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For Immediate Release:

## Riot Grrrls Dare Do All That May Become a Man . . . just Better

*Taffety Punk's all-female classical band is back.*

### The Tragedie of Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

Directed by Michelle Shupe

**Where:** Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003)  
**When:** Sep 25 - Oct 12, 2024  
**Price:** \$20. Tickets available at [www.taffetypunk.com](http://www.taffetypunk.com).

Fresh from their Helen Hayes Awards win for Outstanding Production (*La Salpêtrière*) the Taffety Punks bring back the **Riot Grrrls** to show us how Shakespeare is done.

With a ten-woman cast, director **Michelle Shupe** brings a fresh and fierce perspective to Shakespeare's classic tragedy. Shupe invokes the Norns of Norse Mythology as inspiration for the three witches — or “wyrd sisters” as they are called here. The three become the spine of the play as Macbeth and other nobles grapple with their choices against fortune. Shupe says, “Elevating the witches to the Fates asks the question: does fate control you or do you control your fate? Being that wrapped up with destiny, what does the play say about autonomy?”

*The Tragedie of Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare's more overtly supernatural scripts, wherein a successful thane of ancient Scotland encounters the three wyrd women who prophesy he will be King. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's choices from this point create one of the greatest tragedies of betrayal, self-sabotage, and “over-arching ambition” ever written. While the gruesome plot that plays out seems inevitable, actors delight in the dizzying number of motivations and tactics can be pursued toward the final scene.

Taffety Punk's company members are known for bringing raw intensity and nuanced interpretations to the stage. In this production, **Lise Bruneau** and **Tonya Beckman** (seen together earlier this year as the Narrators in *Venus and Adonis*) return to take on the title roles, with Bruneau as Macbeth and Beckman as Lady Macbeth. Bruneau delights in the opportunity “to trace the descent of Macbeth into darkness.” She says, “It happens little by little until he is beyond rescue, as he sacrifices his humanity by degrees over the course of the play. One ill choice slowly becomes many, as Macbeth's access to tenderness and vulnerability converts into bitter and miserable venom.”

Beckman shares some of the inherent challenges in taking on the iconic role of Lady Macbeth: “I think it's tempting, anytime you take on a role that has such a long history and tradition attached to it, to worry about two things: 1. Am I doing this ‘right’? and 2. How can I make my version unique and special? I think both those questions are traps. So I try to ignore the noise and keep my attention inside the play. I always want to know what makes the play matter now. What does Lady Macbeth speak to about today? For me, that question is a lot about what we think about ambitious women.”

Many of the actors take on multiple parts moving swiftly through the story on a set designed by **Jessica Moretti**, who returns to Taffety Punk after a long hiatus (during which she worked with the Oscar winning design team of del Toro's *Pinocchio*). Moretti is transforming the small black box at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop into a space that is simultaneously intimate and full of depth. Utilizing ancient imagery from traditions on either side of the North Sea, a ritualistic significance will emerge from the practical needs of the the scenic elements.

Stage combat is also an element of many classical plays that is ordinarily denied to women — even though women receive the same training and certifications in combat as men. Because of the intimate space at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, fight choreographer Lorraine Ressegger-Slone is focusing on

smaller weapons — daggers and knives — for the combat in the show. She explains that she is basing the choreography on Kali, a Filipino martial art: “Kali is both graceful, street-smart, and gritty, which I think is really fitting for the play. I love the fluidity of it, how quick and efficient it can be, but also how beautiful and powerful it looks.”

The women of Taffety Punk began the Riot Grrrls theatre project as a reaction to the lack of gender parity on American stages. They take their name and inspiration from the 90s punk movement that was focused on bringing “grrrls to the front”. Women get all the training men do and are often still relegated to the three smaller roles in a Shakespeare play who do not get to enjoy any sword fights. This is an ongoing project to provide opportunities for women in theatre to play the roles ordinarily denied them, and to put women in the position of directors, designers, and stage managers.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company as always is committed to making the best possible theatre for the best possible price. Tickets for this show will not exceed \$20.

*The Tragedie of Macbeth* opens at the **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003 – two blocks from Metro’s Orange/Blue Line stop at Eastern Market) on Saturday, Sep 28 and runs through Saturday, Oct 12. Specific showtimes are as follows: Half-Price Previews: Sep 25, 26, 27 at 7:30pm; Opening night: Sep 28 at 8:00pm, Industry Night: Sep 30 at 7:30pm; and then Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30pm, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00pm through October 12, with an additional matinee performance at 2:00pm on the last Saturday.

**This show is estimated to occupy 130 minutes of show time.** Give or take.

Featuring company member Lise Bruneau in the title role with company members Tonya Beckman (Lady Macbeth), and Teresa Spencer (Banquo/Macduff), with Hana Clarice (Ross), Fabiolla da Silva (Seyton), Irene Hamilton (1st Wyrd Sister, Lennox), Ashara Knyshe (2nd Wyrd Sister, Lady Macduff), Rachael Small (3rd Wyrd Sister, Macduff’s Son, Gentlewoman), Dawn Thomas-Reidy (King Duncan, Porter, Murderer, Doctor, Voice of Hecate) and Mallory Trice (Malcolm, Fleance). The Riot Grrrls’ *Macbeth* is directed by Michelle Shupe. Set design by Jessica Moretti; light design by Katie McCreary, costume design by Elizabeth Morton. Movement and Fight Choreography and Intimacy Direction by Lorraine Ressegger-Slone. Stage Manager: Carrie Edick.

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: [www.taffetypunk.com/press](http://www.taffetypunk.com/press)**

• **Michelle Shupe** (Director) is one of Taffety Punk’s original Riot Grrrl’s, having played the Friar in the all-female *Romeo and Juliet*. She has since collaborated with the Taffety Punk several time an actor playing the Duke in *Measure for Measure*; and as the director of *Twelfth Night*. A resident of the Windy City, Shupe has been active with The Shakespeare Project of Chicago for many years: acting, directing, assistant directing and serving as dramaturge and associate artistic director. Directing credits with the Project include: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Women Beware Women* (co-director), “The Dark Lady”, *Merchant of Venice*, and “A Shakespearean Garden” (director and co-adaptor). Next exciting assignment: *King Lear* in 2025. Directing credits outside the Project include guest directorships at Roosevelt University and AD at Venus Theater and the Washington International School.

**Lise Bruneau** (*Macbeth*) is a co-founder of Taffety Punk, where she recently appeared with fellow company member Tonya Beckman as the narrators of *Venus and Adonis*. She played Iago in the Riot Grrrls: *Othello* (directed by Kelsey Mesa), and has directed many of the Riot Grrrls, Bootleg Shakespeare, and TPunk shows: notably *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Oxygen*, *Bloody Poetry*, *Pericles*, *King John* and *Owl Moon*. DC Area appearances include her recent Helen Hayes winning performance in Solas Nua’s *The Honey Trap*. Other area credits include Arena Stage: *Junk*, *Watch on the Rhine*, *The Heiress*, *Legacy of Light*; Shakespeare Theatre Co: *Hamlet*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Othello*; Mosaic Theater Co: *Eureka Day*, *Paper Dolls*; Theatre J: *Breaking Glass*, *Mikveh*; Round House Theatre: *This*, *The Book Club Play* and Center Stage: *Mary Stuart*, *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, *Blithe Spirit*. Outside of DC, Lise has performed in New York on Broadway in Roundabout Theatre’s *The Cherry Orchard*, directed by Simon Godwin; and at the Park Avenue Armory in *Hamlet*, and *The Oresteia*, directed by Robert Icke; and at American Regional Theatres such as ACT San Francisco in *Sweat*, *Les*

*Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Angels in America*; Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park in *The Revolutionists*; Denver Center Theatre Co in *Heartbreak House* (Henry Award); Chicago Shakespeare Theatre in *Merry Wives of Windsor*; and Alabama Shakespeare Festival as Margaret of Anjou in *Wars of the Roses*. As a freelance director, she has helmed the recent *Oresteia*, and *Measure for Measure* for Chesapeake Shakespeare Company; *4000 Miles* for Clarence Brown Theatre; *Hamlet* (starring Marcus Kyd) for Nebraska Shakespeare; and *Savage in Limbo* for MetroStage, among others. Ms. Bruneau trained at RADA. [www.lisebruneau.com](http://www.lisebruneau.com)

**Tonya Beckman** (*Lady Macbeth*) is a company member of Taffety Punk where she has appeared in: *Venus & Adonis*, *Our Black Death*, *Othello*, *Pramkicker*, *Don Juan*, *She Rode Horses Like The Stock Exchange*, *The Tempest*, *The Rape Of Lucrece*, *Bloody Poetry*, *Charm*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Owl Moon*, *Measure For Measure*, *Romeo & Juliet*, the world-premiere of *suicide.chat.room*, as well as the Bootleg Shakespeare productions of *Troilus & Cressida*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *King John*, *Hamlet*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen Of Verona*, *Henry VI*, and *Richard III*. DC area acting credits include Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Studio Theatre, Arena Stage, Round House Theatre, Kennedy Center, Theater J, Ford's Theatre, Imagination Stage, Mosaic Theater Company, Solas Nua, 1st Stage, and Constellation Theatre. Regional theatre credits include: Cleveland Play House, Cincinnati Playhouse, Fulton Theatre, Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Totem Pole Playhouse, Public Theatre of Maine, Purple Rose Theatre, and Human Race Theatre. [www.tonyabeckman.com](http://www.tonyabeckman.com)

**Taffety Punk Theatre Company** is the resident company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. Founded to establish an actively collaborative company of actors, dancers, and musicians, the company has been at the forefront of theatre innovation, presenting groundbreaking productions that inspire audiences and introducing new playwrights and stories to the stage, new works of choreography, and new compositions of original music. Through its artist-nurturing Generator program Taffety Punk has a rich history of developing original works that challenge theatre norms. Generator projects that have realized full production include the widely celebrated dance plays *suicide.chat.room*, *Fragments of Sappho*, and *Enter Ophelia, distracted*; as well as the world premieres of Liz Maestri's *Inheritance Canyon*, and Michelle Shupe's *La Salpêtrière* (nominated for five Helen Hayes Awards in 2024 including Outstanding New Play, and winner of two of those nominations: Outstanding Production, and Outstanding Supporting Actor - company member Kimberly Gilbert). Over the years, Taffety Punk has garnered numerous accolades and recognition for its work and, in fact, won the very first John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company from the Helen Hayes Awards. The Washington Post declared the company "The most vital of the city's small troupes." The company's all-female ensemble, the Riot Grrrls, have repeatedly delighted audiences delivering impassioned productions of classical plays while empowering women in theatre. The Riot Grrrls reunite this year to prevent *The Tragedie of Macbeth*. The Bootleg Shakespeare is a widely celebrated event the company hosts with the partnership of the Folger Theatre providing the most exciting night of theatre anyone could ask for: an entire Shakespeare play rehearsed and performed in a single day. The company has released albums by its company members and their tangential bands, most notably the indie rock sensation Beauty Pill, the musical home for two Taffety Punk Company Members: composer Chad Clark and singer Erin Mitchell Nelson. Taffety Punk's music catalog is available on all streaming platforms and via [taffetypunk.bandcamp.com](http://taffetypunk.bandcamp.com) where LPs and singles can be ordered. Taffety Punk is thrilled to add company member Teresa Spencer's book of poetry and short stories to the company's media catalog. *Too Like the Lightning* will be released August 23, 2024 and will be available at bookstores everywhere. As Taffety Punk Theatre Company moves forward, it remains committed to its mission to ignite a public passion for theatre by making the classical and the contemporary exciting, meaningful, and affordable. The company is excited to continue its legacy of excellence and making the greatest theatre for the lowest price. [www.taffetypunk.com](http://www.taffetypunk.com)

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