Open Circle Theatre produces high-quality, inventive theatre productions that provide opportunities for professional theatre artists with and without disabilities.



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NEWS RELEASE

Open Circle Theatre is BACK and Announces The Who's Tommy

SAVE THE DATE: Press Night - Friday, October 28, 2016 at 8 pm

For Immediate Release:

July 28, 2016

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WASHINGTON -- Open Circle Theatre (OCT), announced today its upcoming production of *The Who's Tommy* (Music and Lyrics by Pete Townshend, Book by Pete Townshend and Des McAnuff) running October 27 through November 20, 2016 at the Silver Spring Black Box Theatre. After a five-year hiatus, OCT bursts back onto the scene with this challenging piece based on the beloved rock opera of the 70's. But if there is one thing OCT loves, it's a challenge! *Tommy* uses driving rock rhythms to explore the story of a young boy traumatized by a violent act as he struggles through different stages of his recovery. With the show's most recognizable song, *Pinball Wizard* stating, "This deaf, dumb and blind kid sure plays a mean Pinball." OCT dives into the fray asking questions:

- How does violent crime victimization impact the disability community?
- What does it mean to be healed?
- How can a person deal with the extremes of villainy versus virtue that society applies to people with disabilities?

Part of OCT's founding philosophy is that disability can enhance the artistic experience and inspire aesthetic innovation. Pete Townshend, the driving artistic voice behind The Who, uses Tommy's status as "that deaf, dumb and blind boy" as a metaphor for the abuse of his childhood and his eventual struggle to find balance as a rock superstar. In this performance, audiences can explore with the artists on and off stage what happens

when disability becomes more than a metaphor? What happens if, when Tommy turns around to speak for the first time, it's in American Sign Language?

OCT's Artistic Director Suzanne Richard (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, Helen Hayes Award Nomination) will direct the production and will once again partner with Dance Exchange for their modern, innovative choreography. Auditions and additional collaborators will be announced shortly. But you ain't seen nuthin' yet!

The Who's Tommy will be accessible to all audiences. OCT will be modifying the audience banks at the Silver Spring Black Box Theatre to seat patrons in wheelchairs in an integrated and dispersed fashion. Sign language will be seamlessly incorporated in the show with signing ensemble members who will create characters who happen to communicate in sign or likewise singing characters who happen to understand/use sign. At other points in the show, the production will incorporate real time captioning. There will also be audio described on demand at every performance for patrons who are blind or have low vision, as well as programs available online and a Braille copy at the theatre.

Please visit our new website and blog at <u>www.opencircletheatre.org</u> for more information and press from past years.

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