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Last Kick at the Cat for Vagina Monologues

Kimberley Johnston
Reporter



This may very well be the last kick at the cat after a five-year run for *The Vagina Monologues* at UPEI. Ruth Freeman, who is coordinating the production, says some breathing room has to be maintained so people do not tire of the concepts being conveyed in the play.

"I have mixed feelings about this being our last year. It has been an incredible experience, and we have had so much support from the university and broader Island community. But I don't ever want people to tire of the monologues, or become desensitized to its message, so we will take some time off and re-evaluate in a few years."

There have been some changes to the production this year, explained Freeman. The cast of 32 is the largest it has ever been and a new monologue has been added.

Until recently, the play was centered only around "women born women". A monologue entitled *They Beat the Girl Out of My Boy ... Or So They Tried* introduces the audience to the world of transwomen, she said.

Trish Daley, a long-time director of the show, explained the concept of transgenderism and the point of view of transwomen.

"We are all assigned a gender, male or female, at birth. Transpeople are those who feel that their birth-assigned



gender does not define them wholly. You might say a transwomen is someone who was mistakenly identified as male at birth, and has spent a lifetime correcting the mistake."

The new monologue is inspired by the true story of Calpurnia Adams, a transgender field medical combat specialist and veteran of the Gulf War. Her army soldier boyfriend was murdered by a fellow GI for falling in love with the "wrong kind of woman".

It is a composite of stories told to playwright Eve Ensler who brought transwomen of all ages and backgrounds together to share their stories. The women ranged in ages from their twenties to fifties, and began their transition at different times in their lives. Daley said the stories encapsulate the same humor and pain in all the monologues, but highlight the particular vulnerability of transwomen.

"They face the same violence any women face but in many ways that violence happens because they are seen as less than women; even less than human."

Freeman said the new monologue is not so much an attempt to keep the play fresh, but to give a realistic portrayal of the different views in our society.

"I'm not convinced that the addition of new monologues is what keeps people coming back, or that it is an effort on the part of the author to keep the play fresh. I believe the new monologues have more to do with being inclusive and also responding to what is happening in the world around us. What keeps the monologues fresh is the different cast we have each year. Each woman brings something different to her monologue, and the story can seem

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