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'Monologues' speak to more than just themselves

By Madeleine Chollet | For the Thresher

Vaginas need comfort. Perhaps it is not the most poignant statement, but when said aloud, it is one infused with exhilaration, wit and passion — three adjectives that aptly describe The Vagina Monologues.

Under the direction of Will Rice college senior and Thresher Arts and Entertainment co-Editor Carly Kocurek and Hanszen College junior Parisa Azamian, this diverse cast executes an above-average portrayal of the lives of females around the world and the struggles and triumphs of womanhood. While some of the actresses are shaky in their roles, an impressive share of phenomenal performances makes this show worth seeing.

The play consists of a series of monologues about vaginas and issues relating to femininity, sex and gender. The play examines the lives of women — from an abused wife to a confused teen — in an attempt to acknowledge the contributions women have made to the world and their value in the community. Raising issues of domestic violence, genital mutilation, loneliness and rape, The Vagina Monologues conveys important information in a way that is entertaining but still serious.

In a horrific account entitled "Memory of Her Face," Sid Richardson College junior Lisa Justin describes how one husband threw acid in his wife's face, not only destroying her flesh, but also her ability to communicate within the larger community.

Another monologue, "My Short Skirt," performed by Wiess College senior Jill Browning competently addresses issues of female empowerment in a relatively pleasant fashion, flowing from feelings of hostility to comfort.

As a whole, the play is well balanced, interspersing the darker pieces with more uplifting ones, producing a multi-faceted work that leaves the audience not horribly depressed, but empowered and aware.

Two of the most powerful pieces in the play are wickedly funny, inciting outright laughter. The performances by Director of Multicultural Affairs Catherine Clack and Lovett College junior Adriana Ramirez are amazing. Clack's enthusiasm and blunt attitude make even the most squeamish gynecological topics funny, and Ramirez's imitation of different types of moans during sex is classic.

Unfortunately, not all of the actresses perform as well as the aforementioned, causing the play to drag at times, especially during the middle third. Another cause of this transient drag is a lack of movement; in almost every monologue, the actresses are seated and their body language is limited to the bare essentials. Although the directors clearly designed the production with a minimalist outlook, as is apparent by the classy yet bare set and the omission of nearly all props, no reason existed for them to minimize the actresses' movement. By doing so, the directors have placed all of the focus on the monologues, leaving the viewer with no other option than to agonize over every sentence rather than experience the piece as a whole, connecting the visual to the spoken word.

Still, the cast and crew are passionate about the mission of The Vagina Monologues, and their participation in an annual global awareness event. This year all of the profits and donations generated will go directly to the Houston Area Women's Center (<http://www.hawc.org>), an organization that aids and shelters battered women.

Although this play has its faults, it is empowering, insightful and generally well done. The cast is a diverse group of women from the Rice community who have come together to relate the experiences of women from around the world. At the very least, you should see The Vagina Monologues because it is educational and provides an insight into the minds of over half of the world's population.



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