

CONSTELLATION THEATRE COMPANY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Good Woman of Setzuan

An exotic comedy from revolutionary playwright **Bertolt Brecht**
A cast of 20 bring this **epic drama** to life in the expansive Clark Street Playhouse.

Directed by Allison Arkell Stockman

Press Opening: Saturday, March 29, 2008 at 8 pm.

Pay-What-You-Can Previews March 27 & 28 at 8 pm.

The Good Woman of Setzuan runs through April 20.

Three gods descend to earth in search of one good person and discover that kindness and compassion don't pay the rent. Shen Te, a kind and generous prostitute, is driven to disguise herself as the shrewd and unethical male businessman Shui Ta in order to navigate the demands of love, family and hungry neighbors. Bertolt Brecht, the avant-garde father of epic drama, mixes comedy and fantasy to create an exotic world that turns out to be very close to home. Constellation Theatre Company's presentation of *The Good Woman of Setzuan* is the first professional production of this play in Washington, DC since Garland Wright directed a translation by Ralph Manheim at Arena Stage in 1985.

Bertolt Brecht was a provocative and daring visionary who created an original style of theatre designed to challenge and enlighten the audience, while engaging them to think about the dilemmas inherent in modern society. He asks how we can remain virtuous in a world that revolves around money and power. An active critic of war and capitalism, Brecht was perceived as dangerous by Germany's government and he was forced to travel as a refugee from 1933 until he came to California in 1941. An internationally renowned playwright and poet, Brecht founded the Berliner Ensemble in 1949 after he returned to Germany. The company toured throughout Europe, spreading Brecht's influence far and wide. *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Life of Galileo*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* are the most celebrated of Brecht's plays in addition to the musical *The Threepenny Opera* that he created with composer Kurt Weill.

Brecht's brilliance lies in his humor and his ability to inspire while amusing. "Clothing his didactic purpose in dazzling wit and fable-like enchantment, Brecht succeeds magnificently in achieving his distinctive alchemy of entertainment and instruction, art and life." Eric Bentley is a widely recognized playwright, critic and scholar, one of the foremost authorities on the modern theater, and a longtime intimate of Brecht's. He has created a version of the play that is not a literal translation, but captures the spirit of the work and, in Bentley's words, is "more plausible, has more character, more charm, vivacity, edge."

Constellation Theatre Company will be a resident company at Source following the renovation. This spring Constellation has arranged to have a temporary home at Clark Street Playhouse. The large warehouse space offered a rare opportunity and Constellation has chosen to follow *The Good Woman of Setzuan* with *The Oresteia* this spring. Allison Arkell Stockman's original adaptation of Robert Fagles' translation of the archetypal Greek trilogy will tell the ultimate story of love, sacrifice, justice and revenge in one dynamic evening of theatre. Stockman says, "The expansive space at Clark Street is perfectly suited to Constellation's mission to create epic, magical worlds with striking visual imagery and the integration of music and dance. We embraced the chance to tell stories with large ensembles of actors, elevated language and heightened physicality."

Constellation Theatre Company presented its first show, *A Dream Play* by August Strindberg in a new version by Caryl Churchill, in June 2007 at Source. Celia Wren of The Washington Post called the production "brisk, accessible and surprisingly humorous" and "a promising debut for a company that seems determined to dream big." DC Theatre Scene's Tim Treanor attested that the show was successful at "placing Constellation firmly on the map of serious professional theaters in Washington."

This past October, Constellation brought *The Arabian Nights* by Mary Zimmerman to Source Theatre. Nelson Pressley of The Washington Post wrote, "With its cool, confident staging of Mary Zimmerman's user-friendly 'Arabian Nights,' Constellation Theatre Company undulates into view as a young troupe to watch" and noted that the production "offers something to admire at every turn." Doug Krentzlin of DC's Examiner called it, "an infectious ode to the primal power and appeal of storytelling."

Many of the central talents to *A Dream Play* and *The Arabian Nights* have come together again to create *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Director Allison Arkell Stockman collaborates with Scenic and Lighting Designer A.J. Guban, Costume Designer Yvette M. Ryan and Choreographer Ashley Ivey. Stockman, Guban and Ryan most recently worked together on *Combat and Redemption: An Opera Triptych*, an In Series presentation of three one act operas by Monteverdi, Mozart and Holst, performed at the Atlas Performing Arts Center. Tom Teasley, a master percussionist who played live during *The Arabian Nights*, has composed and recorded an original score for *The Good Woman of Setzuan*.

Katie Atkinson who played the bewitching Scheherazade in *The Arabian Nights* will star as Shen Te, and her alter ego Shui Ta. Also returning to the acting company are Katy Carkuff, Catherine Deadman, Kevin Finkelstein, John Geoffrion, Keith Irby, Ashley Ivey, and Lisa Lias. Twelve other skilled actors, Molly Cahill, John Feist, Lewis Freeman, Hilary Kacser, Jenny Leopold, Kenny Littlejohn, Beckett Martin, Francisco Reinoso, Joe Thornhill, Meghan Tolmie, Yasmin Tuazon and Ron Ward, complete the twenty-person ensemble that will populate the exotic town of Setzuan.

WHO: Constellation Theatre Company

WHAT: *The Good Woman of Setzuan* by Bertolt Brecht, translated by Eric Bentley

WHERE: Clark Street Playhouse, 601 South Clark Street Arlington, VA 22202

WHEN: March 27 – April 20, 2008. Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm & Sundays at 3 pm.

PRESS OPENING: Saturday, March 29 at 8 pm.

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THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN: FACT SHEET

Press Contact: Misty Demory

Play: The Good Woman of Setzuan

202-280-8101

Playwright: Bertolt Brecht, translated by Eric Bentley

Director: Allison Arkell Stockman

Blurb: Three gods descend to earth in search of one good person and discover that kindness and compassion don't pay the rent. Shen Te, a kind and generous prostitute, is driven to disguise herself as the shrewd and unethical male businessman Shui Ta in order to navigate the demands of love, family and hungry neighbors. Bertolt Brecht, the avant-garde father of epic drama, mixes comedy and fantasy to create an exotic world that turns out to be very close to home.

Cast: Katie Atkinson, Molly Cahill, Katy Carkuff, Catherine Deadman, John Feist, Kevin Finkelstein, Lewis Freeman, John Geoffrion, Keith Irby, Ashley Ivey, Hilary Kacser, Jenny Leopold, Lisa Lias, Kenny Littlejohn, Beckett Martin, Francisco Reinoso, Joe Thornhill, Meghan Tolmie, Yasmin Tuazon, Ron Ward.

Design and Production: A.J. Guban (Set and Lights), Tom Teasley (Composer), Yvette M. Ryan (Costumes), Chris Baine (Sound Design), Ashley Ivey (Choreography), Kevin Finkelstein (Assistant Director), Françoise Bastien (Stage Manager), Brett Abelman (Assistant Stage Manager), Meghan Nesmith (Dramaturgy), Michael Roike (Technical Director), Angelo Merenda (Props Design), Nick Lopatta (Master Electrician).

Pay-What-You-Can Previews (2): Thursday, March 27 & Friday, March 28 at 8pm

Press Night: Saturday, March 29 at 8pm

Performance Schedule: Mar. 27 – April 20 with shows on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 3 pm. Special Performance Monday, April 14 at 8 pm.

Constellation Theatre Company Mission Statement: Constellation Theatre Company is dedicated to creating theatre that is epic, expansive and essential. We adventure outside the staid, predictable realm of our everyday lives into an arena that is startling, magical and symbolic. Constellation combines visionary, expressive design with heightened physical movement and elevated language. Like bright lights in the dark sky, our shows will seek to illuminate the human experience in ways that are powerful, dynamic and relevant today.

For Tickets: 1-800-494-8497, www.boxofficetickets.com/constellationtheatre

For Information: 202-280-8101, www.constellationtheatre.org

Ticket Prices: \$12 - \$20 \$20 All performances. \$15 for Students & Seniors.
\$12 Tickets for Groups of 5 and up.

Location: Clark Street Playhouse, 601 South Clark Street, Arlington, VA 22202
Metro to Crystal City or Take the Clark Street Exit Just Over the 14th Street Bridge.

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