



Clean Slate echoes
Vagina Monologues

Description

Theatre La Chapelle presents a successfully translated version of *Table rase*

By **Byron Toben**

Clean Slate, the latest **Talisman Theatre** translation of a popular Quebec French play into English (*Table rase* by Catherine Chabot) echoes to me Eve Ensler's mega hit *The Vagina Monologues*.

That play, based on 200 interviews of women grew from a 1996 Off-Off Broadway beginning into a worldwide phenomenon.

One highlight was a 2001 massive presentation at Madison Square Garden including readings by 71 female celebrities, including such as Oprah Winfrey, Jane Fonda, Glen Close, Gloria Steinem and Canada's Andrea Martin.



Those monologues explored sexual experiences, both consensual and non, body image, genital mutilation, reproduction, sex work, etc. all through the eyes of women of various ages, races, proclivities.

Clean Slate was worked up by Ms. Chabot with the collaboration of the original French cast of Vicky Bertrand, Marie-Anick Blais, Rose-Ann Dery, Sarah Laurendeau, Brigitte Poupart and Marie-Noelle Voisin.

Whereas *Vagina Monologues* is a series of freestanding individual recitations, *Clean Slate* is more interactive between the individuals, linked by a plot.

In the English version at the **Theatre La Chapelle**, they are portrayed by a fine female sextet of **Cleopatra Boudreau, Rebecca Gibian, Gita Miller, Michelle Langlois-Fequet, Kathleen Stavert and Julie Trepanier**. There is a token male, **Christian Daoust**, in a brief cameo.



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individual recitations, *Clean Slate* is more interactive between the individuals, linked by a plot. The whole takes place at a cottage where the six friends have gathered to witness the assisted death of one of them who chooses that path rather than suffering from an incurable cancer. Preparatory to the final injection, they each voice their own views on sex and death, often arguing among themselves to the point where I questioned whether they were really close friends.

These declarations were highlighted by drum-like thigh pounding culminating in a cry of “Shock” wherein each, in turn, would reveal the most shocking event in her life.

Lots of pelvic thrusting, disco dancing and strobe lights accentuated the physical theatre aspect of what would otherwise have been a static talk piece. What else to expect when the director was dancer/actor **Leslie Baker**, famous inter alia for her charmingly entitled piece, *Fuck You, You Fucking Pervert*.

Plaudits all around to translator **Jennie Herbin** with the support of the **Cole Foundation** and the **Playwrights Workshop Montreal**.

***Clean Slate* continues at Theatre La Chapelle until March 30.**

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Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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