



545 7th Street SE
WDC 20003
(202) 873-5330
info@taffetypunk.com
www.taffetypunk.com

2 April 2024

Contact: Erin Mitchell Nelson
press@taffetypunk.com
(804) 357-6523

For Immediate Release:

A Goddess, a Hunk, and a Boar Walk into a ~~Bar~~ ^{forest}...

Taffety Punk presents Shakespeare's origin story of frustrated love.

Venus and Adonis
by **William Shakespeare**
presented as a concert poem

Directed by Marcus Kyd
Choreography by Erin Mitchell Nelson
Original music and sound design by Kathy Cashel

Where: Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003)
When: April 18 — 27, 2024
Price: \$15 — Tickets available at www.taffetypunk.com

Taffety Punk is thrilled to present a hybrid concert of the poem that made Shakespeare famous. *Venus and Adonis* so astounded the Elizabethan world it was reprinted nine times before Shakespeare's death — much more than any of his plays or other poems. Waiting patiently for us all at the back of any "Complete Works," this timeless poem grapples with a pendulum of passions between desire and restraint, and remains as vivid and visceral to the modern audience as when it was new. It's time to put this classic on the top of the playlist, remastered by Taffety Punk.

Based on a brief story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, immortal Venus falls for the mortal Adonis and woos him. Astonishingly, Adonis seems indifferent — a first for her! — putting the Goddess of Love at risk of suffering from an unrequited love. Weaving music and dance into this rich tapestry of verse, Taffety Punk amplifies the emotional underpinnings of this unique and riveting story to make it as ardent as a first kiss. The dramatic and thematic revelations in the text focus on love and loss; expectations of roles and status; and the inversion of those expectations.

Embracing the innate storyteller function of an epic poem, *Venus and Adonis* features two Taffety Punk company members, renowned actors **Tonya Beckman** and **Lise Bruneau**, who bring their wealth of vocal experience to bear on the poetry. "One of the things that I'm most drawn to about the poem is that it's the piece that made Shakespeare a star, yet most of us today don't know much about it," says Beckman. "I am excited to have the opportunity to dig into it, just for that reason. That he wrote it in quarantine during a plague feels relevant, as we're only a couple of years out of our own similar experience. And I love the unexpected comedy that is popping up along the way."

Company member **Kathy Cashel**, a stalwart of DC's punk and indie music scene, provides intermittent sonic fields for the poem to soar over. Choreographer **Erin Mitchell Nelson**

enhances the story with movement impulses drawn from Shakespeare's imagery performed by dancer **Sarina Martinez de Osaba**.

Taffety Punk has a proven history of bringing Shakespeare's lesser-known works to life with dynamic adaptations that make the story meaningful to contemporary audiences. The company's celebrated adaptation of the Bard's other epyllion, *The Rape of Lucrece*, features a full rock band and modern dance at play with the actors' narrative. *Venus and Adonis* is a quieter interpretation, but similar to *Lucrece*, director **Marcus Kyd** keeps the text onstage with the actors. Kyd says, "The structure of these poems frees us from the constraints imposed by a play. We are emphasizing the storyteller nature of it, and we have some expressive freedom in terms of sound and choreography to enhance the emotional impact." He adds, "We are thrilled to give this too-long overlooked poem a sort of modern debut."

Venus and Adonis plays at 8:00pm on a variety of dates between April 18 and 27 at the **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003 – two blocks from Metro's Orange/Blue Line stop at Eastern Market). There is a half-price preview on Thursday April 18. The show will open on Friday, April 19, and then play on April 20, 23, 25, 26, and finally closes Saturday, April 27. There will be cake in the lobby available on April 23 to celebrate Shakespeare's Birthday. In keeping with Taffety Punk's promise to keep ticket prices low, tickets are \$15, and are available at <https://www.taffetypunk.com>.

This show runs 80 minutes without an intermission.

Featuring company members Tonya Beckman, Lise Bruneau, with guest artist Sarina Martinez de Osaba, *Venus and Adonis* is directed by company member and co-founder Marcus Kyd, with original choreography by company member and co-founder Erin Mitchell Nelson. Lights designed by company member Chris Curtis. Music and sound composed and designed by company member Kathy Cashel.

For hi-res photos, go to: <https://www.taffetypunk.com/press/>.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company is the resident company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. Founded to establish an actively collaborative company of actors, dancers, and musicians, the company has been at the forefront of theatre innovation, presenting groundbreaking productions that inspire audiences and introducing new playwrights and stories to the stage, new works of choreography, and new compositions of original music. Through its artist-nurturing Generator program Taffety Punk has a rich history of developing original works that challenge theatre norms. Generator projects that have realized full production include the widely celebrated dance plays *suicide.chat.room*, *Fragments of Sappho*, and *Enter Ophelia, distracted*; as well as the world premieres of Liz Maestri's *Inheritance Canyon*, and Kelsey Mesa's *La Salpêtrière* (nominated for five Helen Hayes Awards in 2024 including Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Production). Over the years, Taffety Punk has garnered numerous accolades and recognition for its work and, in fact, won the very first John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company from the Helen Hayes Awards. The Washington Post declared the company "The most vital of the city's small

troupes.” The company’s all-female ensemble, the Riot Grrrls, have repeatedly delighted audiences delivering impassioned productions of classical plays while empowering women in theatre. The Bootleg Shakespeare is a widely celebrated event the company hosts with the partnership of the Folger Theatre providing the most exciting night of theatre anyone could ask for: an entire Shakespeare play rehearsed and performed in a single day. The company has released albums by its company members and their tangential bands, most notably the indie rock sensation Beauty Pill, the musical home for two Taffety Punk Company Members: composer Chad Clark and singer Erin Mitchell Nelson. Taffety Punk’s music catalog is available on all streaming platforms and via taffetypunk.bandcamp.com where LPs and singles can be ordered. As Taffety Punk Theatre Company moves forward, it remains committed to its mission to ignite a public passion for theatre by making the classical and the contemporary exciting, meaningful, and affordable. The company is excited to continue its legacy of excellence and making the greatest theatre for the lowest price.

Marcus Kyd (Director) is a director, actor, and musician based in Washington, DC. He is the Artistic Director and co-founder of Taffety Punk Theatre Company where he has directed original works including *Enter Ophelia, distracted* (co-created with company member Kimberly Gilbert), *Fragments of Sappho* (based on the translations by Anne Carson), *suicide.chat.room*, the concert adaptations of Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*, and *The Phoenix and Turtle*, and new plays *Phaeton*, by Michael Milligan, and *Our Black Death*, by Lindsay Carpenter. He directed Adirondack Theatre Festival’s Production of *The Last Wide Open* (returning there this summer to director *Dial M for Murder*), and Contradiction Dance Company’s *Fashion Victim*, in collaboration with choreographer Kelly King. For three years he directed the Folger Shakespeare Library’s touring educational troupe “Bill’s Buddies” who brought Shakespeare to life for hundreds of students every year with a live performance and interactive workshops. As an actor Marcus has performed for the Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, The Folger Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Round House Theatre, Center Stage, Olney Theatre Center, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Arena Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre, Theater J, Anti-Social Music/WPAS, Nebraska Shakespeare Festival, and many more. He played guitar and sang for The Most Secret Method.

Erin Mitchell Nelson (Choreographer) is a performing artist, choreographer and teaching artist. She is a co-founder and the Managing Director of Taffety Punk, and has created original movement for many Taffety productions, including *This Inherent Echo*, *Enter Ophelia, distracted*, and *suicide.chat.room*, and the dance films “Tulips”, “The Surround”, and “At a Loss”. She was a company member with the Latin Ballet of Virginia (Richmond) and Wellspring/Cori Terry and Dancers (Michigan). She has been on faculty at Western Michigan University Department of Dance, and has worked with Exploring Ballet with Suzanne Farrell, Experimental Film Virginia, and the Midwest Regional Alternative Dance Festival (RADFest). Erin holds a BFA in Dance & Choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University, and an MA in Arts Management from American University. She is a vocalist for the band Beauty Pill and teaches dance and movement in the DCMetro area.

#