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New & Noteworthy in DC

By Dolores Gregory

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What Mel hath wrought.

For Washington, D.C., actress Deborah Kirby and her newly minted Journeymen Theater Ensemble, the runaway success of "The Passion" offers a sense of what is possible for any "faith-based" artistic venture.

Kirby's new company takes as its mission to "create excellent work that honors God and addresses moral and spiritual issues." The success of Gibson's film shows that the choice to create work for a faith-based audience is a sound one, she says. It not only affirms that such an audience exists, it shows that a faith-based audience wants "excellence in the art."

Journeymen's debut production as a professional company will be a "movement-enhanced" *Everyman* at Church Street Theater in July. The company will announce auditions shortly. (see www.Journeymentheater.org). *Everyman* is a choice that Kirby freely acknowledges might seem obvious and safe -- except that, as director, she plans to take a far from reverent approach to the medieval morality play. Think of it as "Cirque du Soleil meets Tim Burton," Kirby says.

"Burton comes up with a concept and he fully realizes it and fully commits to it," she explains. Featuring original music by Ugandan composer Ronald Kibirige, Kirby's *Everyman* will be a "conceptual" project that should establish the company's serious theatrical aesthetic as well as its unusual (for Washington) mission.

"Why is that Christians are taking a back seat and doing theater that's not excellent or just leaving it inside the church building?" Kirby muses. "What is that? Why are we not making bold choices and artistically challenging ourselves? If I believe that God is the ultimate creator, then I should have the boldness to do bold art."