



Avant Bard Theatre - Office
3700 S. Four Mile Run Dr.
Arlington, VA 22206

Avant Bard Theatre – Performances
Gunston Arts Center – Theatre 2
2700 S Lang St.
Arlington, VA 22206

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT INFORMATION

Alyssa Sanders
Producing Partner
E: alyssa@avantbard.org
P: 703-418-4808

February 2, 2024

Avant Bard and Longacre Lea Embark on Co-Production of Shakespeare's Coriolanus

ARLINGTON, VA, Feb. 2, 2024: Avant Bard Theatre and Longacre Lea have started rehearsals for their co-production of William Shakespeare's timeless tragedy, *Coriolanus*. This co-production promises to bring a fresh perspective to the classic play, blending Avant Bard's innovative approach to the classics with Longacre Lea's intellectually adventurous artistic vision.

“Avant Bard Theatre and Longacre Lea share a commitment to pushing artistic boundaries and engaging audiences with thought-provoking productions. This collaboration brings together the best of both theatres, promising a dynamic and unforgettable rendition of *Coriolanus*.” said Alyssa Sanders, Avant Bard Producing Partner.

The addition in August 2023 of Longacre Lea Artistic Director Kathleen Akerley to Avant Bard’s leadership team is a testament to this shared commitment. Akerley adapted and directed *Julius Caesar* for Avant Bard last season. Soon after joining Avant Bard, Akerley proposed the idea of a co-production. Both companies found the idea to be a win-win, not only because of their shared artistic commitment but also because it made financial sense during a time when budgets are shrinking due to the decline in funding for the nonprofit performing arts sector.

“It’s been nearly six years since Longacre Lea was involved in a full production, but all of the leadership are here in this co-production: Séamus [Miller] as Adaptor/Director and Video Designer, Solomon [HaileSelassie] as Lighting Designer and Stage Manager, and me as Co-Producer and Standby Dogsboddy,” shared Akerley. “We’ve also got company



Founding Artists
TJ Edwards
Brian Hemmingsen
Christopher Henley

Producing Partners
Kathleen Akerley
Sara Barker
Alyssa Sanders

Board of Directors
Edgar Ndjatou, President
Peter Threadgill, Secretary
Nia Hill, Treasurer
Genie Barton

member Tom Carman on Sound Design. I can't speak for them, but I will acknowledge feeling rusty, feeling the pressure created by new roles, and feeling the hesitancy to treat theater production in 2024 as business-as-usual, but it certainly helps me get started to have the artists at Avant Bard to co-produce with.”

Séamus Miller’s adaptation of *Coriolanus* uses violent video games as a metaphor for the creation, manipulation, and destruction of the protagonist. “I think this is Shakespeare’s most American play, possibly his most misunderstood play, and certainly his most misunderstood protagonist,” Miller said. “We’re re-examining the character from a trauma-informed lens; how sending him into combat as a child and celebrating his brutality has rendered him unable to behave in a prosocial environment, and how those around him share responsibility for his dysfunction. We’re using video game elements to create a layer of alienation between Coriolanus and the other characters—as well as the audience—and to explore Coriolanus’ experience of flashbacks and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).”

Returning to Avant Bard’s stage as the title character is local DC area actor, James Finley. “I’m very excited to return to Avant Bard (and debut with Longacre Lea!) to tackle one of Shakespeare’s most visceral tragedies,” shared Finley. “Coriolanus is a man shaped by and capable of incredible violence, but also unscrupulous honesty and integrity. I’m looking forward to exploring how those traits, at first prized by his community while he’s away, become a liability as he attempts to live and lead within it.”

In addition, the cast of *Coriolanus* includes Kim Gilbert playing Volumnia and Eric Hissom as Menenius, both local DC-area actors are renowned for their versatility and impressive repertoire.

Previews begin Thursday, February 29. The press/opening matinee is Sunday, March 3. *Coriolanus* runs through Saturday, March 23. Performances take place at Gunston Arts Center, Theatre Two, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington, VA 22206. For press inquiries, interviews, or additional information, please contact Alyssa Sanders at alyssa@avantbard.org or at 703-418-4808.

Note: As part of a commitment to making theatre open to all, Avant Bard offers pay-what-you-can tickets for all previews as well as Saturday matinees, complementary tickets to all Arlington middle and high school students and half-price tickets for their parents/guardians, and, for *Coriolanus*, offers two “Mask Required” performances: Saturday, March 16, 2pm and 7:30pm.

###

Avant Bard and Longacre Lea on the web and social media:

<https://avantbard.org/>

<https://www.longacrelea.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/AvantBardTheatre>

<https://www.facebook.com/LongacreLeaProductions/>

<https://twitter.com/AvantBard>

<https://twitter.com/longacrelea>

<https://instagram.com/avantbardtheatre>

<https://www.instagram.com/longacrelea/>

Avant Bard produces thought-provoking theatre. Avant Bard dedicates itself to productions of classic works—both time-tested and contemporary—that take provocative, bold approaches in intimate settings. Since 1990, Avant Bard has delivered high-quality, diverse, and accessible arts to the Washington, D.C. region. Avant Bard is committed to talent development, equity, inclusion, and programmatic excellence.