



Taffety Punk Theatre Company

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Teresa Spencer writes love poems to her street harassers.

Punks and filmmakers create an evening devoted to satirical missed connections.

Too Like the Lightning

a multi-media reading with actor and poet **Teresa Spencer**

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

When: December 1, 2018, at 7:00 PM.

Price: \$15. Tickets available at www.taffetypunk.com.

Known champions of women in the arts, Taffety Punk takes a stand against catcallers with the comic poems of actor and riot grrrl **Teresa Spencer**. Long before the *#MeToo* movement caught steam, Spencer struck back at the constant and unbearable irritation women face everyday: street harassment. Channeling her anger through comedy and poetry, she turns the abuse on its head and presents each encounter as a missed opportunity, a lost-love-that-could-have-been. As the Juliet of irony, Spencer pummels catcallers, mansplainers, stalkers, and other sundry unsavories.

She has described the collection as "love poems to my street harassers." Sadly, she has endless material.

When asked what she hopes the audience will take away from her work, Spencer is very clear: "Power." She says, "Harassers do this shit to make us small. To make us feel that our voices, our very presence, is unwelcome in the public sphere. I want us all to feel as big and as full and as human as we actually are."

What started as a way to share her frustration became a much needed means of support for her immediate friends, who then shared the poems with their friends, and Spencer's influence spiraled outward from there. Her work resonated with so many that she started to receive requests from other women based on their experiences. The poems reached an even larger audience when they were featured on the website of feminist magazine *The Establishment*. A frequent collaborator with Taffety Punk, Spencer read the work aloud as an opening act for the "Hear Lucrece" project — a collaboration between the punks and Wolf Trap Opera which brought activist organizations and audiences together to focus attention on how to prevent violence against women and how to support women in need.

This collection of poems inspired another theatre troupe to produce a short independent film that would carry the intentions of the poems into new media. **Walterhoope** is a Cincinnati-based theatre company devoted to creating unique experiences for their audiences. Their film adaptation of "Too Like the Lightning" seeks to maintain the inherent comedy of Ms. Spencer's work, with a diverse cast representing the near-universality of the abuse. Walterhoope's artistic director, **Audrey Bertaux** says, "We are using comedy not to make light of the subject matter, but to rise above it."

Taking a cue from the Walterhoope event where the film premiered, Taffety Punk will curate an evening that includes food, and word-games for starters, followed by a live reading of select poems by Teresa Spencer herself, culminating in a screening of the new film.

As much as the evening is meant to inspire and empower women, Spencer and Taffety Punk artistic director **Marcus Kyd** want men to know they are definitely welcome and invited. For Kyd, "If I could make events like this mandatory for men, I would. We must listen. We must work for change. This behavior is one hundred percent preventable." Spencer adds that she wants men to discover that they "have a personal stake in understanding and combatting street harassment." She elaborates: "The reality is that while most men don't sexually harass strangers in public places, most people who do sexually harass strangers in public places are men. So I hope this is of interest to good dudes because it's an opportunity not only to understand an experience that severely negatively impacts your friends, lovers, partners, colleagues, and family members on a relentless basis, it also gets in the way of you, a good dude, just being a human living your non-harming life."

A one night only reading and screening, **Too Like the Lightning** will take place at the **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** on Saturday, December 1, at 7:00 PM. Single tickets, which include food from a company potluck, are now on sale for \$15 at taffetypunk.com. All tickets are general admission.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company is the resident company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003 - two blocks from Metro's Orange/Blue Line stop at Eastern Market.

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 has the distinct honor of winning the very first John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company at the 2008 Helen Hayes Awards, when the award was introduced. They have since received many "Helen Hayes Recommended" endorsements for their productions, and have been nominated for more awards — most recently for choreography for *Phaeton* and *An Iliad*. The company was also a 2010 finalist for the D.C. Mayor's Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts. Taffety Punk has produced plays, dance concerts, and original music, often weaving all three forms into the same event. They have released a 7" single ("And Then It Faster Rock'd") and a full length album (the score for "Oxygen"), and a collection of songs by company member Jupiter Rex.

Teresa Spencer (*actor, poet*) has been making theatre in the Washington, DC-Baltimore area as an actor and writer for over a decade. Heightened form is her jam: kinetic, iambic, devised, and dissident. A couple years ago, she wrote a joke love poem to a street harasser and put it on the internet. The joke eventually grew into a series of prose poems, "Too Like the Lightning", first published by *The Establishment* and now translated from prose to film by the Cincinnati-based arts organization Walterhoope, where Teresa is a Resident Artist. She's also a Taffety Punk Riot Grrrl, and has appeared with the company in *Titus Andronicus*, *The Tempest*, the Rulebreaker Rep (Howard Brenton's *Bloody Poetry*, and Kathleen Cahill's *Charm*), and as the Duke of York in Bootleg *Henry VI, parts 1, 2 & 3*. Teresa recently appeared in Theater Alliance's devised drama-dance-installation *Still Life With Rocket*, which won a 2018 Helen Hayes Award for Best Production. She'll be on stage next in *Fallen Angels* at NextStop, and she's currently developing Walterhoope's next project, *Wellspring*, a sci-fi podcast series taking aim at xenophobia, to be released in early 2019. Teresa is a faculty member in the Department of Theatre Arts at Towson University and holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting. www.teresaspencer.net

Walterhoope is a Cincinnati theatre arts organization, whose mission is to create the best theatre while uniting diverse art forms, to treat audiences as family and provide unique experiences for them, to use arts education to foster a healthy community, and to do it all responsibly. The film based on excerpts from the poetry collection *Too Like the Lightning* is directed by Walterhoope founding members, Audrey Bertaux, David Mavricos, and William Vaughan; featuring Audrey Bertaux, Billy Chace, Ernaisja Curry, Tatiana Godfrey, Padma, Teresa Spencer, and William Vaughan; with sound and original music by Matthew M. Neilson, The Curious Music Co.

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