

CONSTELLATION THEATRE COMPANY

Constellation Theatre Company tells big, powerful stories in an intimate space. We offer world-class entertainment that **transports audiences all over the globe through unique, immersive experiences.**

Our signature style fuses **visual spectacle, original music, dynamic movement** and **masterful acting** to spark curiosity and imagination. Each time audiences enter our theatre space, they **enter an entirely different world.**

Since our founding in 2007, we've built a reputation of artistic excellence and inventive storytelling. Now in our **10th season**, we've produced **30 shows from 13 countries**, with plays ranging from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to *Avenue Q*; from the Sanskrit epic, *The Ramayana*, to the Tony Award-winning musical comedy *Urinetown*.

"Constellation Theatre Company has developed one of the most distinctive house styles in town, especially when they light into classic myths and exotic design."
– *The Washington Post*

Founding Artistic Director, Allison Arkeel Stockman, and the Company's small, dedicated staff, bring a dynamic vision to each show—from ancient myths to contemporary puppetry—to engage seasoned and new theatre-goers. "In life we only use a small portion of our capabilities. In our shows the action is larger than life. Constellation stretches our ordinary boundaries to tell imaginative, epic stories and infuse them with adventure so audiences leave inspired and exhilarated."

Looking ahead, we're excited to continue to stretch in the coming years; to take on new creative challenges, deepen our impact and expand our reach.

Big vision. Small space. In a city known for its large and dynamic theatre scene, Constellation has emerged as a vital, innovative theatre company known for creating dramatic spectacles with heightened style.

As a resident company at **Source theatre on 14th Street, NW**, we currently produce **four shows each season** in a **100-seat black box**. With each production, we transform the intimate space with **intricate sets, vibrant costumes, colorful lighting and live music**. Free from the constraints of a fixed stage or seats, we regularly change the audience configuration, immersing the audience in the spectacle, heightening the dramatic experience and forging a unique connection to the actors.

The Washington Post called our first production in 2007, "a promising debut for a company that seems determined to dream big." **We do dream big.** Scenic and Lighting Designer A.J. Guban transforms our small space in ingenious ways. You might enter beneath a 4,000-gallon swimming pool or into an exquisite Japanese home with sliding screens that double as surfaces for stunning projections. Epic myths come alive when a 12-person ensemble plays 80 fantastical characters, often including gods, demons, birds and dragons. We give

voice to international playwrights whose work is rarely performed on American stages. Whether it's with a six-piece orchestra or the rhythmic music of world-renowned percussionist Tom Teasley, our lively casts sing and dance just steps from the audience.

"The company specializes in the kind of dramatic spectacle that legitimizes the phrase 'magic of the theater.'"

– DCist

Despite the benefits of producing plays in an intimate venue, the theatre's size also has constraints. Source's finite seating limits ticket revenue. For Constellation, like the majority of non-profit theatres, earned revenue can't fully cover production and operating costs. In the 2016-17 season, we expect to sell over 10,000 tickets—nearly 30% more than we did three years ago. And contrary to industry trends, our subscriber base, which is approximately 20% of our audience, continues to grow. Most shows sell at X% capacity. Yet,

despite our success, this year's ticket revenue makes up only 40% of our \$815,000 annual budget. To fill this gap, we rely on support from foundations, the government, and most importantly, individual donors.

We Nurture Artists. A "constellation" is made up of individual stars—and when banded together, the patterns form vivid imagery, inspiring people to create legends; powerful narratives unfold.

In much the same way, Constellation brings together stellar artists to tell powerful stories. Artists are pivotal to creating dynamic, exciting theatre, and Constellation plays a critical role in the ecology of DC's arts industry. Over 10 years, we've hired more than 600 artists and regularly hire **60 artists per production**, including a director, choreographer, designers, actors and musicians. Collaborating together, we celebrate the many artistic elements that comprise a theatrical experience.

We foster an enriching, creative environment for artists. We believe in cultivating artistic careers, identifying the next generation of theatrical voices and encouraging the growth of seasoned professionals. To that end, we recruit both emerging and veteran artists, often featuring fresh talent alongside top-name performers. We also value the fresh perspectives that artists with diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds bring to the collaborative process.

We Cultivate Community. In addition to nurturing artists, we recognize the essential role theatre plays in building the broader community. In an age when people are increasingly focused on digital communication and virtual reality, live theatre connects individuals through shared experiences. Audiences sit together; laugh together; sometimes even cry together. As a result, we entertain audiences while also challenging them and inviting them to connect. Further, our membership program brings patrons together to meet the artists and look inside the creative process, getting the sneak peek at design presentations and open technical rehearsals, then enjoying preview parties. Because we believe theatre is a vital art form that should be accessible to everyone, we're committed to offering Pay-What-You-Can previews and discounted performances to keep Constellation shows affordable.

*We received the John Aniello Award for **Outstanding Emerging Theatre** from the Helen Hayes Awards in 2009.*

*To date, we've received 10 **Helen Hayes Award** nominations for outstanding design.*

*In 2013, the American Theatre Wing recognized us for having "articulated a distinctive mission... and nurtured a community of artists in ways that **strengthen the quality, diversity, and dynamism of American theatre.**"*

We reach beyond the performances. Constellation engages our vibrant neighborhood in the 14th/U Street Corridor with community outreach activities related to our specific shows. Constellation held a pet adoption day with the Humane Society, a Blood Drive with the American Red Cross, a guided meditation session, and a mental health awareness talk with a psychiatrist from Whitman Walker Health Clinic. We've hosted a Pony Pop-Up and Chinese Lion Dancers on 14th Street. We also encourage patrons to engage with neighborhood businesses through social events at venues, including: local consignment furniture retailer Miss Pixie's; Barcelona Wine Bar; Plan B art gallery; national furniture retailer, Mitchell Gold; and Cove, a co-working space.

We strive to attract audiences that **reflect the diversity of the international city in which we live** and of our artists. We produce plays from countries around the world, and whenever possible, we reach out to communities featured in our performances. Our 8th season, for instance, brought scripts from Italy, Ireland and India and programming included free lectures from cultural experts, including a Smithsonian Journeys Travel Guide and a senior curator from the Freer/Sackler Gallery. By presenting ancient tales and contemporary plays through a unique lens, we spark dialogue and inspire audiences to consider their own experience with a fresh perspective.

As we look to the future, we will continue to enrich our patron experience through collaborations with other arts and cultural organizations. Constellation is also eager to engage the next generation of theater-goers. We recently hired a Development and Community Outreach Associate to focus on these exciting activities.

As Constellation enters its second decade, we will reach higher to build on our strong foundation. We'll continue to present **transformational productions** but will also invite the audience to join us as we **stretch our creative sensibilities**. We'll explore fresh ideas and unconventional spaces to broaden our artistic focus and deepen our interaction with artists, patrons and our community. As ticket revenue makes up less than half of our operating budget, **contributions must expand to fill this vital gap**. Support from individuals and foundations will enable us to grow responsibly and sustainably and focus on artistic excellence, bold storytelling and connecting audiences to art. Specifically, we will:

- **Expand our Artistic Scope.** We will continue to create our *dynamic productions at Source* in the theatre's 100-seat venue. We relish the opportunity to transport you to a unique, new world with each show while providing exciting immediacy to the action on stage. In addition, we dream of developing an interactive theatrical experience in an unconventional local venue. We imagine the *Immersive Theatre Project* transforming a vacant building complex into 30 theatrical spaces that audiences will navigate on their own. Audiences will explore the 360-degree environment, triggering how the narrative unfolds as they interact with characters, investigate props and move through the space, triggering how the narrative unfolds as they go. The production will culminate with a chance for the audience to gather and socialize.
- **Invest in Artists.** We believe in cultivating dignity, kindness and respect—in our organization, in our community and among our artists. We value the dedicated staff and talented artists who manage day-to-day operations and bring each show to life. While Constellation's artist fees are competitive with other small theatre companies, financial compensation cannot adequately reflect the talent, dedication and years of expertise that Constellation's theatre professionals bring to our craft. Most of our artists are paid flat fees that would not equal minimum wage if they were paid hourly. As a demonstration of our investment in the artists we employ Constellation increased artist fees by 20% this year. With your help, **we can continue investing in our staff and artists to strengthen the organization's capacity and artistic integrity.**

- **Broaden our Community** via essential outreach activities. In addition to maintaining accessibility via our Pay-What-You-Can Previews and Discounted Ticket Nights we will build our audience base and enhance the patron experience with a new *Passport Series of show-specific, interactive events*. These initiatives, in addition to current programming, require additional programming focus and an investment in growing our small staff.

Play a Role in Constellation's Future. We have always had a big vision. Our bold productions continue to defy expectations and establish a high bar for success.

Constellation's Board, staff and volunteers are committed and poised to lead the way as we tackle creative challenges and reach new heights. Your support now is vital to our success. Your investment will ensure that our work continues to be of the highest quality, and that we are able to stretch artistically to explore new ideas and spaces in the city, increase diversity in our productions and audience, and strengthen our ties with the DC arts community.

Our future starts now; join us on the journey.