



MEDIA CONTACT:

Kristina Erwin

Assistant Director of Marketing

301-924-4485 ext. 105

kerwin@olneytheatre.org

**AMERICAN PREMIERE OF WEST END HIT POLITICAL COMEDY
LABOUR OF LOVE TO OPEN AS MIDTERM ELECTIONS HEAT UP
James Graham's Olivier Award-winner sets timeless debate between
political moderates and activists as progressives seek to retake power**

Olney, MD – August 22, 2018 – Olney Theatre Center's first production of the 2018-19 Season in the Muiltz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab is the **American Premiere of James Graham's *Labour of Love* directed by Leora Morris**. Graham is one of the most important playwrights currently working in Britain and **recently had three productions of his plays running concurrently on London's West End**, including *Labour of Love*. Another of those plays, *Ink*, will premiere on Broadway in 2019. Olney's production runs September 26 – October 28, 2018 with **Invited Press Night on Saturday, September 29 at 7:45pm**.

Set in the district office of a member of Parliament, ***Labour of Love* covers 27 years of British politics** through the story of **David Lyons, a Labour MP** who believes the path to power lies in claiming the moderate center and Jean, his fiery, left wing constituency manager, who insists that staying true to principles is the best way to affect the most good. The first act begins in 2017 on the verge of David's imminent defeat as his district is about to be captured by the Conservatives for the first time in memory. The action then works backwards finishing the first act in 1990 on the very day David is elected for the first time. The second act then proceeds from 1990 back through to 2017. Throughout David and Jean's political arguments and personal barbs runs a deep thread of human emotion and unexpressed affection. **Their verbal tet-a-tets are part of the reason *Labour of Love* won the 2018 Olivier Award for Best New Comedy.**

Though set "across the pond," *Labour of Love* feels like a timely play in the runup to the midterm elections argues Olney Theatre Center Artistic Director Jason Loewith. **"James' whipsmart comedy says more about American politics than any play I've come across in the past five years,"** said Jason Loewith. "It's *The West Wing* meets *Much Ado About Nothing*,

and in between the laughs it asks the most important question Democrats and Republicans face today: **does the future belong to the moderates or the hard-core believers?"**

Several actors make their Olney debuts in this production including M. Scott McLean and Julia Coffey as the central characters, MP David Lyons and his constituency agent Jean Whittaker. McLean was most recently seen in *Constellations* at Theatre Works Hartford and Coffey has appeared in the DC-area at Studio Theatre (*Hedda Gabler*) and Shakespeare Theatre Company (*The Merchant of Venice*). **Tessa Klein** (Helen Hayes nominee for *Chimerica* at Studio Theatre) plays David's sophisticated London wife, Elizabeth and **Emily Kester** (*The Hard Problem* at Studio Theatre) plays Margot Midler, a young party activist, while **Brian Kim** joins the cast as the Chinese investor Mr. Shen. **Marcus Kyd** returns to Olney for the first time since appearing in the Helen Hayes nominated *Fickle: A Fancy French Farce* as Len Prior, a local Labour party official.

Director **Leora Morris**, a 2018 O'Neill/NNPN National Directors Fellowship Director in Residence, leads her first production at Olney Theatre Center following work at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre as the Yale Directing Fellow and winning Toronto's Ken MacDougall Award Winner for Emerging Directors. She received her MFA in Directing from the Yale School of Drama where she also served as co-artistic director of Yale Cabaret. Joining the artistic team for the production as set designer is **Daniel Ettinger**, who teams with projections designer **Rasean Davonte Johnson**, costume designer **Sarah Cubbage** and sound designer **Sarah O'Halloran** and lighting designer **Jesse Belsky** to create a world that spans eras from the early 90s to the present day. **Ben Walsh** is the stage manager.

Labour of Love

By James Graham

Directed by Leora Morris

September 26 - October 28, 2018

Press Opening: Saturday, September 29, 2018 at 7:45 pm

Regular performances are Wednesday-Saturday at 7:45 pm; matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 1:45 pm; Wednesday matinee on October 3 at 1:45 pm. There is no Saturday matinee performance on September 29.

There will be an Audio-described performance for the blind and visually impaired on Wednesday, October 10 at 7:45 pm. There will be a Sign-interpreted performance on Thursday, October 18 at 7:45 pm.

Tickets begin at \$54. Discounts available for groups, seniors, military and students.

Special Events:

- **BEHIND-THE-SCENES: TBA**

Saturday, September 29 at 5:00 PM

\$10/Free for Olney Theatre Center Members

A hallmark of Olney Theatre Center, this event will be a discussion that expands upon the themes and issues raised in *Labour of Love*.

- **FREE FILM: Much Ado About Nothing (2011)**

Friday, October 13 at 8:00pm

Free

Historic Theatre

This 2011 London stage version of Shakespeare's romantic comedy stars the incomparable **Catherine Tate** (*The Office*) and **David Tennant** (*Doctor Who*). They play Beatrice and Benedick, who engage in epic verbal sparring matches as they reluctantly fall in love. Join Olney Theatre Center for a free screening of the live performance in a fun and sexy production set in the 1980s that was a hit in London's West End. "Tennant and Tate sparkle in *Much Ado*" (*The Guardian*).

Sonia Friedman Productions. Directed by Josie Rourke. Digital Theatre Live.

- Post-show discussions will occur after the following Saturday matinee performances:

- October 6, 13, 20 and 27

ABOUT OLNEY THEATRE CENTER

Olney Theatre Center is an award-winning, nonprofit, Equity theatre now in its 81th Season. Our mission is to produce and present extraordinary theatre and performance from our four-theatre campus for an ever-more diverse set of audiences in our community, and to educate the next generation of theatremakers. We strive every day to unleash the creative potential of our artist and audiences, and in so doing, become Maryland's premier center for theatre performance and education. In the past five years, Olney Theatre has had ten world or regional premieres, including Andrew Hinderaker's *The Magic Play* and *Colossal* (2015 Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play or Musical), and Jennifer Hoppe-House's *Bad Dog* (2015 Steinberg

Award nominee). Olney Theatre places a priority on engaging our community by ensuring that we remain affordable, accessible and inviting to new and returning audiences.

Located just north of Washington, D.C. in arts-rich Montgomery County, Maryland, Olney Theatre Center offers a diverse array of over 300 professional productions year-round. It is situated on 14 wooded acres in the heart of the beautiful Washington-Baltimore-Frederick "triangle," within easy access to all three cities, and is also home to National Players, America's longest-running touring company. Olney Theatre Center is led by Artistic Director Jason Loewith and Managing Director Debbie Ellinghaus. For more information, please visit olneytheatre.org.

Follow Olney Theatre Center on Twitter and Instagram @olneytheatre and on Facebook at facebook.com/olneytheatre.

#