

Vagina Monologues slams into glass walls

BY SUZANNE GARDNER

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The annual presentation of *The Vagina Monologues* has come up against more than its share of glass walls this year. Although the Women's Centre will host the event on campus next week, the venues have changed due to controversy.

Event organizer Andrea Dupuis received notice from Federation of Students vice-president internal Sai Kit Lo that the V-Day performances of *The Vagina Monologues* were not allowed to take place in the SLC's Great Hall. He believed the event was "not appropriate to happen in a public area." Consequently, the Feds board of directors called an emergency board meeting on the night of February 6 to overrule this decision.

Dupuis decided to call Lo to discuss the issue and to ask if the event could then be held in the SLC's multi-purpose room instead. Lo once again responded that the event could not be held in the Great Hall despite Dupuis' interest in just the room.

At this point Dupuis questioned Lo on this statement, to which Lo replied: "The conservative students of the university would feel uncomfortable with the content of 'the body parts.'" He then asked Dupuis for further clarification on the content of the play. "This shocked me," said Dupuis. She proceeded to explain to Lo that the play is "a series of real-life monologues with a message of empowerment." Lo counteracted this explanation by stating: "I think the Great Hall is a living room for all students to feel comfortable in."

Dupuis explained that she grew increasingly upset about Lo's reasonings when she discovered that the movies *Borat* and *The Departed*, both rated R by the MPAA, are being shown in the Great Hall as part of the Student Life Office's Warrior Weekends event happening February 9 and 10.

"How is that worse or even on the same plane as a charity event that's provocative and evocative?" asked Dupuis.

When asked about his opinion on the showing of these movies in the Great Hall, Lo said, "I don't think it's right to show movies like *Jackass* and *Borat*. Students shouldn't have to be exposed to material like this, but I don't see how we should interfere."

After refusing to let the performance take place in the Great Hall, Lo did permit Dupuis to plan the event for the multi-purpose room. She later found out that the room was already booked at that time. Dupuis contacted Lo again and attempted to set up a personal meeting with him to discuss his reasons behind why the presentation was continually facing obstacles, yet she received no reply. At this point, Dupuis decided to no longer go through Lo to receive her answers because she "didn't feel comfortable talking to him anymore because it was all 100 per cent unclear."

"I don't think he was representing us [the students]," explained Dupuis. "He was representing himself, and that's unfortunate." Dupuis sent all of her correspondence with Lo to the Feds vice-president administration and finance Renjie Butalid to further discuss the issue with him instead of with Lo.

Dupuis commented on Butalid's quick attention to the issue, specifically the board's decision to overrule Lo, stating: "I'm 100 per cent satisfied with that. Our execs as a whole have come through for us."

Butalid explained that since the situation came to his attention on Monday morning, he has been working to get the facts straight and come to a decision. Upon discussion with the board on Tuesday, Butalid explained that the board decided that "although Lo was well-intended, this Feds supports an environment of free speech, no matter how controversial, to promote discussion."

"I think his heart was in the right place, but his head was in the wrong place," explained Dupuis. "I just hope this doesn't happen again." Dupuis is currently looking into holding a free event in the Great Hall after reading week, in addition to the three shows being held from February 13-15 in the Modern Languages building.

In defence of his actions, Lo said: "I did what I can that I believe is right for all students." On the morning of February 7, Lo resigned from his position as vice-president internal, stating, "I can't live with the belief that I'm contaminating this as remaining an officer of this organization."