



MEDIA CONTACT:

Joshua Ford

Director of Marketing and Communications

jford@olneytheatre.org

**OLNEY THEATRE CENTER BRINGS QUEER PUNK ROCK TO THE STAGE WITH
HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH THIS WINTER**

Helen Hayes Award-winner **Mason Alexander Park** returns to Olney Theatre in acclaimed director **Johanna McKeon's** new staging of the revolutionary musical

Olney, MD — October 27, 2021 — Revolutionary punk-rock sensation *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* comes to Olney Theatre Center this winter (**November 26, 2021 to January 2, 2022**) starring **Mason Alexander Park**, who earned a Helen Hayes Award for Best Leading Performer in a Musical for their role as the **Emcee in Olney's 2019 production of *Cabaret***. The show is directed by Broadway veteran **Johanna McKeon**, who has served as Associate Director on five Broadway productions: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *American Idiot*, *War Paint*, *Grey Gardens* and *King Kong*. *Hedwig* marks her first production with Olney Theatre Center.

The invited press performance is Sunday, November 28 at 7:00 PM. Interested critics may reserve two tickets by emailing sstraub@olneytheatre.org. Tickets are available from \$59 - \$85 and can be purchased at olneytheatre.org or 301-924-3400.

Hedwig and the Angry Inch follows the story of a genderqueer East German singer who fronts a fictional rock and roll band. Caught in the crossfire of cold wars and culture wars, Hedwig is a survivor, and not just of the botched sex change operation that left her with the aforementioned "Angry Inch." Transported to America, she is chasing rock stardom, as well as the (much more successful) rocker Tommy Gnosis, her one-time protege and lover. Described as "groundbreaking and undoubtedly ahead of its time" by *Entertainment Weekly*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* is a rock 'n' roll musical that incorporates a cabaret confessional, drag, and a heart of gold, guarded by barbed wire and sequin spiked heels.

***Hedwig* will open at Olney Theatre Center on November 26, 2021 and run through January 2, 2022 in the 1938 Original Theatre**, overlapping with Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* on the mainstage and Paul Morella's one-man adaptation of *A Christmas*

Carol in the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab. Said **Artistic Director Jason Loewith**, “We’re celebrating the generous spirit of the holidays in all three of our theaters to get our empathy muscles back in shape. Whether you’re putting yourself in Belle’s shoes, Hedwig’s high heels, or Scrooge’s motheaten slippers, we’re making sure everyone in our community is seen on our stages this season. Visibility matters. Representation matters. And appreciation of difference matters a lot.”

Director Johanna McKeon said about the show, “As a tried and true *Hedwig* veteran, I understand the power that this show packs for a live audience. Significantly for today’s times, it’s a story of sheer endurance. Hedwig has seen and survived it all and she’s back with the scars to prove it. On a personal level, it’s been twenty months since I last directed a live performance and I couldn’t be more thrilled to bring *Hedwig* with me shredding and wailing into this new era. I directed Mason Alexander Park five years ago in the role, and I’m so excited to reach new heights and depths with them on the original stage at the Olney.”

In addition to her work on Broadway, McKeon has been Associate Director on multiple national and international tours. Her directing credits include the West Coast premiere of *Noura* by Heather Raffo at The Old Globe, Mona Mansour’s *Unseen* (Old Globe New Voices Festival), and Anne Washburn’s *I Have Loved Strangers* (Clubbed Thumb and Williamstown Premiere). Her independent feature *Auld Lang Syne* received the Audience Award for Narrative Feature at the 2016 Indie Street Film Festival and her newest feature *My Address is Still Walton Have You Forgotten?* created with playwright Karinne Keithley Syers, has recently begun a screening tour. McKeon is the recipient of Drama League, Boris Sagal and Fulbright Fellowships, and received her MFA from the University of Texas, Austin.

On returning to Olney and to this particular show, ***Hedwig* star Mason Alexander Park** stated, “I couldn’t be more thrilled to revisit the role of Hedwig, which challenged and changed my own perceptions of identity and performance over a decade ago when I first purchased the film online, and again ripped me open five years ago when I played the role on the first Broadway National Tour. This part solidified my understanding of my non-binary identity, and gave me a home in theatre that I otherwise would have had difficulty carving out, and I can’t wait to reclaim the gender nonconformity that is embedded in every atom of the piece. Having rebuilt herself in the wake of intense tragedy, Hedwig is the perfect person to guide us through our resurfacing out of this pandemic. I’m thrilled to reunite with my remarkable friend and director from the Broadway production Johanna McKeon to redefine Hedwig’s sense of self in 2021.”

Beloved by Olney audiences for their role in Olney Theatre's critically acclaimed production of *Cabaret*, **Mason Alexander Park** also portrayed Hedwig in the Broadway National Tour. Park later made headlines when it was announced that they would be **playing Gren, a nonbinary character in the upcoming Netflix live action adaptation of *Cowboy Bebop***, a beloved Japanese anime series. Park can also be seen as **Desire in the upcoming Netflix adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman***, as well as in Amazon's *Critical Role: The Legend of Vox Machina*.

Chani Wereley plays Yitzhak, Hedwig's talented but codependent husband and back-up singer. Wereley is a Helen Hayes Award-nominated actor, singer, and dancer based in Washington, D.C. She has appeared in multiple productions in the Washington, D.C. area, including *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Water by the Spoonful*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Dogfight*, the regional premiere of *The Bridges of Madison County*, and the Helen Hayes nominated productions of *Pippin* and *American Idiot*. For her work in the critically acclaimed production of *Little Shop of Horrors* at Constellation Theatre Company, Wereley was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress. Over the summer, she originated the role of Sophia in the Kennedy Center world premiere of *Earthrise* by Lauren Gunderson, with music and lyrics by Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk.

Hedwig will showcase music direction by Olney's Associate Artistic Director for Musical Theatre, **Christopher Youstra**. Hedwig's band is composed of **Manny Arciniega** on the drums, **Jamie Ibacache** on the guitar, and **Jason Wilson** on the bass guitar. The production features choreography by **Ani Taj**, scenic and costume design by **Jacob Climer**, projection design by **Patrick Lord**, lighting design by **Max Doolittle**, sound design by **Matt Rowe**, and wig design by **Mike Potter**. **Denise Cardarelli** serves as stage manager.

VACCINATION POLICY

Masks and proof of COVID vaccination are required at all Olney Theatre performances. Those under 12 who are not yet eligible for the COVID vaccine must be masked and accompanied by a vaccinated adult. We do not accept proof of a recent negative COVID test in lieu of vaccination. Visit OlneyTheatre.org/vax for more information.

EVENT DETAILS

Hedwig and the Angry Inch

Book by John Cameron Mitchell

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Trask

Directed by Johanna McKeon

Music Direction by Christopher Youstra

November 26, 2021 - January 2, 2022

Tickets: \$59-\$85 available at olneytheatre.org and 301-924-3400

Socially distanced seating is available in the rear six rows (K-P) only

ABOUT OLNEY THEATRE CENTER

Mission

Olney Theatre Center for the Arts produces and curates theatrical performance for the diverse audiences in our community, and educates, learns from, supports and inspires a more inclusive generation of theater-makers.

Vision

We strive to become an arts and culture powerhouse, redefining the American regional theater movement by cultivating and sharing the creativity of our community.

History

Founded in 1938 as a summer playhouse, Olney Theatre Center (OTC) now produces world and American premieres of plays and musicals, and reimaginings of familiar titles year-round; presents the work of leading companies and artists; tours nationally and locally; teaches students of all ages; and mentors a more inclusive generation of theatremakers. For more than 8 decades, OTC has brought impactful theater performance and education to our community, helping to grow the vibrancy and vitality of our home in the Washington, DC region.

Over the years, some of the biggest names in theater and film have appeared on our stages, including Tallulah Bankhead, Helen Hayes, Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn, Bob Fosse, Phillip Bosco, Eve Arden, Eva Gabor, Burl Ives, Jose Ferrer, Carol Channing, Olivia d'Havilland, Tony Randall, Paulette Goddard, Dorothy and Lillian Gish, Jane Seymour, Anne Revere, Frances Sternhagen, Arthur Treacher, James Broderick, Olympia Dukakis, Sir Ian McKellen, Marica Gay Harden, John Colicos, Uzo Aduba, Alan Cumming, Cheyenne Jackson, Robin de Jesus, Wilson Jermaine Heredia, among many, many others.

Olney Theatre is now the cultural anchor of a rapidly changing region and serves one of the most diverse, best educated, and wealthiest counties in the country. Situated on the unceded land of the Piscataway-Conoy people, the Olney area was once a rural farming community with a unique Quaker heritage. Now the area is occupied by every kind of family that makes up 21st Century America, along with major corporations, shopping districts, civic associations, non profit organizations and a diverse collection of houses of worship. Montgomery County's 1 million residents play a dynamic role in the Baltimore-Washington corridor, and are a driving force behind the region's creative economy.

Olney Theatre Center employs 40 full time staff, 20 part-time positions, 26 early career apprentices and players, and more than 400 professional artists annually. The Theatre intends to continue expanding to better meet the needs of our community.

For more information, please visit olneytheatre.org/history

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