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**PETER FLYNN DIRECTS OLNEY THEATRE CENTER'S  
*FIDDLER ON THE ROOF* WITH AN EYE TOWARD THE GLOBAL SHTETL**

Rising anti-Semitism, Russian aggression, refugee crises, and women's struggles against patriarchal authority reinforce the timeless themes that speak across generations and communities

**Olney, MD — October 5, 2023 — Ethan Watermeier** will star as Tevye and Broadway veteran **Rachel Stern** (*Girl From the North Country*) as Golde in **Olney Theatre Center's** new production of ***Fiddler on the Roof***, set to run **November 8 to December 31** on the regional theatre's **Roberts Mainstage in Olney, Maryland**. As with its acclaimed production of *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* which centered a **plus-sized African-American** actor as Belle, and its **ASL and English** production of *Meredith Willson's The Music Man*, Olney Theatre's *Fiddler* is seeking to expand the classic's resonance to encompass new audiences and communities.

**The invited press performance is on Saturday, November 11 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 \$35 - \$101 and can be purchased at [olneytheatre.org/fiddler](http://olneytheatre.org/fiddler) or by calling the box office at 301-924-3400.

Director **Peter Flynn's staging begins after *Fiddler's* narrative ends**, in a timeless version of the immigration center where the Jews of Anatevka hope to land. Tevye (Watermeier) has arrived with his wife and two youngest daughters, eager to regain a sense of community by sharing the story of his family's displacement, and its struggles between tradition and progress. **So, he enlists others who want to immigrate to America – and who have likely also been displaced, as he has – in telling his story and creating (metaphorically) the American community he hopes to join.** Those whom he enlists will be the ensemble members representing the many different ethnic and religious backgrounds found in the Olney Theatre community, one of the most diverse in America.

Says Artistic Director Jason Loewith, **"Without changing a word or note** of this beautiful musical, **Peter Flynn's staging celebrates that most typical Jewish-American journey, and links that journey with an American immigrant story that continues today.** His idea perfectly reflects the changing mission of the

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS): *We used to aid refugees because they were Jews. Now we aid refugees because we are Jews.* As Cantor Stephanie Weishaar said to me when I told her about our plans, ‘the enduring power of *Fiddler* is that for every culture, in every part of the world, they see THEIR story in *Fiddler*.’”

in the cast as Tevye’s rebellious daughters are **Sophie Schulman** as Tzeitel, **Ariana Caldwell** as Chava, and **Sumie Yotsukura** as Hodel. **Michael Wood** (Motel), **Jay Frisby** (Fyedka), and **Noah Keyishian** (Perchik) portray the three daughters’ non-arranged marriage suitors. Populating Anatevka are **Jason B. McIntosh** (Lazar Wolf), **Graciela Rey** (The Fiddler), **Sasha Olinick** (Rabbi), **Cheryl J. Campo** (Yente), **Ariel Messeca** (Mendel), **Dylan Arredondo** (Avram), **Robert Mintz** (Innkeeper), **Jamie Baumgardner** and **Daniel Powers** (Russian Soldiers), and **Russell Rinker** (Constable). Haunting Tevye’s dreams are **Miranda Pepin** (Fruma Sarah) and **Tsaitami Duchicela** (Grandma Tzeitel). Sharing the roles of Tevye and Golde’s two youngest daughters are **Naomi Biel**, **Daphne Wheeler** (Shprintze), and **Olivia Fegler**, **Maisie Posner** (Bielke). **Caroline Graham** and **Joey Ledonio** are swings for the production.

This will be Peter Flynn’s second directing gig at Olney Theatre Center, where he helmed *Roald Dahl’s Matilda the Musical*. His New York directing credits include the off-Broadway premiere of *Smart Blonde* by Willy Holtzman starring **Andréa Burns**; the off-Broadway premiere of **Curvy Widow** by Bobby Goldman & Drew Brody; *Rhapsody in Seth* starring **Seth Rudetsky**; Lee Blessing’s *Two Rooms*; the 75th Anniversary performance of Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* with Adriane Lenox, B.D. Wong, S. Epatha Merkerson; *On the 20th Century* with Douglas Sills & Marin Mazzie; *Chess* with Josh Groban & Julia Murney; *Funny Girl* with Bebe Neuwirth, Whoopi Goldberg, & Andrea Martin; *Skippyjon Jones*, and *Junie B. Jones* (nominated for two Lucille Lortel Awards including Best Musical). Other DC credits include *Into the Woods* & *Ragtime* (Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding Direction for both productions) for Ford’s Theatre where he is an Associate Artist.

Flynn’s creative team includes Olney Theatre-newcomer Choreographer **Lorna Ventura**, who has worked on the Original Broadway productions of shows such as *Wicked*, *Grease*, *All Shook Up*, *Harlem Song*, and *Nice Work If You Can Get It* — as an Original Cast Member or Associate Choreographer — alongside acclaimed talents like Idina Menzel, Stephanie J. Block, Kristen Chenoweth, Rosie O’Donnell, Ben Vereen, and Joel Grey. Olney’s Associate Artistic Director **Christopher Youstra** serves as Music Director along with other Olney veterans, **Milagros Ponce de Leon** (Scenic Designer), **Pei Lee** (Costume Designer), **Max Doolittle** (Lighting Designer), **Matt Rowe** (Sound Designer), **Ali Pohanka** (Wig Designer), and **Jenny Male** (Fight and Intimacy Choreographer). New York Casting was provided by **Stephanie Yankwitt, CSA** of **tbd**

**Casting.** **John Keith Hall** is the Stage Manager. **Chess Jakobs** is the Assistant Director and **Daniel Powers** the Assistant Choreographer.

With a production meant to reflect the diverse community in which it is performed, it follows that Olney Theatre's Director of Community Engagement, Shruthi Mukund has a robust line-up of supporting events. Among the highlights are an Opening Night conversation with **Alisa Solomon**, author of "**Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof**," and **Rabbi Sarah Bassin**, the Director of Clergy and Congregations at **HIAS, which draws on Jewish values and history to provide vital services to refugees and asylum seekers throughout the world** (November 11 at 5:00 pm); a special **Backstage Tour** (November 19); a **Holiday Traditions Story Time at the Olney Public Library** (November 19 at 1:00 pm); and a **Broadway Musical Trivia Night** (November 30). **The Salat Foods** truck will be on-site serving Middle Eastern comfort food between performances on Saturdays (November 18 - December 30).

## **PRODUCTION DETAILS**

### ***Fiddler on the Roof***

Based on Sholem Aleichem stories by special permission of Arnold Perl

Book by Joseph Stein

Music by Jerry Bock

Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick

Produced on the New York Stage by Harold Prince

Original New York Stage Production Directed and Choreographed by Jerome Robbins

Music Direction by Christopher Youstra

Choreographed by Lorna Ventura

Directed by Peter Flynn

### **Dates, Location, Tickets**

**November 8, 2022 - December 31, 2023**

**Roberts Mainstage**

**Olney Theatre Center**

2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road

Olney, MD 20832

**Tickets: \$35 - \$101 available at [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org) and 301-924-3400**

### **Performance Schedule**

Wednesday through Saturday evenings at 7:30 pm.

Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday matinees at 1:30 pm.

Sunday evenings at 7:00 pm.

Additional performances around Thanksgiving and Winter Break.

See the full schedule at: <https://tickets.olneytheatre.org/overview/fiddler-on-the-roof>

### **Accessible Performances**

Sensory Friendly Performance – Tuesday, November 21 at 1:30 pm

Audio-Described Performance – Wednesday, December 6 at 7:30 pm

ASL Interpreted Performance – Thursday, December 9 at 7:30 pm

### **RELATED EVENTS**

BEHIND THE SCENES — *What happened after Anatevka?*

Opening Night Discussion with Author Alisa Solomon

Thursday, Nov 11, 5:00–6:00 p.m.

Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab

\$10 / Free for members

For a very special opening night, Olney Theatre Center welcomes author Alisa Solomon, whose seminal book *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* changed the way Americans think about the history and legacy of Tevye's story. Alisa is joined in a conversation about *Fiddler's* legacy with Rabbi Sarah Bassin, the Director of Clergy and Congregations at HIAS, which draws on Jewish values and history to provide vital services to refugees and asylum seekers throughout the world. Artistic Director Jason Loewith moderates this conversation about what *Fiddler* continues to mean for 21st-century America.

### **In The Community—**

#### **“Holiday Traditions” Story Time at the Olney Library**

Sunday, Nov 19, 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Olney Public Library (3500 Olney Laytonville Rd, Olney, MD 20832)

No RSVP. Just show up!

As part of our celebration of *Fiddler*, we're sponsoring a morning of stories at the Olney Public Library. This is a free family event appropriate for all ages, especially toddlers, preschoolers, and young children. Books to be read are chosen with the help of the Olney librarian.

### **BEYOND THE STAGE: 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

How does a professional theater bring the magic behind *Fiddler on the Roof* 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!

Your tour guide:

**Kirsten Parker** (Production Manager) is excited to lead the backstage tours for Olney Theatre Center, just like she did during her time working for Carnival Cruise lines. Education: BFA Technical Theatre - Stage Management from Point Park University, MA Theatre Arts - Arts Management from George Mason University.

### **BEYOND THE STAGE- Broadway/Musical Trivia Night**

Thursday, Nov 30, 2023 from 6 to 7:15 PM

Location: Actors Hall, Olney Theatre Center

Tickets: \$10

Drinks and snacks available for purchase.

If your brain is full of random musical-related knowledge that you don't know what to do with, put it to the test at our happy hour Broadway/Musical Trivia Night! Sign up with a team, or come as a single and make some new friends.

#### **Host:**

**Chris Youstra** (Music Director/ Director of Music Theater) As the past resident music director, Mr. Youstra has music directed and conducted over 45 musicals at Olney Theatre Center, including *The Most Wonderful Time of the Year*, *A.D. 16*, *Cabaret*, *Matilda*, *Once*, and many more.

### **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)

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

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