

**?DIGITAL WOMAN**  
***Shadows of Sycorax - Ophelias/A-VOID-ING – Juliets***<sup>1</sup>

A Shakespearean trilogy by Margie (Margarida Gandara Rauen, writer, director)

*?Digital Woman* [sic] is the name of a trilogy by Margie that includes the short plays ***Shadows of Sycorax, Ophelias/A-VOID-ING, and Juliets***, which examine contradictions of humankind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as having the latest technology of digital culture, but still being threatened by several types of abuse. Each of the three pieces became an act of the trilogy. They were conceived for alternative spaces and were presented at such venues as prison courts, an art gallery, community rooms, mall lobbies, schools, an old apartment and bus stations, widely seen in different events from 2004 through 2007 in Curitiba, state of Paraná, Brazil. The pieces were produced independently, till the author was sponsored by a city grant from the Fundação Cultural de Curitiba [Cultural Foundation of Curitiba] to develop *Juliets* and the last part of the trilogy in 2007.

Each part focuses on a Shakespearean character, namely Sycorax (Caliban's mother in *The Tempest*), Ophelia (*Hamlet*), and Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*). Short passages of Shakespeare's plays translated by the author/director have been used in the creation of the playtexts, which expand on issues of gender discrimination and archetypal patterns inscribed in patriarchal cultures. While familiarity with Shakespearean plots may inform public reception of *?Digital Woman*, its three acts are easily understood by audiences that have not read the Bard.

*Shadows of Sycorax*, the first act, drawing on the discrimination metaphor that is inherent to Sycorax's condition, features the life stories of Brazilian girls who not only were poor and marginalized, but became teenager criminals and had to face punishment in prison. The second act, *Ophelias/A-VOID-ING*, considers the transformations experienced by women along the 20th century, when the various feminisms prompted new attitudes regarding the sexes. *Juliets*, the final act, examines the conflicts between romantic heterosexual love and changed social conventions, establishing a forum about contemporary relationships and current issues such as AIDS, gay, lesbian or queer themes, rape, and also Internet affairs. Video

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<sup>1</sup> Title in Portuguese: **?MULHER DIGITAL: Sombras de Sycorax - Ofélias/A-VOID-ING - Juliets**, by Margie (Margarida Gandara Rauen), all rights reserved with SBAT (Brazilian Society of Theatre Authors), 2004 and 2007.

projections featuring historical materials (edited images regarding the performance contents) will be juxtaposed with the first and the second acts. The cast of two actresses and two actors will also interact with the projections during performance.

While Shakespearean studies internationally tend to emphasize the search for influences upon other authors, discussing timeless and universal contents, the post-colonial approach of *?Digital Woman* challenges the very notions of timelessness and universality, dealing with the underlying violence found in Shakespeare's plots. Margie's appropriation from a counter-discursive stance is combined with Forum Theatre, one of the techniques of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, leading the audience to become much more than witnesses, particularly in *Shadows of Sycorax* and *Juliets*. The audiences play an active role in discussing how abuse and violence can be stopped, denounced and/or minimized. Since audience interaction is expected to be spontaneous, each performance produces unique effects. Although a relational approach is central to the performance dynamics, participation is optional, and the audience will not be humiliated or exposed to hazardous substances or action. Total performance time is approximately 1 hour and a half, varying slightly due to audience participation. The ideal program would feature *?Digital Woman* in several presentations, with up to 50 people in the audience per event, a reasonable amount for its interactive design to be fulfilled. Therefore, *?Digital Woman* is a site-specific play that is not meant for staging at big auditoriums. Lighting equipment, two digital cameras, two multi-media projectors and a computer are necessary.

*?Digital Woman* is likely to meet the expectations of the diverse audience of a festival, especially because its intercultural nature usually appeals to people from various backgrounds and beliefs, generating new perspectives upon the forum themes that each audience will choose to develop.

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