



**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS WORLD PREMIERE
“THE TROJAN WOMEN” BY ELLEN MCLAUGHLIN; INSPIRED BY EURIPIDES
April 4-May 11, 2008**

BERKELEY, Calif. (21 February 2008) – Berkeley’s acclaimed Aurora Theatre Company proudly presents the Professional World Premiere of **THE TROJAN WOMEN** by lauded actress and playwright **Ellen McLaughlin** (best known for the role of “Angel” in *Angels in America*, and her plays *Iphigenia and Other Daughters*, *Narrow Bed*, and *Tongue of a Bird*). Aurora Theatre Company founding Artistic Director **Barbara Oliver**, who directed the company’s critically heralded 2004 production of McLaughlin’s *The Persians*, helms this re-imagined Greek drama that makes the struggles of ancient Greece as immediate as the headlines of today. **Nora el Samahy, Gwen Loeb, Julian Lopez-Morillas, Charisse Loriaux, Sarah Nealis, Matthew Purdon, Emilie Talbot, and Carla Spindt** star in **THE TROJAN WOMEN**, playing **April 4 through May 11** at the Aurora Theatre in Berkeley. For tickets and information (\$28-50) the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**. The chorus of **THE TROJAN WOMEN** features an artistic collaboration with four young actors from the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Inspired by Euripides’ classic anti-war tragedy, **THE TROJAN WOMEN**, first produced during the Greek Peloponnesian War, examines the aftermath of the Trojan War through the eyes of its surviving women. Queen Hecuba, the slave-concubine Andromache, and Helen, the woman whose beauty started it all, meet in the ruins of Troy after their city has been sacked, their husbands killed, and their families taken away as slaves. Vividly recounting the final days of the Trojan civilization, **THE TROJAN WOMEN** is an impassioned cry against violence that insists upon the victory of spirit amid the horrors created by gods and men.

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS “THE TROJAN WOMEN”

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THE TROJAN WOMEN is the third tragedy in Euripides’ trilogy of plays dealing with the Trojan War. The first tragedy, *Alexandros*, is about the recognition of the Trojan prince Paris who, abandoned in infancy, is rediscovered by his parents in adulthood. The second tragedy, *Palamedes*, deals with the Greek’s mistreatment of their fellow Greek Palamedes. This trilogy was presented at the Dionysia along with the comedic play *Sisyphos*. Produced during the Peloponnesian War, **THE TROJAN WOMEN** is often considered a commentary on the capture of the Aegean island of Melos and the subsequent slaughter and subjugation of its populace by the Athenians in 415 BC (the same year the play premiered). The four Trojan women presented in the play are the same women that appear in the final chapter of the *Iliad* lamenting over the corpse of Hector.

Ellen McLaughlin’s plays have received numerous national and international productions. *A Narrow Bed* was produced Off-Broadway and was co-winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize in 1987. *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* was written for and premiered at The Actor’s Gang in Los Angeles, and was subsequently produced Off-Broadway. *Tongue of a Bird* premiered at the Intiman Theatre in Seattle and was subsequently produced in London, the Mark Taper Forum, The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival in N.Y.C., and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. *The Persians*, McLaughlin’s adaptation of Aeschylus’ firsthand account of the Persian Wars, received its critically-acclaimed West Coast Premiere at Aurora Theatre Company in 2004. In addition to **THE TROJAN WOMEN**, other works for the stage include *Days and Nights Within*, *Infinity’s House*, and *Helen*. McLaughlin is a recipient of a grant from the NEA and won the Berilla Kerr Award for playwriting in 2000; she teaches playwriting at Barnard College and at Yale School of Drama. As an actor, she is perhaps best known for originating the part of the “Angel” in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, which received its World Premiere at San Francisco’s Eureka Theatre; she most recently appeared in *Ghosts* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. About **THE TROJAN WOMEN** McLaughlin says “It is perhaps the greatest anti-war play ever written, certainly one of the oldest, and contains some of the most extraordinary roles for women in theatrical literature.”

Aurora Theatre Company has assembled an outstanding ensemble for **THE TROJAN WOMEN**. **Julian Lopez-Morillas** returns to Aurora Theatre Company as Poseidon in **THE**

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS “THE TROJAN WOMEN”

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TROJAN WOMEN. He most recently appeared in the Aurora Theatre Company productions of *Ice Glen* and *The Master Builder* (both directed by Barbara Oliver), and previously appeared in the company’s productions of *The Birthday Party*, *The Aspern Papers*, *The Homecoming*, and *The Weir*, among others. Additional acting and directing credits includes productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Magic Theatre, McCarter Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Carla Spindt returns to Aurora Theatre Company, where she previously starred in *Seascape* (directed by Barbara Oliver), as Hecuba; additional stage credits include productions at TheatreWorks (*All My Sons*), Magic Theatre (*Frankie and Johnnie in the Clair de Lune*), Marin Theatre Company (*Noises Off*), and Oregon Shakespeare Festival (*King Lear*).

Also featured in **THE TROJAN WOMEN** are **Nora el Samahy** as Helen, **Sarah Nealis** as Cassandra, and **Emilie Talbot** as Andromache. el Samahy’s credits include productions at Magic Theatre (*Expedition 6, Territories*), Campo Santo (*Let the Northern Lights Erase Your Name*), and Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*) among others. Nealis’ credits include roles at California Shakespeare Theatre (*King Lear, Nicholas Nickleby*), San Jose Repertory Theatre (*Iphigenia at Aulis*), and Center REPeritory Company (*How the Other Half Loves*) among others. Talbot has been featured in productions at American Conservatory Theatre (*Mary Stuart*), Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*The Illusion*), and La Jolla Playhouse (*Macbeth*) among others.

Rounding out the cast are **Matthew Purdon**, **Gwen Loeb**, and **Charisse Loriaux**. Purdon’s previous credits include roles at Shotgun Players and Cutting Ball Theater; Loeb’s credits include productions at Marin Theatre Company and Center REPeritory Company; Loriaux’s credits include roles at Aurora Theatre Company and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Chorus members **Erika Antonsen**, **Siobhan Doherty**, **Sepideh Makabi**, and **Tara Tomicevic** appear in **THE TROJAN WOMEN** courtesy of the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

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Aurora Theatre Company founding Artistic Director **Barbara Oliver** returns to the company to direct **THE TROJAN WOMEN**. Oliver's Aurora Theatre Company directing credits include last season's West Coast Premiere of *Ice Glen*, Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, and Ellen McLaughlin's adaptation of *The Persians*. For the company, she has also directed *The Man of Destiny*, *Saint Joan*, *The Philanderer*, *Candida*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Widowers' Houses*, *Seascape*, *The Belle of Amherst*, and World Premieres of Ira Hauptman's *Partition*, LeClanche Du Rand's *Transcendental Wild Oats*, and Dorothy Bryant's *The Panel*. Oliver is the recipient of several Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards, including the first Barbara Bladen Porter Award, as well as *Drama-Logue* awards for *The Show Off* and *Dear Master*. An accomplished Bay Area actress, Oliver has appeared in Aurora Theatre Company productions of *The Chairs*, *The Gin Game*, *Holiday Memories*, *Bailegangaire*, *La Castrata*, *The Aspern Papers*, and *Dear Master*. An instrumental figure in Bay Area theatre, Oliver stepped down from her role as Artistic Director at the end of the 2003-04 Aurora Theatre Company season.

On the heels of a multi-record breaking 15th season, Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theatre. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, just steps away from BART, Aurora Theatre Company has been called "One of the most important regional theaters in the area" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street Journal* has "Nothing but praise for the Aurora." The *Contra Costa Times* stated, "Perfection is probably an unattainable ideal in a medium as fluid as live performance, but the Aurora Theatre comes luminously close," while the *San Jose Mercury News* affirmed "[Aurora Theatre Company] lives up to its reputation as a theater that feeds the mind," and the *Oakland Tribune* declared "It's all about choices, and if you value good theater, choose the Aurora."

Following the World Premiere of **THE TROJAN WOMEN**, Aurora Theatre Company closes its 16th season in June with Keith Bunin's stirring **THE BUSY WORLD IS HUSHED**, directed by Robin Stanton.

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS "THE TROJAN WOMEN"

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Aurora Theatre Company is proud to present the Professional World Premiere of **THE TROJAN WOMEN** by acclaimed actress and playwright Ellen McLaughlin (best known for the role of "Angel" in *Angels in America*, and her plays *Iphigenia and Other Daughters*, *Narrow Bed*, and *Tongue of a Bird*). Based upon Euripides' classic anti-war tragedy, **THE TROJAN WOMEN**, first produced during the Greek Peloponnesian War, examines the aftermath of the Trojan War through the eyes of its surviving women. Queen Hecuba, the slave-concubine Andromache, and Helen, the woman whose beauty started it all, meet in the ruins of Troy and together find victory in the female spirit amid the horrors visited upon them by both gods and men. **Aurora Theatre Company founding Artistic Director Barbara Oliver**, who directed the company's critically heralded 2004 production of McLaughlin's *The Persians*, helms this re-imagined Greek drama that makes the struggles of ancient Greece as immediate as the headlines of today.

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DATES: Previews: April 4, 5, 9 at 8pm; April 6 at 2pm
Opens: April 10, 2008
Closes: May 11, 2008

SHOWS: Wednesday through Saturday at 8pm; Sunday at 2pm and 7pm

WHERE: **Aurora Theatre**
2081 Addison Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

TICKETS: For tickets (previews \$28, regular performances \$40-42, limited opening night seating \$50), and information, the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**.

PHOTOS: High-resolution art digital art can be found at **<http://www.cb-pr.com/press/trojanwomen.html>**

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