

July 7, 2010

Contact: Richard Byrne
press@taffetypunk.com
(202) 494 6131

TAFFETY PUNK'S 2010 BOOTLEG SHAKESPEARE: THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

Taffety Punk Theatre Company Presents
The Two Noble Kinsmen by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher
Directed by Taffety Punk founding member **Lise Bruneau**

Where: Folger Shakespeare Theatre
When: Monday, July 26, 2010 at 7 p.m.
Free to the Public

Featuring Taffety Punk artistic director **Marcus Kyd** and company members **Kimberly Gilbert**, **Paulina Guerrero**, **Christopher Marino**, **Tonya Beckmann Ross**, **Joel David Santner** and **Esther Williamson**.

Call it an annual tightrope walk across a lesser-known Shakespeare text by some of the East Coast's finest classical actors. Call it a blessedly free night of theatre after a month of pricey Fringe tix. Call it a tribute to the indefatigable **Barbara Mowat** – director of research at **Folger Shakespeare Library** – on the completion of her task as supervising editor of the Folger's critical editions of William Shakespeare's plays.

But we do know that if last year is any indication, audiences will be calling Taffety Punk Theatre Company's annual "Bootleg Shakespeare" performance both a "smashing success" (D.C. *Examiner*) and a tough seat to get. Last year's Bootleg *Troilus and Cressida* at the Folger was a standing-room only affair.

The premise is simple. Each year, a neglected play by Shakespeare is selected and cast by Taffety Punk artistic director **Marcus Kyd** and Taffety Punk founding member **Lise Bruneau**. The actors turn up on the morning of the show and rehearse the show for a one-time only performance at 7 p.m. that night.

"When you have desperately little time to throw a whole Shakespeare play on its feet," says Bruneau, "it's wonderful to see the story really find its way to the surface – I mean, there's just no time to spend on anything but the most crucial issues – like, who's on stage? Who's going to bring the daggers? How do the swords get from Stage Right to Stage Left? And our fervent cast is always ready to take any of it on!"

Company member **Kimberly Gilbert** is a veteran of all four Bootleg Shakespeare performances (which have included *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII or All Is Well*). "Right before you go on stage," Gilbert says, "every fiber of your being is screaming at you: 'This is the *dumbest* idea you've ever had. Turn back! Turn *back!*' But once you take the leap onto the stage, the audience catches you in their loving arms and never lets go. I have never felt such a connection to a crowd like I have with the Bootleg crowds. It is truly humbling."

The selection of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is in honor of Barbara Mowat and her completion of the task of overseeing the Folger Shakespeare Library's critical editions of all of Shakespeare's plays. The editions are inexpensive (\$5.99), accessible to a wide range of readers, and edited with great scholarly rigor. Published in April, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is the last edition in this impressive series. Taffety Punk Theatre Company is delighted to bring Bootleg Shakespeare back to the Folger this year to honor Mowat's achievement.

"The selection of the next bootleg is always a nebulous thing," says Kyd. "Most of it happens at the bar right after the [previous year's] show. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was on everyone's lips after we finished *Troilus and Cressida* last year. There was a curious serendipity, as we discovered that our dear friend Barbara had just finished editing the entire canon. She has always been an ardent fan of bootleg Shakespeare, so this gives us a chance to thank her and celebrate her work. We're all terribly jealous of her. She's been living and breathing these texts for years."

And the play itself? An intriguing blend of courtly gamesmanship, unrequited love – and, yes, a Morris dance. As with last year's Bootleg Shakespeare choice (*Troilus and Cressida*), *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is based on the work of Geoffrey Chaucer (in this case, the "Knights Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales*) Scholars generally concur that the play – co-written with John Fletcher – was among the last in which Shakespeare had a hand in writing.

Every member of the Taffety Punk company will take part in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. (See above.) The cast also includes a bevy of well-known local actors, including Longacre Lea founder **Kathleen Akerley**, **Michael Glenn** (last seen in Woolly Mammoth's hit *Clybourne Park*), Faction of Fools founder **Matthew R. Wilson** and Bootleg Shakespeare favorite **Todd Scofield**. Veterans of Taffety Punk productions over the past few years – **Michael John Casey** (*The Faithkiller*), **Daniel Flint**, **Paul Hope** and **Mark R. Ross** (*Burn Your Bookes*) and **Abby Wood** (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*) – will also be joining the festivities. And among the classical actors from New York City joining Taffety Punk for the evening include **James Beaman** (Theseus) and **Ashley Strand** (as Arcite).

Hi-res press photographs available at: <http://www.taffetypunk.com/contact.html>. (Right click on image.)

Check out our trailer for Bootleg Shakespeare at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jka7kMTbaM>

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.