

TAFFETY PUNK’S BOOTLEG *TROILUS & CRESSIDA*!

ONE NIGHT ONLY! MONDAY, JULY 27!

@ FOLGER SHAKESPEARE THEATRE

Directed by Lise Bruneau

Featuring company members Kimberly Gilbert, Marcus Kyd and Christopher Marino

Taffety Punk Theatre Company. Folger Shakespeare Theatre. Two great Shakespearean institutions that will go great together on **Monday, July 27 at 7 p.m.**, when Taffety Punk presents its one-night only bootleg production of *Troilus & Cressida* at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre.

Yo! What’s “bootleg theatre?”

Quick. Dirty. Fun. Shakespeare. Taffety Punk’s bootleg productions are the theatrical equivalent of the wildly-popular 48-hour film festivals – but with no edits, no dubs and no do-overs. Absolutely live theatre without a net.

The premise is simple: A troupe of actors arrives at the theatre at 10 a.m. on the morning of the day of the show. The text is always one of Shakespeare’s least-performed plays. (Previous Taffety Punk bootlegs include *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII*).

“All Shakespearean actors want to do *all* the plays in the canon,” says Lise Bruneau, who will be directing. “Which is nearly impossible to do.”

Bruneau says that performing lesser-known texts allows the audience “to recognize those plays on their own merits.” At Taffety Punk’s successful *Henry VIII* bootleg last year, she says, the reaction of cast and audience was “a total shocker. What a great play! We think we know the story, but Shakespeare coming at it without focusing on the lore that we know about Henry VIII.”

The actors have their lines memorized when they arrive in the morning, then and the gang plunges directly into the blocking and the tech required to perform the show that very night.

“Bootleg is electrifying,” says company member Kimberly Gilbert, who will be playing Cressida. “Between the punks on the stage bearing their souls and embracing their flight or fighting demons – to the punks in the audience, those beautiful people that are with you in nervous, spirited energy, never letting you fall – it is an experience that every actor should have.”

Bruneau concurs: “At the first bootleg, I told the actors I wanted a breathless attack, a leaning forward into the text, a desperate and intense energy. The whole cast laughed and looked at me and said, “Did you expect anything else?”

What’s *Troilus & Cressida*? Why bootleg it?

Troilus & Cressida is Shakespeare’s take on the Trojan War – a mash-up of Homer’s Iliad and Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. It’s violent, sexy, angry Shakespeare, in which he creates a universe where lust, betrayal, pride and swagger mix uneasily and ultimately combust in useless bloodshed.

Michele Osherow, resident dramaturg at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre, is supplying dramaturgical services for the bootleg. She says that “what strikes me as profound is that the play sets us up for a grand romance, and then flatly disappoints because the romance gives way to war and cynicism. The upshot is, romance doesn’t stand a chance faced with the difficulties and complexities of the war and the societies that created it. The world simply doesn’t allow for idealism. The lovers are inevitably doomed because of circumstances they cannot control.”

The play doesn’t get many productions – though it has had more in modern times. Its language is beautiful but knotty. And the text itself is slippery, with hundreds of variants between its first publication in 1609 and the version included in the First Folio of 1623.

Indeed, an epistle published along with the second printing of that 1609 Quarto actually uses *Troilus & Cressida*’s lack of performances before general audiences in the Renaissance as a selling point. (The anonymous huckster writes that *Troilus & Cressida* was “never stal’d with the Stage, never clapper claw’d with the palms of the vulgar.”)

So Taffety Punk’s bootleg production of *Troilus & Cressida* is a chance to get your vulgar palms around one of Shakespeare’s most complex plays. And, yes, it’s free!

Where: Folger Shakespeare Theatre (201 East Capitol Street, SE Washington, DC 20003)

When: Monday, July 27, 2009 at 7 p.m.

How Much: Free. General Admission. No tickets required.

Who: [Taffety Punk Theatre Company](#) – winner of the John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company at the 2008 Helen Hayes Awards – is dedicated to establishing 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. Recent activities have included an all-female production of *Romeo & Juliet* (Fall 2008), *The Faithkiller* – a new play by Gwydion Suilebhan (Spring 2009) and a performance of a multimedia *Rape of Lucrece* at the Shakespeare Association of America’s annual meeting in April 2009.