



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Victoria, BC: November 7, 2011

### GERMAN & THEATRE STUDENTS COLLABORATE ON GERMAN PLAY

Unique student-led production presents German tale of madness and murder

## Woyzeck

### The Choreography of a Murder

Performed in German  
Suitable for all theatre enthusiasts

**Wednesday November 30, 2011**

**Thursday, December 1, 2011**

**at 8:00pm**

Phoenix Theatre

Department of Theatre

Enter the mind of a madman through a dreamlike telling of murder based on a true story.

*Presented by the Departments of German Studies and Theatre.*

#### Tickets:

\$5 Tickets (General seating)

Phoenix Box Office

250-721-8000

Available: November 29-Dec 1, 2011

#### Student Media Contact:

Alina Wilson

email: w\_alina@hotmail.com

#### Department of Germanic Studies

##### Media Contact:

Elena Pnevmonidou

Department of Germanic Studies

email: epnev@uvic.ca

250-721-7324

#### Department of Theatre Media Contact:

Adrienne Holierhoek

Marketing & Communications Manager,

Department of Theatre

email: aholierh@uvic.ca

www.phoenixtheatres.ca

250-721-7992

What drives a man to go insane? The infidelity of his lover? The indignity of his lowly rank in society? Not being able to provide for his family? In the case of *Woyzeck*, the title character of Georg Büchner's 1837 play, all of these factors contribute to the deterioration of his sanity... and becoming a medical guinea pig with a forced diet of only peas for three months probably didn't help.

***Woyzeck: The Choreography of a Murder*** is being performed in its original German text at the Phoenix Theatre November 30 and December 1, 2011 as a first-time collaboration between the Departments of Germanic Studies and Theatre in a new course, *Performing German Drama*.

Instructed by Dr. Elena Pnevmonidou, a professor at the University of Victoria in the Department of Germanic Studies, the class features 22 German and 9 theatre students who are responsible for every aspect of the production, including directing, designing the set, props, costumes, lighting and sound – and, of course, acting in the play. Local actor, director and theatre instructor Clayton Jevne is coaching the cast with acting lessons and participating in the rehearsal process. He has recommended an expressive style of acting to better communicate the story of *Woyzeck* to audience members who are not German speakers. As a background for the production, the students are also required to develop a dramaturgical concept for the play based on textual analysis and research of theatre, culture, and performance history.

*"It is amazing what students are capable of once they break out of traditional instructional environments and are encouraged to take ownership of a foreign language by becoming themselves the producers of culture,"* says Pnevmonidou. Theatre student and co-director Molly Noonan says, *"While all theatre is collaborative in nature, I feel that this version of Woyzeck will be a fascinating exercise in combining the creative energy of an entire class of University students, not all of whom have backgrounds in theatre. Our version of Woyzeck is a unique experience of theatrical collaboration."*

Based on the historical events of the trial of Johann Christian Woyzeck in 1821, this famous story of a man driven to insanity and murder has inspired an astonishing number and variety of adaptations in theatre, opera, music, art and film over the centuries. In the original trial, which represented the first time the insanity defence had ever been used in a German court, Woyzeck was executed despite his plea because the German elite feared they would face a backlash from the commoners. The play tells the story of Woyzeck, a lowly soldier who works himself to extremes in order to provide for his family. To this end, he also subjects himself to degrading scientific experiments. When Marie, his overtly-sexual lover and the mother of his child, is wooed by Woyzeck's superior officer, a handsome and powerful Drum Major, Woyzeck is the last to learn of her infidelity. This final humiliation helps to transform the unstable Woyzeck into a murderous madman.

Büchner is one of the most performed German playwrights internationally. He wrote *Woyzeck* as a new style of open drama with a model that was not bound by conventional forms of playwriting. Büchner is recognized as a proto-existentialist writer and precursor of modernism and *Woyzeck* has been extolled as a revolutionary piece of theatre. The scenes of the play are fragmentary and the ending of the play is unfinished – owing to the fact that Büchner unexpectedly died at the age of 23 while writing the play – allowing this collaborative vision of the play to have unique sequencing and interpretation of Büchner's masterpiece.

Pnevmonidou adds, *"I hope these endeavours may eventually lead to a standing German theatre group that will mount a German-language play every year for the education of our students as well as the appreciation of our German-speaking community."*