

# How to Give Birth to a Rabbit

A SONG CYCLE

## “How to Give Birth to a Rabbit”

Part of the 11th Annual Capital Fringe Festival July 7 - 31, 2016

On a crisp October morning in 1726, Mary Toft delivered her first rabbit. Over the next few months, she delivered nineteen more bunnies — as well as one unidentifiable creature, somewhere between a pig and a fish. The 24 year-old illiterate mother of three from the rural town of Godalming hacked dead rabbits into smallish pieces, forced them into her body, and gave birth to these “made monsters” under the eye of scientists eager to make their mark. News quickly spread to London, and even those who weren’t convinced were soon caught up in the debate — poets, playwrights, satirists, journalists, and painters rode the tide of Mary’s fame. By December, the hoax was discovered, the duped doctors were branded frauds, and Mary was briefly tossed into prison.

The true, twisted story of Mary Toft, and those who instigated, verified, promoted — and ultimately vilified — her plot to better herself weaves together the lives of many people: from the poorest in 18th-century England to King George I. Her dramatic delivery of praeternatural rabbits continues to puzzle and inspire, and today, her legend lives on.

“**HOW TO GIVE BIRTH TO A RABBIT**” is a theatrical piece premiering at the Capital Fringe Festival in July 2016. The story — and the themes of poverty, pride, pomp, and fraud — are revealed through character monologues — each expressing their desires, actions, and the results of their involvement.

The show is not a fully-staged musical, but a song cycle. The 11 songs were written by a variety of local and national songwriters in styles as varied as country, opera, punk, and traditional musical theater. Under the supervision of producer Tonya Howe, a professor of 18th century culture at Marymount University, the writers were given biographies and background dossiers of the characters involved in the Mary Toft affair -- and were allowed complete creative control to develop a song about that person’s involvement and state of mind during the strange ordeal.

Under the direction of Stephen Lilly, the music has been orchestrated to be played by a newly-formed house band, The Bloody Bunnies, who will accompany the four vocalists.

**Who:** The Mary Toft Players

**Featuring:** Performed by Rachel Jones, Colin Brown, Christopher Robin and Grant Colins. Produced by Jon Gann and Tonya Howe. Written by various DC music talents including Maureen Andary, Sara Curtin, Tom Goss, Brian Wilbur Grundstrum, The Maul, Itai Yassur (Awake All Night, 2015 Fringe), Gary Gore, and Dan Kaufman. Musical

Direction by Stephen Lilly and Directed for the Stage by Craig Houk.

**Where:** Sprenger Theater at the Atlas Performing Arts Center  
1333 H Street NE, Washington, DC 20003

**When:** Saturday, July 9 @ 8:00pm  
Thursday, July 14 @ 9:45pm  
Saturday, July 16 @ 7:15pm  
Friday, July 22 @ 9:45pm  
Sunday, July 24 @ 6:00pm

**Website:** [rabbitmusical.com](http://rabbitmusical.com)

**Photos:** Some high resolution photos related to our show may be downloaded from [capitalfringe.org](http://capitalfringe.org). Additional photos may be obtained by emailing [info@reelplan.com](mailto:info@reelplan.com)

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**Official Hashtags** #bloodybunnies #rabbitbirths #ahareraisingtale

### **About the Company**

The Mary Toft Players is a collective of artists, producers and musicians who have come together for the Capital Fringe Festival to tell this strange-but-true story through song. Producer Jon Gann has had past successes at Fringe, including Match Game DC (2011 Fringe), and Pepe! The Mail Order Monkey Musical (2009 Fringe) -- both top-selling shows played to sold-out houses.

### **About Capital Fringe**

At Capital Fringe our focus is on expanding audience's appetites for independent theatre, music, art, dance and unclassifiable forms of live performance and visual art. Capital Fringe is a catalyst for cultural and community development, and a destination that brings artists and audiences together. Capital Fringe thrives on amplifying the vibrancy of DC's independent arts community and enriches the lives of those who reside, work and visit here.

As a non-profit business Capital Fringe is made possible by: Reva and David Logan Foundation, Nora Roberts Foundation, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, The City Fund, Dallas Morse Coors Foundation, Prince Charitable Trust, Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Share Fund of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, MARPAT Foundation, DC Public Library Foundation, PNC Bank, Fringe Board of Directors and Fringe individual donors and members.

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