because it had not been published. So then once I had it, the fear set in. I thought, "How do you do a play when everyone is just sitting around a table?" I thought, "I have to commit to doing this around a table and figure out how to make it work."

There were constant challenges throughout the whole thing...the most joyous, but the most challenging. By the end, things were staged SO specifically that it appeared that nothing was going on, but that was the point, huge amounts of work and specificity to get to what looked most natural and minimal. We sat at the table for a long time, and I told the actors to decide for themselves when to start moving, to start getting up. They made their choices when ready, and then we were off and running. It was probably the most "staged" piece I have ever done. Some folks asked "Well, what did you even *do*?" and I guess that was the point. It was incredibly rewarding.

**Let me change course. Can we discuss Roundabout's Refocus Project [launched in 2021 to shine a light on plays, playwrights, and communities left behind by history]? As a leader, how do you think you can be of service to that movement?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** Having been in this home for such a long time, the most important thing is the understanding and the embracing of new generations, new ways of looking at plays, and discovering plays that should have been looked at before. As artists, we have to take responsibility for that. It's probably the most important thing that we, and the theatre, can do. Everything that is happening in the institution right now, this theatre, like Refocus, is what will continue to breathe new life into it. Roundabout used to be only about revivals, but that has changed and continues to change, for instance, through the Black Box Theatre introducing new writers, commissioning new pieces, hearing new voices.

My ability to work in many genres, to have wings, and constantly bring other experiences back home, is part of that as well, part of Todd's vision. Roundabout can offer what I have found to other people, to tell their stories, in this home, where the door remains open.

**Lastly, Scott, why are you a storyteller?**

**SCOTT ELLIS** Listen, we have talked about this. The insecurities are massive (big sigh), but for me, I remember sitting behind that table way back at *Flora*, realizing the experience was so different in that moment because, as much as I wanted to tell the story, I knew I couldn't tell the story alone. Or I didn't want to. But I could *help* tell the story. I knew how to *help*. The discovery of that type of collaboration with other artists to help tell the story was the *thing*. Like home. If I'm smart enough, I surround myself with really great collaborators, and we all help each other. If I'm good at it at all (chuckles and turns red), I'm good at it because I'm in a room with great people. ♦



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American is proud to be the official airline of  
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*Congratulations to this year's honorees!*



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Thanks for putting art in the heart  
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Bank of America recognizes Roundabout Theatre Company for its success in bringing the arts to performers and audiences throughout the community. We commend you on creating an opportunity for all to enjoy and share a cultural experience and join you in celebrating the contributions of Scott Ellis and all of this year's honorees to the arts.

Visit us at [bankofamerica.com/arts](https://bankofamerica.com/arts).

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Congratulations to Todd Haimes,  
Sydney Beers, Chris Nave and everyone  
at Roundabout Theatre Company who  
make all the incredible work happen  
behind the scenes, in the community,  
and in the theatres.

Bravo!

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Congratulations to Scott Ellis,  
Amy Sherman-Palladino and  
Daniel Palladino, and Black Theatre United  
on your well-deserved honors tonight!

We also wish sincerely to thank  
Todd Haimes, Sydney Beers, Chris Nave  
and the entire hardworking Roundabout staff,  
my fellow board members—especially Gala  
Chairs Samantha Rudin Earls and David Earls  
and Johs and Regis Worsoe—as well as  
the constellation of artists that, all together,  
comprise the Roundabout family.  
Here's to yet another season producing  
some of the best theatre in the world.  
We look forward to many more!

**ROXANNE** and **SCOTT BOK**

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Congratulations to the  
ever talented Scott Ellis

This is such a well deserved award!!  
It is an honor and a pleasure  
to know you!!

My very best wishes always

**MARY CIRILLO-GOLDBERG**

We congratulate Scott Ellis,  
Amy Sherman-Palladino and  
Daniel Palladino, and  
Black Theatre United for their  
well-deserved honors.

We are thrilled to be a part of  
Roundabout Theatre Company  
and applaud the entire team for their  
work on and off the stage.

**COLLEEN** and **JOHN COOK**

OUR ENTHUSIASTIC AND HEARTFELT  
**CONGRATULATIONS**

SCOTT, AMY AND DANIEL, BTU,  
AND ROUNDABOUT.

WITH ADMIRATION AND AFFECTION,  
MICHAEL, LAUREN,  
AND THE ENTIRE DODGER FAMILY



Congratulations to Roundabout Theatre Company on a fantastic season. I am honored to be a part of the extraordinary and dedicated Board of Directors and the talented and energetic team at Roundabout, powerfully led by Todd, Sydney, and Chris. I look forward to being a part Roundabout's future as it continues to grow and thrive.

**SYLVIA GOLDEN**



We Proudly Support  
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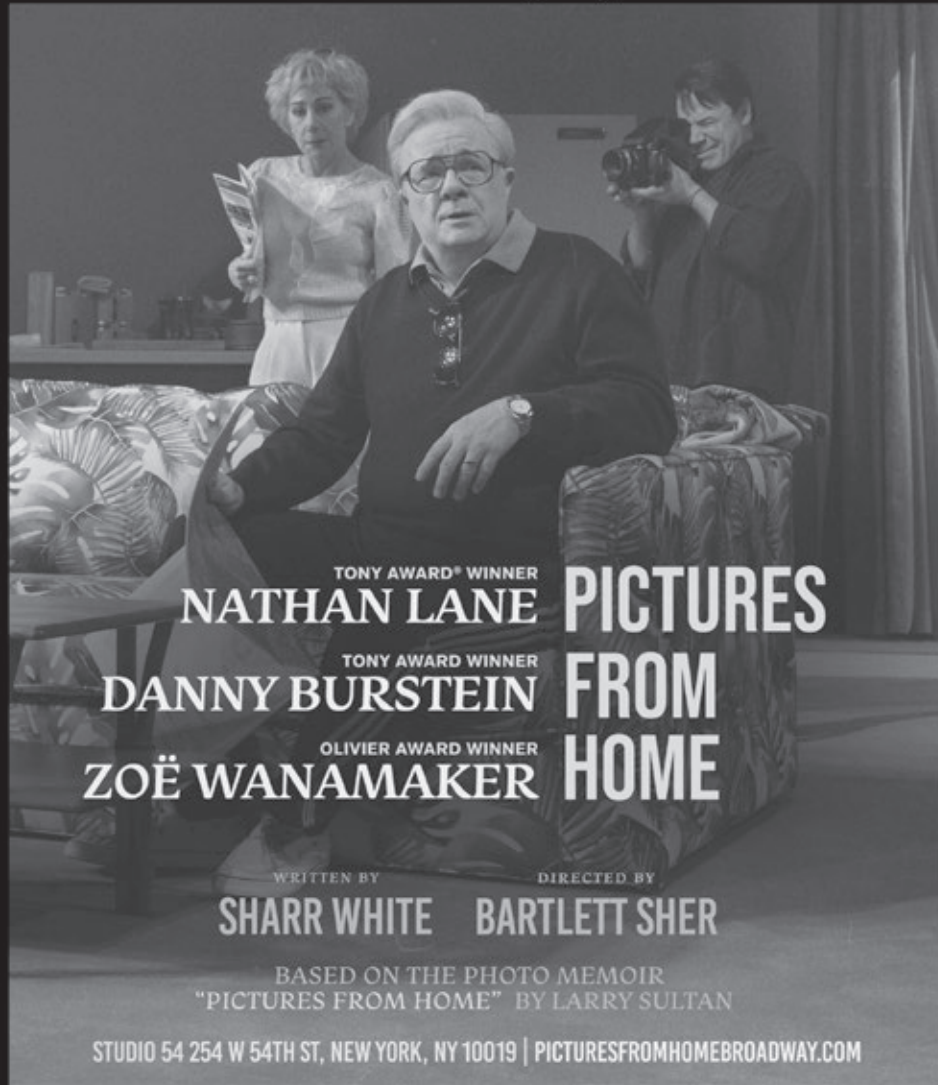
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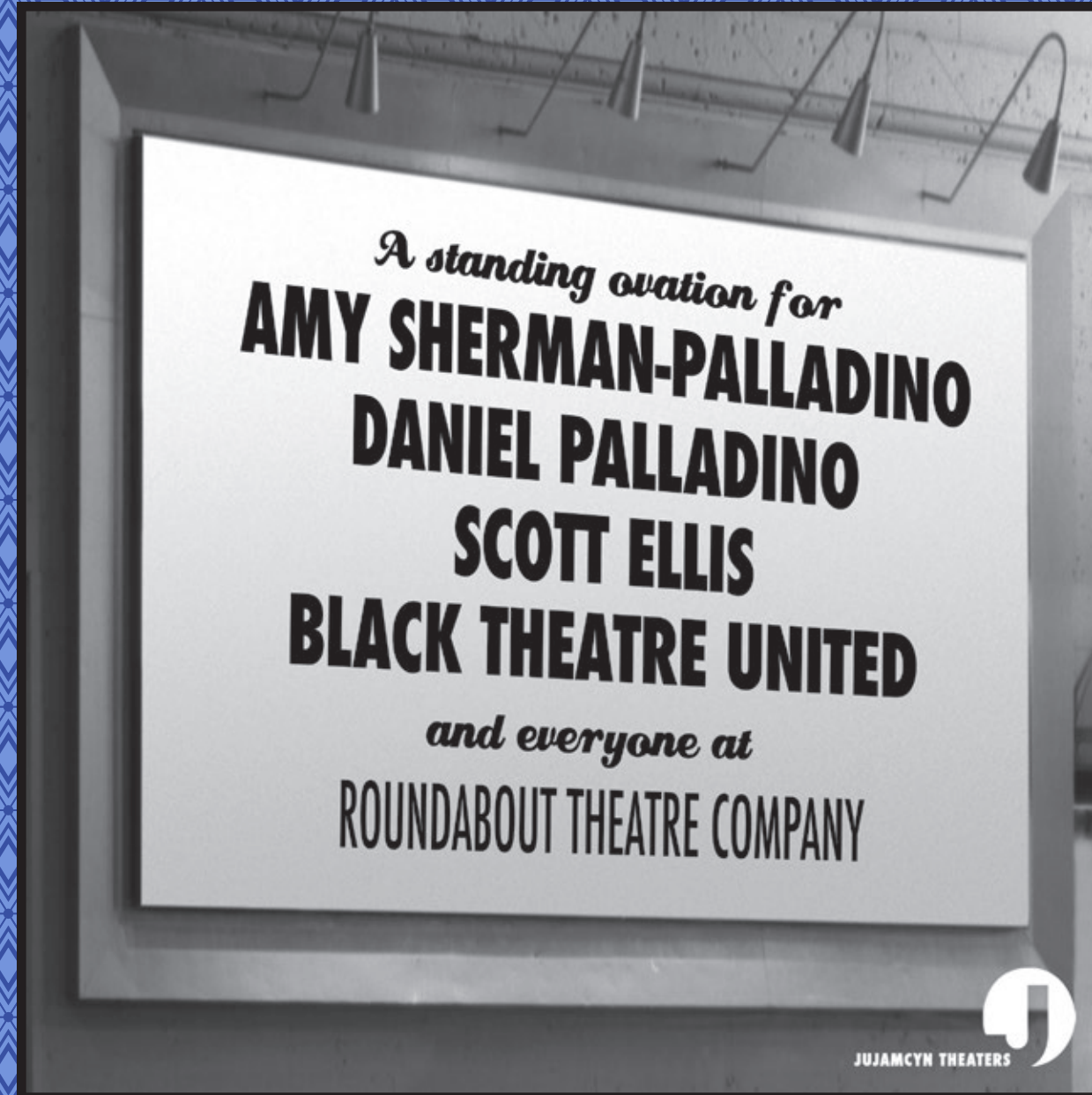
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Thank you, Todd, Sydney, Chris, and the entire company for all of your dedication and hard work on a fantastic season. Congratulations to tonight's honorees: Scott Ellis, Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino, and Black Theatre United.

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Congratulations to our dear friend  
Scott Ellis, and honorees  
Amy Sherman-Palladino and  
Daniel Palladino, and  
Black Theatre United on their deserving  
recognitions tonight! And congratulations  
to Roundabout on a successful season.

We are very proud to be sponsoring  
tonight's spectacular performance  
by Sutton Foster.

**DR. TAYLOR W LAWRENCE** and  
**DR. RYAN P SHELHAMER**

Congratulations to tonight's award recipients:  
Scott Ellis, Amy Sherman-Palladino and  
Daniel Palladino, and Black Theatre United.  
I am thrilled to be a member of Roundabout's  
Board of Directors and help pay tribute to all  
of the incredible work you do for the theatre.

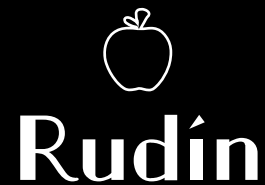
I would like to thank Todd Haimes, Sydney Beers,  
Chris Nave, and the entire team at Roundabout  
Theatre Company both onstage and behind-  
the-scenes. Thank you for all of your hard work  
producing another fabulous season and  
educating minds through theatre.

**GINGER McKNIGHT-CHAVERS**



Congratulations  
Amy Sherman-Palladino  
Daniel Palladino  
Scott Ellis  
Black Theatre United  
&  
Sutton Foster

•  
Thank you to  
Roundabout Theatre Company  
for its commitment to  
theatre and artists alike



On behalf of **stage directors** and **choreographers**,  
we congratulate all of tonight's honorees, including

**SDC Member Scott Ellis**

on receiving the Jason Robards Award  
for Excellence in Theatre

**Black Theatre United**

and **Amy Sherman-Palladino** and **Daniel Palladino**



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Congratulations to Scott Ellis,  
this year's recipient of the Jason Robards  
Award for Excellence in Theatre  
and dear friend to me and Roundabout.  
Thank you for your extraordinary talent,  
vision & humor and for your countless  
contributions to the theatre.  
I applaud Amy Sherman-Palladino  
and Daniel Palladino, and  
Black Theatre United on your  
well-deserved recognitions.

**MARY SOLOMON**

We congratulate tonight's honorees,  
our dear friend Tom Tuft, and all of you  
who work so hard on behalf of  
this special theatre company.

**FERN** and **LENARD TESSLER**



Congratulations to the entire Roundabout Theatre team for creating programming to broaden the talent, voices and audiences for American theatre, and for far-reaching education programming in New York City schools at a time when arts education is critical. Special thanks to Todd Haimes, as well as board leader Kitty Patterson Kempner, for their vision and hard work. And thank you to our honorees: Scott Ellis, Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino, and Black Theatre United for your incredible impact on the theatre.

**JENNIFER** and **OWEN THOMAS**

Fran and Paul Turner are thrilled to be part of Roundabout and honored to be Vice Chairs of the event.

**FRAN** and **PAUL TURNER**

We congratulate tonight's honorees and dear friends to Roundabout: the extraordinary Scott Ellis for his remarkable contributions and dedication to the theatre; Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino for their commitment and support of NYC arts and culture; and Black Theatre United for their work to create a more just and inclusive theatre industry.

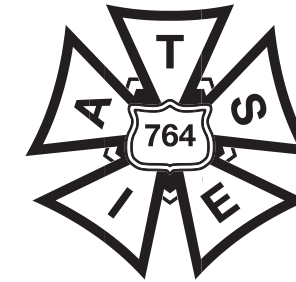
We applaud Todd and the Roundabout family for their leadership and visionary commitment to producing powerful, inclusive and boundary-pushing theatre, and building transformational education experiences that pave the way for the future.

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**Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino**

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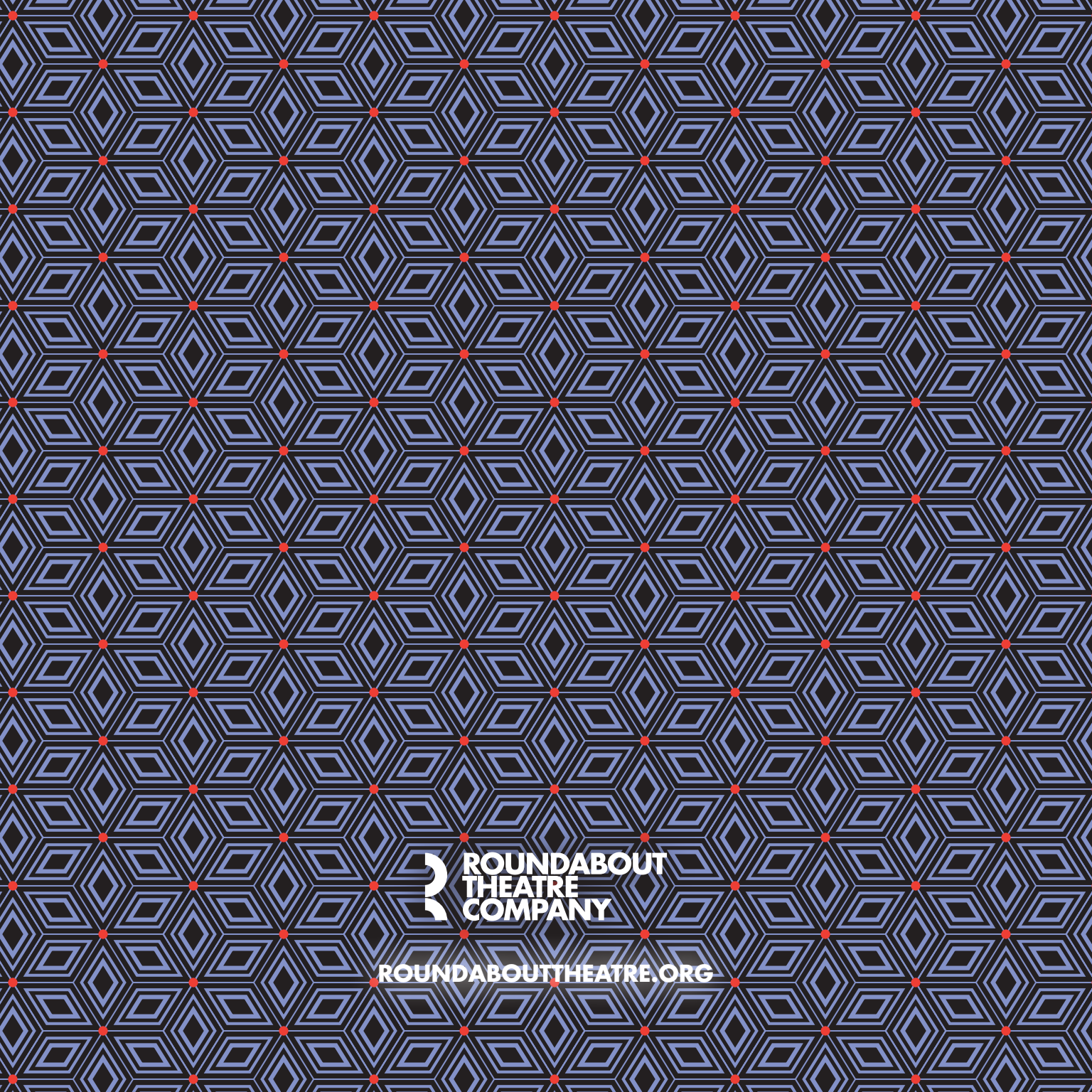
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