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'Vagina Monologues' arouse generosity

By Karl Rybaltowski
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This past weekend, the Pritzker Club and MTCC Ballroom hosted a play that spawned an HBO production, a worldwide non-profit movement, and plenty of controversy in the United States and abroad.

Organized by members of IIT Feminists United, the event raised money for Porchlight Counseling Services, an organization that provides counseling and resources to victims of sexual violence. With a strong turnout, the event was regarded by the organizers as a big success.

The Vagina Monologues started as a one-woman play performed by Eve Ensler in New York. What had started as a series of anecdotes from acquaintances relating to sexuality and sexual violence turned into a series of interviews with 200 women - the result being a number of monologues that explore these issues, powerful because of their grounding in real events.

Though the play initially started as a celebration of female sexuality, it soon took on a more serious tone and became part of the V-Day movement, which opposes sexual violence worldwide. While a portion of the proceeds (10%) from each production of The Vagina Monologues goes to the V-Day non-profit itself, the rest is given to local rape and

sexual violence crisis centers for women. The production itself has also expanded to touch on transgender issues.

The performance at IIT was organized by members of IIT Feminists United, with FU Secretary Vlada Gaisina (MMAE '11) directing. The members of the organization felt more female-oriented performances were lacking in the university. "I was... really influenced by a performance at IIT's Kent College of Law in 2009. I had interviewed the director in an attempt to promote it on Main Campus, and I was struck by how positive the entire experience was. I knew then that IIT was in desperate need of an event that is so empowering and positive, and focuses so much on women." Meagan Sarratt (PSYC '11), President of FU, agrees. "We, as a school, are so unaware of the daily violence that women around the world face, and I was hoping that this would be our wake-up call."

Open auditions were held for the all-female cast on January 20 and 21, with students from different colleges and even IIT staff getting involved, for a variety of motivations. had already had some experience with the V-Day movement. "My mom saw Eve Ensler perform the monologues a while back, and my older sister was involved with V-Day activities on her college campus," said performer Elaine Erwin (ARCH '13). "So I thought I could carry this sort of 'legacy' by getting involved with

FU's production." To Residence Hall Director Jordan Alexander, it was a chance to stay involved. "I love this show, had been a part of it at the University of Vermont in 2007 and was thrilled I did not miss my chance here at IIT"

The monologues themselves cover a broad range of themes, and challenged the performers to interpret the very personal material on their own terms. The monologue performed by FU VP of Publicity Kunoor Ojha (PSYC '12) presented "Memory of her Face," three stories of women around the world (Baghdad, Islamabad, and Ciudad Juarez) who were victims of sexual violence or mutilation. "It's a sad one, to say the least... so that's what I tried to get across in my performance. No shaking my fist at sky in rage, no yelling out about it, just a sort of sad detachment." Other monologues were more affirmative and even humorous, while no less enlightening, such as Jordan Alexander's "My Angry Vagina." "The character I play... is my strongest feminist voice on my most passionate activist day. She allows me to express my anger in a healthy, educational and artistic way that resonates with other women and encourages the feminist movement forward."

The monologues were also accompanied by a raffle with sex-positive items as prizes and the sale of chocolate hearts (due to a shipping error, the standard chocolate vaginas didn't make it to the event in time). Despite the mi-

nor hiccups, however, the cast and organizers were very pleased with the audience. "The Pritzker Club was filled with laughs and great feedback from the crowd; I think the dimmed lighting in the audience with the spotlights on the performers worked perfectly. Most of the monologues got lots of claps, but there are always those few monologues that speak the truth yet quiet the crowd," said performer Julie Alkhovsky (PSYC '12).

There was an overwhelmingly positive reaction from the audience, as well. "The turnout was phenomenal! Every seat was taken on the first night! I'm usually really skeptical about student interest but people really responded! I would never have guessed how much we'd raise from it," Kunoor Ojha said. One audience member was overheard saying "People often talk about penis envy - I think I'm feeling the opposite right now."

There is already support for a repeat performance of The Vagina Monologues next year, and even making it an annual event. Asked about the future, Vlada Gaisina said "We've even talked about doing a performance of 'A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and a Prayer,' which includes men, next year. ... We want it to keep getting bigger!"

With the reaction The Vagina Monologues received this past weekend, that's not difficult to envision.



Photos by Jean-Emmanuel Guebey

Alternative Spring Break needs your help (and money)!

By Rebecca Waterloo
A&E EDITOR

It's a month until spring break; for thirty two IIT members, that means packing up and taking off to sunny California where they'll be building houses through Habitat for Humanity for a week. In order to get out there, they need your help. Keep an eye out for the numerous creative fundraisers for all crowds. Any donation gets them one step further to Oakland, so keep reading to find out how you can help!

ASB Benefit Night @ The Bog

Thursday, February 17, 7 pm @ The Bog

Alternative Spring Break is organizing an event in The Bog to help them get to Oakland, California to build houses through Habitat for Humanity. There's lots going on, including food, raffles, rec center tournaments, a kissing booth, karaoke bribes, and a "Date Auction" at 9 pm, when you can bid on some hot ASB'ers to give you the love you deserve.

Some dates involve a walk to class, a coffee date, or requests are welcome (G rated only, folks). ASB gets The Bog the whole night, but

the fun will start around 7 pm. Bring your dollars and coins, this is an opportunity you won't want to miss.

Fundraiser Bowling Tournament for ASB

Saturday, February 19, 3 pm @ The Bog

Come down and bowl with some friends, win some prizes, and help build homes for people in need all at the same time! \$5 per person to enter. Prizes for highest score and more. Register here:

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dEJEVHVwWk5tcWZxWUxhUjJPWkJWN0E6MQ>

ASB Spaghetti Dinner

Sunday, February 27, 5:30 pm @ Delta Tau Delta house

Come get a bottomless plate of spaghetti for only \$5. ASB members themselves will serve you spaghetti until your button bursts from your pants. \$5 for a plate of spaghetti is a meal you can't pass up!

ASB Night at Rocky's

Thursday, March 3, 9 pm @ Rocky's Bar & Grill, 234 W. 31st

Head to Rocky's for college night specials. All tips given will be matched and donated to ASB. After 10 pm, the event will be 21+.

Take On ASB

Saturday, March 5, 6 pm @ Keating Sports Center

Compete against ASB teams through different sport competitions; basketball, soccer & volleyball. \$5 per person buy in, winning team gets a prize at the end. Registration will soon be up, but email asb.iit@gmail.com for now with your preferred sport or register as a team to take on ASB!

Supporters can also donate directly to a link (<https://payment.iit.edu/item.php?item=464>)

Find ASB on Facebook to hear more what they're up to! (<http://www.facebook.com/IITASB2011>)