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**OLNEY THEATRE RETURNS TO INDOOR PERFORMANCE WITH
LARISSA FASTHORSE'S SATIRE *THE THANKSGIVING PLAY*
One of 2019's most-produced American plays opens renovated
Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab**

OLNEY, MD — September 14, 2021 — Native American playwright Larissa FastHorse's (Sicangu Lakota) comedy *The Thanksgiving Play* makes its DC premiere as Olney Theatre's season opener. Directed by Raymond O. Caldwell, performances begin September 29, 2021 and run through Sunday, October 31, 2021. A gala celebrating the re-opening of the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab will mark Opening Night on Saturday, October 2. **The Invited Press performance is Sunday, October 3 at 1:45 pm. Interested critics should email sstraub@olneytheatre.org for two complimentary tickets to that performance.**

This return to the stage is also a homecoming for the cast of *The Thanksgiving Play*, featuring a quartet of actors returning to Olney Theatre. **Megan Graves** (*Oil*) is Logan, a high school drama teacher charged with creating a Thanksgiving play for the school district that satisfies the parents calling for her ouster and meets the criteria of a Native American Heritage Awareness Month grant. **Parker Drown** (*A Chorus Line*) is Jaxton, her yoga-bro friend who aggressively wants everyone to know how sensitive he is to the politics of representation. David Schlumpf (*Elf*, *South Pacific*) is **Caden**, an elementary school history teacher enthralled with playwriting and historical accuracy, and **Dani Stoller** (*The Crucible*, *The Humans*) is Alicia, an "authentic" indigenous actor from L.A., whose appearance is underwritten by the aforementioned grant. The result is a comic quest to represent the story of a people who are excluded from the actual creation of that story. While the laughs come quickly, FastHorse's play asks probing questions about the limits of white liberals' best intentions.

Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) is an award-winning playwright. Larissa's produced plays include *The Thanksgiving Play* (Playwrights Horizons, Artists Rep), *What Would Crazy Horse Do?* (KCRep, Relative Theatrics), *Urban Rez* (Cornerstone Theater Company, ASU Gammage, NEFA National tour 2019-20), *Landless and Cow Pie Bingo* (AlterTheater), *Average Family* (Children's Theater Company of Minneapolis), *Teaching Disco Squaredancing to Our Elders: a Class Presentation* (Native Voices at the Autry), *Vanishing Point* (Eagle Project) and *Cherokee Family Reunion* (Mountainside Theater).

The show is directed by Raymond O. Caldwell, artistic director of DC's innovative and acclaimed Theatre Alliance. Born in Wiesbaden, Germany and raised all over the world, Raymond O. Caldwell (he/him/his) is an award-winning director who has directed for Round House Theatre, Imagination Stage, Mosaic Theater, The Kennedy Center, National Players/OTC, Solas Nua, CulturalDC, and the Hegira. Prior to leading Theater Alliance, he was a faculty member and resident director in Howard University's Department of Theatre Arts for six years, and spent six seasons as the Community Engagement Partnership Manager at Arena Stage.

The creative team features Scenic Design by Milagros Ponce de León (Matilda), Costume Design by Jeannette Christensen, Lighting Design by Alberto Segarra, Projections Design by Kelly Colburn and Dylan Uremovich, Sound Design by Tosin Olufolabi, Stage Managed by Tashiana Quiñones. Understudies are Conor Patrick Donohue (Jaxton/Caden) and Mishy Jacobson (Logan/Alicia).

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. However, The Thanksgiving Play is recommended for ages 12+. At this time, we do not accept proof of a recent negative COVID test in lieu of vaccination. Visit OlneyTheatre.org/vax for more information.

DETAILS

The Thanksgiving Play

by Larissa FastHorse

Directed by Raymond O. Caldwell

Previews: September 29, 30 & October 1

Official Gala Opening: Saturday, October 2 at 8:00 pm

Invited Press Opening: Sunday, October 3 at 1:45 pm

Runs until October 31, 2021

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 October 6 . There is no Saturday matinee on October 2.

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

Special Events:

- Behind-the-Scenes
The History of This Land: Introducing Our Land Acknowledgement
Friday, October 1, 6:30 - 7:15 pm
Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

Over the past decade, more and more institutions have chosen to recognize and respect the Indigenous Peoples who serve as traditional stewards of the land they now occupy through a formal Land Acknowledgement. While a Land Acknowledgement is only a small step in healing centuries-old wounds, it demonstrates the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

To help unveil Olney Theatre's Land Acknowledgement, we've gathered a panel of local experts and Tribal Elders to help us unpack the complex and rich history of the Olney area, from the Piscataway Tribe, through the Sandy Spring Quaker community that abolished slavery in 1777, to this moment. Speakers include Piscataway Elder Natalie Williams and Quaker historian Tom Farquhar of the Sandy Spring Museum.

- **Appreciating the Indigenous History of Maryland**

Saturday, October 9, 4:30 - 6:00 pm

Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

Free

Larissa FastHorse's *The Thanksgiving Play* reminds us that celebrating Thanksgiving without understanding the violent history beneath it amounts to a second erasure of this country's Indigenous Peoples. Maryland's rich and complex Indigenous history encompasses many tribal nations whose names - Assateague, Piscataway, Nanticoke, and more - are all we know of them. Join us for a special Behind-the-Scenes event with E. Keith Colston, Administrative Director of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, to learn about the history of the land that became the State of Maryland on July 4, 1776. The event begins with Native American activist Peter Brooks sharing the *Gyun Yuk* ("Words Before All Else"), a spiritually uplifting Iroquois address traditionally used to open any public gathering.

Speakers: Peter Brooks, Native American activist; Keith Colston, Administrative Director of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA)

- *Afterwords* discussions will occur after the following Saturday matinee performances of *Thanksgiving Play*: October 9, 16 and 23

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 year-round world and American premieres of plays and musicals, and reimaginations of familiar titles; presents the work of leading companies; tours nationally and locally; teaches students of all ages; and mentors the next 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 central Maryland.

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 Picataway-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 is a driving force behind the region's creative economy.

As of September 2021, Olney Theatre Center employed 40 full time staff, 20 part-time positions, 26 early career apprentices and players, and more than 400 professional artists. The Theatre intends to continue expanding to better meet the needs of our community.

For more information, please visit olneytheatre.org.

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