

# VENUS THEATRE

September 7 - October 1, 2017

## AGLAONIKE'S TIGER

By Claudia Barnett  
Directed by Deborah Randall

Featuring: Ann Fraistat, Matthew Marcus, Deborah Randall,  
Katie Hileman, Katie Jefferies Zelonka, and Amy Rhodes

Dear Member of the Press:

Thank you so much for covering Aglaonike's Tiger at Venus Theatre. Every play this year is dedicated to Tricia McCauley and this one most especially.

It's been so incredible to dive into the stars with this dream of an artistic team.

This is a rare all ages production so I'm really excited about whole families coming out to spend an evening together as well.

This is the fifth script of Claudia's Venus has help to develop. And we were into rewrites as of last week. We're excited to see how the whole thing lands.

Thanks so much for coverage!

Best,

Deborah Randall  
Venus Theatre, Founder.

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Venus Theatre welcomes the return of Claudia Barnett (No. 731 Degraw-street, Brooklyn, or Emily Dickinson's Sister: A Play in Two Acts and Witches Vanish) with their 61st woman empowering play, Aglaonike's Tiger. Directed by Deborah Randall, Aglaonike's Tiger features the talents of Ann Fraistat, Matthew Marcus, Deborah Randall, Katie Hileman, Katie Jefferies Zelonka, and Amy Rhodes.

Aglaonike, one of the earliest female astronomers, could predict lunar eclipses, but her science was suspect because she was a woman. She therefore billed herself as a sorceress and claimed she could draw down the moon. Inspired by her unsung history, this coming-of-age play follows the protagonist through a series of challenges, both magical and scientific. Drawing on ancient Greek traditions and postmodern performance trends, Aglaonike's Tiger is stylized and visual and uses puppets and masks to explore political, ecological, and scientific themes.

Tickets for Aglaonike's Tiger are now on sale on line ([www.venustheatre.org](http://www.venustheatre.org)).

**PERFORMANCES:**

September 7 - October 1, 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](http://venustheatre.org)

**ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Claudia Barnett writes weird, experimental plays about women and history and science. *Aglaonike's Tiger*, about the first female astronomer in ancient Greece, was workshopped by 5th Wall Productions in Charleston and had a lab production at the University of Pittsburgh in 2016; it will premiere at Venus Theatre in September 2017. Her other plays have been developed and performed at the Great Plains Theatre Conference, the Kennedy Center Page-to-Stage Festival, MultiStages, Nashville Repertory Theatre, Stage Left Theatre, Venus Theatre, and the Women's Voices Theater Festival. She won the Andaluz Award Jury Prize from Albuquerque's Fusion Theatre for *Palooka*, which premiered as part of The Seven: Strange Bedfellows in 2016. She teaches playwriting at Middle Tennessee State University and is the author of *I Love You Terribly: Six Plays* (2012) and *No. 731 Degraw-street, Brooklyn, or Emily Dickinson's Sister: A Play in Two Acts* (2015), both published by Carnegie Mellon University Press.

**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.

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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.

Contact: Deborah Randall  
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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.

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***“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.”***

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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.

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.