



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS CONTACT:

Debbie Bisno, dbisno@mccarter.org

MCCARTER THEATRE CENTER ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL PLAY FESTIVAL

UNIQUE DIGITAL PARTNERSHIP WITH ROUND HOUSE THEATRE FEATURES 4-WEEK FESTIVAL
HONORING LIVING LEGEND, EXPERIMENTALIST — PLAYWRIGHT **ADRIENNE KENNEDY**

Princeton, NJ. (Sept. 29, 2020) – **Round House Theatre** in association with **McCarter Theatre Center** will present *The Work of Adrienne Kennedy: Inspiration & Influence* (Nov. 14 – Dec. 12, 2020), a four-week festival celebrating the award-winning experimentalist and celebrated playwright. **TICKETS ON SALE OCTOBER 9th, 2020.** More Info: mccarter.org/adriennekennedy. Approved images found [here](#). (NOTE: the playwright has explicitly not given permission to use any images of her other than those approved in this link.)

Hailed as “American theatre’s greatest and least compromising experimentalist” (*New York Times*), **Adrienne Kennedy** is one of the most prolific and widely studied—but rarely produced—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.**

Four of Kennedy’s plays will be offered virtually with a new play released each week and available to view for a limited time: *He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box*, *Sleep Deprivation Chamber*, *Ohio State Murders*, and the world premiere of *Etta and Ella on the Upper West Side*. The festival will also feature a series of dynamic online discussions about Kennedy’s lasting influence, and contemporary artists who were inspired by her—allowing audiences everywhere to engage with the artistry of one of American theatre’s most widely studied, yet rarely produced playwrights.

“In this moment of ‘in between’, McCarter joins its peers in exploring innovative ways to share stories and engage with audiences. We are eager to boldly experiment with form and content and to discover alternative methods of producing. We are opening the door to new partnerships, and the chance to reach wider audiences through this experimentation,” says Artistic Director **Sarah Rasmussen**. *“The work of Adrienne Kennedy—an African American woman, a bold playwright, an artist ahead of her time in experimenting (with both form and content), and a woman who broke convention in the face of traditional barriers that prevented a much-deserved spotlight—resonates powerfully with this moment.”*

“Adrienne Kennedy’s plays are beautiful, poetic conversations on race and power that are just as necessary now as they were fifty years ago. They deserve to be widely produced in person as soon as they can, but we’re excited to showcase exactly why that is with an online festival that anyone in the world can experience.” – **Ryan Rilette**, Artistic Director, Round House Theatre

The Festival of Plays:

***He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box* By Adrienne Kennedy - NOVEMBER 14, 2020**

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, and of Kay’s brutalized Black mother whose death remains a mystery. Written in 2018, Kennedy’s newest work is a brief but expansive memory play that conjures “dread, romance and a tragic surrealism all at once” (*NYT*).

***Sleep Deprivation Chamber* By Adam P. Kennedy and Adrienne Kennedy - NOVEMBER 21, 2020**

Teddy is a young Black college student studying theatre, but his senior year becomes a waking nightmare when an officer accuses him of assault. Written by 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 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 - DECEMBER 5, 2020**

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 and murder, but also the violence of segregation, ostracization, and misogyny.

***Etta and Ella on the Upper West Side* By Adrienne Kennedy - DECEMBER 12, 2020 | World Premiere**

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. Kennedy intricately blends monologue, dialogue, voiceover, and prose to create an

