



THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES: 2013
NOTES FROM EVE ENSLER

STAGING THE PLAY:

The overall spirit of the play should be one of celebration and humor. The comedy in "The Vagina Monologues" is what gives the piece its unique ability to enlighten the audience without preaching to them. The performances need to be brave, fierce and *funny*. The actresses need to enjoy each other, enjoy the audience and shed their inhibitions - they should go for honesty, simplicity and humor. It is also crucial that the entire performance keep at a quick pace.

The monologues are anecdotal and rely on good old-fashioned storytelling to come across well; they are *real* and very *human* so the performers should embrace that concept and keep the "acting" to a minimum! The women who were interviewed for this piece did not see themselves as victims on any level. If any of the monologues are delivered from a place of shame, self-pity or remorse they will counteract the message of the performance.

Performers: Think beyond thespians. A V-Day benefit production of "The Vagina Monologues" is not a typical theatrical performance. It doesn't matter whether or not the members of your cast have acted before; some of the most powerful performances at V-Day events have been by people with no acting experience. Having a broad range of performers often helps to draw in different cross-sections of a community.

Description of the Monologues:

Hair

This is a woman who may be slightly bitter, but newly empowered and enlightened! "Hair" is the first piece in the show so it is important to find humor in it and, as always, *stay away from self-pity*. "Hair" has been performed as a Southern woman, a Puerto Rican woman, a West Indian woman, (i.e. it could be any woman) etc.

The Flood

"The Flood" has been performed as an older Jewish woman, a Southern woman, a Midwestern woman, etc. A big "trap" for this piece is to let the performer speak from a remorseful place so that the audience feels pity for her. Keep in mind that her flooding story is an *unexamined* experience and that she doesn't feel sorry for herself or feel traumatized by her past. She is a funny, sassy lady who feels like she's had a pretty good life and hasn't missed out on anything. As always, we are looking for the performer to tap into the truth of her experience and this can be accomplished with an actress of any age or ethnicity.

The Vagina Workshop

The speaker has an accent that reflects that she is extremely proper (upper class) – the *last* woman on earth that you'd expect to find in a Vagina Workshop! This is a long, complex piece and the actor needs to move through each section with attention to quick pacing and story arc.

Because He Liked to Look At It

This piece is quite self-explanatory and works well with a variety of interpretations and characterizations.

My Angry Vagina

The "title" can be omitted so that the speaker just begins with "*My Vagina's Angry.*" A fierce energy is appropriate for this very pissed-off piece. Any actress performing this monologue should feel free to "let it rip," and turn the theater into a rally! So, the note here is that it can never be too angry. This is a woman who is fed up and is ready to speak her mind. Amen!

My Vagina Was My Village

The "Bosnia" monologue benefits from a very simple delivery. The language is quite graphic, so the actress should let the words speak for themselves. A lot of dramatics can overwhelm the piece and alienate the audience. The actresses performing "Bosnia" should familiarize herself with the Balkan conflict and the atrocities of the rape camps. They should also research the Muslim community in Bosnia, as their culture compounds the tragedy of rape by expelling these "ruined" women from their communities. The monologue is distinctly split into two voices - that of present and past - dramatizing the struggle between the two selves and making it a perfect piece for two actresses.

The Little Coochi Snorcher That Could

As indicated, the speaker is a Southern woman of color but women of diverse ethnic backgrounds have performed this monologue wonderfully. In this monologue, we follow the story of a young girl from a healthy, curious child to a damaged and violated teenager. In her journey, we recognize the plight of many sexually abused women as they become dangerously detached from their own bodies and themselves. This is a true story of salvation and not an endorsement of underage sex. "Coochi" is not meant to be *judged* for its morality but admired for its tenderness. Again, the telling of this sad but beautiful tale should not be tinged with self-pity but with frankness and honesty.

Reclaiming Cunt

"Cunt" is an incredibly powerful monologue. When Glenn Close performed this piece at V-Day 2001, she had all 18,000 people in the audience screaming "Cunt" with her by the time she reached her "climax." Of all the monologues in the show, "Cunt" provokes the most fear from actresses and audiences because the word is so vulgar and shocking in our (American) context. That being said, the actress who performs "Cunt" needs to transform the word from something vile and derogatory into something powerful, sexy and delicious. She can do this by finding a rhythmic energy and pacing that builds into a frenzied climax. No small task, but if the actress fully "attacks" this piece with no inhibitions or timidity, this can be achieved! Whatever her style of delivery, the actress should "get into her cunt groove" and sing out sister!

A six-year-old girl was asked...

This piece should be performed in a straightforward manner, without pretense, the way six-year-old girls are clear and lack self-consciousness. You should stay away from a childlike delivery. It ruins the genuine nature of the answers. By this age, girls can be shockingly grownup and definitive in their way of looking at the world.

The Woman Who Loved to Make Vaginas Happy

No, a "sex worker" is not your traditional therapist - this woman is a dominatrix. She lives to shock and seduce the audience, dominate them and make them squirm in their seats. She loves sounds, including the sound of her own voice. At the end of the monologue, she has a symphony of moans and then the party really gets started. The "moaning" is a grand climax to the evening, but the actress must keep a careful balance between giving the moans their full due and keeping them based in reality. If you are looking to utilize your cast more, you can have the entire cast or some of the cast, do a moan each.

I Was There In the Room

This monologue is a poem and care must be taken to deliver it as such. The actress should be encouraged to find a simple, heart-felt delivery. There are no big theatrics needed here as the beauty and power of the writing does the work for her. The actress should take her time to paint the images and find the awe and reverence in this everyday miracle that we all take for granted. This monologue is based on Eve's observations of her granddaughter's hospital birth. In this monologue, Eve is in no way endorsing a particular birthing practice. As with all of the monologues, it is not advocating a specific point of view, it is an account of one woman's experience.