

VENUS THEATRE

May 11 - June 4, 2017

TUNNEL VISION

By Andrea Lepcio
Directed by Deborah Randall

Featuring: Katie Hileman and Kyosin Kang

Dear Member of the Press:

Thank you for covering Tunnel Vision by Andrea Lepcio. This is the second production of this play and we stage it with revisions from the first based on feedback exchanges between me and Andrea. Venus Theatre is pleased to stage our 60th woman empowering script in our 17 year existence.

Exploring the absurd has been more liberating than I ever could have imagined.

This play, as all plays are this year, is dedicated to Tricia McCauley.

Tricia was first my young female professional producer out of college. I was cast as Mary in Claire Chaffee's *Why We Have A Body* at her Theatre Conspiracy in the mid nineties. That production changed my artistic life in terms of my understanding of what women could do on stage. We'd met prior to that but our friendship grew from that experience and kept growing for two and a half decades. I'm proud to do this work as a way of honoring her. There were times I would rehearse solo work for her in the living area of her group house. She would watch what I created and she would tell me, "this is what you do". It was her affirmation in my off-of-the-beaten-track way of creating that helped me to keep going in the face of so much adversity.

She was my friend, my sister in art, and neither I nor my company would be here without her. The cast from production #59 planted a container garden in her memory a month ago and every day the growth of it speaks to me in a new way. So, let me know if you need lettuce!

This is the kind of zany staging that would keep her talking for months. It has been liberating to continue to play for her laughter, as ethereal as that may be now. That's my real objective.

I hope you enjoy the show.

All Best,

Deborah Randall
Venus Theatre, Founder.

Venus Theatre welcomes the return of Andrea Lepcio (Looking for the Pony) with their 60th woman empowering play, Tunnel Vision. Directed by Deborah Randall, Tunnel Vision is a multi-layered celebration of the Feminine featuring the talents of Katie Hileman and Kyosin Kang.

Tunnel Vision is ultimately a journey of acceptance and redemption, played out in a non-traditional theatre space from which truth, purpose and love unexpectedly emerge. Key to the action is the live construction of a sculptural art installation. Two female characters enter an unidentified space. It is unfamiliar to them and they are unfamiliar with each other. Unsure how they got here, they quickly find themselves "stuck" in this liminal space. The two struggle to maintain their composure --anything to avoid confronting the circumstances that lie beneath their arrival at this "place" or admit their burgeoning attraction to each other. The play considers many of the daily challenges women face as well as those issues that are, typically, solely female: the struggle to balance motherhood with the desire to have a career, the stigma that comes with not choosing the traditional path assigned our gender, the hypercritical judgment we place on ourselves in comparison to our female peers, the difficulty we find in truly loving ourselves, and the fear that sometimes comes in loving each other.

Tickets for Tunnel Vision are now on sale on line (www.venustheatre.org).

PERFORMANCES:

May 11 - June 4, 2017

Thursdays at 8:00 p.m.
Fridays at 8:00 p.m.
Saturdays at 8:00 p.m.
Sundays at 3:00 p.m.

WHERE:

Venus Theatre
21 C Street Laurel, MD

BOX OFFICE:

venustheatre.org

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Andrea Lepcio is best known for Looking for the Pony, a finalist for the Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award and for the NEA Outstanding New American Play Award. It was presented in a "Rolling World Premiere" Off-Broadway at Vital Theatre Company in New York and Synchronicity Theatre in Atlanta and subsequent productions. Recent productions include Strait of Gibraltar at Synchronicity Theatre, Tunnel Vision at Off the Wall in Pittsburgh, Dinner at Home between Deaths at Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles and The Gold at New York Musical Festival. Additional Plays and musicals under development include World Avoided (EST/Sloan Commission), Central Avenue Breakdown (FwdTheatre) and Lf&Tms (Music Theatre Factory). Andrea is a member of the Dramatists Guild, was a Dramatists Guild Fellow and served as the Dramatists Guild Fellows Program Director for ten years. M.F.A. in Dramatic Writing, Carnegie Mellon University. B.A. Human Ecology, College of the Atlantic

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Deborah Randall is the founder and visionary behind Venus Theatre. Born in Washington, DC, and raised in Prince George's County, she began directing as a student and president of the Drama Club at Prince Georges Community College. Her first paid acting gig was at Wild World Theme Park in 1986. She later went on to graduate cum laude from UMBC under the guidance of Xerxes Mehta, Wendy Salkind, Sam McCready, Alan Kriezenbeck, and Alice Robinson. She was in Mehta's Marat/Sade at UMBC with the Maryland Stage Company and in McCready's Merry Wives of Windsor with Shakespeare on Wheels. After college, Randall worked as an actor regularly in Washington, DC, and then began performing her own monologues. She has performed four solo shows, written two, and had one published. She has also written and staged works for multiple casts. She began doing public staged readings of other living playwrights in 2002, which led to cultivating strong relationships with many writers. The works of Randall and Venus have been seen up and down the Eastern seaboard. Venus Theatre began in 1995 as an all female improv troupe called Venus Envy. Venus led Take Back the Night Marches and did improvisational games at the House of Ruth as well as other empowerment projects. In 2000, Randall founded Venus Theatre, known for immersive staging and

award-winning world premiere work. In 2006 Venus dropped roots in the county where the founder grew up. Venus hopes to bring culture to the community that has given her so much. Venus receives about 200 play submissions each year and chooses four plays. The production to publication rate stands at about 25% and the trend is that these plays go on to get more productions over time, even if they have been shelved for a decade or more. Deb takes great pride in this. Venus stands among the longest running women's theatres in the world.

ABOUT VENUS THEATRE

In 2000, Venus Theatre began her journey to become an incorporated 501c3. In the years prior exploration occurred under the title Venus Envy and the company led workshops at the House of Ruth and Take Back the Night marches on college campus' in the DC/Baltimore Region.

Founder, Deborah Randall, began as an actor performing four different solo shows: All She Cares About is the Yankees (John Ford Noonan, published by Samuel French. ISBN: 0573632065), How She Played the Game (Cynthia Cooper, published by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. ISBN:1600031285), Til It Hurts (Deborah Randall, unpublished), Molly Daughter (Deborah Randall, published in Anthracite! An Anthology and distributed through Chicago University Press. ISBN: 9781589661172).

The desire to return to collaboration became important and Deb started exploring full-length plays and readings. Out of these staged readings, full productions began to arise. During this time, Deb was also a Theatre Educator through the Helen Hayes Legacy Project for several years.

After producing in various spaces throughout Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, a new need arose. Inspired by Virginia Woolf's, A Room of One's Own, a new journey began to find a storefront space that could be transformed into a black box. In 2006, the company moved into an old Chinese Restaurant on C Street. During the first few years in residence, a lot of family programming was launched with hopes of integrating into the neighborhood on a developmental level. This period was a critical time of development for Venus. But, just like in the earlier journey, the solo work came back, readings began to take place in the space, and Venus was back to producing cutting edge new theatrical works that captured empowering and sometimes harrowing journeys of women.

Fifteen years later and we are still empowering women. Venus now has a very strong awareness of the importance of sustainable creativity. We recycle set pieces, borrow where we can avoid building, and overall want to keep a clean green footprint when it comes to women in theatre.

It is the mission of Venus Theatre to set flight to the voices of women and children with theatre for a lifetime. We try to never produce the same play twice and have a deep belief that our adventurous audiences, who are always ready for a daring journey, will keep coming back to see what we're up to next. As of December 2014, Venus Theatre produced 50 plays that empowered women. Each year, Venus receives about 200 play submissions and chooses four to produce in the calendar year ahead. Each production gets 20 performances. Venus offers a summer camp for children for one week in June or July each year. Venus will continue to produce four new plays that empower women in the calendar years ahead as well as expanding our educational and community outreach.



Venus is a 501c3 nonprofit organization committed to setting flight to the voices of women with theatre for a lifetime. Venus is the only woman run theatre company in the state of Maryland and among the longest running women's theatre's on the globe.

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HowlRound

A knowledge commons by and for the theatre community.

Posted by Deborah Randal
October 26, 2016

Fifty years ago I was born in Washington, DC. It's been incredible to grow up with the Smithsonian as a field trip destination during the end of bussing and amid great movements of social integration. Art was accessible and everywhere. No matter what was happening in the world I always had permission to play, and I just never stopped doing that. My company, Venus Theatre, now stands among the longest running women's theatres in the world.

I believe in small, immersive theatre, and that the disappearance of the black box—which is happening all over—means devastation to the form. When we package theatre up and market it like dollar store pregnancy tests, we lose the power of the form.

"It's essential for women to have access to black boxes and storefronts because we have been smashed into silence for so long that we need time to stretch and safe spaces to explore our ideas without being held to larger theatres' budgetary standards."

Women make up 50 percent of our world, so without the contemporary voices of women on today's stages, audiences are only getting half of the story. Humanity cannot afford this. Especially not now. Theatre is a vehicle of empathy. We need it in our neighborhoods; we need it with tiled brown carpet in the lobby, in addition to the decadent red. We need it everywhere right now.

Producing women's voices takes experience, patience, and trust. In my experience, in order for the true female voice to be embraced she must dive deeply and find it within a safe and effective process. This process should be more important than the result. Process cannot be marketed without also being exposed and destroyed. This is why black box independent theatre is critical. It's essential for women to have access to black boxes and storefronts because we have been smashed into silence for so long that we need time to stretch and safe spaces to explore our ideas without being held to larger theatres' budgetary standards.



Deborah Randall featured in the *Washington Post*.

As I've been working on this essay, the world has been shifting under our collective feet. The first woman became the Democratic nominee for the President of the United States of America, and then we lost the great Mother of American Theatre, Zelda Fichandler.

Archetypally, this is a time of the loss of the artistic mother, it seems to me. As the daughters, we must honor her by building further the incredible structure she began. That means taking risks and trusting ourselves and each other. We, who dare to produce works by women. We, who dare to pay whatever we can afford in the form of stipends to artists, even if it means foregoing advertising. We, the sisters of now, must join hands and create.

It's difficult to find one another. The isolation feels incredibly depressing. It's terrifying. I know.

If you are reading this now and you are daring or have dared to set flight to voices of women, I know! You've been ignored. Discredited. Diminished. Disregarded. But I tell you it's still worth it. Even if you only ever produce one play. Even if you only ever get a table reading in front of five other people, it's worth it.

It's worth it because it changes the nature of our collective experience. What we know now is the canon of male writing is different than the way women tend to express. This is so often discussed in universities and so rarely explored in any professional theatre. There is a grave difference between intro/climax/denouement and the swirling spiral of contraction and release.

Each time you feel the contraction of darkness it is a call to get still and internal. It's a call to cultivate the vision you are here to create. And when the release comes back around again, and it always does, let it go out into the world. No matter how terrifying it seems, know this: it will become internal and personal again. Everything is in motion. The idea that we are rooted in the linear storytelling format is simply not true. Round and round this artistic life spiral will go—as it does and has always done—for women. This is what my fifty years has taught me.

This style of female expression is waiting to be acknowledged. We need to find the courage to go out and meet it. We need to honor the women who have created before us by summoning a fraction of their courage and stepping out into the risk zones during times of release. This is where the birth happens. Every time.

Live it. Trust it. Release it out into the world.

And let me know when you do, because your courage feeds my courage.