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Month Day, Year – National Players, America’s longest-running touring theatre company, will perform *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, at ***VENUE*** on **DAY OF WK, MONTH DAY at 0:00 AM/PM**. Admission is \$XX. National Players is the professional touring troupe and signature outreach program of Olney Theatre Center in Olney, Maryland.

National Players is an **entirely self-contained and self-sustaining tour**: the ensemble members who act in the plays also serve as the tour’s stagehands, electricians, truck drivers, wardrobe crew, and much more. It is an ensemble of true “theatre-makers” in the fullest sense of the word.

As You Like It is one of Shakespeare’s comedies; a female-driven story combining classic elements of romance and hidden identities. Banished from the only home she’s ever known, Rosalind assumes the identity of a man and escapes to the Forest of Arden with her cousin Celia and their fool Touchstone. While there, they run into other exiled folks from the old court, including the dashing and brave Orlando, who won Rosalind’s heart prior to her banishment, but he was too tongue tied to express his love in return. Determined to woo him, Rosalind persuades Orlando in her male disguise to win her heart. For only if Orlando loves her as a man will Rosalind know he truly loves her.

National Players meld classic language with contemporary staging of Shakespeare’s imaginative tale about city folk venturing into the woods. A romantic comedy about gender roles, losing oneself, and discovering oneself anew.

As You Like It is directed by **Jason King Jones**, Artistic Director of National Players for seven years, and Olney Theatre Center’s Senior Associate Artistic Director. Past National Players productions: *Hamlet*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Animal Farm*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Tempest*, and *Odyssey* (which he also adapted), *Othello*, and for Tour 70 he directed *The Crucible*.

“I’m very proud of this production. Telling this sprawling story with a tight ensemble has allowed a lot of the playfulness and theatricality to take center stage. The result is a really heartfelt and joyous show that makes Shakespeare feel incredibly familiar.”

As befits a small ensemble, most of the actors play at least two roles, often complementary in their structure. **Lisa Danielle Buch** plays Rosalind, the only actor playing one role, yet Rosalind plays two roles in the course of the play, assuming a male identity when she ventures into the

Forest of Arden. **Emma Stern** plays Rosalind's loyal and humorous cousin Celia but also a Lord in court. **Cedrick L. Riggs, Jr.** plays the brave and devoted Orlando, as well as Corin, an elderly shepherd and one of Orlando's tenants. **John J. Yazzo** takes on several colorful characters including the doting and impassioned shepherd Silvius and a wrestler named Charles. **Saira Grewal** plays Phebe, another confused shepherdess-in-love and **Faith Ore** plays both Dukes, who are foils to each other. **Anna Shafer** plays the "melancholic" and insightful Jaques as well as Adam, the selfless and dutiful servant to Orlando. **Miranda Pepin** plays Orlando's older sibling, the spiteful Oliver, as well as several other roles. **Matt Merline** is the fool Touchstone and like his fellow Players, several other Lords and attendants. **Liz Monasky** is the tour's stage manager and audio engineer, the only player who isn't an actor, a first in National Player history. .

Patti Kalil is the set designer, with costumes designed by **Jen Gillette**. **Sarah Tundermann** designs lights for the traveling troupe and **Justin Schmitz** is the sound designer. **Casey Kaleba** is the fight choreographer.

ABOUT NATIONAL PLAYERS

Established in 1949 and based at Olney Theatre Center since 1952, National Players is America's longest-running touring company. Founded on the principle of prioritizing areas with limited access to theatre, National Players company consists of 10 early-career theatre artists who spend 10 months touring the United States with their three-play repertory to a variety of diverse populations and venues from performing arts centers, universities, but also public schools, rural community centers, and penitentiaries. National Players also acts as an educational ambassador, teaching theatre-related courses to students of all ages and backgrounds. Though it travels thousands of miles and serves tens of thousands of people each year, National Players always comes home to Olney, Maryland. Learn more at: nationalplayers.org

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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.

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