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**WORLD PREMIERE OF *LONG WAY DOWN* TRANSFORMS
JASON REYNOLDS' AWARD-WINNING NOVEL-IN-VERSE INTO A
MUSICAL WITH ROOTS IN R&B AND HIP-HOP**

**Ken-Matt Martin directs the new production at Olney Theatre Center that
will move to the Apollo's new Victoria Theatre in the fall**

OLNEY, MD — April 23, 2024 — Olney Theatre Center (Jason Loewith, Artistic Director, Debbie Ellinghaus, Executive Director), in association with **TheaterWorksUSA** (Barbara Pasternack, Artistic Director; Michael Harrington, Executive Director) **and Edgewood Entertainment** (Dale A. Mott, Producer/Managing Director; Charles D. Urstadt, Producer/Managing Director) presents the **World Premiere of *Long Way Down*** in Olney Theatre's **Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab** with Book, Music, and Lyrics by poet, performance artist and musician **Dahlak Brathwaite** (HBO's Def Poetry Jam, Spiritrials, Try/Step/Trip) and additional writing by **Khiyon Hursey** (Netflix's Soundtrack, Love in America, Spirited with Benj Pasek and Justin Paul), adapted from the bestselling novel by **Jason Reynolds**. The production will be directed by **Ken-Matt Martin** (Mosaic Theater's *Nancy*) who also serves as co-choreographer with cast member **Victor T. Musoni** (Goodman Theatre's *Toni Stone*, Steppenwolf's *Columbinus*). The production will have three preview performances on May 22, 23, and 24.

Press are invited to attend either Saturday, May 25 at 8:00 pm or Sunday, May 26 at 1:30 pm – pending availability. Interested critics should email sstraub@olneytheatre.org to request press tickets along with their preferred performance date and time. The production is scheduled to run through Sunday, June 23. Tickets are \$55 - \$90 and are available online at olneytheatre.org/longwaydown or at 301-924-3400.

A special conversation with author Jason Reynolds will be held prior to the Opening Night performance on **Saturday, May 25 at 5:00 pm** in the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab. Tickets for the event are \$10/free for Olney Theatre Center Members. The conversation will also be live-streamed on the Olney Theatre YouTube channel and Facebook page.

Published in 2017, Jason Reynolds' critically acclaimed novel written in verse, received a prestigious John Newbery Honor, along with a Printz Award Honor and the Coretta Scott King Honor.

Tyrese Shawn Avery stars in the musical as the central character Will, **IO Browne** plays his mother Shari, and **Victor Musoni**, in addition to serving as co-choreographer, plays Will's older brother Shawn. After Shawn is murdered by a rival gang, Will gets ready to hit the streets in search of vengeance. However, in his apartment's elevator, he is confronted by the spirits of people central to his predicament seeking to influence what decision he makes before the elevator reaches the ground floor. Among them, Will encounters Frick (**Colin Carswell**), a leader of the rival gang; Buck (**Parris Mone't Lewis**) who served as a mentor to Shawn; his first girlfriend Dani (**Cheryse Dyllan**); his father Mike (**Quincy Vicks**), and his Uncle Mark (**Naiqui Macabroad**). Understudies for the production are **Ciara Hargrove** and **Bryan Archibald**.

Olney Theatre's Artistic Director, Jason Loewith, says, "It's such a privilege to produce this necessary new musical, bringing together a once-in-a-generation literary talent like Jason Reynolds with creatives of the highest caliber. Dahlak, Khiyon, Ken-Matt, and Victor have turned an extraordinary story into a theatrical event like no other. I'm so grateful to them, as well as the folks at TheaterWorksUSA and Edgewood, for asking us to bring their work forward one more step. I can't wait to be in conversation about it with our communities."

The artistic team, in addition to Brathwaite, Hursey, Musoni, and Martin includes **Cedric Lyles** (Music Director), **Nick Hernandez** (Music Programmer), **Simean Carpenter** (Scenic and Lighting Designer), **Danielle Preston** (Costume Designer), **Kevin Alexander** (Sound Designer), **Paul M. Callahan** (Assistant Lighting Designer), and **Robbie Armstrong III** (Production Stage Manager).

Following the run at Olney Theatre Center, ***Long Way Down*** will be mounted in the **Apollo's Victoria Theater** – a new, recently restored, mission-focused arts venue located next door to and managed by the historic Harlem theatre.

About the Play

Growing up, Will's big brother taught him three iron-clad rules of how to behave when gun violence claims someone close: Don't cry. Don't snitch. Get revenge. So when his brother is himself gunned down, Will is determined to follow the code and gets in an elevator on the top floor of his apartment building, armed and ready to hit the streets in search of vengeance. What happens on the way down is an emotional hip-hop journey through the cycles of violence that have plagued Will's family and too many others.

DETAILS

Long Way Down

Book, music, and lyrics by Dahlak Brathwaite

Additional writing by Khiyon Hursey

Adapted from the bestselling novel by Jason Reynolds

Co-choreographed by Ken-Matt Martin and Victor Musoni

Directed by Ken-Matt Martin

Previews May 22, 23, and 24 at 7:30 pm

Invited Press opening Saturday, May 25 at 8:00 pm or Sunday, May 26 at 1:30 pm

Email sstraub@olneytheatre.org to reserve

Runs until: Sunday, June 23, 2024 in Olney Theatre Center's Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

Tickets \$55 - \$90. Discounts are available for groups, seniors, teachers, active military, first responders, and students. Visit olneytheatre.org/discounts for details.

Purchase via olneytheatre.org/longwaydown or 301-924-3400

Performance Times

Regular performances are Wednesday-Saturday at 7:30 pm;

Matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 pm.

No Saturday matinee on May 25.

On Wednesday, May 29, there will be a matinee performance at 1:30 pm. However, there are no Wednesday evening performances on May 29 or June 5.

There will be additional performances on Sunday evening June 2, 9, and 16 at 7:00 pm.

There will be a special Black Out Performance for the Black community on

For the 2023-2024 Season, Olney Theatre Center will be offering programs for purchase rather than as a complimentary item at performances. Programs are always free for members and K-12 students. For more information visit: olneytheatre.org/programs

ACCESSIBILITY

Audio described performance on Wednesday, June 12 at 7:30 pm

Sign interpreted performance on Thursday, June 13 at 7:30 pm

Behind the Scenes and Beyond the Stage

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 reimaginings 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 de 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 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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