

CONSTELLATION THEATRE COMPANY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Arabian Nights

The ancient book of **1001 Nights** adapted by brilliant theatre director **Mary Zimmerman** with **live music** performed by **Tom Teasley**

Directed by Allison Arkell Stockman

Press Opening: Saturday, September 29, 2007 at 8 pm.

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

The Arabian Nights runs through October 21.

Constellation Theatre Company's production of *The Arabian Nights* is the Washington, DC premiere of Mary Zimmerman's acclaimed adaptation of the ancient *Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*. Each night King Shahryar marries and murders a young woman until the brilliant Scheherezade is brought to his bed. She delays her death by entrancing the king with tales of romance, lust, comedy, mystery, sensuality and sorrow. An ensemble of twelve actors celebrates the transformational power of storytelling as a cold and violent heart becomes free to laugh, cry and love again.

Mary Zimmerman is one of our nation's leading directors, specializing in magical theatre that combines heightened physicality with spectacular visual design. She is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and a Tony Award for Directing her 2002 Broadway production of *Metamorphoses* which she adapted from Ovid's myths and set in an onstage swimming pool. Zimmerman's credits as an adapter and director also include *The Odyssey*, *Journey to the West*, *Eleven Rooms of Proust* and *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*. Based out of Chicago, her work has been produced at the Lookingglass Theatre and the Goodman Theatre as well as the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Mark Taper Forum and McCarter Theater. Washington, DC audiences enjoyed her captivating vision of *Pericles* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in 2004 and look forward to their upcoming production of her newest adaptation *Argonautika* this winter.

The world premiere of Zimmerman's version of *The Arabian Nights* was presented by the Lookingglass Theatre Company in Chicago in 1992 and a New York City production at the Manhattan Theatre Club followed in 1994. The New York Times reported, "*The Arabian Nights* is a celebration of the salutary powers of storytelling... of the rich, inexhaustible multiplicity of a narrative tradition." The New York Post described the play as "Funny, sexy (erotic would be an apter description), romantic, enchanted and enchanting" while New York magazine imagines that "Mary Zimmerman held in one hand a giant kaleidoscope and in the other hand the horn of plenty."

Constellation has recruited a master percussionist, Tom Teasley, to compose and perform music during the performances. With a background in jazz and world music from Africa, India, Brazil and the Middle East, Tom describes that he “taps into the power of the world’s rhythms, both secular and sacred, and tries to integrate them in an intuitive way.” In addition to familiar percussion instruments, Tom incorporates djembé, cajón, riq, surdo, doumbek, tabla, gamelan and caxixi. Joan Reinhaller of The Washington Post described Teasley as “a percussionist in the widest and most exuberant sense.” As an artist in residence, Teasley has played at the Kennedy Center nine times; he has collaborated with the National Symphony Orchestra and was featured by PASIC, the world’s largest percussion convention, three times. The vibrant and diverse tones, textures and colors of Teasley’s percussive tapestry will greatly enrich the individual stories and overall experience of *The Arabian Nights*.

Constellation Theatre Company presented its first show, *A Dream Play* by August Strindberg in a new version by Caryl Chuchill, this past June at Source Theatre. 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 “genuinely powerful and excellent ensemble” moved with “atomic-clock timing and laserlike precision... placing Constellation firmly on the map of serious professional theaters in Washington.” Many of the key talents from *A Dream Play* have come together again to collaborate on *The Arabian Nights*, notably director Allison Arkell Stockman, Scenic and Lighting Designer A.J. Guban, Choreographer Ashley Ivey and performers Katy Carkuff, Misty Demory, Keith Irby, Craig Klein and Lisa Lias.

Stockman has also hired Yvette M. Ryan as a costume designer. Ryan’s costumes have been seen most recently in *Reefer Madness* at Studio Theatre 2ndStage where she also designed *Dog Sees God* and *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow*. Locally Ryan has designed for Shakespeare Theatre’s Academy of Classical Acting, Rorschach Theatre, Imagination Stage, Journeymen Theatre and Baltimore’s Everyman Theatre. Ryan earned her MFA at University of Maryland at College Park as did Designer A.J. Guban, who has worked for The Kennedy Center, Washington National Opera, The Washington Ballet, The Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, Washington Shakespeare Company, SCENA Theatre and Didactic Theatre Company.

In addition to Carkuff, Demory, Irby, Klein, and Lias, this dynamic ensemble consists of Katie Atkinson as Scheherzade, John Tweel as Shahryar, Steve Beall, Kevin Finkelstein, John Geoffrion, Gwen Grastorf and Anastasia Wilson. These talented actors have performed at Shakespeare Theatre Company, Signature Theatre, Studio Theatre 2ndStage, Rorschach Theatre, Catalyst Theatre Company, Washington Shakespeare Company, Longacre Lea, Solas Nua, Synetic Theater, Forum Theatre Dance, Imagination Stage, American Century Theater, SCENA Theatre, The Hatchery, Journeymen Theatre, Open Circle Theatre, Phoenix Theatre DC and many others.

WHO: Constellation Theatre Company

WHAT: *The Arabian Nights* by Mary Zimmerman

WHERE: Source Theatre 1835 14th St. NW

WHEN: Sept. 27 – Oct. 21, 2007. Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 3 pm.

PRESS OPENING: September 29 at 8 pm.

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THE ARABIAN NIGHTS: FACT SHEET

Press Contact: Misty Demory

Play: The Arabian Nights

202-280-8101

Playwright: Mary Zimmerman

Director: Allison Arkell Stockman

Blurb: Mary Zimmerman's acclaimed adaptation weaves ancient tales of wonder into a rich and poetic testament to the transformational power of storytelling. Each night King Shahryar marries and murders a young woman until the brilliant Scheherazade is brought to his bed. She delays her death by entrancing the king with tales of romance, lust, comedy, mystery, sensuality and sorrow.

Cast: Katie Atkinson, Steve Beall, Katy Carkuff, Misty Demory, Kevin Finkelstein, John Geoffrion, Gwen Grastorf, Keith Irby, Craig Klein, Lisa Lias, John Tweel, Anastasia Wilson.

Design and Production: A.J. Guban (Set and Lights), Tom Teasley (Composer/ Musician), Yvette M. Ryan (Costumes), Ashley Ivey (Choreography), Tonya Beckman Ross (Assistant Director), Robert Barossi (Stage Manager), Danielle Martin (Dramaturgy).

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

Press Night: Saturday, September 29 at 8pm

Performance Schedule: Sept. 27 – Oct. 21 with shows on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 3 pm. Special Performance Monday, October 15 at 8 pm.

Sign Interpreted Performances: Thursday, October 4 at 8 pm and Sunday, October 7 at 3pm.

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-\$18 \$15 Thursdays and Sundays, \$18 Fridays and Saturdays.
Students and Seniors \$2 off. Groups of 8 and up \$12 each.

Location: Source Theatre at 1835 14th St. NW on the corner of T St.
Two blocks from the U St./ Cardozo Metro. On-street parking.

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