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■ In my opinion

'Vagina Monologues' misspeaks

I'm just going to say it: "The Vagina Monologues" sucks.

Why the ASUO Women's Center insists on performing this wretched play year after year is beyond me. The horse is dead, yet they just keep beating it.

This thoroughly unremarkable play is certainly worth seeing once. But then again, so is "The Sound of Music."

For those of you who aren't familiar with the play, "The Vagina Monologues" is a loosely strung together series of poorly written monologues about women and their vaginas. Or maybe I should say vaginas and their women.

The title of the play appeals to the fourth-grader in all of us who still giggles when we hear the word, "vagina." If the play had a different title, no one would have ever heard of it. And if it didn't piss off certain Catholic groups so much, it certainly would have fizzled out long ago.

Because of the controversy about the message of the play (or lack thereof), the fact that it's a shallow, rambling mess of pre-packaged feminist clichés that many feminists don't even agree with anymore (if they ever did) has almost completely escaped public discussion.

No one likes vaginas more than I do. I'm the president of the vagina fan club. But this play just sucks.

The first half is everybody giggling about the fact that an adult just said "pussy" out loud while the second half of the play is everybody crying and feeling miserable about violence against women. Did I miss the part that was supposed to be empowering?

It's a sad commentary that the great canon of feminist plays seems to consist of one play. One! For crying



GABE BRADLEY
THE WRITING ON THE WALL

out loud, let's get some variety in here. Let's see something other than "The Vagina Monologues." Maybe those plays wouldn't suck so much. From a purely philosophical perspective, I'd like to see a play that's a bit more dialogical. "The Cunt Conversations" perhaps?

You could totally do a play about vaginas and have it be a great play. This one just doesn't happen to be that play.

For that matter, you could do a play about penises and it could be good too. But there are those who would argue that all Western culture has been about the penis, so maybe it's been done before. Is there a demand for a "Penis Monologues?" I doubt it. Besides, after the "Seinfeld" episode about shrinkage, there's not much left to say.

In any case, this year's production by the ASUO Women's Center was particularly pitiful for a couple reasons.

First of all, the political correctness militia won a major victory against quality theater this year when the producers of this year's play decided to typecast rather than hold auditions in response to protests of last year's production.

About 10 people protested the fact that women of color, plus-sized women and queer were "underrepresented" in

the cast of the play. The biggest complaint was that a white student performed a monologue in which the character was African American.

In other words, these few protesters wanted the directors to engage in typecasting so extreme that it borders on illegal discrimination. A sad side effect of such "inclusive" exclusivity is that it eliminates acting talent from the cast selection process.

Also, keep in mind that the original cast for "The Vagina Monologues" was a middle-aged white woman doing all the parts — all of them!

Even more ridiculous than this policy of typecasting is the hypocritical results it achieves.

"It's all about giving a voice to people who've never had the opportunity to speak up before," director Felicia Perez said in a press release.

That's a nice line. Except when the cast was announced, the sentiment proved to be woefully hollow. Topping the list of cast members was Eugene mayor Kitty Piercy. A University vice-president, several faculty members and the ASUO vice-president were also cast.

They said they wanted to make it more democratic and accessible to the common woman. But at the end of the day, they sold out to get a big name and cater to women who are already in a privileged position to have their voices heard.

They didn't democratize "The Vagina Monologues." They didn't give a voice to the underrepresented. And they certainly didn't cast the common woman. All they did was take "The Vagina Monologues" away from the good actresses.

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■ Editorial

U.S. should keep a light hand on the Middle East

The past week and a half has brought a series of small, albeit significant, steps toward a stable peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

On Feb. 7, Israeli and Palestinian leaders confirmed they would declare, during a summit beginning the next day in Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, an end to years of bloody and destructive fighting. The New York Times reported Monday that Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said he has talked with radical groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad regarding a truce formulated at the summit in Egypt. Showing some progress, Hamas promised not to immediately retaliate for any Israeli violence while it weighs whether to join a Palestinian cease-fire with Israel.

On Sunday, in what is being heralded as a tremendous gesture, the Israeli government approved the release of some 500 Palestinian prisoners within the week. (The Palestinian Authority has reported that Israel holds more than 7,600 Palestinian prisoners.) We cautiously hope these actions mark a real turning point in transforming a war of hatred and heated ideology into dialogue.

Peace between these two groups is obviously hampered by the demonization that has followed decades of war. The Palestinian and Israeli people must learn to see neighbors where they once saw enemies, and this will take time and encouragement. Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon have taken the first steps toward moderation, and both must look past the often loud and influential voices of religious fundamentalists. Abbas told the Times that he is optimistic about the supportive response he has received from militants concerning the peace process — it is progress Abbas has rightfully boasted about.

The Bush administration must realize that the Middle East deserves some autonomy in this matter. Both sides have accepted invitations to meet separately with President Bush, and Abbas has recently encouraged the promised American economic aid, but the United States must refrain from tending to this process with a heavy hand. We commend Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for her somewhat introductory visit to the region, but we caution against a hard-line Bush proposal for a provisional democratic Palestinian state at this time. Even Abbas has said he would reject such a short-term solution, saying Palestinians would be hesitant to accept a plan that might be seen as a replacement for a final settlement.

A successful peace process is a tall order for any leader to fill, let alone attempt, as Abbas has tried to do since he was elected president of the Palestinian Authority a little more than a month ago. Whatever the outcome, we commend the quick and substantial progress.

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INBOX

Wet Seal's shady practice is torturing animals for fur

I recently read an article about how clothing retailer Wet Seal is under investigation by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission because of shady business practices. Unfortunately, these shady practices aren't the only dark secrets at Wet Seal headquarters. Wet Seal also continues to sell fur despite a national boycott against them from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. It is a common practice for the animals they kill for fur to be kept in horrible conditions for their entire life span. Incredibly small cages, exposure to the elements and death by a broken neck or smashed skull is just a sample of the torture happening on their fur farms. As long as Wet Seal supports the unnecessary torture of animals for fur, I encourage everyone to shop elsewhere.

Curtis Taylor
Eugene

Conduct Code necessary first step for student safety

The LGBTQA would like to address the recent attacks toward our office with

an outline of our intent and our requests for the ASUO and Office of Admissions. We support freedom of expression, the free exchange of ideas, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We agree with the Affirmation of Community Standards that states: "The University of Oregon has a long and illustrious history in the area of academic freedom and freedom of speech. A culture of respect that honors the rights, safety, dignity, and worth of every individual is essential to preserve such freedom."

We request from all branches of the ASUO to create and enforce a Code of Conduct for Incidental Fee Funded Organizations. The Code of Conduct would adhere to the Non-Discrimination Policy and the Affirmation of Community Standards. We request that a mechanism be created through our student government that can enforce this Code of Conduct upon the student groups through effective management and consequences.

We request that the University administration institute an internal process in regards to staff, students, organizations and others affiliated with the University that has the authority to enforce the Non-Discrimination Policy

in its entirety. We believe it is foremost the responsibility of the administration to ensure the safety of all students.

We request that there be an expansion of the Multi-Cultural Academic Requirement to include one mandatory class for all incoming freshman that includes a curriculum which covers the topics of patriarchy, rape culture, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism and other forms of oppression, and includes skills for treating differences with respect.

We believe these actions are the start of creating a safe campus environment. We are all responsible for the steps it takes to educate and eliminate hate and hate-speech in our community. It is important to note, and we would like to make it clear, that the LGBTQA is not for or against the defunding of the Oregon Commentator. It is the administration's failure to respond and proactively enforce its own Non-Discrimination Policy that has escalated this situation. We ask that the University administration respond with a plan, which incorporates our requests listed above, by March 18.

LGBTQA

University of Oregon

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