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**MICHAEL RUSSOTTO TO SUBSTITUTE FOR PAUL MORELLA IN HIS SOLO
VERSION OF *A CHRISTMAS CAROL: A GHOST STORY OF CHRISTMAS*
Production will continue to use Morella's adaptation, which is 99% Dickens' original
language**

Olney, MD – October 17, 2024 – Renowned Washington actor, **Michael Russotto** will substitute for **Paul Morella** in the 15th edition of the latter's solo adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story of Christmas* at Olney Theatre Center. Said Olney Theatre Center's Artistic Director **Jason Loewith**, "A medical event from earlier in the fall will prevent Paul from performing his show this season, a production which so many people look forward to every year. **With the blessing of Paul's family, we asked Olney veteran Michael Russotto to step in while Paul recovers.** We're grateful to him for undertaking this daunting task, which is the best tribute we could think of to Paul's boundless creativity and energy. We're hoping the joy generated by the show speeds his recovery."

Previews begin in the Multz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab on the day after Thanksgiving, November 29, 2024. The show runs through December 29, 2024. **Press may reserve two tickets to attend the official opening on Saturday, December 7 at 7:45 pm by emailing: sstraub@olneytheatre.org**

Tickets range from \$41 - \$81 and can be purchased at olneytheatre.org or 301-924-3400.

Said actor **Russotto**, "It's a real honor to step into a role that has become central to so many people's experience of the holiday season, in a show that Paul Morella has carefully crafted and refined over many years. I'm looking forward to the challenge, and I hope to make my dear friend, Paul, proud in the process."

There is no further information on Morella's condition at this time. His family has requested privacy while he recuperates.

Morella's version of the story is distinguished by its faithfulness to Dickens' prose, as well as by the fact that a single actor plays every one of the play's nearly fifty characters. This unique retelling of the classic tale has been referred to by DC Theater Arts as "the story's most authentic form," "beautifully detailed," and the "purest and truest version out there," as well

as by DC Theatre Scene as a “remarkable journey” and “magical experience,” offering “a wonder that continued to affect me days after seeing the show.” It has also been praised by critics writing for outlets including *The Washington Post*, the *Washington City Paper*, *MD Theatre Guide*, and countless more.

INFO

A CHRISTMAS CAROL: A GHOST STORY OF CHRISTMAS

By Charles Dickens

Adapted by Paul Morella

Performed by Michael Russotto

November 29 – December 29, 2024

Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

Press Night: Saturday, December 7 at 7:45 pm

Performances are Wednesday-Saturday evenings at 7:45 pm; Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3:00 pm; Weekday Matinee performances at 3:00 PM on Tuesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 26.

Tickets: \$41-\$81. Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.

A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story of Christmas is best appreciated by children ages 10 and up due to the use of Victorian language and light references to adult behavior.

About Paul Morella (adapter)

Paul Morella has previously appeared at Olney Theatre Center in *Mary Stuart*, *The Crucible*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Awake and Sing!*, *The Tempest*, *Rancho Mirage*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Over the Tavern*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *Opus*, *Dinner With Friends*, *A Passion For Justice*, *The Millionaires*, *Rabbit Hole*, *Brooklyn Boy*, *Sight Unseen*, *The Mousetrap*, *Private Lives*, ‘Art’, *Coffee with Richelieu*, *The Laramie Project*, *The Rivals*, *Becket*, *Broken Glass*, *M. Butterfly*, *Monster*, *Night Must Fall*, and *The Time of Your Life*. Other regional appearances include leading roles at Folger Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Signature Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, The Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, MetroStage, Potomac Theatre Project, Theater J, Everyman Theatre, Rep Stage, The Delaware Theatre Company, Two River Theatre, and The Kennedy Center.

About Michael Russotto (performer)

Michael Russotto is honored to return to Olney Theatre Center in Paul Morella’s adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. Other productions at Olney include *The Joy That Carries You*, *Singin’ In The Rain*, *Bakersfield Mist* and *Neville’s Island*, to name a few. Most recently, he played Meckel in Theater J’s production of *The Hatmaker’s Wife*, where he has also appeared in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *The Christians*, *The Sisters Rosensweig*, and *Falling Out of Time*. In the Spring of 2024, Michael played Chauncey Miles in the 1st Stage production of *The Nance*. Prior to that, he toured Michigan in *Tuesdays With Morrie* (Morrie) for the 25th anniversary of the play. Other

credits include *My Lord What a Night* (Abraham Flexner), *Twelve Angry Men* (Juror # 3), and *Death of a Salesman* (Charley) at Ford's Theatre. Michael has performed regionally at Cleveland Play House, The Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, Signature Theatre, Round House Theatre, and The Folger Shakespeare Theatre. He is a member of the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and has received numerous Helen Hayes Award nominations for performances in the DC area. Film and television work includes *Playing Through*, *The Battle of Bloody Lane*, and *Death of a Nation*. Michael can be heard on the L.A. Theatre Works recording of *Seven Days in May*, with Ed Asner. He has also narrated hundreds of audio books for Books on Tape and The Library of Congress.

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 now produces world and American premieres of plays and musicals, and reimaginations of familiar titles year-round; presents the work of leading companies and artists; tours nationally and locally; teaches students of all ages; and mentors a more inclusive generation of theatremakers. For more than 8 decades, Olney Theatre has brought impactful theater performance and education to our community, helping to grow the vibrancy and vitality of our home in the Washington, DC region.

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 Piscataway-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 are a driving force behind the region's creative economy.

Olney Theatre Center employs more than 40 full-time staff, 20 part-time positions, 13 early career apprentices and players, and more than 400 professional artists annually. The Theatre intends to continue expanding to better meet the needs of our community.

For more information, please visit olneytheatre.org/history

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