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**TAFFETY PUNK'S ALL –FEMALE *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*:
RETURN OF THE RIOTGRRRLS**

**What: Taffety Punk Theatre Company Presents *Measure for Measure*:
A play by William Shakespeare, with an all-female cast.**

**Where: Capitol Hill Arts Workshop
545 7th Street SE Washington DC
(Two blocks from Eastern Market Metro)**

**When: Opens Friday, September 18. Closes Saturday, October 10.
Performances each Wed. through Sat. night at 7:30 p.m.
With Sat. matinees at 3 p.m.
Pay What You Can Previews on Wed. and Thu. September 16 and 17 at 7 p.m.**

All Tickets: \$10

**Directed by Taffety Punk Company founding member Lise Bruneau
Featuring Taffety Punk Company Member Kimberly Gilbert as Angelo**

How is Taffety Punk Theatre Company following up on its standing-room only performance of their *Bootleg Troilus & Cressida* in late July at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre? It is bringing back the Riotgrrls for a run at one of Shakespeare's most sexually-charged and morally-shadowy plays: *Measure for Measure*.

Last autumn, Taffety Punk astounded local audiences and garnered rave reviews with an all-female rejoinder to Shakespeare Theatre Company's all-male production of *Romeo & Juliet*.

The success of that project prompted director Lise Bruneau to reunite the core of last year's All Girl *Romeo and Juliet* cast to tackle a Shakespeare's most popular "problem play," set in a city of fops, madams, fake friars and virgins that is temporarily handed over to a new governor who proves to be much more morally dubious than the licentious and scheming city that he rules.

Among the returning Riotgrrls are Taffety Punk company member Kimberly Gilbert (Angelo), Esther Williamson (Isabella), Tonya Beckman Ross (Mistress Overdone and Mariana), Michelle Shupe (The Duke), Toni Rae Brotons (Lucio), Kelsey Rae Grouge (Provost) and Abby Wood (Abhorson).

“We’re all so proud of what happened last year with *Romeo and Juliet*. We knew that ‘taking on’ the biggest classical theatre in town would be fun, and very punk, but no one really expected the tremendous verve and expertise and passion and remarkable power that all these girls had been sitting on while they waited for their three lines in *Henry V*,” says Bruneau. “Also, that experience introduced us to the great freedom that can come from switching gender, especially with a Shakespeare play.”

Part of that freedom is an unleashing of physicality. Last year’s crew undertook boot camp-style pushups before each rehearsal and reveled in the fight training for the play. Bruneau says that the cast picked up almost where they had left off as *Measure* rehearsals started. “We came into the first rehearsal and did 20 or 25 pushups straight out,” she says. “It took us a while to build up to that last year. So this year, we hit the ground running.”

The point of the exercise, adds Bruneau, is that “we set a precedent last year of going all the way with physicality. So that rather than tiptoeing back towards a place where [the actors] can really open up, they’re going straight there – with abandon.

Bruneau observes that interplay between *Measure* and an all-female cast is already yielding new insights. She says that far from encountering “icky sexual politics,” the rehearsal process is revealing that *Measure* “is actually a completely non-misogynist play. It’s really so woman-positive. So much so that, as our stage manager Phoebe Duncan pointed out, this is a Shakespeare play where a guy gets his girlfriend pregnant, and the girlfriend’s not going to jail? In a Shakespeare play? It’s always the girl that goes to jail, or gets her life threatened. It’s always her fault. In the world of this play, that’s really not the issue.”

Bruneau says that the role of Isabella – who is called away from her decision to enter a convent to grapple with a dire choice between surrendering her chastity or the life of her brother – has also opened up in rehearsal to reveal the character’s innate strength.

“You think of someone who’s entering a convent as devout, quiet, and maybe a little frightened of the real world,” says Bruneau. “That’s not Isabella at all. This is a girl who is not intimidated by anything. She’s ready to go to the mat with anybody on any intellectual or moral argument. She’s so refreshing. She’s a revolutionary. She’s going to a convent to be free. She has a macho religion and she’s making a macho life choice.”

Taffety Punk Theatre Company received the John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company at the 2008 Helen Hayes Awards. 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.

Lise Bruneau is a founding member of Taffety Punk Theatre Company. She trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. Directing credits include: *Bootleg*

Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida*, *Henry VIII*, *Cymbeline*; *All Girl Romeo & Juliet*, *The Devil in his Own Words*, and *Let X* for Taffety Punk, *Freakshow* for DC Fringe 2009, and *The Stones* for the Old Globe San Diego. Acting credits include: *Ion*, *Othello*, *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare Theatre; *Legacy of Light*, Arena Stage; *Alice*, *The Book Club Play*, Roundhouse; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Chicago Shakespeare Theater; *Blithe Spirit*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, & Elizabeth I in *Mary Stuart* at Center Stage; *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare Theatre; *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* & *The Angel* in *Angels in America* at ACT in San Francisco. *Dybbuk* for A Travelling Jewish Theatre; *Topographical Eden* & the world premiere of Edna O'Brien's *Triptych* at the Magic. She has also appeared at Seattle Rep, Berkeley Rep, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the Wilma in Philadelphia.