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FOR REVIEW ONLY

Horizon Theatre Company presents *Rooted*, playing Aug. 25 – Sept. 24, press opening Sept. 1

Comedy about connection set in a treehouse at Horizon's Inman Park stage

"Genuinely satisfying... a pleasant trip from humor to understanding" – Cincinnati CityBeat

ATLANTA (August 21, 2023) – Horizon Theatre closes out the summer with the regional premiere of *Rooted*, an offbeat comedy about two sisters who accidentally start a cult. The play will run from **Aug. 25 – Sept. 24**, with its **press opening taking place on Sept. 1**. Plant researcher and YouTuber Emery Harris lives alone in a house in a tree named Mabel, surrounded by plants and supported by her overbearing sister Hazel. But when strangers begin gathering beneath Mabel, chanting and singing, Emery learns she's been unwittingly elected as her internet followers' botanical, new-age messiah. **This warm-hearted comedy digs into the power of plants and the intriguing, often hilarious idiosyncrasies of people.**

"Rooted is funny and entertaining, but also incredibly profound and smart," said Horizon Theatre Co-Artistic/Producing Director Lisa Adler. "We have two of Atlanta's favorite actors in the leading roles, onstage together at Horizon for the first time since our hit *The Waffle Palace*. **The wonderful playwright Deborah Zoe Laufer is a master of quirky, relatable stories about families and friendship.** Audiences always love how we transform our theatre, and this time they will be treated to an onstage treehouse. They'll leave *Rooted* feeling satisfied and hopeful about the future and the possibility for true connection with fellow humans and the natural world."

Playwright Deborah Zoe Laufer creates a funny and poignant play for our times, exploring **"the yearning for meaning and belief, the struggle to be truly present, the power of female friendship and what happens when you slow down and allow there to be quiet and connection in the midst of a chaotic world."** As Laufer says, "The story embodies feelings around isolation that are particularly resonant today. The play is very alive with the longing for connection, the fear of connection and what it takes to truly make that connection." This is the third play Horizon has produced by Laufer. Her family comedy *End Days* remains one of Horizon's most popular past plays, and the *NY Times* Critics Pick *Informed Consent* came to the Inman Park theatre following the show's Off-Broadway run.

Rooted is the second part of a nature-focused trilogy set in the area where Laufer was raised. The play was commissioned and first produced by Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and was recently produced at Boston's Lyric Stage Company. The first trilogy play, *Be Here Now*, also commissioned and produced by Cincinnati Playhouse, was produced locally at Aurora Theatre in Lawrenceville. **Laufer's plays have been produced at hundreds of other theatres around the world**, including Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Cleveland Playhouse, Geva, The Humana Festival, Everyman, Primary Stages and Ensemble Studio Theatre.

Eccentric amateur botanist **Emery (Maria Rodriguez-Sager***; Horizon's *The Waffle Palace*, *Project Dawn*, *Grand Concourse*; Theatrical Outfit's *Tiny Beautiful Things*) stays rooted in her treehouse, where she has lived happily for over a decade, more comfortable with plants than people. Passionate about her plants and her YouTube channel, she documents her research for her several thousand followers. Her energetic, fast-talking older sister **Hazel (Mary Lynn Owen***; **two-time Suzi Award winner**;

Horizon's *The Waffle Palace, Third, The Clean House*; Alliance Theatre's *Knead*) has long been caregiver to her younger sister, who has a physical disability and uses a walker. However, unlike Emery, Hazel dreams of escaping small town life and her waitress job at the local diner and moving on to new adventures. Emery's quiet world is disrupted when her internet fans begin camping out and chanting to her in the pasture below her treehouse. As the crowd grows larger beneath Mabel, they clamor to see their leader and ask her to show herself and heal them, even donating money to show their loyalty. This lights Hazel on fire as she imagines the new opportunities this might bring their way. One follower, **Luanne** (newcomer **Jadé Davis**, BFA Theatre Boston U), is trampled by the crowds and granted entry to the treehouse, where Luanne and Emery discover they are kindred spirits. Ultimately, the sisters have to decide between staying rooted together or spreading their leaves and growing in new directions.

The production's creative team is led by veteran **director Justin Anderson, who has guided some of Horizon's most popular recent plays** including *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. Tasked with creating the play's treehouse escape are Horizon's award-winning **resident scenic designers of more than a decade, Isabel & Moriah Curley-Clay; Costume Designer April Carswell** (Actor's Express' *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*) and **Lighting Designer David Reingold** (Horizon's *Support Group for Men*), with **props designed by Ashley Foreman** (Actor's Express' *Hometown Boy*). The sound design came from **Sound Designer Bailey Gafeney** (Horizon's *Designing Women*) who adapted the sound and original music created by **Composer and Designer Dewey Dellay and Sound Designer Andrew Duncan Will** from the recent Lyric Stage Company production of *Rooted* in Boston.

Performances begin Aug. 25, running through Sept. 24. The show's press opening is Sept. 1. Performances are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 5 p.m. There is no Saturday matinee on August 26. Tickets start at \$30 on weekdays and \$35 on weekends (plus sales taxes and fee). Prices are subject to change and prices rise as performances fill up, so patrons are encouraged to order early for the best prices and availability. Students under 25 can purchase \$20 tickets with valid student ID by calling the box office. Single ticket seating is general admission, with a reserved seating section for season subscribers. **For ticket sales and more information on single tickets and subscriptions, visit horizontheatre.com or call the Box Office at 404.584.7450.**

For full actor and creative team bios visit horizontheatre.com/rooted.

PR photos can be viewed and downloaded at <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjARrGz>.

CREATIVE TEAM

Playwright	Deborah Zoe Laufer
Director	Justin Anderson
Horizon Co-Artistic/Producing Director	Lisa Adler
Stage Manager	Brittany K. Giles-Jones*
Set Designers	Isabel Curley-Clay & Moriah Curley-Clay
Lighting Designer	David Reingold
Costume Designer	April Carswell
Sound Designer	Bailey Gafeney from original designs by Dewey Dellay and Andrew Duncan Will
Props Designer	Ashley Foreman
Technical Director	Jeff Adler
Associate Technical Director	Daniel Friday

CAST

Emery
Hazel
Luanne

Maria Rodriguez-Sager*
Mary Lynn Owen*
Jadé Davis

* Members of the Actors' Equity Association

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***Horizon Theatre Company** connects people, inspires hope, and promotes positive change through the stories of our times for our diverse audiences. Now in our 39th season, we produce professional area and world premieres of smart, funny, and provocative contemporary plays. We also develop the next generation of diverse artists and audiences for theatre.*

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