

Olney

THEATRE CENTER

The following remarks were made by Jim Petosa on May 29th, 2008 during a party in his honor hosted by Shelley and Tommy Mulitz.



Friends,

I want to thank you for coming tonight to celebrate this odd moment. It was just one year ago that I made the decision to resign as Olney's Artistic Director. Giving 18 months notice was my way of assuring that this departure could be carefully planned.

At that time, we were in the midst of our search for our new managing director. In part, I believed that a new leadership partnership would be in that managing director's best interest, and therefore, in the best interest of the theater.

The selection of Amy Marshall pleased me greatly. As I came to know Amy and began working with her, I was heartened. I knew that the theater was in capable hands. At one point, Amy turned to me and asked me a simple question, "So, why are you leaving?" I laughed, but in the coming months, I found myself reinvigorated by the conviction that the legacy and the current mission of Olney Theatre Center had found a potent steward and champion in its new managing director.

After months of discussions that began with Amy, members of the Board, and then with me, I was ultimately swayed—and quite moved—by the unanimous vote of the Board that asked me to reconsider my resignation and stay on as Olney's Artistic Director.

But, this is no time to sit back in an easy chair that may be too comfortable to be of any motivating use. This is, however, a time to begin a new chapter for us all.

During this era...

- We will find the means and the strategies to secure the economic well being of this theater in a manner that assures the best of our artistry.
- We will complete the campus master plan with the final amenities that will make Olney Theatre Center the fully realized destination point.
- We will join the ranks of the nation's leading regional theaters and by so doing have a national impact on the generation of new work for the American stage.
- We will successfully program work that opens our campus to the growing diversity of our region, and nurture participation in our work among everyone who lives within our region.
- We will maintain our legacy of providing opportunities for artists of all ages and stages of their career to explore and expand their artistic possibilities. Young artists taking on their first professional challenges, mid career artists exploring unexpected aspects of their creative potential, and later career artists seeking to expand their contributions by taking on new roles in the creative process will all have a home at Olney.

- We will nurture and experience the full potential of our academic partners in pursuit of our artistic ambitions.
- We will find our way to achieve, with even greater success than the last generation of remarkable theatre artists, the notion that America's regional theatres could become the long sought after artistic homes. Homes that might just change the national character through creating a distinct American culture from the best notions of the American character.

We are a vibrant community of artists, administrators, technicians, volunteers, and audiences. We are a theater that provides for family audiences in a way that honors the depth and potential of even the youngest audience members. We are a theater that respects power of theatre. We are a theater that believes the institution exists to dignify the art, and the art exists to dignify the audience.

In short, we are the latest version of that ever elusive dream of the ideal artistic home...one that has a room for every need: every need for comfort, every need for provocation, every need for challenge, every need for laughter, every need for tears, every need for thought, every need for whimsicality, and every need for profundity.

We will be generous. We will be careful stewards. We will be prudent, wise, and responsible while, at the same time, bold, visceral, and daring. But as we do this work... we will not pander, we will not settle, and we will not dumb down.

If I am not alone in these convictions, the next miles of our journey together will be the most rewarding, the most unpredictable, and the most enduring.

And so, tonight...and why not...let us, again, begin!