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A MARY STUART FOR THE 21st CENTURY OPENS AT OTC

Tale of Powerful Women in Patriarchal Society Resonates in Fresh Adaptation

OLNEY, MD – April 5, 2019 – The clash between Queen Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots takes on contemporary resonance, exploring issues of gender and power in ***Mary Stuart***, adapted by Olney Theatre Center Artistic Director Jason Loewith from Friedrich Schiller's *Maria Stuart*. Loewith also directs his adaptation of this retooled classic for a unique 21st Century production staged with 6 actors in the intimate confines of the 150-seat Multz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab (**May 8 - June 9, 2019**).

Loewith, who prior to his time at Olney Theatre Center won acclaim for writing the book and lyrics for his adaptation of ***The Adding Machine***, is in his sixth year as Olney Artistic Director and believed now was the perfect time for a new take on *Mary Stuart*. "With a record number of women serving in the 116th Congress this year, **Schiller's play about the two most powerful women in Renaissance Europe is more relevant than ever**," says Artistic Director Jason Loewith. "So we're stripping it down to its essentials, putting six extraordinary actors without costumes, in the round, to tell their story. It's a fleet and muscular version of the play that interrogates these two Queens and the patriarchal culture that denied them the chance to unite the British Isles while they lived, and condemned one of them to death."

"Jason has been passionate about this project for quite awhile, both for its thematic content and the challenge of adapting a late 18th Century play that runs over three hours with 16 characters and assorted soldiers, courtiers and nobles into a 6-actor, two-hour theatrical experience," said Jason King Jones, Senior Associate Artistic Director of Olney Theatre and lead producer on the show. "Providing him with the talent, time, and resources needed to accomplish that goal has become a shared ambition for the entire organization."

The six actor ensemble requires artists of great range and adaptability to take on multiple roles, and Loewith has assembled a formidable group including, **Eleasha Gamble as Mary Stuart**

(also Sir William Davison and Count Aubespine), **Megan Anderson as Queen Elizabeth** (and Hannah Kennedy), **Chris Genebach** as Earl of Leicester (also Sir Amyas Paulet), **Paul Morella** as Lord Burleigh, **Mitchell Hébert** as Shrewsbury (also Melville), and **Jake Lozano** as Mortimer (also Earl of Kent, Bellievre). Members of the ensemble have been involved with the process of adapting the script during pre-production reading workshops held over the past fall and winter.

The set, which **Loewith has co-designed** with **Richard Ouellette** is a smoked plexiglass turntable with minimal furnishings, allowing the work of the actors to define the space. Similarly, **Ivania Stack's costumes**, with one important exception, are also spare, meant to serve as emblems of character as actors shift from playing one to another. **Colin K. Bills' lighting design** serves as a more forceful design element as does **Matthew M. Nielson's sound design**. **Casey Kaleba** serves as fight choreographer and **Lisa Nathans** as dialect coach. **Katie Ciszek** is the dramaturg with stage management by **Karen Currie**. Loewith's assistant director is **Dani Stoller**.

MARY STUART

Adapted from Friedrich Schiller's play *Maria Stuart*

and directed by Jason Loewith

May 8 - June 9, 2019

Press Opening: Saturday, May 11, 2019 at 7:45 pm

Regular performances are Wednesday-Saturday at 7:45 pm; matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 1:45 pm; and a Wednesday matinee at 1:45 pm on May 15. There is no Saturday matinee on May 11.

There will be an Audio-described performance for the blind and visually impaired on Wednesday, May 22 at 7:45pm and a sign-interpreted performance on Thursday, May 30 at 7:45 pm. Audience members who wish to use these services should contact Julie Via, Patron Services Manager (jvia@olneytheatre.org) to confirm.

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

Special Events:

- **Gender / Power: Women Leaders on the New (Old) Politics**

Saturday, May 11 at 5:00pm in the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

\$10/Free for Olney Theatre Center members

Since before the time of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots, women have faced challenges in gaining, wielding and retaining political power. Meanwhile, the 2018 elections sent a record number of women to Congress. So what's changed and what's still the same? Join us for a conversation.

- *Afterwords* discussions led by members of the Olney Theatre staff with members of the cast occur after the following Saturday matinee performances: May 18 and 25, June 1 and 8.

ABOUT OLNEY THEATRE CENTER

Mission

Olney Theatre Center for the Arts produces, presents and tours extraordinary performances for a diversity of audiences, and educates and inspires the next generation of theater-makers.

Vision

We strive every day to unleash the creative potential of our artists and audiences, and in so doing, become a nationally-prominent destination for the most impactful theater performance and education.

History

Once a summer stock retreat in rural Maryland, Olney Theatre Center is now an award-winning, year-round regional theatre surrounded in a 15-mile radius by 1.6 million people representing three of the most ethnically diverse counties in America. Since our founding in 1938, some of the biggest names in theatre have appeared on our stages: from "Golden Era" stars like Helen Hayes and Tallulah Bankhead to contemporary artists like Sir Ian McKellen, Robin De Jesús, and many others. OTC welcomed Artistic Director Jason Loewith and Managing Director Debbie Ellinghaus in 2013 and 2014, respectively, who established a new artistic strategy to broaden programming with the goal of nurturing a diversity of voices and audiences. Olney Theatre Center now produces musicals and plays under the three rubrics of Classic, Contemporary and Family programming. Since 2013 Olney Theatre Center has twice won the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Musical Production, the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play and presented six world premieres. Complementing this work, OTC fulfills its mission as a teaching theater with educational programs like the Our Play program in local 5th grade classrooms, a summer camp and a year-round professional apprentice program. National Players, now in its 70th Season, is the hallmark outreach program of OTC, a unique ensemble touring innovative theater to communities large and small across the United States.

For more information, please visit olneytheatre.org.

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