

# **CONSTELLATION THEATRE COMPANY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ***The Marriage of Figaro*** The Play by Beaumarchais ***A Physical Comedy About Class***

A new adaptation by Director Allison Arkell Stockman  
With Original Music by Jesse Terrill

**Press Opening: Saturday, January 24, 2009 at 8 pm.**

Pay-What-You-Can Previews January 22 & 23 at 8 pm.

*The Marriage of Figaro* runs through February 22.

**Love Letters. Locked Doors. Lustful Liaisons.**

Constellation Theatre Company is presenting an original adaptation of Beaumarchais' celebrated work, infused with heightened physicality inspired by commedia dell'arte. Figaro must outwit his master, the Count, in order to preserve the honor of his bride, Suzanne, who the Count plans to bed on her wedding night. While nobles and servants plot and scheme, mistaken identity, sexual intrigue and class conflict prevail. This epic farce inspired Mozart to write the opera and foreshadowed the French Revolution.

**Beaumarchais** was born Pierre-Augustin Caron, the son of a watch-maker who married into money and land, assuming the additional name "de Beaumarchais." The complex and perfectly timed plotting that has made *The Marriage of Figaro* one of the classic examples of French farce seems fitting to Beaumarchais' original profession as an expert of creating watches dependent on many small, intersecting parts that must move together in rhythm. Over his lifetime Beaumarchais played a wide variety of roles. In addition to being a playwright, he was an inventor, musician, politician, fugitive, spy, publisher, arms-dealer, diplomat, litigant, judge and revolutionary. As a man who worked his way up the social ladder through marriage, political writings and public scandal, Beaumarchais was always critical of the ruling class and empathetic with under dog causes. He was especially sympathetic with the American colonies and their rebellion against England; he personally trafficked weapons and employed forty vessels to aid the revolutionaries. It is ironic that despite his full support of the French Revolution of 1789, he found himself jailed for treason and then exiled during the aftermath, only to return to Paris before his death.

The original *The Marriage of Figaro* was written by Beaumarchais as the second part of a trilogy. *The Barber of Seville* was the first of Beaumarchais' successful plays and requests for a sequel resulted in *The Marriage of Figaro*, followed by the final installment, *The Guilty Mother*. *The*

*Marriage of Figaro*, or *La Folle Journée* (The Crazy Day), was written in 1778, eleven years before the French Revolution. While Marie Antoinette loved the story, her husband Louis XVI saw the central critique of the nobility as insulting and dangerous, and he banned the play until 1784. At the first public performance the house was so packed that the opening night crowd crushed three people to death. After the smash success of the play, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was inspired to compose the comic opera by the same name which debuted in Vienna only two years later.

Allison Arkell Stockman, Founding Artistic Director of Constellation Theatre Company, chose to do **an original adaptation** of the play for the upcoming production. “This brilliant work, written by a French playwright, is set in Spain, with a story best known from the Italian opera written by an Austrian composer, now presented in the United States. I wanted to explore the archetypal characters and clarify the major events with dialogue that would be fast, funny and accessible to a modern American audience. The central struggles of social class conflict and the battle of the sexes lie at the heart of the story and those themes still ring true today.” This classic French farce is heavily influenced by the **commedia dell’arte** tradition and so Stockman sought out physical comedy masters **Mark Jaster and Sabrina Mandell of Happenstance Theater** (Creators and performers of the sold-out and extended *The Seven Ages of Mime* at Round House Theatre) to conduct movement workshops with the cast. This production embraces the heightened physicality of commedia and the way that style communicates ideas about character, status and gender.

**Constellation Associate Artists** A.J. Guban (Scenic & Lighting Design), Yvette M. Ryan (Costume Design) and Ashley Ivey (Choreography) return to create a show that is rooted in its historical context and yet “period light” in its representation of class and sexuality. Spanish visual artists Goya and Gaudi inspired a design that is fantastical, imaginative and supportive of a theatrical world that includes asides, song, dance and lots of music. Jesse Terrill, who performed as an actor in Constellation’s most recent production of Havel’s *Temptation*, completes **the design team**. Terrill has composed **original orchestral music** that underscores and accents moments during the show.

*The Marriage of Figaro* has a **terrific cast** including Constellation favorites: Katy Carkuff, Misty Demory, Ashley Ivey and Joseph Thornhill. Joe Brack (most recently seen in the one man show *Santaland Diaries*) portrays Figaro and is once again playing opposite Helen Hayes Award Winner Nanna Ingvarsson; the two talented actors were Orestes and Clytaemnestra in last spring’s *Oresteia*. Jonathon Church is making his debut with Constellation in the role of the Count. Church has twice been nominated for Helen Hayes Awards and has done excellent work with many area companies including: Longacre Lea, Catalyst Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Solas Nua and Forum Theatre. Steve Beall, Lewis Freeman, Lee Liebeskind and Rachel Lee Poole round out the strong ensemble.

*The Marriage of Figaro* will be performed at **SOURCE** where Constellation is a resident company,

WHO: Constellation Theatre Company

WHAT: *The Marriage of Figaro* by Beaumarchais

WHERE: Source Theatre 1835 14<sup>th</sup> St. NW

WHEN: Jan. 22 – Feb. 22, 2009. Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 3 pm.

**PRESS OPENING: Saturday, January 24 at 8 pm.**

CONTACT: 202-204-7741 or [constellationtheatre@gmail.com](mailto:constellationtheatre@gmail.com)

WEBSITE: [www.ConstellationTheatre.org](http://www.ConstellationTheatre.org)

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## **THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO: FACT SHEET**

Press Contact: Misty Demory

**Play:** The Marriage of Figaro

202-204-7741  
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**Playwright:** Beaumarchais

**Director & Adapter:** Allison Arkell Stockman

**Blurb:** Figaro must outwit his master, the Count, in order to preserve the honor of his bride, Suzanne, who the Count plans to bed on her wedding night. While nobles and servants plot and scheme, mistaken identity, sexual intrigue and class conflict prevail. This epic farce inspired Mozart to write the opera and foreshadowed the French Revolution.

**Cast:** Steve Beall, Joe Brack, Katy Carkuff, Jonathon Church, Misty Demory, Lewis Freeman, Nanna Ingvarsson, Ashley Ivey, Lee Liebeskind, Rachel Lee Poole, Joseph Thornhill.

**Design and Production:** A.J. Guban (Set and Lights), Jesse Terrill (Composer), Yvette M. Ryan (Costumes), Ashley Ivey (Choreography), Françoise Nelson (Stage Manager), Christy Denny (Dramaturg), Meghan Tolmie (Assistant Director), Erica Yeager (Props Design), Michael Roike (Technical Director), Jeny Hall (Master Electrician), Lynette Winslow (Assistant Sound Design), Julia Cain (Assistant Stage Manager).

**Pay-What-You-Can Previews (2):** Thursday, Jan. 22 & Friday, Jan. 23 at 8 pm

**Press Night:** Saturday, January 24 at 8pm

**Performance Schedule:** January 22 – February 22 with shows on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 3 pm. Special Performance on Monday, February 16 at 8 pm.

### **Constellation Theatre Company Mission:**

Visionary Design. Heightened Physicality. Epic, Ensemble Theatre.

**For Tickets:** 1-800-494-8497, [www.ConstellationTheatre.org](http://www.ConstellationTheatre.org)

**For Information:** 202-204-7741, [www.ConstellationTheatre.org](http://www.ConstellationTheatre.org)

**Ticket Prices:** \$15-20      \$20 Adult General Admission  
Students and Seniors \$15. Groups of 8 and up \$17 each.

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

**Post-Show Discussions with the Artists:** Saturday, Feb. 7; Sunday, Feb. 15; Friday, Feb. 20.

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