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**JASON REYNOLDS IN-CONVERSATION, 10-MINUTE PLAYS ABOUT GUN CONTROL, JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION, AND BLACK OUT NIGHT ARE PART OF OLNEY THEATRE CENTER'S BEHIND THE SCENES AND BEYOND THE STAGE COMMUNITY EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES ACCOMPANYING THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *LONG WAY DOWN* MUSICAL ADAPTATION**

**Olney, MD – May 9, 2024—** Olney Theatre Center is rolling out a roster of events for the community on its campus, including live performances, parties, and talkbacks with Black artists and business owners to celebrate Black excellence and to highlight the many themes in and calls to action inspired by the world premiere of the musical *Long Way Down* – based on Jason Reynold's award-winning young adult novel of the same name. These include conversations with **Jason Reynolds himself (May 25)**, student-written **short plays about gun violence (June 8)**, a **Pride Celebration (June 7)**, a **Black out night performance (June 9)**, and a **Juneteenth celebration featuring Urban Artistry (June 19)**. There are also book clubs and story times as part of the programming generated by Olney Theatre's Community Engagement program. The world-premiere musical adaptation created by Dahlak Brathwaite and Khiyon Hursey calls on the influence of Black American art traditions such as hip-hop and dance to tell a powerful story about a black teen named Will, and the critical choices he has to make during a fateful trip in an elevator.

Say's Olney Theatre Center's director of community engagement, Shruthi Mukund, "Jason Reynolds's books have always built community, so it made perfect sense for us as a theatre committed to putting our community at the center of everything we do, to elevate the voices that are represented in this world premiere, and widen the circle of people who take their engagement with the art we present to the next level."

Tickets for Community Events are low or no-cost to patrons but do vary. For more information, visit [olneytheatre.org/community](http://olneytheatre.org/community)

*Long Way Down* runs May 22 - June 23 in Olney Theatre's Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab in association with **TheaterWorksUSA** and **Edgewood Entertainment**. For information and tickets visit: [olneytheatre.org/longwaydown](http://olneytheatre.org/longwaydown)

### **EVENT DETAILS**

#### **BEYOND THE STAGE - Olney Theatre Book Club**

May 21 and 28, 2024

6:00 pm

Omi's Pavilion

Free with RSVP

Introducing Olney Theatre's Book Club with discussions of books related to our current season. Come talk with Olney Theatre Center's Artistic Staff and guest speakers on May 21 for *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds and on May 28 for *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Following the book discussion on May 28, there will be a conversation with activist groups in Montgomery County.

#### **BEHIND THE SCENES - Opening Night Panel: In Conversation with Author Jason Reynolds**

May 25, 2024

5:00 pm

Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

\$10 / Free for members

Join Stephanie Shonekan, Dean of UMD College of Arts and Humanities, in conversation with award-winning author Jason Reynolds to discuss the inspiration for this musical adaptation, *Long Way Down*.

#### **IN THE COMMUNITY - Story Time at the Olney Library**

June 2, 2024

2:00 pm

Olney Public Library

No RSVP. Just show up!

This free family event is appropriate for all ages, especially toddlers, preschoolers, and young children. Join us at the Olney Public Library for a morning of stories inspired by *Long Way Down*. Books to be read are chosen with the help of the Olney librarian and feature special guest storyteller Shaquille Stewart.

#### **BEYOND THE STAGE - Social Mixer – Olney Theatre Pride Celebration**

June 7, 2024

6:00 pm

Omi's Pavilion

Free with RSVP

Honor our LGBTQ+ artists by joining local council members Dawn Luedtke, Evan Glass, and Artistic Director Jason Loewith for a reception celebrating Pride Month.

## BEYOND THE STAGE - **Just Arts 2024 ENOUGH! Plays to End Gun Violence**

June 8, 2024

4:00 pm

Omi's Pavilion

Free with RSVP

Olney Theatre Center invites you to a staged reading of the ENOUGH! Plays to End Gun Violence. Founded in 2019, ENOUGH! Plays to End Gun Violence calls on teens to confront gun violence by creating new works of theatre that will spark critical conversations and inspire meaningful action in communities across the country. This reading is brought to you through a collaborative effort with Imagination Stage, Round House Theatre, and Mauricio Pita & Team.

## **BLACK Out Performance of *Long Way Down***

Sunday, June 9

7:00 pm

Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

Olney Theatre Center is proud to announce our first BLACK Out Night for the world premiere musical *Long Way Down*. Olney Theatre Center is taking the next step in our pursuit of a more equitable and inclusive environment in our programming and in our community outreach.

To continue this effort and celebrate the beautiful, important story of *Long Way Down* and the community it represents, Olney Theatre Center's BLACK Out Night will take place on June 9th at 7pm. Join us for an awe-inspiring evening of theatre, black excellence, and community.

**Specially priced \$20 tickets for this performance only (limit 4) may be purchased here, using the code BLACKOUT.**

We ask our non-black identifying patrons to please choose a different performance of *Long Way Down* to attend.

Want to learn more about what a BLACK Out night means? You can find it [here](#).

## BEYOND THE STAGE - **Juneteenth Celebration**

June 19, 2024

5:00 pm

Omi's Pavilion

Free with RSVP

Come join us at Olney Theatre Center as we celebrate Juneteenth! Enjoy a night filled with dance and music featuring performances by Urban Artistry and an opportunity to support locally-owned businesses.

## **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.

For more information, please visit [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org).

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