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**CYNDI LAUPER’S TONY-WINNING *KINKY BOOTS* IS FIRST MUSICAL OF 2023 ON THE OLNEY THEATRE CENTER MAINSTAGE**

Artistic Director Jason Loewith helms the feel-good musical and features local stars Solomon Parker III as a drag queen Lola, and Vincent Kempfski as troubled shoe manufacturer Charlie

**Olney, MD — January 3, 2023** — “The sex is in the heel” and on the Olney Theatre Center Mainstage as *Kinky Boots* runs **February 10 - March 19, 2023**. With music and lyrics by pop-icon **Cyndi Lauper**, a book by Broadway-legend **Harvey Fierstein**, and its tale of overcoming prejudice and stereotypes, the Olney Theatre production is just the thing to get winter-worn theatregoers through to spring. Director **Jason Loewith**, in addition to longtime collaborators **Christopher Youstra** (Music Director) and **Tara Jeanne Vallee** (Choreographer) will also be aided by **Devon Vaow** (who is well known in drag circles as [Evon Michelle](#)), as the production’s drag consultant and makeup designer. Additionally, costume designer **Kendra Rai** supplies the inspiration for the titular footwear, a bevy of drag queens, and industrial factory workers **The invited press performance is Thursday, February 16 at 8:00 pm. Interested critics may reserve two tickets by emailing [sstraub@olneytheatre.org](mailto:sstraub@olneytheatre.org).** Tickets are available from \$42 - \$85 and can be purchased at [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org) or 301-924-3400.

Said Loewith about the production, “What better way to start 2023 than with a Tony-winning musical about optimism, change, tolerance and acceptance? *Kinky Boots* is a fun and wild ride, and I’m so excited to **RAISE UP** our audiences alongside this stellar cast and creative team.”

In the show, which is based on a little-seen indie film of the same name, Charlie Price (**Vincent Kempfski**) is desperately trying to save his family’s shoe factory, when an encounter with Lola (**Solomon Parker III**), a London drag queen in need of a quick repair for her boot, unites them in a new business venture. In order for their plan to work, the macho culture of Charlie’s economically depressed industrial hometown is going to have to co-exist with the gender-fluid exuberance of Lola and her queens.

**Solomon Parker III**, who also performs in drag as **Echinacea Monroe**, grew up in Montgomery County, and sees his Olney debut as Lola serving as a kind of “capstone” to a DC-theatre career that has seen him rise to the first rank of local performers. He recently was a standout in Signature’s production of *The Color Purple* and Ford’s Theatre’s *Grace*. Says Parker, “I was lucky to grow up with the diversity of Silver Spring. But I’m definitely from a tougher part of the county. So embracing my femininity, expressing that in drag, has been a majorly expressive feat. **Like I’m a 200 pound black dude. I get Lola. I’ve lived and continue to live Simon’s experience.** To be able to embrace our shared gender fluidity is going to be an incredible experience to share onstage. I’m 15 minutes from the street I grew up on. So leading this show and telling this story is a real pinnacle for me.”

**Vincent Kempiski** makes a long-anticipated return to Olney Theatre to play Charlie coming off acclaimed performances as the Wolf/Cinderella’s Prince in Signature Theatre’s production of *Into The Woods* and last year’s turn as Roger in the Virginia company’s production of *Rent*.

Also joining the ***Kinky Boots*** cast are **Candice Shedd-Thompson** as Charlie’s longtime girlfriend Nicola; **Stephen Schmidt** as Charlie’s dad; **Chris Genebach** as the ultra-masculine factory worker Don; **Alex De Bard** as Lauren, a local factory girl; **Ricardo Blagrove** as Lola’s father Simon Sr; **Karl Kippola** as factory worker George; **Calvin McCullough** as Charlie’s shoe-biz connection Harry; **Stephen Murray** as Nicola’s boss Richard; **Kaiyla Gross** as office manager Pat, and **Sarah Anne Sillers** as Trish, a factory employee with a lot to lose. **Shane Hall** (Dance Captain), **Connor Reilly**, **Robbi Duncan**, **Quadry Brown**, **David Singleton** and **Malachi Alexander** are the Angels - Lola’s fellow drag queens. **Henry Harleston** will play Young Lola/Simon, while **Grayden Goldman** and **Dustin Sardella** share the role of Young Charlie. Swings for the production are **Alexis Krey**, **Catrina Brenae** and **Tyrell Stanley**.

Joining Loewith, Youstra, Vallee, Vaow, and Rai on the creative team are **Milagros Ponce de León** (set designer), **Larry Peterson** (wig designer), **Max Doolittle** (lighting designer), and **Matt Rowe** (lighting designer). **Leigh Wilson Smiley** is the dialect coach, **Casey Kaleba** is the fight choreographer, and **Ben Walsh** is the Production Stage Manager.

### **First Time Free**

Once again, Olney Theatre Center is making **4 free tickets to preview performances** of ***Kinky Boots*** (Feb. 10, 11, 12 & 15) available to new patrons who have never

attended a production. Those tickets may be reserved by using the code **1stTimeFree** prior to selecting seats.

### **MASK POLICY**

Masks are required at performances on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Masks are recommended but not required at performances on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. This policy is subject to change, visit [OlneyTheatre.org/health](https://olneytheatre.org/health) for more information.

### **EVENT DETAILS**

#### **KINKY BOOTS**

Book by Harvey Fierstein

Music and Lyrics by Cyndi Lauper

Original Broadway production Directed and Choreographed by Jerry Mitchell

Based on the Miramax motion picture *Kinky Boots*, written by

Geoff Deane and Tim Firth

Music Direction by Christopher Youstra

Choreography by Tara Jeanne Vallee

Directed by Jason Loewith

Scenic Designer Milagros Ponce de León

Costume Designer Kendra Rai

Lighting Designer Max Doolittle

Sound Designer Matt Rowe

Fight Choreographer Casey Kaleba

Wig Designer Larry Peterson

Makeup Designer & Drag Consultant Devon Vaow

Production Stage Manager Ben Walsh

**Begins performances: February 10**

**Previews:** February 10 - February 15, 2023

**Press opening:** Thursday, February 16 at 8:00 pm (RSVP to [sstraub@olneytheatre.org](mailto:sstraub@olneytheatre.org))

**Scheduled to run through:** March 19, 2023

Performances Wednesday through Saturday at 8:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 pm, Wednesday matinees at 2:00 pm on February 15 and March 1. No Saturday matinee on February 11.

### **Accessibility**

GalaPro captioning on smartphones and tablets is available for all performances.  
Audio-described performance for the visually-impaired on Wed., March 22 at 8:00 pm.  
Sign-interpeted performance on Thurs., March 2 at 8:00 pm.

### **Related Events at Olney Theatre**

#### **Opening Night Panel Discussion: Drag, Theater, & Culture, from *La Cage Aux Folles* to Ru Paul**

Thursday, February 16, 2023

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Mainstage Theatre

\$10/Free for members

We will trace the history of the art of drag and drag culture from its underground origins to its movement into “the mainstream”.

Moderated by: Rashaud Matthews

Speakers: Evon Dior Michelle - Director of Entertainment/CoFounder of [SADBrunch Entertainment](#); Sunrize (Joseph W. Ritsch) - Director/Choreographer/Producing Artistic Director at [Rep Stag](#)

#### **Beyond the Stage - Sip n (Face) Paint (BYOM)**

Saturday, February 25, 2023 at

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

1938 Original Theatre

\$10

Batimore’s 2020 Drag Queen of the Year and Director of Entertainment/CoFounder of [SADBrunch Entertainment](#), Evon Dior Michelle, will lead a Drag Makeup Tutorial. This event is B.Y.O.M.: bring your own makeup! Enjoy experimenting with bold and bright looks!

Drinks and snacks will be available to purchase.

#### **Not-Your-Typical-Singles Mixer**

Thursday, March 9, 2023

6:00 pm Mixer

8:00 pm *Kinky Boots*

Location: Actors Hall at Olney Theatre Center

Tickets plus pre-show reception: \$40

~Drag~ yourself (or not) to the “It’s Not Your Typical Night in the burbs!” We have the glamorously talented Evon Dior Michelle, Director of Entertainment and CoFounder of [SADBrunch Entertainment](#), as our host for our first ever Singles Mixer at Olney Theatre! We

have reserved a section in the Mainstage Theatre for all the attendees to sit together to watch *Kinky Boots* after the mixer.

Drinks and snacks will be available to purchase.

## **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 reimaginings 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 Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok @olneytheatre and on Facebook at [facebook.com/olneytheatre](https://facebook.com/olneytheatre).

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