

WHEN CUNTS TALK



stock questions, many of them goofy: Describe what it smells like....What would it wear if it got dressed?...What are its nicknames?...What would it say if it could talk?...and she turned their answers into a manuscript. Some of the more compelling narratives became soliloquies with titles such as "Reclaiming Cunt," "My Short Skirt," and "My Angry Vagina."

According to a press release for the show, "the play brazenly explores the humor, power, pain, wisdom, outrage, mystery and excitement hidden in vaginas." Those must be some BIG vaginas to hide all that stuff in there! "We live in a penis world," Ensler griped to a reviewer for *Metro Times Detroit*. "Everything about this world is phallic." The reviewer added, "Ensler wrote the play because she heard women talking about their vaginas and what they said surprised her. What she found out was that women were really 'hungry' to talk about them."

All those hungry vaginas have led to successful runs of the *Monologues* in London, Paris, Rome, L.A., New York, Chicago, and Beaverton (just kidding). The play was also transformed into a best-selling book and HBO special. It has become a cultural phenom in which women—from most appearances, wealthy white women—pay \$30 for the privilege of chanting the word CUNT in a crowd of other women.

Since its premiere in 1996, the play has been performed by a rotating cast that has given solace to those who might have wondered whatever happened to Teri Garr...and Marla Gibbs...and Swoosie Kurtz...and Rue McClanahan...and Hayley Mills...and Marcia Wallace...and Loretta Swit...and Peggy Lipton...and Nell Carter...why, they're up there onstage in *The Vagina Monologues*, talkin' 'bout their furry little wet *verjingeys!*

Reading from cue cards, the actresses adopt the voices of a Bosnian rape-camp survivor; a 70-year-old woman who's never had an orgasm because of an embarrassing problem of over-lubrication; a Southern Negress who finds love and sex in the arms of another woman; and many other vaginal vignettes straight from the mouths of cunts.

MY BRAIN FELT LIKE A ROASTED CASHEW on this blazingly hot midsummer day, the sort of day I don't want to hear anyone yabbering, much less a cunt. My girlfriend and I slipped out of the sweltering downtown sidewalk sauna into the cushy, carpeted Newmark Theater to see the Portland leg (labia?) of a *Vagina Monologues* touring company. This particular cast's marquee name was Karen Black, a great actress whose eyes remained crossed throughout *Easy Rider* and *Five Easy Pieces* 30 years ago and who now must bear the relative ignominy of being a traveling vaginal monologist.

There were two other actresses: a dreadlocked black one and a blonde white one. The programs listed their names as Starla Benford and Kristen Lee Kelly. I'm guessing Starla is the black one, because I don't think I've ever seen a black Kristen. All three actresses were topnotch. They showed lotsa spunk 'n' sass, making for a spunky, sassy, spunkity-sassafrassy show. And they were all very good at doing different accents, although Karen Black's Bosnian rape victim sounded a bit like Bela Lugosi doing Dracula.

Although the tickets cost \$30, we were treated to no real set design beyond the three chairs from which the actresses, all of them wearing red T-shirts, never budge. Thirty bucks a ticket apparently isn't enough to make the actresses memorize their lines, either—instead, they read from cards just to keep reminding you that these are the *real* words of *real* women, but to me it just seems like a lazy

Three cunts sit on the stage, talking about cunts, while 1,000 cunts—and about a dozen men—sit in the audience, listening.

It's OK if I use the word "cunt," because one of the cunts onstage—the black cunt, as opposed to the two white cunts sitting next to her—just led the audience in a rousing chant of "CUNT! CUNT! CUNT!"...We learned that the "C" stands for things such as "cute"...the "U" stands for "urge"...the "N" for "nice"...and the "T" for "tangy," so we've **reclaimed** the word "cunt," and now it's a nice word rather than a bad one.

As is "vagina," because the three vagina-bearing actresses onstage have helped us to reclaim that word, too. Sure, I used to think that "vagina" was a rather distasteful, malodorous, gamy, sticky, sweaty, pissy, moldy, bloody, slimy word myself, and the play *The Vagina Monologues* seems to imply that our culture finds the word repellent due to some sort of patriarchal conspiracy to make the ladies feel ashamed of their hoochie-noo-noos.

Much of the play's outrage...and be assured that it's a protected, suburban, abstract, safe sorta outrage...seems based in the idea that the sheer ugliness of the word "vagina" itself is part of a deliberate male plot to "rob women of our language," or some such nonsense, as if walking around with a "penis" and a "scrotum" is a real treat.

Vagina Monologues playwright Eve Ensler—may Goddess bless her and her vagina—has clocked that bank by exploiting what is little more than a mildly clever Women's Studies project—she interviewed a coupla hundred women 'bout their vaginas, asking them

"If you want to stop violence against women, why don't you buy us all earplugs so we don't have to listen to you complain?"

way to get out of learnin' yer lines.

Our tickets were for seats way in the back, and we found ourselves surrounded by giant mastodons and woolly mammoths. We were sandwiched between two women who must have weighed 300 pounds each. Some lard-assed bitch behind me cackled at every joke in the show, and believe me, there were a *lot* of jokes.

Men don't fare very well in the *Monologues*. One woman tells of how her meanie of a husband forced her to shave her bush and still cheated on her anyway. Throughout the show's 90 minutes, from testimonial to testimonial, the only man who is apparently able to give any of these chicks an orgasm is some submissive doofus who insists on staring worshipfully at her spread-eagled snatch and slobbering over it. We also learn that lesbian relationships are much more likely to provide women with sexual and emotional fulfillment, existing as they do apart from the evil clutches of MEN, who are so penis-obsessed that they rarely know their way around a cunt.

THE PLAY MIXED COMICAL, LIGHTEARTED, 'giney-related material with atrocity stories about clitoral mutilation and Bosnian rape camps. And it didn't mix well, either. Vagina jokes found themselves crashing headlong into rants against clit-snippin' (which, interestingly, they claim is primarily an African phenomenon, and I wonder how that made the black actress feel). Truth be told, the only ones in the audience likely to have undergone systematic genital mutilation were the circumcised males...such as I, dear reader, such as I.

Women don't suffer more...they just cry louder. After a while, I had a Tourette's-like compulsion to start screaming out obscenities at the top of my lungs and possibly jumping toward the stage à la John Wilkes Booth. I wanted to shout out the most degrading racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks I could summon. I wanted to shout at these bitches to be grateful for what they have. *That* would've been *my* version of chanting the word "cunt."

I just flew in from Vegas, and boy, are my fallopian tubes tired! So...how many vaginas does it take to screw in a light bulb? Only one, but it has to do it VERY CAREFULLY...No, seriously, it's good to see so many vaginas out there in the audience tonight! I love all you cunts! Let's all chant the word "CUNT" together...

And while you're reclaiming "cunt" and "vagina," ladies, here are some more terms for you to reclaim: twat, snatch, gash, slit, hole, slimepit, and cum-bucket. Try *that* one on for size, all you grandmas in Peoria who titter at *The Vagina Monologues*—reclaim the word "cum-bucket" for me, will you? I wanna hear you chant the word "cumbucket," Granny!

I scanned the audience for the few male attendees, all of whom looked unhappy to be there, these poor, hunched-over cuckolds being dragged to this play. I wondered about their lives...I pondered the level of their pussy-whippification. I felt bad for them, but not bad enough to help.

THE STRANGEST THING ABOUT THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES for me, apart from its all-consuming silliness, is its constant equation of a woman's vagina with a woman's self. I'm not sure what they're getting at there, but it ultimately sounds sort of...objectifying. I was under the impression that for years, feminists have fought against the idea of equating a woman's body with her self. And I fight against that idea, too. I love the vagina. It's the *monologues* I have a problem with. It's not the cunt...it's the

talking. The self-absorption. The automatic presumption of innocence and victimization. The inability to confront your own potential for malice and hurtful behavior. And the eternal double standards, which you never seem to oppose so long as they benefit you.

I can separate the vagina from the person, and it's usually the person I wind up hating.

EVE ENSLER HAS USED SOME OF THE MUCHO DINERO she's earned

from *The Vagina Monologues* to launch an organization called "V-Day," which is described as "a movement to end violence towards [sic] women." One website boldly claims that *The Vagina Monologues* "gave birth to a global movement to stop violence against women and girls."

What about violence toward men and boys? Is that somehow better? Is that somehow less prevalent? Is that more acceptable? Are your vaginas more precious than our penises? Saying we should end violence against women and girls reminds me of a conversation I once had with a rock star...the only rock star I've ever known...where he noted that the movement to "stop black-on-black violence" somehow implied that it was preferable to be violent against white people.

Not once, through all my 'net-surfing about V-Day, did I get an inkling of what they were actually DOING to end violence against women, apart from raising money. And what evidence did they provide to support the idea that they know *why* violence against women happens and what can be done to stop it?

Maybe it has something to do with the fact that mothers hit their little boys more often than daddy does, and that mommy hits those boys more frequently than she hits her little girls. That's what the statistics say, anyway.

Oh, sorry—didn't want to complicate the story.

If you want to stop violence against women, why don't you buy us all earplugs so we don't have to listen to you complain?

FOR \$30, I WANNA SEE a chick shooting ping-pong balls out of her pussy.

I want to see her mop a floor with the mop handle shoved up her twat. I want to see her blow out candles with the force of her vaginal muscles. I want to see her play the flute with that cunt. I want to see her make disturbingly loud duck sounds with her vagina. In fact, I want to see **Honeysuckle Divine** rather than *The Vagina Monologues*. Honeysuckle did all those things in a poorly reproduced video that was originally filmed at a San Francisco grindhouse in the early '70s. I still have the video somewhere in storage. Honeysuckle Divine—now *there's* a talking cunt I can get behind. The other twats are just blowing hot air.



I tell ya, us twats don't get no respect! I want respect, and I won't shut up until I gets me some!

REVIEW OF "THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES"



THE REAL TALKING VAGINA: Photos of HONEYSUCKLE DIVINE, displaying her amazingly versatile snatch and shooting a ping-pong ball from her twat.