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Contact: Kelsey Mesa
press@taffetypunk.com
(305) 785-3295

TAFFETY PUNK'S RIOT GRRRL *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*

An all-female cast takes on the erupting passions and crazy 'ado' of Shakespeare's comedy

Taffety Punk Theatre Company presents *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare
With an all-female cast featuring company members **Tonya Beckman Ross** as Beatrice, **Kimberly Gilbert** as Benedick, and **Esther Williamson** as Claudio.
Directed by Eleanor Holdridge

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

When: Opening Night: Friday, September 9 at 7:30 PM; Wednesdays through Saturdays until September 24 at 7:30 PM; Saturday matinees as 3:00 PM

Price: All tickets \$10 at <http://tix.taffetypunk.com/> or 1-800-838-3006

The law of supply and demand works against women in classical theatre. A dearth of Shakespearean women characters coupled with a huge pool of talented female actors in D.C. makes competition for the handful of roles in each production fierce.

The Riot Grrrls movement in the 1990's asked, "Why aren't there more women in punk rock?" Asking why there aren't more women characters in classical theatre plays is futile, so Taffety Punk Theatre Company twists the act of performing Shakespeare, asking, "Why can't women play the men?"

For the fourth year, that is exactly what the actors in Taffety Punk's Riot Grrrls will do. Following an all-female production of *Romeo and Juliet* (in direct response to the Shakespeare Theatre Company's all-male version), Riot Grrrls took on sexually-charged *Measure for Measure* and testosterone-laden *Julius Caesar*. This year, led by director and Riot Grrrl newcomer Eleanor Holdridge, the Riot Grrrls present *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Holdridge brings the experience of over thirty Shakespeare productions to Riot Grrrls but has never directed an all-female cast in a Shakespeare play. "To me, it seems close to what [Shakespeare] did himself back in the day: a single sex to represent both, with the constant humor, almost meta-theatrical wit in his ruminations on the sexes," she says.

Taffety Punk company member Esther Williamson has watched the Riot Grrrls evolve, portraying Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*, Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, and Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. She looks forward to Riot Grrrls for the opportunity to take on roles she would normally not be cast in because "Shakespeare's male characters have very different motivations than his female ones and it's great fun to figure out what makes them tick." This year, Williamson plays Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

About the progression of Riot Grrrls, Williamson says, "Riot Grrrls has matured along with the plays. *Romeo and Juliet* was full of adolescent energy that was a direct parallel to our experience of putting on an all-female show for the first time. *Measure for Measure* was a different kind of exploration with much more complicated themes. *Julius Caesar* really dealt with men—not boys. We had to grow up a lot last year in order to grapple with that play."

Much Ado About Nothing revolves around themes familiar to our world today: the returning soldier and the society—and love—they confront upon their return. Holdridge explains, “In *Much Ado*, a group of elite soldiers come back from a war that seems strangely distant from the lives of the town and from the action of the play. But as they strive valiantly to live it up during their leave, re-enter the life of the town and get on with the stuff of life, their own passions erupt in a crazy ‘ado.’”

“The very human comedy of the tension between soldier and local constabulary, the misunderstandings that burst to the surface, the ridiculous lengths we go to protect our pride and self-worth, the giddy an overwhelming feeling of love that makes us all act as fools play out in this wonderful comedy, that satirizes and celebrates who were then and who we are today.”

For the characters, the war may be over, but the Riot Grrrls are still fighting for their share.

Much Ado About Nothing plays at **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** opens on Friday, September 9 and runs through September 24 on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Shows are at 7:30 PM, with 3:00 PM Saturday matinees.

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.html>

Taffety Punk Theatre Company won 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. Taffety Punk’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.