



Theatrical Outfit To Launch **DOWNTOWN DIALOGUES THIS FALL** In Updated 2020 – 2021 Season Plan

- Live Shows Returning In Streamlined Spring Season, With Focus On Artist And Patron Safety
- Launch Of “Made In Atlanta” New Work Program That Develops Plays About Atlanta And The South
 - Return Of “Unexpected Play Festival” That Showcases New Plays
 - Launch Of New Community Initiatives, Including “The Welcome Table”

ATLANTA (September 2020) – Back on March 9, 2020, then incoming Artistic Director Matt Torney gathered some of Theatrical Outfit’s (TO) biggest supporters to reveal the plan for the 2020 - 2021 Season. The season was to bring together three key pillars: exciting mainstage productions, a new work program designed to develop plays by Atlantan playwrights, and a series of new community engagement initiatives. Sadly, after we realized the scale of COVID-19 and the impact that the virus would have on theatres across the country, we had to suspend live programming last March, and adjust our plans for the upcoming season to keep our staff, audiences and artists safe.

Throughout these past five months, TO has been at work to redefine what the 2020 – 2021 Season will look like, but through it all, one thing has remained – TO’s commitment to starting the conversations that matter. Artistic Director Matt Torney says, “We believe that theatre offers an essential place for dialogue in times of extreme disruption, and a space in which our community can celebrate, console, and most importantly, connect with one another. TO is committed to building programs that not only respond actively to the present crisis, but also serve as a long-term investment in our community, Atlanta artists, and our future as a Downtown theatre.”

It is with that mission in mind that TO is excited to announce a brand-new lineup that embraces digital programming and includes: Downtown Dialogues, Made In Atlanta, The Welcome Table, The Unexpected Play Festival, and a return to the Mainstage this coming Spring 2021.

Launching at the end of September, TO is excited to announce **Downtown Dialogues** – a four-part series of digital readings each followed by a live video podcast hosted by arts journalist Gail O’Neill. Gail will talk to experts and special guests about the play and its themes, incorporating responses to questions from the audience. The four titles take a deep dive into important topics of today from equality to education to the environment, and all will be brought to life by Atlanta’s finest actors and directors for you to engage with from the comfort of your own home.

First will be the Tony Award nominated ***The Children*** by Lucy Kirkwood. Directed by Susan Booth, it is a taut environmental thriller about legacy, responsibility, and how to step up in the midst of a crisis. Next up we have ***FLEX*** by Candrice Jones. Directed by Tinashe Kajese-Bolden and developed at the Humana 2020 Festival of New American Plays, this groundbreaking new work takes a hard look at the lives of an African American girls’ basketball team on and off the court. Third will see the critically acclaimed ***Eureka Day*** by Jonathan Spector make its Atlanta debut. Directed by January LaVoy, this immensely funny play explores how a parent governed charter school tries to respond to a health crisis. Rounding out the series is the New York hit ***Stew*** by Zora Howard. Directed by Ibi Owolabi, this family drama is set in the kitchen where Mama makes her famous stew and looks at three generations of African American women and the bonds and secrets that they share.

Torney says, “We asked ourselves - what are the plays that speak directly to this moment, that start unique conversations? How do we use digital technology to find new ways to connect, and bring great plays right into people’s living rooms? We have a great mix of plays that were big hits in New York and London, to brand new voices being heard in Atlanta for the first time.”

As we approach the holiday season, Theatrical Outfit is honored to host a special one-night event to benefit organizations that serve the downtown homeless community. **The Welcome Table** will raise awareness of the most vulnerable among us, shining a light on how the homeless community has been impacted by COVID while raising funds to support the wonderful organizations working to mitigate that impact. Stay tuned for more details.

As announced back in March, TO will be launching the **Made In Atlanta** new play program, but now we are taking advantage of the disruption to our mainstage season to devote more time and resources to developing new work. Torney says, “What better way to spend this time than focusing on the future, investing in great plays about Atlanta and helping to develop ideas and writers. Our hope is that we will find amazing plays to premiere in future seasons that will make a big impact both here in Atlanta and around the country.”

Made in Atlanta is a place-based program that aims to create a space in the heart of downtown Atlanta where artists can tell the stories of our City and the South. It will include three stages: commissioning brand new plays, developing scripts through workshops and readings, and most importantly, producing world premiere productions. Through these avenues, Theatrical Outfit is investing in powerful new voices and building national partnerships that will enrich the theatre and our community. TO is excited to announce its first weeklong workshop – **We The Village** by Dana Stringer. This rich new drama takes a look into the world of Atlanta in the 1990s and how two unlikely souls can form a friendship that stands the test of time. Stringer’s piece was presented as part of the 2020 Unexpected Play Festival and immediately caught the attention of Artistic Director Matt Torney - “It was a story that I had never heard before, was deeply rooted in Atlanta, with amazing characters and brilliant writing. I immediately knew that Dana was a playwright to watch, and when we decided to launch Made in Atlanta, she was one of my first phone calls.”

Later in 2020 we will announce our first round of **Commissions** and additional script development workshops. We will also expand on the Fall’s **Downtown Dialogues** podcast series to produce special episodes that will take you behind the scenes of the play development process and introduce you to some of the exciting artists who will be working with us this year.

In January, TO is excited to once again partner with the Working Title Playwrights (WTP) for the **Unexpected Play Festival**. This month-long festival celebrates brand new work by local playwrights, all being heard for the first time. Each digital reading will be immediately followed by a discussion led by WTP Artistic Director Amber Bradshaw in which the audience will offer essential feedback that will help the playwright take the work to the next level. At TO, January will bring a new year, new work, and brand-new conversations that matter.

Then in Spring 2021, we plan to return to the mainstage with three smart, authentic, and vital live productions. As previously announced, **Tiny Beautiful Things**, based on the book by Cheryl Strayed & adapted for the stage by Nia Vardalos, will take to the stage rearranging TO in a bold new way. The season will also see a powerful partnership with Theatre J in Washington DC on a co-production of **Fires In The Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities** by Anna Deavere Smith. A third title will be announced shortly.

Torney says, “We had two requirements for our return to live performances - the plays had to be excellent, and the productions had to be safe for both the artists and the audiences. We are reworking every aspect of how we produce to factor in the latest safety guidelines and will be re-evaluating constantly as we get new information. With flexible ticketing, filmed performances, and a highly trained front of house staff, we are confident that we can offer excellent theatre that embraces the challenges of COVID-19 and offers both flexibility and security to our patrons.”

Theatrical Outfit is excited to welcome you all back ... digitally at first, then in person when it is safe ... for another year of smart, authentic, and vital storytelling that starts the conversations that matter.

Downtown Dialogues

The Children

by Lucy Kirkwood

Directed by Susan Booth

September 24, 2020

"... A richly suggestive and beautifully written piece of work...Kirkwood is the most rewarding dramatist of her generation."
—*The Independent (London)*

In their remote cottage on the British coast, a long-married pair of retired nuclear physicists live a modest life in the aftermath of a natural disaster, giving scrupulous care to energy rationing, their garden, and their yoga practice. When former colleague Rose reappears after 38 years, her presence upends the couple's equilibrium and trust. As the fallout from long-ago decisions comes hurtling into view, Rose unveils a proposal that threatens more than their marriage. A hit in London and New York, Lucy Kirkwood's latest is a taut thriller about responsibility and reparation—and what one generation owes to the next.

FLEX

by Candrice Jones

Directed by Tinashe Kajese-Bolden

October 8, 2020

PART OF THE HUMANA 2020 FESTIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN PLAYS

A powerful new play about swagger, determination and sticking together. It's 1997 and the WNBA is changing the game. Every player on Plainnole's Lady Train basketball team now dreams of going pro — but first, they'll have to navigate the pressures of being young, black and female in rural Arkansas. Candice Jones's adrenaline packed play about a high school basketball team explores the fierce strength of young black women in the South and what it means to be part of a team.

Eureka Day

by Jonathan Spector

Directed by January LaVoy

October 22, 2020

"One of the funniest plays to open this year" — The New York Times

At Eureka Day Charter School in Berkeley, all decisions are made by consensus and diversity of opinion is valued. But when a mumps outbreak hits the school, the board of parent-directors find themselves confronting one of the central questions of our time: how do you find consensus when you can't agree on the facts? This achingly hilarious comedy of manners shows just how thorny conversations about vaccination can get.

Stew

by Zora Howard

Directed by Ibi Owolabi

November 12, 2020

"A captivating story that's intimate, funny, and heartbreaking in equal measure"— The New Yorker

In Zora Howard's STEW, Mama is up early to prepare an important meal and, even with her family on hand to help, time is running short. In between cutting celery, garlic, and red peppers, tense secrets are revealed among the three generations of black women. This beautiful and powerful play celebrates the joys and complexities of family life and how to balance old grievances and new revelations with making sure dinner is ready on time.

Made In Atlanta

Made in Atlanta is a place-based program that aims to create a space in the heart of downtown Atlanta where artists can tell the stories of our City and the South. It will include three stages: commissioning brand new plays, developing scripts through workshops and readings, and most importantly, producing world premiere productions. Through these avenues, Theatrical Outfit is investing in powerful new voices and building national partnerships that will enrich the theatre and our community.

We The Village
by Dana Stringer

Week-Long Workshop Coming In Fall 2020

In late 90s Atlanta, a popular drag queen named Frankie and his twelve-year-old, latchkey neighbor, Redd, form a special bond. When Redd's mother becomes suspicious of their relationship, accusations and threats are made, provoking Frankie to abruptly end the friendship and move away. Twenty years later, Redd finds Frankie again and their reunion proves to be something they both need. A popular part of TO's 2020 Unexpected Play Festival, Dana Stringer's heartfelt play takes an earnest and funny look at unconditional love and acceptance.

2 BRAND NEW COMMISSIONS, and further development workshops to be announced later this Fall!

The Welcome Table

Theatrical Outfit is honored to host a special one-night event to benefit organizations that serve the downtown homeless community. **The Welcome Table** will raise awareness of the most vulnerable among us, shining a light on how the homeless community has been impacted by COVID while raising funds to support the wonderful organizations working to mitigate that impact. Stay tuned for more details.

Unexpected Play Festival

In January, TO is excited to once again partner with Working Title Playwrights for the **Unexpected Play Festival**. This month-long festival celebrates brand new work by local playwrights, all being heard for the first time. Each digital reading will be immediately followed by a discussion led by WTP Artistic Director Amber Bradshaw in which the audience will offer essential feedback that will help the playwright take the work to the next level. At TO, January will bring a new year, new work, and brand-new conversations that matter.

Mainstage Season

Tiny Beautiful Things

Based on the book by Cheryl Strayed • Adapted for the stage by Nia Vardalos

Directed by Amber McGinnis

Coming In Spring 2021

ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCED PLAYS IN THE U.S. IN 2019

"A Show That Aims To Open Our Eyes To The Tiny Moments When The World Surprises Us With Care" - New York Magazine

Based on the New York Times bestselling book by Cheryl Strayed (author of *Wild*) and adapted by Academy Award nominee Nia Vardalos (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*), *Tiny Beautiful Things* explores Strayed's time as the anonymous, unpaid, advice columnist Dear Sugar. While navigating her readers' questions and pleas for advice, Strayed weaves together her own personal experiences to create a column full of light, laughter, and humanity. *Tiny Beautiful Things* is "A Theatrical Hug In Turbulent Times" (*Variety*).

Fires In The Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities

by Anna Deavere Smith

A Co-Production with Theater J in Washington DC

Co-Directed by Adam Immerwahr and January LaVoy

Coming In Spring 2021

"Quite Simply, The Most Compelling View Of Racial & Class Conflict That One Could Hope To Encounter" – The New York Times

Theatrical Outfit and Theater J join forces to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Crown Heights riot by bringing Anna Deavere Smith's (Shonda Rhimes' *For The People*) documentary theatre masterpiece to life with soaring theatricality. Taken directly from a series of interviews with over fifty members of the Jewish and Black communities following the historic riots, *Fires In The Mirror* turns their voices into a tour de force one-woman show starring January LaVoy. This groundbreaking play is "Viscerally Smart [And] Endlessly Empathetic" (*The New Yorker*).

Plus one more smart, authentic, and vital play to be announced soon.