

Excerpt from Redd Carpet Fund Application for Shrewd Productions

Project Description:

Written by award-winning playwright and founding company member Monika Bustamante, "Thirst: a spell for Christabel" will delight audiences with its stunning visual effects and arresting story. Based on Samuel Coleridge's last, unfinished poem "Christabel", "Thirst" enjoyed a successful Off-Broadway run in New York in 2008. New York-based director Elena Araoz comes back to Austin to direct an all-star cast in what the New York Times called a "diverting, idiosyncratic little fable that turns primal".

Shrewd Productions will utilize its critically lauded sensibilities and award-winning production team to mount the regional premiere of this lyrical, spellbinding drama. The intricate symbolism and heightened, poetic language of Bustamante's plays is coupled with a style that makes her characters both real and immediate, and incredibly relatable. It's this unique combination that makes Bustamante's plays a favorite with Shrewd, and has earned her honors and accolades at local and national levels. With a forest of trees that leak sap and water, an immense flood, and a life-sized sailing vessel that assembles itself onstage, "Thirst" will also provide a sensory thrill for the audience in the technical artistry required by the script.

By bringing "Thirst: a spell for Christabel" to the Rollins Studio at the Long Center, Shrewd Productions hopes to increase its reach and further develop its growing core audience by utilizing the high visibility and strong base of arts patrons that the Long Center provides. Shrewd Productions is one of the leaders in the development of new work in Austin's theatre community, a community that has achieved national recognition as a forerunner of the next wave of theatrical development in America. By presenting at the premier performance space in Austin, Shrewd Productions will take the next step towards becoming a fully-realized professional company and gain the recognition of a larger portion of the Austin arts-audience, while providing an enriching experience for patrons at the Long Center representative of Austin's nationally acclaimed New Works theatre scene. The budget (enclosed) shows insight to all projected and incidental costs and represents a clear and accurate estimation of the need for and use of anticipated funding.

How does this project contribute to diversity in arts programming in Austin?

Shrewd Productions has always focused on women's voices; featuring the work of female artists and telling stories from a feminine perspective. Austin's only feminist theatre company, Shrewd was founded by 4 women including the playwright of "Thirst: a spell for Christabel", Monika Bustamante. As part of a season celebrating female heroes in myth and legend, the story of "Thirst" is told from the point-of-view of a female protagonist, who saves her father and herself from the villain's sinister influence. Bustamante takes the eerie vision of Geraldine and the innocent maid Christabel in Coleridge's poem and transforms it into the story of a struggle between two strong women with very real desires and conflicts, fighting to see "whose thirst is greater?" Written and directed by women, "Thirst" will champion Austin's incredible community of female artists and bring Austin audiences a story with a voice that is strong, intelligent and unique.