

CONSTELLATION THEATRE COMPANY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Misty Demory

202-280-8101

constellationtheatre@gmail.com

The Oresteia

An epic Greek tragedy by Aeschylus, translated by the brilliant **Robert Fagles**.
Powerful visual imagery, **live music** and **a cast of 29** in **one dynamic evening** of theatre.

Adapted and Directed by Allison Arkell Stockman

Press Opening: Saturday, May 10, 2008 at 8 pm.

Pay-What-You-Can Preview May 9 at 8 pm.

The Oresteia runs through June 1.

The only surviving Greek trilogy brings us Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Orestes, Electra and The Furies in the ultimate story of war, love, vengeance and mercy. The tragic chain of murder and blood sacrifice culminates in the birth of a justice system and the triumph of compassion. The three plays, *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers* and *The Eumenides* have been streamlined into a single, epic evening of theatre complete with live music and dance.

This original adaptation begins with an opening sequence that brings to light the given circumstances of the play, the theft of Helen of Troy and the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Returning victorious from the Trojan War, Agamemnon is seduced by his stealthy wife Clytemnestra, who is determined to seek revenge for their daughter whom Agamemnon was forced to kill in order to appease the gods. Years later, their son Orestes returns home from exile and finds his sister Electra imprisoned as a slave. Together they mourn their father's death and vow to slay their mother and her lover Aegisthus in return. As soon as his mother's blood wets the ground, Orestes discovers that The Furies, ancient goddesses of revenge, are hot on his trail to punish him for his crime. Apollo, the god of Prophecy and Light, rescues Orestes. They travel to the temple of Athena and there the goddess of Justice sets into motion history's first murder trial.

Aeschylus, the father of Greek tragedy, is the oldest of the Greek playwrights whose scripts have survived. A veteran of the Persian Wars, Aeschylus conveys the horror of violence and celebrates the potential of a civilization that settles its conflicts through debate and democracy. *The Oresteia* won first prize at the Dionysia festival in Athens when it was first performed in 458 BC. In ancient Greece, a day at the amphitheatre included three tragedies, followed by a comedic satyr play, and *The Oresteia* is the only trilogy that remains intact today. This is the first time all three plays have been presented in a single two and a half hour performance by a professional theatre in Washington, DC. The American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, MA presented a critically acclaimed one-evening version of the trilogy in 1995 and the Royal National Theatre of London produced an original translation of the tale told through two plays performed in repertory in 2000.

When embarking on this adventure Constellation Theatre Company chose the translation of famous translator Robert Fagles, one of the very few writers to tackle all three of the major epic poems of Homer and Virgil: *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*. Sadly, Robert Fagles died of cancer on Wednesday, March 26 of this year. Charles McGrath of The New York Times described the talent of this esteemed writer, “While faithful to the spirit and intent of the original, his translations were remarkable for their narrative energy and verve.” Director Allison Arkell Stockman, an alumna of Princeton where Robert Fagles was a popular professor, was first attracted to Fagles work when she read his translation of *Antigone*. She attests, “Professor Fagles had a rare gift for combining action and poetry in a way that is accessible to modern audiences and actors. The passion and emotional depth of his words are sprinkled with bright moments of humor that, while sorely needed, are often neglected in translations of Greek tragedy.” Stockman approached Fagles with a proposal for this production and he generously granted permission for her to adapt the three plays into a single evening, using about one third of the original text.

Before returning to the renovated Source Theatre as a resident company, Constellation Theatre Company has found a home at Clark Street Playhouse this spring. They just closed their production of Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, described by Celia Wren of The Washington Post, “Under the smart direction of Allison Arkell Stockman and aided by costumer Yvette M. Ryan and other canny creatives, a 20-person cast is rollicking through Brecht's single-minded parable, making it colorful and stylized.” Doug Krentzlin of DC Examiner complimented the company’s “enthusiasm, imagination and just plain raw talent.” Designers A.J. Guban and Yvette M. Ryan finished their work on *Good Woman* and immediately began creating the world for *The Oresteia*.

Internationally acclaimed musician Tom Teasley is composing music that he will perform live during *The Oresteia*. Teasley composed and recorded music for *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and was seen onstage in *The Arabian Nights* last fall. Nelson Pressley of The Washington Post wrote of Teasley’s performance in *The Arabian Nights*, “With his unusual array of instruments, his propulsive beats and near-dervish presence, Teasley is practically a show unto himself.” Teasley has collected a large and diverse range of instruments to underscore *The Oresteia*. 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.”

Helen Hayes award winner Nanna Ingvarsson will star in *The Oresteia* as Clytemnestra opposite Brian Hemmingsen’s Agamemnon. Returning to the Constellation acting company are Katy Carkuff, Misty Demory, Kevin Finkelstein, Gwen Grastorf, Keith Irby, Choreographer Ashley Ivey, Hilary Kacser, Lisa Lias, Kenny Littlejohn, Beckett Martin, Joe Thornhill and Ron Ward. Fifteen other skilled actors, Joe Brack, Jennifer Crooks, Nick DePinto*, Theo Hadjimichael, Elizabeth Jernigan, Meghan Nesmith, Anne Nottage, Kevin O’Reilly, Rachel Lee Poole, Julia Proctor, James Radack, Julie Roundtree, Amy Quiggins, Jjana Valentiner, Lindsay Kit Wiebe complete the twenty-nine person ensemble.

* AEA Member

WHO: Constellation Theatre Company

WHAT: *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus, translated by Robert Fagles

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

WHEN: May 9 – June 1, 2008. Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm & Sundays at 3 pm.

PRESS OPENING: Saturday, May 10 at 8 pm.

-- continued--

THE ORESTEIA: FACT SHEET

Press Contact: Misty Demory

Play: The Oresteia

202-280-8101

Playwright: Aeschylus, translated by Robert Fagles

Director: Allison Arkell Stockman

Blurb: The only surviving Greek trilogy brings us Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Orestes, Electra and The Furies in the ultimate story of war, love, vengeance and mercy. The tragic chain of murder and blood sacrifice culminates in the birth of a justice system and the triumph of compassion. Powerful visual imagery, live music and a cast of 29 bring this original adaptation of the archetypal Greek trilogy to life in one epic evening of theatre.

Cast: Joe Brack, Katy Carkuff, Jennifer Crooks, Misty Demory, Nick DePinto*, Kevin Finkelstein, Gwen Grastorf, Theo Hadjimichael, Brian Hemmingsen, Keith Irby, Nanna Ingvarsson, Ashley Ivey, Elizabeth Jernigan, Hilary Kacser, Lisa Lias, Kenny Littlejohn, Beckett Martin, Meghan Nesmith, Anne Nottage, Kevin O'Reilly, Rachel Lee Poole, Julia Proctor, James Radack, Julie Roundtree, Joe Thornhill, Amy Quiggins, Jjana Valentiner, Ron Ward, Lindsay Kit Wiebe. *AEA Member

Design and Production: A.J. Guban (Set and Lights), Tom Teasley (Composer/ Performer), Yvette M. Ryan (Costumes), Ashley Ivey (Choreographer), Cliff Williams (Fight Choreographer), John Michael MacDonald, C.Smith (Assistant Directors), Alicia Oliver-Krueger (Stage Manager), Rachel Miller (Dramaturgy), Meghan Nesmith, Cheryl Gnerlich (Assistant Stage Managers), Michael Roike (Technical Director), Erica Yeager (Props Design), Angelo Merenda (Master Carpenter), Christopher Kelly (Master Electrician).

Pay-What-You-Can Previews (1): Friday, May 9 at 8pm

Press Night: Saturday, May 10 at 8pm

Performance Schedule: May 9 – June 1 with shows on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 3 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 Pentagon City or Take the Clark Street Exit Just Over the 14th St. Bridge/ I-395.

###