



Linda Faulkner performs 'The Flood' scene at a Bangkok performance of *The Vagina Monologues*, a play directed by Julie Graham and Amanda Laragione.

Restaged Vagina Monologues gets enthusiastic response

STORY:
KATRINA CLARKE

A woman wearing a shiny red bustier writhes on stage in ecstasy. She breathes heavily, gyrates her hips, moans loudly and shouts, “Oh, my God! Oh!” This could well be a scene straight out of a raunchy sex show in Bangkok. But instead of a display of flesh, we’re viewing a performance of *The Vagina Monologues*. The actors are activists for various women’s issues and the leather-and-lace-clad woman on stage, however convincing she may be, is just acting out the play’s memorable “surprise triple orgasm moan” scene.

“The Vagina Monologues, they’re supposed to provoke,” said Chiedza Mutsaka, an organiser with Bangkok Rising, a group campaigning for the elimination of violence against women and girls, which arranged the stage performance last month. “It’s supposed to demystify the word [vagina]. It’s supposed to disarm the word.” The play is a collection of monologues based on interviews that American playwright and activist Eve Ensler conducted with women around the world about their vaginas.

The script has been translated into 48 languages and performed in more than 140 countries. It was previously staged here by different Thai and international groups and yet its relevance and popularity remains strong among women performers. Mutsaka, a 27-year-old Bangkokian originally from Zimbabwe, said that some women are still embarrassed to utter the word “vagina”, a barrier she thinks it is important to overcome. “If a little girl is told she can’t say the word ‘vagina’, she has to call it a ‘wee wee’, or whatever. Is she ever going to say, ‘Mum, that man touched my wee wee’?”