

## **GO** OPHELIAMACHINE



*Photo by Paul Rubenstein*

"I expel all the semen which I have received. I transform the milk of my breasts into deadly poison." Lifted from Heiner Müller's eternally confounding *Hamletmachine*, the words are a fitting part of the opening tableau of Polish playwright Magda Romanska's similarly themed postmodernist drama, now in its world premiere at City Garage.

Seated behind an old typewriter on a stage that's segmented into halves, Ophelia is realized as something of a triadic entity -- brain/narrator, terrorist and madwoman (Kat Johnston, Megan Kim, Saffron Mazzia), while Hamlet (Joss Glennie Smith), situated in the other half of the stage, mostly watches television. Romanska uses this framework for a vigorous deconstruction of the feminine psyche, image and gender roles, and her script -- heavy laden with dense imagery and symbolism -- explores love, sex, violence, politics, class sensibilities, feminist aesthetics, the vacuities of mass culture and the timeless mystery of death.

This is theater that's not easily accessible and is devilishly bleak at times, but it's not without shards of humor, and is relentlessly provocative and challenging under imaginative direction by Frédérique Michel. The production is nicely embellished with a collage of visuals projected on a huge screen and two monitors. Cynthia Mance, RJ Jones and Leah Harf round out the cast. (Lovell Estell III)