

January 23, 2009

SEASON 2009

Subscription Season

Is He Dead?

February 11 – March 8

King of the Jews

March 11 – April 12

Call of the Wild

April 8 – May 3

The Glass Menagerie

May 29 – July 5

The Millionairess

June 17 – July 12

Waste

August 12 – September 6

Night Must Fall

September 30 – October 25

Camelot

November 18 – January 3

Family Entertainment

Series

**Mermaid Theatre
of Nova Scotia:**

Stellaluna
March 21

*Goodnight Moon &
The Runaway Bunny*
May 31

Green Thumb Theatre:

Treeboy
October 18

National Players

Two Gentlemen of Verona
July 1 – July 26

Lord of the Flies

September 9 – September 10

Much Ado About Nothing

September 16 – September 17

Summer Shakespeare

Festival

The Taming of the Shrew
June 18 – June 21

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**AREA PREMIERE OF
MARK TWAIN'S *IS HE DEAD?*
KICKS OFF OLNEY'S 2009 SEASON
FEBRUARY 11 – MARCH 8**

(Olney, MD) Season 2009 at Olney Theatre Center begins with the area premiere of Mark Twain's rediscovered comedy *Is He Dead?*.

Is He Dead? plays on the Mainstage February 11 through March 8, with a special Pay-What-You-Can preview performance on Tuesday, February 10. Tickets are \$26 - \$49, with discounts available to groups, seniors, military, and students. Call the Box Office at 301.924.3400 or visit olneytheatre.org for tickets. In addition, Olney offers several special performances that include sign interpretation, audio description, and post-show discussions. (Please see the attached "Fact Sheet" for more details.)

Is He Dead?, written by Mark Twain in 1898, was never published until rediscovered by Twain scholar Shelley Fisher Fishkin, a professor of English and the director of American Studies at Stanford. While researching a project on racial themes in Twain's work, she found the play in a file drawer at the University of California's Bancroft Library in Berkeley, where the largest collection of his papers are archived.

Is He Dead?, adapted by David Ives, is a fictional, farcical tale about a young painter, the real-life Jean-François Millet, who stages his own death to drive up the price of his paintings. In order to keep an eye on his ever-growing fortune, Millet disguises himself as his widowed twin sister. As the riotous scheme unfolds, Twain poses daring questions about fame, greed, and the value of art. The playwright pokes his signature, mischievous fun at everyone involved.

The play was first performed on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre from November 2007 to March 2008. Norbert Leo Butz portrayed Jean-François Millet. The production earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Featured Actor.

Directing the Washington premiere of *Is He Dead?* is **Halo Wines**, who serves as the Associate Artistic Director for Olney Theatre and National

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Players. Her previous directing credits include Olney's *Hedda Gabler*, *Omnium Gatherum*, *Having Our Say*, *The Miser*, *The Rivals*, *Tartuffe*, Summer Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, National Players Tour 54 production of *As You Like It*, and Catalyst Theater's *Cloud Nine*. She has been honored with five Helen Hayes Award nominations and received the award for her triple performance in *Cloud Nine* at Arena Stage, where she spent 25 years as a resident company member.

Playing the dual roles of Jean-François Millet and his twin sister Widow Daisy Tillou is **Jeffries Thaiss**, whose Olney credits include *The Underpants*, *The Mousetrap*, *Democracy*, *13 Rue de L'Amour*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Heiress*, *Saint Joan*, *Carousel*, *Piaf* (with Potomac Theatre Project), *Anna Karenina*, *Monster*, *Candida*, *She Loves Me*, and *Holiday*. He has performed at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Shakespeare Theatre Company, The Kennedy Center, Portland Stage Company, and Great Lakes Theatre Festival, among others.

Portraying the co-conspirators in Millet's deathly ruse are **Carlos Bustamante** (Hans Von Bismark, aka Dutchy); **David Frankenberger, Jr.** (Phelim O'Shaughnessy); and **Eric Messner** (Agamemnon Buckner, aka Chicago). Bustamante was last seen at Olney in *Stuff Happens* and *The Miser*. Frankenberger played Slightly in Olney's recent production of *Peter Pan*, and is an alumnus of National Players Tour 59. Messner, also a National Players alumnus, performed in Olney's *Democracy*, *Omnium Gatherum*, and *Saint Joan*.

The remainder of the ensemble cast includes **Nick DePinto** as Basil Thorpe/Claude Riviere/Charlie/The King of France (Olney's *Democracy* and *13 Rue due L'Amour*); **John Dow** as Papa Leroux (Olney's *Of Mice and Men*, *Elephant Man*, *Anything Goes*, *Morning's At Seven*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Cinderella*, and *Romeo and Juliet*); **Julie-Ann Elliott** as Madame Bathilde/The Sultan of Turkey (Olney's *The Mousetrap*, *The Constant Wife*, and *Hedda Gabler*, among others); **Tara Giordano** as Cecile LeRoux (Olney's *Anna Karenina* and *Blithe Spirit*); **Elizabeth Jernigan** as Marie LeRoux (first-timer at Olney, last seen as Peg in *The Way of the World* with The Shakespeare Theatre Company); **Richard Pilcher** as Bastien André; and **Peggy Yates** as Madame Caron/The Emperor of Russia (Olney's *Peter Pan*, *Omnium Gatherum*, *The Rivals*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *She Loves Me*, among others).

In addition to Wines, the creative team for *Is He Dead?* includes Scenic Designer **Jon Savage** (Olney's *Omnium Gatherum*, *The Elephant Man*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*); Costume Designer **Kathleen Geldard** (Olney's *Rabbit Hole*, *Of Mice and Men*, *In the Mood*, *Elephant Man*, *Having Our Say*, *Gifts of the Magi*, and *The Miser*); Lighting Designer **Charlie Morrison** (Helen Hayes Award-winner, U.S. national and international tours of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Aida*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Gypsy*, *42nd Street*, and *Miss Saigon*, among others); and Sound Designer **Jarett C. Pisani** (Olney's Audio Engineer, *Peter Pan*, *The Underpants*, *Rabbit Hole*, *Stuff Happens*, and *The Mousetrap*, among others).

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FACT SHEET
Is He Dead?

Written by Mark Twain
Adapted by David Ives

My art is worth more when?

<p>THE CAST: Jeffries Thaiss* Carlos Bustamante Nick DePinto*</p> <p>John Dow* Julie-Ann Elliott* David Frankenberger, Jr. Tara Giordano* Elizabeth Jernigan Eric Messner* Richard Pilcher* Peggy Yates*</p>	<p>Jean-François Millet/Widow Daisy Tillou Hans Von Bismark Basil Thorpe/Claude Riviere/Charlie/ King of France Papa LeRoux Madame Bathilde/Sultan of Turkey Phelim O'Shaughnessy Cecile LeRoux Marie LeRoux Agamemnon Buckner Bastien André Madame Caron/Emporer of France</p>	<p>THE ARTISTIC TEAM: Director Scenic Designer Costume Designer Lighting Designer Sound Designer Stage Manager</p>	<p>Halo Wines Jon Savage Kathleen Geldard Charlie Morrison Jarett Pisani William E. Cruttenden III*</p>
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*-Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association

PERFORMANCE DATES AND TIMES:

February 11 – March 8, 2009 **PRESS NIGHT: SAT., February 14 at 8:00 pm**

Wed. – Sat. at 8:00 pm; Sun. at 7:30 pm except March 8; Tues. at 7:30 pm on Feb. 24; matinees on Sat., and Sun. at 2:00 pm; matinees at 2:00 pm on Feb. 18 and March 4.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES:

- Pay-What-You-Can: Tues., Feb. 10 at 7:30 pm
- Audio described performance: Wed., Feb. 25 at 8:00 pm
- Sign Interpretation: Thurs., Feb. 26 at 8:00 pm
- Post-show discussions: Sat., Feb. 14 at 2:00 pm (with special guests), Sun., Feb. 15 at 2:00 pm (with special guests) and Wed., Feb. 25 at 8:00 pm (with the cast)

TICKETS: \$26 - \$49; discounts available for groups, senior citizens, military, and students

BOX OFFICE: 301.924.3400; olneytheatre.org

LOCATION: Olney Theatre Center

2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, Maryland 20832

Located just north of Washington, DC, the theater sits 1¼ mile from the intersection of Olney-Sandy Spring Road (Route 108) and Georgia Avenue (Route 97). Parking is free.

ABOUT OLNEY: Olney Theatre Center is a 70-year-old nonprofit professional Equity theater in Olney, Maryland. Located in arts-rich Montgomery County, Olney Theatre Center is easily accessible from Washington, DC, and Baltimore, MD. Olney Theatre Center's mission is to create professional theater productions and other programs that nurture artists, students, technicians, administrators, and audience members; and to develop each individual's creative potential using the skills and imaginative possibilities of theater and the performing arts.

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