

# SYCORAX

A PLAY BY SUSAN GAYLE TODD

BY THE WEIRD SISTERS WOMEN'S THEATER COLLECTIVE  
DIRECTED BY SUSAN GAYLE TODD AND CHRISTA FRENCH

# THE PLAYERS

Hollie Baker - *Cready, Citizen*

Rachel Florence Briles - *Miranda, Ashel, Circumcised Girl, Blind Beggar, Sprite, Puppeteer*

Alyson Curtis - *Barleycorn, Citizen, Puppeteer*

Noelle Fitzsimmons - *Clare*

Christa French - *Bella, Citizen, Sprite*

Courtney Glenn - *Officer Dunlop, Governor of Algiers, Sprite, Mother of Circumcised Girl,*

Feliz Dia McDonald - *Ariel*

Azure D. Osborne-Lee - *Caliban, Sycorax*

Rae Petersen - *Talma, John Foote*

Penny Smith - *John Stone, Citizen, Sprite, Puppeteer*

Vicki Yoder - *Prospero, Officer Burns, Advisor, Aunt of Circumcised Girl*

# THE CREW

Composer and Sound Design - Chris Humphrey

Lighting Design - Paige Binder

Lighting Assistant - Becky Johnson

Puppet Master - Cecil Hynds-Riddle

Dance Choreography - Feliz Dia McDonald, Christa French

Dramaturgy - Margaux Binder, Cecil Hynds-Riddle

Set Design - Margaux Binder, Rae Petersen

Official Needlers - Cindy Smith and Rae Petersen

Front of House - Sandy Givens, Cecil Hynds-Riddle

Graphic Design & Publicity - Alyson Curtis

General Crew Awesomeness - See all names listed above.

# PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has two female characters: Miranda, daughter of patriarch and protagonist Prospero; and another who never appears, but is only mentioned: Sycorax. All we know of her comes from Prospero, the patriarch who has usurped her island, and from her son, Caliban, who appears to have only distant memories of his mother. Prospero refers to Sycorax as a deformed, damned witch who committed unspeakable acts during her life. She is vilified not only for her gender, but also for her age and race.

I wrote *Sycorax* to challenge assumptions about this silenced female character. As reclaimer of Sycorax's story, I recognize the racism in Prospero's (or Shakespeare's) remarks; they sound exactly like the kinds of racist slurs I heard while growing up in a small Texas town in the sixties: disparaging remarks about Sycorax's sexuality and body, rendering her of no account: "a foul witch" whose body was doubled over "with age;" a damn'd witch"; a "blue-eyed hag," pregnant, and abandoned on an island by sailors.

Prospero refers to Sycorax and her son with language more befitting animals than human beings: "the son that she did litter here, a freckled whelp, hag-born . . . got by the devil himself upon [his] wicked dam" (1.2). But in the text's sparse references to Sycorax, I also find her power. In spite of his slurs, Prospero envies Sycorax's ability as "one so strong she could control the moon, make flows and ebbs. And deal in her command, without her power..." (1.2). Caliban, too, remembers her power, her god named Setebos, her island, which he inherited when she died.

From these clues, I constructed an epic history. In my re-telling, Sycorax is a black, lesbian healer who rises to power, but is eventually scapegoated and banished from her home in Algiers.

*We hope you find her story, as we do, worthy of a Shakespearean hero.*

*- Susan Gayle Todd  
Playwright, Co-Director*

# EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS

To our Sponsors, Benefactors, and Helpers:  
without you none of this would be possible.

*In no particular order:*

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*And to all the helpers behind the scenes,*

*The Weirds just wouldn't be The Weirds if it weren't for you!*

**And then came the Tempest.**

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