



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Press Contact:
Meg Devine
(610) 519-7454
margaret.devine@villanova.edu

Villanova Theatre to Challenge, Stimulate Audiences with *Mother Courage and Her Children*

From November 13-18 and November 27-December 2, Villanova Theatre will entertain and challenge audiences with Bertolt Brecht's epic drama, *Mother Courage and Her Children*. The production is directed by Assistant Professor Shawn Kairschner and features Professor Joanna Rotté in the title role. *Mother Courage*, written in the midst of World War II and set in the 1600s during the Thirty Years' War, offers a highly theatrical examination of the relationship between commerce and conflict. Audiences will be invited to discuss the play's enduring relevance during a post-show discussion on Thursday, November 29.

Villanova Theatre is located in Vasey Hall on the Villanova University campus. Performances will be held at 8:00pm on Tuesday – Saturday and at 2:00pm on Sundays and the second Saturday. Tickets cost \$20-\$24, with discounts for seniors, students, and groups, and may be ordered by calling the Villanova Theatre Box Office at (610) 519-7474. Additional information is available online at www.theatre.villanova.edu.

In Brecht's masterpiece, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, a war rages on while the worldly-wise Mother Courage seeks her fortune selling goods to the soldiers. But the war exacts a price – as war always does – and Mother Courage's soaring profits are tempered by searing loss. First performed in 1941, *Mother Courage* remains deeply moving and powerfully relevant.

When Villanova Theatre's 2007-2008 season was announced last spring, Kairschner remarked that he hoped a change in US involvement with Iraq would have made *Mother Courage* less relevant at production time. Now, he hopes the play will invite exploration of the deeply personal impact that war has on individuals. "After a protracted war, the characters in the play are living in a climate of absolute scarcity," he commented. "From our vantage point of plenty, it can be tempting to judge them according to our own experience. We forget that the decisions these people are forced to make are the result of the devastation of their communities and the decimation of their families."

The aesthetic of Villanova Theatre's production intertwines the world of the play with the era during which it was written. Janus Stefanowicz' striking costumes capture the sensibility of the 17th Century, while incorporating the flair of the 1940s. The set, designed by Master's student Lance Kniskern, is deceptively simple, with artfully designed multi-purpose pieces that move gracefully across a vast map of the countries involved in the Thirty Years' War. John Thomas' score, played onstage by an acoustic trio, sets Brecht's songs to appealing melodies that accent the timeless quality of the play.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a poet, playwright, and theatre director. He was born in Augsburg, Germany. Brecht's early plays, marked by a revolt against bourgeois values, won him success, controversy, and the Kleist Prize in 1922. Popularity came with *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928, *The Threepenny Opera*), an adaptation of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), and from then until 1933 his work was particularly concerned with encouraging audiences to think rather than identify, and with experimentation in epic theatre and alienation effects. Hitler's rise to power forced Brecht to leave Germany, and he lived in exile for 15 years, chiefly in the U.S. During this period, he wrote some of his greatest plays, including *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (1938, *Mother Courage and Her Children*) and *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis* (1945, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*). After his return to East Berlin in 1948, his directorial work on these and other plays with the Berliner Ensemble firmly established his influence as a major figure in 20th Century theatre. In 1955, one year before his death, he received the Stalin Peace Prize.

Shawn Kairschner, Ph.D., joined the Villanova University faculty in 2006 and directed last fall's production of *The Tempest*. He has performed and directed in numerous venues in the United States and in England, including a three-year stint as the Artistic Director of the Sideway Theater Company in Berkeley, C.A., for whom he directed or produced a variety of productions from Shakespeare to original, one-person shows. Recent directorial credits include *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in Williamstown, M.A., as well as *Equus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a musical adaptation of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* at Stanford University, where he received his Ph.D.

Joanna Rotté, Ph.D. is a writer, actor, and director. She is professor of theatre in Villanova University's Master's program in theatre, as well as former chair of the department. She has lately appeared on the Vasey stage as Sister Beatrice in *Fred and Jane*, Hannah Hawke

in *Prayers of Sherkin*, Claire Zahanassian in *The Visit*, and Catwoman in *By the Bog of Cats*. . . Her most recent directing endeavor was last season's *The Chairs* by Ionesco. Her own plays – *Prajna*, *Death of the Father*, and *Art Talk* – have been featured presentations at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. She is the author of *Scene Change (A Theatre Diary: Prague, Moscow, Leningrad)* and *Acting With Adler*. She writes regularly for the *Soul of the American Actor Newspaper*, archived at www.homepage.villanova.edu/joanna.rotte.

Mother Courage and Her Children runs November 13-18 and November 27-December 2, 2007. Show times are 8:00pm Tuesday – Saturday and 2:00pm Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$20-\$24 and may be ordered by calling the Villanova Theatre Box Office at (610) 519-7474. Visit www.theatre.villanova.edu for more information.

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VILLANOVA THEATRE FACT SHEET

WHAT: *Mother Courage and Her Children*

WHERE: Villanova Theatre
Vasey Hall
Lancaster & Ithan Avenues
Villanova, Pennsylvania

WHEN: November 13-18 & November 27-December 2, 2007
Preview: Tuesday, November 13, at 8:00pm
Opening: Wednesday, November 14, at 8:00pm
Performs Tuesday-Saturday at 8:00pm
Saturday and Sunday at 2:00pm

TICKET PRICES: \$20.00 Tuesday Preview
\$22.00 Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday
\$24.00 Friday/Saturday/Sunday

CAST: Percy Abraham..... *Swiss Cheese, Ensemble*
Charles Helmetag..... *Old Colonel, Ensemble*
Jennifer Huth..... *Yvette*
Charles B. Illingworth IV..... *Eilif, Ensemble*
Andy Joos..... *General, Ensemble*
Bunny Kroglund..... *Ensemble*
Luke Moyer..... *Ensemble*
Tim Moyer*..... *Cook, Old Soldier*
Matt Mykityshyn..... *Ensemble*
Kristen O'Rourke..... *Katrin*
Jason Peifer..... *Ensemble*
Joanna Rotté*..... *Mother Courage*
Jessica Satryan..... *Ensemble*
Gene Terruso*..... *Chaplain*

* *Members of Actors Equity*

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES:

Student Talk-back: Tuesday, November 27

Audience members are invited to stay after the performance for a talk-back session with the cast. (Admission to this performance is free for all Villanova University students.)

Speaker's Night: Thursday, November 29

Patrons are invited to attend a lively post-show discussion with the director, dramaturg, and an invited speaker (speaker TBA).

WRITTEN BY: Bertolt Brecht
DIRECTED BY: Shawn Kairschner
SCENIC DESIGN: Lance Kniskern
COSTUME DESIGN: Janus Stefanowicz
LIGHTING DESIGN: Jerold R. Forsyth
COMPOSER: John Thomas
MUSIC DIRECTION: Jay Ansill
CHOREOGRAPHY: Samantha Bellomo
DRAMATURG: Carrie Chapter
TICKETS: (610) 519-7474
INFORMATION: www.theatre.villanova.edu