

# VENUSTHEATRE

Dear Esteemed Member of the Press:

Thank you so much for attending #solestories. At the end of last year, I was reading through plays (for the 19th year) and I discovered that I needed to do something different this time. I approached Renee about possible plays she may have had to offer up. She mentioned a few. Then, I asked her about #solestories. I'd been following her morning posts on FaceBook and it was something I really enjoyed. She said she wasn't sure what it was. Her fellow Welder Bob had just had a conversation with her the day before I approached her. They decided she needed a deadline. So, the whole thing began as synchronicity.

Renee used the word "iteration" and I felt that described everything perfectly. So, this whole year is now dedicated to collaborative iterations. Maybe they are plays maybe they are something else.

In the theatre industry right now there are talks of creating pipelines, and men are building some structures and systems for women. I have found that this is not the same as empowering women. As a producer of 68 official women empowering scripts it has puzzled me to see the erasure continue even as the words "empowerment" and "transparency" are thrown around with equal weight as "parity" and "equality".

Words.

My whole career has been about interpreting words. And two words together, "collaborative iterations" became more than a descriptive, they became a mantra for 2019. As women, we are held tightly to cookie cutter definitions and bizarre systems that juxtapose perfectionism with erasure. A collaborative iteration is a license to explore creatively.

We've taken permission here. Just as we did at the beginning of the year with, "Jane App". Just as we will do in the fall as we produce our first playwright from Kosovo. Just as we will end the year with a rock opera to be developed over the summer. We are taking permission and throwing off the layers of expectations put on us by too many misogynistic well-intentioned people.

This is our flag in the sand: Collaborative Iterations. We are here to play and discover and we hope this gives our audiences as much thrill as it has given us!

Enjoy the Ride,

Deborah Randall  
Creatrix



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# VENUSTHEATRE

**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

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## #SOLESTORIES or a play staged around a lot of feet

May 30 - June 22, 2019

Written by Renee Calarco  
Directed by Deborah Randall  
Featuring: Jasmine Brooks, Tina Kumpel, Claire Gallagher, Graham Pilato, and Jan Petkofsky

68th Woman Empowering Project

It began as an Instagram phenomenon...  
What is #solestories? It's a collaborative iteration. An experiment. Right now, it's this play with these actors and this director and these designers. In this moment. You'll meet Vie and Lia. Two modern women in a modern relationship. You'll also meet a cast of characters in the form of an ensemble.

Maybe--in another iteration--it might be an exhibit. Or tiny, isolated bits of performance art. Or--who knows--maybe a film.

### **PERFORMANCES:**

Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

### **WHERE:**

Venus Theatre  
21 C Street Laurel, MD

### **BOX OFFICE:**

venustheatre.org

### **PRODUCTION**

Amy Rhodes: Set and lights  
Neil McFadden: Sound  
Deborah Randall: Costume and Props  
Laura Schraven: Graphics  
Myrrh: Front of house

# A VENUS THEATRE ITERATION

Process is key and therefore so is the experienced artist critical in this way of being. An iteration is never about the final destination, rather about exploration that finds a collective voice in a fire-like response to the situations of the world in a given moment.

This is an event. It occurs when an experienced craftsperson of 20+ years applies her skills to a particular project in a specific way. At Venus Theatre this is an act of feminism. The iteration takes the permission men have had access to over the centuries and applies it to a female journey or process. Where David Rabe has been allowed to blah blah blah, the iterator can stay silent, or write gibberish, or drop in a sock puppet show. The iterator has complete permission to play in the same way men have had permission to say whatever they like for hundreds and hundreds of years.

A Venus Theatre Iteration takes into account the determined structure of theatre and then dives into its echoes and new or alternate forms. Ultimately, A Venus Theatre Iteration gives a previously unknown and unheard voice to women in a dynamic way generated by an experienced artist then shared with a talented and competent team of collaborators. Eventually, after all of that, it may or may not be shared with a paying public.

Where male theatre embraces linear structures, the female iteration embrace loops in echoes stemming from the experience of existing as a female person.

Where inexperienced artists attempt to create the ultimate work of approval, the experienced iterator is not attached to the result but rather the truth of the journey.

Where the commercial theatre sets its objective around ticket sales, the female experienced iteration is focused on humanity.

A Venus Theatre Iteration is fire because it is a reaction. It is water because it flows. It is earth because it is rooted in wisdom and experience, It is air because it is ephemeral. It is the Mother of theatrical expression and experience.

**A VENUS THEATRE ITERATION IS  
THE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF THE FEMALE EXPERIENCE.**

## 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.

Nineteen 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 67 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.

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