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**OLNEY THEATRE CENTER REMOUNTS THEIR ACCLAIMED PRODUCTION OF  
DISNEY'S *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

Director Marcia Milgrom Dodge returns to Olney Theatre; Jade Jones stars as Belle;  
Cancer survivor Evan "Lord Pegleg" Ruggiero cast as the Beast

**Olney, MD — October 17, 2022** — Olney Theatre Center's remount of its 2021 hit *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* runs **November 9, 2022 - January 1, 2023** on the Mainstage. **Jade Jones** and **Evan Ruggiero**, who [attracted national attention](#) last year for their stereotype-busting performances in the lead roles, also return to star as Belle and the Beast. In the year since the production closed early because of the Delta surge, the cultural discourse has continued to explore how we can expand our notions of "beauty" and "ability" on stage and screen. Further acknowledgement of the importance of the Olney production came during the Disney 25th Anniversary Reunion for the cast of the 1997 Cinderella which **featured a segment on Jade Jones's performance as Belle** as an inheritor of that groundbreaking special starring Brandy and Whitney Houston. The production directed by **Marcia Milgrom Dodge**, gets another opportunity to inspire new audiences during its encore run.

**The invited press performance is Saturday, November 12 at 8:00 pm. Interested critics may reserve one or two tickets by emailing [sstraub@olneytheatre.org](mailto:sstraub@olneytheatre.org).**

Tickets are available to the public from \$42 - \$99 and can be purchased at [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org) or by calling the box office at 301-924-3400.

"This magical production had **a nationally-recognized impact on the thousands of kids and adults who saw it last year,**" said Olney Theatre Artistic Director Jason Loewith. "But thousands more lost their chance due to December's COVID wave, so we're bringing it back... and it'll be even better than before. Jade Jones and Evan Ruggiero return to prove, powerfully and proudly, that every one of us is beautiful."

**Jade Jones**, a self-described plus-sized, queer black woman who received two Helen Hayes Award nominations for her performances in *School Girls, or the African Mean Girls Play* (Round House Theatre) and *Into the Woods* (Ford's Theatre), will return to the iconic role of Belle. **Evan Ruggiero**, who continued to pursue a dancing career after losing a leg to cancer as a teenager and has gone on to become a Drama

Desk-nominated performer and the self-proclaimed "[Lord Pegleg](#)," will once more co-star as the Beast.

Joining the cast for this iteration are **Kelli Blackwell** (*A.D. 16*) as Mrs. Potts, multiple Helen Hayes Award-winner **Tracy Lynn Olivera** (*Roald Dahl's Matilda: The Musical*) as Madame de la Grande Bouche, and **Ariana Caldwell** (Constellation's *Once On This Island*) as Chip.

Olney Theatre's *Beauty and the Beast* will also feature returning cast members **Michael Burrell** as Gaston, **Bobby Smith** (*Elf*) as Lumiere, **Dylan Arredondo** (National Players Alumnus) as Cogsworth, **John Sygar** (*Once*) as Lefou, **Sasha Olinick** as Maurice, and **Hailey Ibberson** as Babette. The ensemble includes: **Conor James Reilly**, **Miya Hamashige**, **Ariel Messeca**, **Michael Wood**, **Selena Clyne-Galindo**, **Erica Leigh Hansen**, **Tyler White**, and **Megan Tatum**; with **Shiloh Orr** and **Graciela Rey** as swings.

For decades, Disney and its *Beauty and the Beast* have defined "beauty" for children all over the world. **Marcia Milgrom Dodge's production celebrates "beauty" in all its forms.** Milgrom Dodge has a long track record of "smuggling in" a deeper meaning to classic stories, and uncovering the burning, contemporary truths beneath them. She explained on 2021, "**Our production celebrates community, authenticity, acceptance, and kindness; and with the help of a few magic spells, provides a thoroughly inclusive 'Happily Ever After.'**"

Nominated for a Tony Award for her 2009 **Broadway revival of *Ragtime***, Milgrom Dodge's work has been seen throughout the United States, in Canada, England, Asia, Denmark, and the Middle East, in theatres both on Broadway and Off-Broadway. It has also been featured at acclaimed regional theatres such as the New York City Opera, the Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, Goodman Theatre, and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Her work has won Helen Hayes, Carbonell, Los Angeles Drama Critics, Backstage Garland, Dora Mavor, New York Outer Critics Circle, and Daytime Emmy Awards. She has also been nominated for Tony, Drama Desk, Astaire, Drama League, Barrymore, and Edgar Awards. She is an executive board member of the Stage Directors & Choreographers Society and a published and produced playwright. Dodge is also a featured director on the new Disney+ reality show, *Encore!*

Choreographer **Josh Walden** reunites with Milgrom Dodge after serving as Associate Director/Choreographer on the 2009 revival of *Ragtime*. He has choreographed an episode of *Encore!* on Disney+, as well as various productions at the Kennedy Center, Drury Lane Theatre, Signature Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and the Tisch

School of the Arts. Walden's Director/Choreographer credits include *A Chorus Line* (Maltz Jupiter Theatre, Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, and Theatre Memphis), *Legally Blonde* (Merry-Go-Round Playhouse), *On the Town* (Capital City Theatre), and the rock opera *Fallen Angel*, which won Best Musical at the International Fringe Festival. As a performer, Walden has been seen in the Broadway revivals of *42nd Street*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *A Chorus Line*, and *Ragtime*. His dance company, Josh Walden Dance Theatre, received an honorable mention for Direction and Choreography at the New York Musical Theatre Festival for its production of *All Is Love*.

Award-winning music director **Walter "Bobby" McCoy** currently works with young artists as a faculty member with both Adventure Theatre MTC and Levine Music School. His music direction credits include *The Wild Party* at Constellation Theatre Company, *Caroline, or Change* and *Once On This Island* at Creative Cauldron, *A Christmas Story*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Mame* at Riverside Center for the Performing Arts, and *American Idiot* and *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* at Little Butterfly Theatre. McCoy earned a Helen Hayes Award in 2017 for his music direction of *In the Heights* at GALA Hispanic Theatre, as well as a nomination for his work on *Old Wicked Songs* at 1st Stage in 2015.

The production showcases fight choreography by **Robb Hunter**, scenic design by **Narelle Sissons**, costume design by **Ivania Stack**, wig design by **Ali Pohanka**, lighting design by **Colin K. Bills**, and sound design by **Matt Rowe**. **John Keith Hall** will return as Stage Manager.

Olney Theatre's Community Engagement Department will be running several events in support of *Beauty and the Beast*, including a backstage tour, a Disney trivia night, and an art workshop for kids to draw their own character.

## **EVENT DETAILS**

### **Disney's *Beauty and the Beast***

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Howard Ashman and Tim Rice

Book by Linda Woolverton

Directed by Marcia Milgrom Dodge

Music Direction by Walter "Bobby" McCoy

Choreography by Josh Walden

**November 9, 2022 - January 1, 2023**

Tickets: \$42-\$99 available at [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org) and 301-924-3400

## **Related Events**

### **Beyond the Stage: Disney Trivia Night!**

Thursday, November 17, 2022

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

Location: Actors Hall at Olney Theatre Center

Price: \$5

If your brain is full of random Disney-related knowledge that you don't know what to do with, put it to the test with at our happy hour Disney Trivia Night! Showcase your amazing mind to win tickets to future shows at Olney Theatre. And that's not all: we have our home team of Olney staff members who are strong contenders. You can sign up with your friends as a team or come on your own and join our home team. Drinks & snacks are available to purchase.

Hosted by Briana Williamson of Enchanted Empowerment

### **Behind the Scenes: Backstage Tour**

Saturday, November 19, 2022

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Location: Mainstage Theatre at Olney Theatre Center

\$10 per person or \$25 for a family of 3 or more

Dancing candlesticks, magic roses, talking teacups... how does a professional theater bring the magic behind *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* to life? We want to show you! So we're inviting folks of every age to come on stage and see how we do it. Lighting demonstrations, costume and prop displays, scenery moves... our professional production staff leads you on an inspiring tour through the backstage magic. RSVP early; this annual event tends to sell out fast!

Two food trucks, Flipside Gastro and Achiote MCK, will be on parked on campus 4:30-8:30 pm!

### **Beyond the Stage: Kids' Activity - Draw Yourself Into the Story!**

Sunday, December 11, 2022

11:00 am to 12:00 pm

Location: 1938 Original Theatre at Olney Theatre Center

\$5 per participant or \$15 for a family of 3 or more

Magic, fantasy, and dreams coming true: fairytales have it all! Ever wished that you could be *part of that world*? What about making your own? We're inviting kiddos to our character drawing workshop for a chance to draw and design your own royal fairytale character. We'll provide paper, pencils, pens, colored pencils, and even examples and drawing guides. Draw your own fairytale, grab some lunch, then come back for *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* at 2:00 pm!

## **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 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, OTC 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 40 full time staff, 20 part-time positions, 26 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](http://olneytheatre.org/history)

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