



**Taffety Punk**  
Theatre Company

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**Contaminated American health care system quarantined for thorough examination**  
Taffety Punk Theatre Company presents **The Health Care Crisis Plays:**

***Mercy Killers* and *Side Effects***

Written and Performed by **Michael Milligan**

**Where:** Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003)

**When:** May 19 - June 3, 2017

*Mercy Killers:* May 19, 25, 31, June 2, 3 at 8pm; May 27 at 4pm

*Side Effects:* May 20, 24, 26, 27, June 1 at pm; June 3 at 2pm

**Price:** All tickets \$15 at <http://tix.taffetypunk.com/> or 1-800-838-3006

For several years, a deeply personal yet unrelentingly political conversation has blared in our ears—blaring even louder, if possible, in the past couple months.

With the fate of American health care in constant jeopardy, Taffety Punk is thrilled to host actor and playwright **Michael Milligan**, who digs deep into the many facets of this issue—from patients' agony to doctors' frustration—to examine where we are and how far we have to go.

Milligan, whose play *Phaeton* was produced by Taffety Punk last season, will perform his two health care plays in rep for the first time, taking on perspectives of both patient and provider. In *Mercy Killers*, blue collar Joe grapples with his red state ideals when he realizes the measures he must take to care for his beloved wife. *Mercy Killers* is a tender love story and an unblinking look at health care in the United States.

Flipping the perspective to that of the caregivers, *Side Effects* asks why more than half of physicians in the U.S. struggle with burnout. In this new play, a doctor must reconcile the art and business of medicine as bureaucratic pressures collide with his professional and personal responsibilities. After several workshopping events, *Side Effects* receives its world premiere with Taffety Punk.

"I wrote *Mercy Killers* in response to a number of personal encounters with the healthcare system. A good friend of mine showed up at the Folger Theatre stage door after a show, carrying a small duffel bag, in which he had all of his belongings. He'd been living on the streets for a couple years. I invited him back to my place, where I discovered he also had a number of medical problems, a slipped disk in his neck from a fall and a golf ball size lump on his arm. I took it on myself to try to get him in to see someone. The difficulty of that blew my mind. It was overwhelming. If I lived in any number of other nations, I could have made an appointment and walked my friend to a doctor's office, and the first question would not have been 'what insurance do you have.'"

The impulse to create *Side Effects* was similarly visceral. When Milligan was on the road performing *Mercy Killers*, he started interviewing doctors and nurses in each community. "The situation for healthcare workers is desperate in some sectors of the system. There's even diagnostic terminology

now for what I've encountered, it's called 'moral distress.' It's crippling doctors and nurses; many of them are burning out and leaving the profession. The medical literature says that 'moral distress occurs when one knows the ethically correct action to take but feels powerless to take that action.' As our healthcare system becomes more bureaucratized and corporatized, as medical decisions are increasingly influenced by claims analysts, hospital administrators, and entitlement bureaucrats, *Side Effects* is a meditation on this problem."

"These issues are crippling America," says Taffety Punk artistic director **Marcus Kyd**. "Mike's plays bring us face to face with how and why these problems exist. Taffety Punk's hope is that people will leave with a greater idea of the severity of the problem and a renewed commitment to solving it."

Milligan says, "The character I play in *Mercy Killers*, Joe, is an auto mechanic from Southeastern Ohio, on the Appalachian border of West Virginia. He likes to listen to Rush Limbaugh at the shop. He's not the kind of guy whose story you would expect to be spearheading a multi-cultural, national conversation about healthcare justice." And yet, Milligan has found that Joe's story resonates strongly with audiences of disparate backgrounds and ethnicities.

Both *Mercy Killers* and *Side Effects* will run at **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003) where Taffety Punk is the resident theatre company. The venue is two blocks from Metro's Orange/Blue Line stop at Eastern Market.

Performances of *Mercy Killers* will be held May 19, 25, 31, June 2 and 3 at 8:00 PM; there will be a matinee on May 27 at 4:00 PM. Performances of *Side Effects* will be held May 20, 24, 26, 27, and June 1 at 8:00 PM; there will be a matinee on June 3 at 2:00 PM

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

Taffety Punk Theatre Company's mission is to establish a dynamic ensemble of actors, dancers and musicians who ignite a public passion for theatre by making the classical and the contemporary exciting, meaningful, and affordable. The company was recently nominated for Helen Hayes Awards in choreography for 2016's productions of *Phaeton* and *An Iliad*. Past awards include the John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company at the 2008 Helen Hayes Awards. The company was also a 2010 finalist for the D.C. Mayor's Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts.

**Michael Milligan** (PLAYWRIGHT) won the 2013 Fringe First award in Edinburgh with his one person play, *Mercy Killers*. He has been touring *Mercy Killers* since then, including a Taffety Punk "one shot" at the Harman Center last year. His new solo play, *Side Effects*, commissioned by the Zoellner Arts Center at Lehigh University, will kick off touring in the Fall at the Mayo Clinic. Michael's D.C. acting credits include: *Don Juan*, *Love's Labors Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Alchemist* at the Shakespeare Theater; *The Gaming Table* at the Folger Theatre. Michael just finished playing Iago in *Othello* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Broadway: *August: Osage County*, *La Bete*, *Jerusalem*. Off Broadway: *Thom Pain*, *Mercy Killers*. *The Golem*. Michael lives in Chicago.

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