



S. Asher Gelman A new Israeli production

The Human Condition

The Stage, Tel Aviv's new English-language performing arts group has a new performance of "The Vagina Monologues." Kristóf Joseph Steiner interviews director S. Asher Gelman.

What is *The Vagina Monologues* about for you?

What strikes me the most about this show is just how passionately people feel about it. To me, "The Vagina Monologues" is so much more than just a play about "women's issues;" it's a play about the human condition, as told through the experiences of women. While it is a feminist play, it is not a play about feminism. The sad truth is that even though the play is nearly two decades old, almost all of its issues are still current.

This is a brave decision, since this play is usually directed by female directors.

I have already received a fair amount of criticism about my decision to direct "The Vagina Monologues" but I don't think that I need to be a woman to understand the human experience described and I don't understand why I need to be "qualified" to direct this show by anything

besides my talent and experience.

Do you find that your sexual orientation allows you to better understand the female soul?

I am a bit uncomfortable with this notion of "the female soul" because I see it as somehow excluding women from being a part of the human experience. I also don't believe that my being attracted to men somehow allows me to understand women better. That said, I believe that homophobia is based on misogyny (hatred of men "behaving" like women, etc.), but I don't believe that we should be defined by those that hate us. I believe that I am less hung up on gender norms or my own masculinity (or femininity, for that matter) and therefore, it makes my directing this play

easier.

How is your version of the play different from the 'norm'?

Rather than the classic "one woman, one stool, one microphone, one spotlight" interpretation and without giving too much away, there are 13 women in this show and the environments that can be created with that amount of people makes this version unique. I am also proud of the diversity of the actors - their ages range from 22 to 60 plus and represent six nationalities. It

was important to me that this show represents a large spectrum of women, and I believe we achieved that.

Tell me a bit about your performance group, The Stage. The Stage was created with

the purpose of providing an English-language performing arts community here in Tel Aviv. We encourage anyone with the drive and passion for the performing arts (whether onstage, offstage, or backstage) to get involved. We are currently partnering with Beit Yad Labanim TLV, where we hope to make a permanent home for ourselves.

How did you begin your career in directing?

I have always been in love with the stage, whether it be dancing, acting, choreographing, or, in this case, directing. There is something magical about having a vision and watching it come to life.

The show runs February 8th, 15th, & 20th at Beit Yad Labanim TLV, Tel Aviv. Proceeds from the show go to the Tel Aviv Sexual Assault Crisis Center. Tickets for the production and information about The Stage can be found at (thestagetiv.com)

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