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**PLAYWRIGHT JORDAN HARRISON'S *THE AMATEURS*
ANNOUNCES FINAL CASTING FOR OLNEY THEATRE CENTER
PRODUCTION**

Dark comedy about a troupe of 14th Century actors trying to outrun the Black Death begins rehearsals as the threat of a modern plague terrifies China and the rest of the world

OLNEY, MD – January 29, 2020 – *The Amateurs* by Jordan Harrison and directed by **Jason King Jones** runs in Olney Theatre Center's Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab, **March 4 - April 5, 2020**. The production is the fifth show in Olney Theatre's 2019-2020 season and the final show to perform in the Theatre Lab before it closes for renovations, scheduled to re-open in November 2020. OTC regulars **Evan Casey** (*On the Town*), **James Konicek** (*Dial 'M' For Murder*), **Michael Russotto** (*Singin' in the Rain*), **Emily Townley** (*Ken Ludwig's A Comedy of Tenors*) and **Rachel Zampelli** (*The Crucible*) are joined by Shakespeare Theatre Company veteran **John Keabler** (*Hotspur in Henry IV, part I*). **Opening night is Saturday, March 7 at 7:45pm.**

Harrison's futuristic ***Marjorie Prime*** was a Pulitzer Prize-finalist and a hit with OTC audiences during the 2015-16 season, prior to becoming an award-winning indie film (90% on Rotten Tomatoes) starring Jon Hamm, Tim Robbins and Geena Davis. In ***The Amateurs***, which premiered at the Vineyard Theatre in 2018, he goes back (and forwards) in time. It's the 14th Century, the Black Death is ravaging Europe, and a traveling troupe of actors is performing the story of Noah. Everything is going about as well as can be expected until the actress playing Noah's Wife stops to ask why her character would get on the boat with all those smelly animals. And by the way, doesn't she deserve a name other than "Noah's Wife"? **Heidi Schreck** (***What the Constitution Means to Me***) who acted in an earlier incarnation of the work, is also credited with supplying additional material, including one key monologue during the show's second act, which introduces a troupe of modern actors in a meta-theatrical twist.

Writing in the *New York Times*, Jesse Green praised *The Amateurs* as, “seriously funny, by which I mean funny in a serious way: a good thing in a play that has so much on its mind. Among the themes that light up like fireflies here and there are the nature of sin, the purpose of art, the low status of actors and the low status of humans in general...And so it really is a thrilling, expansive, world-changing moment in a very sneaky play when Hollis, contemplating Mrs. Noah, first asks, What’s my motivation?”

Director **Jason King Jones** comes to the piece with an extra bit of affection. As Olney Theatre’s Senior Associate Artistic Director he also serves as the Artistic Director for **National Players**, the nation’s longest running classical touring theatre troupe and a program of OTC. “As someone who casts and directs actors who go on the road, the characters in ***The Amateurs*** are very real to me. They are their own self-contained community. The plague presents a threat to everyone’s individual survival, but almost as great is the threat to the troupe’s survival – along with the ever-present dilemma facing artists in every time of crisis, ‘Does any of what I do really matter?’”

For the design team, the black box space will be in an alley configuration, with audience members on both sides of the action, intensifying the already intimate atmosphere of the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab. Rising to the challenge are **Misha Kachman** (Set Designer), **Pei Lee** (Costume Designer), **Colin K. Bills** (Lighting Designer) and **Karin Graybash** (Sound Designer). **Ben Walsh** is the stage manager.

The Amateurs

by Jordan Harrison

Directed by Jason King Jones

Previews, March 4, 5, and 6

Official Opening: Saturday, March 7 at 7:45pm (Press invited pending availability). To reserve email: mda@olneytheatre.org

Press may be asked to attend Sunday, March 8 at 1:45pm if space is unavailable on Saturday.

Runs until April 5

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 March 11. There is no Saturday matinee on March 7.

There will be an Audio-described performance for the blind and visually impaired on Wednesday, March 18 at 7:45pm and a sign-interpreted performance on Thursday, March 26 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:

- Behind-the-Scenes
Saturday, March 7 at 5:00pm
\$10/Free for Olney Theatre Center Members
Join us for a discussion prior to the Opening Night performance about the themes and history behind *The Amateurs*.
- *Afterwords* discussions will occur after the following Saturday matinee performances:
March 14, 21 and 28

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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