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**OLNEY THEATRE CENTER'S 22-23 SEASON BEGINS WITH CLARE BARRON'S OFF-BROADWAY HIT *DANCE NATION***

**Tale of middle-school dance team features actors of all ages in a drama that received the "Relentless Award" established in memory of Philip Seymour Hoffman**

**OLNEY, MD — August 24, 2022 — *Dance Nation* by Clare Barron and directed by Jenna Place opens Olney Theatre Center's 84th season** in the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab.

Preview performances begin Wednesday, September 28 with press invited to attend either Saturday, October 1 at 7:45 pm (**limited availability**) or Sunday, October 2 at 1:45 pm.

Interested critics should email [sstraub@olneytheatre.org](mailto:sstraub@olneytheatre.org) for two complimentary tickets to that performance. **The production is scheduled to run through Sunday October 30, 2022.**

Tickets are available online at [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org) or at 301-924-3400.

Clare Barron's play was a hit off-broadway in 2018, with The New York Times's former-critic Ben Brantley declaring Ms. Barron "**insanely talented,**" and continued to describe the experience of *Dance Nation* as possessing "**the passionate ambivalence of early adolescence with such being-there sharpness and poignancy that you're not sure whether to cringe, cry or roar with happiness.**"

As written by Ms. Barron, the participants of **a competitive tween dance team in Liverpool, Ohio are played by actors of all ages, from those in their early 20s to those in their late 60s.** As they prepare for an upcoming competition, the urgent questions confronting the girls range from those of status – who will get to dance the lead role? To those that beset all pubescent kids: what's happening to my body? Am I ahead or behind? Who will I become? That the action is delivered by distinctly adult actors, those questions also become, who was I?

The diverse ensemble includes longtime veterans of Olney Theatre Center, including **Brigid Cleary** (more than 40 Olney credits over 40 years) and **MaryBeth Wise** (over a dozen productions, dating back to National Players Tour 41 in 1989) as Ashlee and Maeve respectively. **Megan Graves** as Sofia and **Michael Wood** as Dance Teacher Pat, are also familiar to Olney audiences having appeared in last season's *The Thanksgiving Play* and

*Disney's Beauty and the Beast* respectively. Making their Olney debuts are **Yesenia Igelsias** as all of the Moms as well as the ill-fated dancer Vanessa; **Jasmine Joy** as Amina, **Shubhangi Kuchibhotla** as Connie, **Ashley D. Nguyen** as Zuzu, and **Louis E. Davis** as the team's sole boy dancer, Luke.

The show is directed by **Jenna Place**, who knows a thing or two about high-pressure competition from her time as a nationally ranked alpine skier. Having moved on in college to a theatre career, Ms. Place joined the Olney Theatre staff as Associate Artistic Director/Casting Director in 2017. She has directed for National Players, Theater J, Rep Stage, Theater Alliance, Adventure Theater, Forum Theater, Imagination Stage, and Monumental Theatre. She is also a well-known freelance casting director who has worked with many theatre companies in the DMV.

On the creative team, **Nikki Mirza** serves as both the Choreographer and the Assistant Director; **Paige Hathaway** is the scenic designer, and **Moyenda Kulemeka** the costume designer; **Kenny Neal** is the sound designer, and lights are designed by **Sarah Tundermann**. **Bailey Howard** is the production stage manager.

## **DETAILS**

*Dance Nation*

by Clare Barron

Directed by Jenna Place

Begins: Wednesday, September 28, 2022

Official Opening: Saturday, October 1, 2022

Runs until: Sunday, October 30, 2022

Regular performances are Wednesday-Saturday at 7:45 pm; matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 1:45 pm. No Saturday matinee on October 30. Wednesday matinee on October 5.

## **SAFETY POLICIES**

Masks are required at all Olney Theatre performances held indoors. Patrons are no longer required to present proof of vaccination. Visit [OlneyTheatre.org/vax](https://olneytheatre.org/vax) for more information.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

**Audio described performance on Wednesday, October 12 at 7:45 pm**

**Sign interpreted performance on Thursday, October 20 at 7:45 pm**

Tickets begin at \$54. Discounts available for groups, seniors, active military and students. Purchase via [olneytheatre.org](https://olneytheatre.org) or 301-924-3400

## **Special Events**

**Behind the Scenes**

**Competition, Women, and Camaraderie**

Saturday, October 1 at 5:00 pm  
Multz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab  
Free for members or to stream/\$10 general public

In *Dance Nation*, a pre-teen dance troupe navigates ambition, friendship, and desire as they claw their way to the Nationals in Tampa Bay. The journey is anything but easy. As Abby Lee Miller of TV's *Dance Moms* warns, "Do it right, because somebody, sometimes your best friend, is waiting for you to screw up so she can take your place." Olney Theatre Center assembles a panel of women who clawed their way to the top of their fields to discuss how competition and sisterhood coexist.

### **Beyond the Stage Community Dance Team Showcase**

Saturday, October 8 at 4:00 pm  
1938 Original Theatre  
Free

Living in the DMV we're surrounded by many amazingly talented competitive diverse dance teams. To celebrate our production of *Dance Nation*, we've invited local high school and college level teams who compete in Step Dance, Irish Dance, Dance Twirl, Cheer and South Asian Dance to strut their stuff on the Olney Theatre stage. Come experience the energy and excitement as each team presents their unique dance style dancing to win, in our case, the hearts of the audience!

### **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](http://olneytheatre.org).

Follow Olney Theatre Center on Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok @olneytheatre and on Facebook at [facebook.com/olneytheatre](https://facebook.com/olneytheatre).

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