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A female pope

By Staff

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For strong dramatic portrayals of medieval women, there are precious few options. There's "Saint Joan," George Bernard Shaw's masterful treatment of Joan of Arc, and a few scattered others. Now, Boston University student Michelle Poynton and her nascent theater company, Rare Bird Productions, will add to the canon with "Pope Joan," an original work by Poynton that considers the Catholic myth of a female pope in the mid-ninth century.

The cast, a combination of undergraduate acting majors or recent graduates of the University at Buffalo and Canisius College, will take on the roles of various bishops other Vatican figures involved in the rise and eventual downfall of the supposed female pope. To construct the story, Poynton has synthesized the disparate historical accounts about Pope Joan -- most of which dismiss the story as myth -- into a single narrative that confronts issues of identity and human imperfection.

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Poynton and Rare Bird staged "The Immaculate" at last year's Infringement Festival, and plan to mount a production of "Pope Joan" in Boston later this year. The play opens at 8 tonight at Ujima TheatreLoft (545 Elmwood Ave.) and runs on weekends through Aug. 18.

-- Colin Dabkowski