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Dramatic Publishing

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Nasty

Drama
by
Ramon Esquivel

Nasty

Drama. By Ramon Esquivel. *Cast: 2m., 6w. or 1m., 3w.* *Nasty* combines realism and fantasy to explore friendships, identity and bullying in the context of social networking sites, chat rooms, blogs, tweets, videos, and role-playing games on the Internet. Offline, they are Lencha, Zoe, Martha, and Manuel, teenagers who stress about school, obsess over crushes, and make one another laugh. Online, they are QYN-CHACHA, ZUUZUU, EARTHA-X, and MYNYSTR_of_SOUND, avatars that slay werewolves, create art, and gossip about one another. One kiss ignites a chain reaction that blurs the lines between these offline and online worlds. Lencha, adept at navigating the labyrinths and dungeons of Elder World as QYN-CHACHA, wages a flame war when she feels threatened. Zoe, who dominates the social networks as ZUUZUU, proves that a girl with more than 2,000 friends can be one formidable enemy. Martha gleefully tweets and blogs the conflict as EARTHA-X, champion of social justice and bullhorn of gossip. Manuel, shy in person but flamboyant as MYNYSTR_of_SOUND, complicates matters by trying to help. When the conflict threatens to spiral out of control, one person tries a brave but risky strategy to save their friendships: honesty. The story of *Nasty* raises three questions: How do our online identities reflect our best and worst selves? How do friends work through conflict? What are the pros and cons of developing relationships through online communication? The highly theatrical world of the avatars can be brought to life through multimedia projections and animations or through clever use of masks, puppetry, movement and/or lighting effects. *Nasty* was developed at the 2009 New Plays for Young Audiences residency at New York University, Program in Educational Theatre. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: N71.*

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“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

Nasty was developed at the 2009 New Plays for Young Audiences residency at New York University’s Educational Theatre Program. Directed by David Montgomery. Dramaturgy by Cecily O’Neill.

CAST

LENCHA Kristin Ciccone
MARTHA Salisha Romain
ZOE. Shannon Riley
MANUEL Hector Estrada

QYN-CHACHA. Rachel Lin
EARTHA-X Yosefa Forma
ZUUZUU Melissa Zakri
MYNYSTR_OF_SOUND. Karl O’Brian Williams

STAGE DIRECTIONS. Caroline Renner

NASTY

CHARACTERS

Offline

LENCHA	a girl, 16
MARTHA	a girl, 16
ZOE	a girl, 16
MANUEL	a boy, 17

Online

QYN-CHACHA	the avatar of LENCHA
EARTHA-X	the avatar of MARTHA
ZUUZUU	the avatar of ZOE
MYNYSTR_of_SOUND	the avatar of MANUEL

Other entities: HECKLER, WEREWOLF

CASTING NOTES

Written for eight actors (6 female, 2 male), or four actors (3 female, 1 male) with doubling. Actors playing MANUEL and MYNYSTR_of_SOUND play HECKLER and WEREWOLF.

Regard avatars as the idealized selves of the teens that created them. It is okay, perhaps even better, if avatars do not look like their real-world counterparts.

PRODUCTION NOTES

One act, fourteen scenes. The action of the play occurs in the real world (OFFLINE) and in the world of the Internet (ONLINE). OFFLINE scenes should be naturalistic. ONLINE scenes should be as vivid and imaginative as designers and production teams can make them. Multimedia, masks and puppetry are encouraged, but clever lighting and staging are also effective.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Avatars speak in the vernacular of teens communicating over the Internet. Online dialogue uses shorthand, acronyms and bad grammar that offline characters type. This is necessary for online avatar characterization.

NASTY

(LENCHA enters offline.)

LENCHA. Offline, I am Lencha. Age: sixteen. Interests: manga, second-hand stores, books, video games, chocolate, ripping music, and delicious food.

(QYN-CHACHA, Lencha's avatar, enters online.)

QYN-CHACHA. Online, I am Queen Cha-Cha. Age: eighteen. Interests: fantasy, Tolkien, quests, prophecies, Japan, slaying dragons, and eradicating ignorance.

(MARTHA enters offline.)

MARTHA. Offline, I am Martha. Age: sixteen. Interests: books, computers, books, coffee, books, sushi, and books.

(EARTHA-X, Martha's avatar, enters online.)

EARTHA-X. Online, I am Eartha-X. Age: twenty-one. Interests: empowerment, iconoclasm, revolution, subverting dominant paradigms, and gossip.

(ZOE enters offline.)

ZOE. Offline, I am Zoe. Age: sixteen. Interests: world peace, drama, vintage clothing, colors, skin care, and hanging out with friends.

(ZUUZUU enters online.)

ZUUZUU. Online, I am Zuu-Zuu. Age: eighteen. Interests: passion, romance, beauty, truth, justice, and hot boys.

(MANUEL enters offline.)

MANUEL. Offline, I am Manuel. Age: seventeen. Interests: music, drawing stuff but I suck, more music, writing bad poetry, reading banned books, and meeting people.

(MYNYSTR_of_SOUND, Manuel's avatar, enters online.)

MYNYSTR. Online, I am Minister of Sound. Age: not applicable. Interests: creation, visualization, experimentation, syncopation, sound vibration, beautification, socialization, and vacation.

(ALL exit except for MARTHA offline and EARTHA-X online. In this sequence, offline characters remain neutral when not speaking, while online avatars are animated throughout.)

EARTHA-X. Status: Eartha-X is EMMA GOLDMAN PAPER! Don't distract her! (Unless it's really important.)

MARTHA (*as if reading essay in class*). "Though considered a radical anarchist in her time, Emma Goldman became the precursor to the modern woman. She was independent, educated, and, most importantly, critical of paternalistic institutions. With each bomb, Goldman saw the glass ceiling beginning to crack."

(LENCHA enters offline as QYN-CHACHA enters online.)

QYN-CHACHA. Status: QYN-CHACHA is available. As usual. (*Instant messages EARTHA-X.*) hey hotti. <wink face> (*She winks.*)

EARTHA-X. Don't bother me I'm "working!" <grin face> (*She grins.*)

QYN-CHACHA. me 2. LOL. (*She laughs out loud.*) Wuz goin on gurl?

EARTHA-X. Emma Goldman's rocking my world. <devil face> (*She makes a devil face.*) You?

QYN-CHACHA. essay on lot's wife. <yawn face> (*She yawns.*)

LENCHA (*as if reading essay in class*). "In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Book of Genesis, Lot's wife is never named. She is simply referred to by her marital status."

EARTHA-X. She doesn't even have a name!

QYN-CHACHA. i'm gonna give her 1. Ursula Lot maybe.

EARTHA-X. Carlotta Lot. LOL.

QYN-CHACHA. LOL.

(BOTH laugh out loud.)

LENCHA. For the purposes of this paper, I will give her a name: Silencia Lot.

EARTHA-X. Silencia. Pregnant with meaning. <frown face> *(She makes a frown face.)*

QYN-CHACHA. It means “silence” in Spanish. <buck-tooth face> *(She makes a buck-tooth face.)*

EARTHA-X. Thank you, Rosetta Stone. <deadpan face> *(She makes a deadpan face.)*

LENCHA. “Her only recorded act, looking back towards her home as it is destroyed by fire and brimstone, is punished severely: Silencia is turned into a pillar of salt.”

EARTHA-X. AH! You gave me an idea for my ending! <excited face> *(She makes an excited face.)*

QYN-CHACHA. YAY! <smiley face> *(She makes a smiley face.)* What?

(ZOE enters offline as ZUUZUU enters online.)

ZUUZUU. Status: ZuuZuu is AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

QYN-CHACHA. zuuzuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!

ZUUZUU. U chicks lookin’ to get some?!? LOL.

QYN-CHACHA. LOL.

EARTHA-X. LOL.

(ALL laugh out loud.)

ZUUZUU. I have soooooooooooooo much HW! <frown face> *(She makes a frown face.)*

QYN-CHACHA. Same.

ZUUZUU. When I stay up this late my face breaks out.

QYN-CHACHA. a little zit cream hides everything.

ZUUZUU. nothing works. believe me.

EARTHA-X. Try putting a bag over your head.

ZUUZUU. <frown face> (*She makes a frown face.*)

EARTHA-X. Joke.

ZUUZUU. Help me! I'm journaling for media lit! <criying face> (*She makes a crying face.*)

QYN-CHACHA. what u want?

ZUUZUU. Topic????? <troubled face> (*She makes a troubled face.*)

QYN-CHACHA. topic: why media literacy teachers look at students' breasts in class!

ZUUZUU. God!!! i really should!!!! <smiley face> (*She makes a smiley face.*) but it has to relate to "media depictions of women and/or minorities."

EARTHA-X. Write about skinny cartoon girls in manga.

QYN-CHACHA. hey!

ZUUZUU. Good idea!!!!

ZOE. (*as if reading essay in class.*) "Looking at a standard female character in manga, we see a face of unblemished porcelain and inhuman body dimensions. Her eyes are bigger than her waist."

EARTHA-X. Someone should study body image issues among girls who read manga. (*She coughs, coughs.*)
Lencha?

QYN-CHACHA. <frown face> (*She makes a frown face.*)

EARTHA-X. Turn that frown upside down, sad clown.

QYN-CHACHA. <frown face>! (*She really makes a frown face.*)

ZUUZUU. Don't worry. I'll say SOME manga readers don't have body-image issues.

QYN-CHACHA. whatever. back to lot's wife. she loves me.
ZUUZUU. <frown face> (*She makes a frown face.*) Don't
leave!!!!

QYN-CHACHA. i don't have body-image issues martha.

EARTHA-X. Sorry. <frown face> (*She makes a frown
face.*) Forgive me?

QYN-CHACHA. i forgive u.

EARTHA-X. Kewl.

QYN-CHACHA. psycho woman <smiley face> (*She
smiles.*)

EARTHA-X. LOL.

ZUUZUU. LOL.

QYN-CHACHA. LOL.

(*ALL laugh out loud.*)

EARTHA-X. OK. Sun's coming up. 5 a.m.

ZUUZUU. Ahh!!! My face is gonna be hideous!!!!

QYN-CHACHA. paper due in 5 hours! martha will u read
it?

EARTHA-X. If you read mine. Send by 7.

QYN-CHACHA. Deal. GTG! <hugs>

ZUUZUU. <hugs>

EARTHA-X. <hugs>

(*ALL hug one another.*)

QYN-CHACHA. sisterhood space for lunch?

EARTHA-X. As usual.

ZUUZUU. SS for lunch.

QYN-CHACHA. L8r h8ers. <kissy face> (*She blows kisses
to the others.*) Status: Qyn-ChaCha is offline.

(QYN-CHACHA exits.)

ZUUZUU. Will she be mad if I write about manga? <worried face> *(She makes a worried face.)*

EARTHA-X. She's tough. Good topic.

ZUUZUU. Thanx!!! Can you edit my paper later???

EARTHA-X. I'll be up all night with Emma G.

ZUUZUU. Give her my love!!!!

EARTHA-X. She scoffs. Meaningless sentiment.

ZUUZUU. LOL. *(She laughs out loud.)*

EARTHA-X. Email by 7.

ZUUZUU. Luv ya!

EARTHA-X. *Ciao.*

ZUUZUU. Status: ZuuZuu has signed out.

(ZUUZUU exits.)

EARTHA-X. Status: EARTHA-X is busy getting smarter.

(EARTHA-X exits.)

Offline. The girls conclude their essays as if presenting in class.)

LENCHA. "Lot's Wife wanted to see truth for herself, to taste fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. She wanted to learn. She was punished with death."

ZOE. "The popular character Miyori is endowed with masculine qualities but drawn with a hyper-idealized female figure."

MARTHA. "Emma Goldman was allowed to return from exile in 1934. She was warmly embraced by everyone

except her former allies, friends in the Communist press.”

LENCHA. “Turned into a towering pillar of all who dare oppose the will of the Creator.”

ZOE. “So pale, and so thin that she could easily break, like a pillar made of beautiful, delicate material.”

MARTHA. “She died in 1940 and was buried in a Chicago cemetery. Her gravestone, a tall white pillar.”

ALL. “A pillar of salt.”

(ALL exit.)

MANUEL enters offline space as MYNYSTR_of_SOUND enters online.

As MANUEL reads his essay in class, MYNYSTR expresses himself in a video posted on his MirrorBook page.)

MANUEL. Essay on William Shakespeare, by Manuel Ruiz.

MYNYSTR. I hate Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet are the only teenage characters we read in school. They’re impulsive. They fall in love too quickly. They hate their parents. They kill themselves. And these are our role models?

MANUEL. Shakespeare is cynical. Lovers speak famous poetry because they are so in love, so in love. Then a bad guy shows up: “Look! I found a letter! Your lover is unfaithful!” Everyone falls for it. And these are our role models?

MYNYSTR. I don’t understand Shakespeare. Don’t blame iambic pentameter because poetry is my first language.

Father says, “You don’t understand? Work harder.” Yale Book of Shakespeare, a used copy on my desk. If they study Shakespeare at Yale, then I better learn, better learn.

MANUEL. *Julius Caesar*. I like Marc Anthony in that play, because I picture him as Puerto Rican. But Caesar’s friends turn on him and then on each other because of what they think others might do.

MYNYSTR. *Othello*. Only black man around forever. Loves a white woman, Desdemona. Des-de-MOAN-a. (Love that name.) He loves her, she loves him, speak famous poetry, so in love, so in love. But LOOKOUT! Iago heard something, y’all: Desdemona got it on with a white boy.

MANUEL. Othello, jealousy festering in his soul, turns to violence. The black man turns to violence.

MYNYSTR. Did Shakespeare have any black friends?

MANUEL. How can Othello be so in love, so in love with Desdemona one moment and then want to kill her the next? Because he heard a rumor?

MYNYSTR. In Shakespeare’s world, best friends are worst enemies. Hate fills a vacuum left when love vacates.

MANUEL. I do not live in Shakespeare’s world. I will never give up like Romeo and Juliet. I will not turn on my friends like Brutus. I will not destroy the people I love like Othello.

MYNYSTR. Fighting is easy. Peace is hard.

MANUEL. Shakespeare is wrong. (*He holds up his paper covered in red pencil marks.*)

MYNYSTR. Status: Mynystr_of_Sound got schooled.

(MANUEL exits. MYNYSTR remains as setting shifts to...

The Sisterhood Space, also known as the playground. An elaborate structure dominates the space.

QYN-CHACHA enters with camera.)

QYN-CHACHA. “The Sisterhood Space: A Digital Story.”

(QYN-CHACHA gives camera to MYNYSTR.) I need your artistry.

MYNYSTR. You sure?

(QYN-CHACHA nods. She tours the playground as MYNYSTR photographs.)

QYN-CHACHA. The playground at Hazen Hills Park is our sanctuary. Across from Hazen High School, my friends and I take advantage of the school’s lax security and meet here for lunch.

MYNYSTR. Pan: high school in the distance.

QYN-CHACHA. History runs deep. In second grade, our teacher Mr. Wooden threw the first “Full Moon Party.” It is now a tradition. Families showed up with cookies and punch, and we sang songs like “Moon Shadow” and “Moon River.”

MYNYSTR. Action: Interpretative Moon Dance. Go.

(QYN-CHACHA does an Interpretive Moon Dance.)

QYN-CHACHA. Martha and I had been friends since kindergarten, but we made friends with a new girl that day, Zoe.