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2002, 13th Annual JWP Conference

Apr 21st, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

***The Vagina Monologues: Illinois Wesleyan University's Production
of Entertainment and Empowerment***

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Poster Presentation PK

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY'S PRODUCTION OF
ENTERTAINMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

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When the student director and caste of IWU's production of Eve Ensler's Obie Award winning play, *The Vagina Monologues* set about staging the performance in February 2002, they were well aware of the magnitude of the task they were facing and the multitude of issues they were addressing. *The Vagina Monologues* is about the celebration of female sexuality by dispelling the mystery that shrouds a woman's "down there". It brings to light topics that are considered taboo such as menstruation, orgasms and homosexuality. Therefore, the IWU performers were taking a bold step by staging this play in front of our relatively conservative Bloomington community, not to mention their parents. Indeed the production team did encounter some resistance to their efforts, especially when advertising their performances. Along with breaking down walls and encouraging the full experience of being a woman, *The Vagina Monologues* addresses another global issue: violence against women. The V-Day Organization is an outgrowth of the worldwide performances of *The Vagina Monologues* and is now committed to ending violence against women by using the funds raised by staging the performances. The IWU production team funneled the donations they collected during their performances to RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan. Thus this effort on the part of these IWU students was not limited to a mere theatrical performance but was part of a world-wide campaign to realize a violence-free future in which women will feel empowered and celebrated.