Fearless: The Vagina Monologues

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Abstract
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FEARLESS: THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES

February 14, 2014

Performed annually around the world to celebrate womanhood, empower survivors of sexual assault and abuse, and create an open forum for challenging cultural attitudes toward women, the Vagina Monologues will be performed by Gettysburg College students next Thursday and Friday (February 20 & 21).

Organized by three co-directors, Liz Marshall ’14, Emily Zeller ’14, and Hillary Mallet ’15, this year’s rendition of the Vagina Monologues is going to feature over fifty fearless students from the College and a new monologue from Eve Ensler, the creator of the global phenomenon, about her experience of creating a closer relationship with her father.

The Vagina Monologues is a collection of poetic narratives in monologue form based on the real stories and experiences of women who have been sexually assaulted and abused, disrespected and violated. The performances are always powerful, charged with intense emotion and feelings of solidarity as women and men come together to celebrate the power of women while also confronting issues of violence in our homes, relationships, and communities. However, that’s not to say that some of the monologues aren’t humorous and filled with hilarious commentary on the joys of being a woman, too.
Emily first heard about the Vagina Monologues at a summer camp she went to when she was twelve that had a women’s interest group. “The Vagina Monologues is a really cool application of female empowerment,” says Emily. “It’s all about the raising up of women, and it’s a great way to get people on campus involved, thinking and talking about these issues in an approachable, theatrical outlet. This is something that should be for the whole campus community.”

Liz, another co-director, first learned about the Vagina Monologues her sophomore year because her friend had signed up to do it. “At first,” says Liz, “I thought it just sounded really weird. But then I got involved too and it touched me in a way nothing else had. The unity of the women on the stage was so powerful and beautiful—it’s so amazing to see so many women on campus step forward and tackle these issues and talk about what’s going on because so many are afraid to talk about it. I can’t even tell you how many people walked up to me after I first performed ‘Over it,’ a monologue about healing after rape, and told me that I had just said all the words they had wanted to say but were too scared to say or didn’t know how. And there’s nothing as empowering or as beautiful as that.”

“It’s important to recognize,” says Hillary, “that a lot of women on campus and in the cast of the Vagina Monologues have been victims of sexual assault, so it’s great to have this outlet that says ‘Yeah, I’m a woman. Yeah, this happened. But we’re together.’ I’m a pretty big feminist, so it’s nice to bring something like the Vagina Monologues to campus to be able to raise awareness of these issues in a way that’s humorous, but serious, too.”

The Vagina Monologues serves as an incredible medium to promote awareness for issues of violence against women, but for many, it also works as a starting point for the healing process. “You don’t always know who in the cast or in the audience has been affected by these issues,” says Liz, “because of stigmas and fears of judgment, but through these monologues, we can be that voice for them and show them they’re not alone.”

Not only is performing the Vagina Monologues important for the women of the campus community who may or may not have been affected by these issues, it is important for the men on campus to experience this event as well so that they can understand what’s happening on our campus, in our communities, in our nation, and in our world as related to how women are treated and the things they undergo simply because they are females.

“I’d really like to see if we could get a bigger male population to come to the performance because it’s important for them to see us,” says Hillary. “They might say they’re uncomfortable going, but there are a lot more uncomfortable things in the world than talking about women. Men need to be aware of a woman’s side of things in terms of sexual assault so that they can be a friend to the women on campus and a friend to the women of the world.”

“Actually,” says Emily, “my favorite monologues are the ones that make you the most uncomfortable, like ‘The Moaners’ and ‘Cunt,’ because those ones that make you squirm are usually the most effective at doing their job.”

“I think one of the biggest issues on Gettysburg’s campus is that the conversations about sexual assault are so women-centered,” says Liz. “Not only does sexual assault happen to men, but they’re also so excluded in that
they constantly feel like they’re being blamed for these things. But I’d love to see a lot of men come out to see these performances. I’d love to see both genders there. It might be uncomfortable, but that’s the next big step in ending sexual assault among men.”

The Vagina Monologues is not only a great way to address the serious issues facing women, it’s also an incredibly powerful time of celebration—recognizing the resilience, beauty, and power of women who come together as a community of survivors, telling their stories, raising awareness, and making a difference so that even just one more assault or rape or injustice can be stopped.

Come out next Thursday and Friday at 7pm to see the women of Gettysburg College present The Vagina Monologues: hear their stories, stand with them in solidarity, and support them in their celebration of womanhood.

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