



Deborah Randall is the founder of Venus Theatre, the longest running regional women's theatre in the nation. Located at 21 C Street in Laurel, the company has produced at least 70 woman-empowering scripts and given over 1000 opportunities to an array of artists. Venus Theatre was established in 2000 and it arrived at its Laurel location in 2006. Previously, Deborah toured shows and ran improv performances under the title Venus Envy. This name was born out of the SHE Company in Washington, DC, which led Take Back the Night marches and empowerment workshops at House of Ruth.

When Venus Theatre first opened, Deborah offered classes, summer camps, and workshops to parents and children. She and her husband, Alan Scott, wrote three different musicals for children: *Juanita the Walrus Goes on a Shopping Spree*, *Boogsnot* and *the Disco Dancing Snows* and *Fiona the Fish and the Musical Carwash*. She eventually returned to her true passion of presenting solo shows and women's empowerment plays.

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In addition to performing work written by other artists, she resurrected her own solo show titled *Molly Daughter*, which is now published through Chicago University Press. Deborah even makes sustainable creativity a priority. Venus Theatre recycles set pieces and borrows to avoid building.

Deborah is also a trained actor who once performed political satire in Washington, DC. However, she considers herself as more of a writer. This prompted her to develop and perform solo shows. She later made a shift to more collaborative productions and started reading the work of other playwrights. Deborah hosts public staged readings, which involve holding the script and reading from the play, often with the use of music stands. She describes staged readings as "a part of the theatrical creative process which allows writers to get out of their head with the work, take some feedback and make any necessary adjustments."

Deborah Randall has amplified the voices of women and children for over twenty years. Her work not only contributes to the history of arts and activism in Laurel, but it also makes an impact on women's history throughout the nation.

Materials from collection and interviews, 2021, M. Sturdivant.

Photo credit: Marvin Joseph, The Washington Post