



***transFigures*, a new work for Women's Project, conceived and directed by 26-year-old Lear deBessonnet, and inspired by the phenomenon known as Jerusalem Syndrome, begins performances in Manhattan April 6 toward an April 16 opening.**

By [Kenneth Jones](#)

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transFigures creator Lear deBessonnet.

writings of Bathsheba Doran and Joan of Arc, scientific journals, and Post-It notes from the desks of corporate secretaries" and "skips from New York to Jerusalem to map the intersection of religious revelation and insanity."

transFigures, a new work for Women's Project, conceived and directed by 26-year-old Lear deBessonnet, and inspired by the phenomenon known as Jerusalem Syndrome, begins performances in Manhattan April 6 toward an April 16 opening.

According to Women's Project notes, Jerusalem Syndrome is the well-documented psychosis that causes ordinary tourists to channel Biblical figures, create togas out of hotel bed-sheets, and parade through the Holy City as Moses, Mary Magdalene, Jesus and other religious icons.

transFigures is "created from sources as varied as the

With text by Bathsheba Doran, Joan of Arc and Henrik Ibsen, and choreography by Andrea Haenggi, *transFigures* has scenery by Jenny Sawyer, costumes by Clint Ramos, lighting by Ryan Mueller, sound by Mark Huang, and is line produced by Allison Prouty.

Featured in the cast are David Adkins, Dylan Dawson, Juliana Francis, Nate Schenkkan, T. Ryder Smith and Marguerite Stimpson.

"I wrote *transFigures* in response to my personal struggle with

faith," rising avant garde director deBessonnet said in production notes. "By the time I was 22, all of the spiritual assumptions on which I had based my life became unsustainable and yet, I could not dismiss my own spiritual experiences — there was something about questions of God that still had a hold on me. I created *transFigures* to slice open those questions with a play that took a hard look at the failures and problems of the faith as believer with first-hand experience of religious ecstasy."

She added that upon her arrival to New York City she "was shocked by what I perceived as the radical secularism of New Yorkers. At the first rehearsal, I asked my ensemble of seven actors, 'if you had the option of hearing the voice of God and being a bit socially dysfunctional for the rest of your life *or* moving through your whole life never hearing that voice but functioning normally, what would you choose?' Everyone one of them said they would prefer to function normally. I wanted to get to the bottom of why I was so obsessed with saints, and why my cast was so repelled by them. I wanted to explore the beauty, ambiguity, and danger of hearing the voice of God."

Lear deBessonnet is founder and artistic director of Stillpoint Productions and has worked beside Martha Clarke, Anne Bogart and Marianne Weems. Her devising/directing credits include *Bone Portraits* (Walkerspace), *Death Might Be Your Santa Claus* (a site-specific work performed at an abandoned bank next to the New York Stock Exchange), *Flying on the Wing* (NY Fringe, Outstanding Solo Show), *The Eliots* (Center Stage), an early version of *transFigures* (Calvary Church), *The Female Terrorist Project* (HERE Arts Center), *L'Histoire du Canard* (NYU Graduate Acting Freeplay), *Bite Your Tongue* (NYU Graduate Acting Freeplay), *Equus* (Hangar Theatre), *Whiskey Girl* (Hangar Theatre) and *A Short Time After* (by Caridad Svich, Six Nights). Internationally, she directed a new tri-lingual musical for the National Opera Theatre of Kazakhstan (*In the Dark Ages*) and a workshop of *Revisions* in Dublin. She has trained with DAH Theater of Yugoslavia and the SITI Company and was co-director of the Collaborative Theatre Intensive with The International WOW Company. She is a member of the Women's Project Directors Lab, a Drama League Directing Fellow and a Jefferson Scholar. Her next project will be *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* at P.S. 122 in June.

Julie Crosby, the new producing artistic director of the 28-year-old theatre company, stated in production notes, "Lear deBessonnet, a member of Women's Project Lab for playwrights, directors and producers, has created a work for the stage that is both deeply personal and universal. *transFigures* is daring, provocative and visceral. It forces us to look at the world through a more inquisitive lens. It's exactly the kind of theatre that Women's Project should be producing."

transFigures will play the Julia Miles Theater, 424 W. 55th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues, Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays at 8 PM, Saturdays at 3 PM and 9 PM, Sundays at 3 PM. There are added performances April 11 at 8 PM and May 1 at 8 PM.

Tickets are \$42; rush tickets \$10 (at the box office only, cash

only, one hour prior to curtain on day of performance subject to availability).

For more information visit www.telecharge.com, call (212) 239-6200 or visit www.WomensProject.org.

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Women's Project is dedicated to producing and promoting theatre created by women. Founded in 1978 by Julia Miles, Women's Project "continues to create opportunities for women in a field where they are conspicuously underrepresented." During its 28 years, Women's Project has produced over 120 mainstage and 450 developmental productions, and published 10 anthologies of plays by women.

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