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Devising A Show From the Ground Up: Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed

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Devising A Show From the Ground Up:

*Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed*

By

Lindsay R Spear

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation from the Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Abstract

Only 24 U.S. states, plus DC, mandate sex education. That’s less than half of the country. When the members of Portal Theatre, including myself, shared our own personal experiences with sex education, we found one thing in common: we were all unprepared. We were unprepared for sex, queer sex, consent, sexual health like menstruation, STI’s, and yeast infections, etc. We all found there was something in our sex education that was lacking. To respond to the poor sex education of the United States, and in various countries around the world, we decided to share our experiences by creating a play. The play explores seven different topics in sex education; periods, first time having sex, sex educators, masturbation, abstinence, consent/assault, and bad sex advice. Using a variety of different theatrical styles, the two actors, Lindsay Spear and Phoebe Thompson explore how their sex education in school failed them in sometimes funny sometimes dramatic ways. This play will inform, entertain, and address the real experiences of people affected by bad sex education, to which the majority of the US is affected by.

By analyzing the process of creating this show and touring it across different Fringe Festivals in Canada, I will break down the creative process of devising and building a show from the ground up. I will explain the process of researching, writing with other people, and the hardships of the creative and touring process. Throught this play and reflection, I hope this thesis encourages you to look into the sex education system in your own country, or gives you the courage to create your own show on a topic you are passionate about.
In the spring of 2018, Michael Phillips, theatre professor at Western Oregon University, asked me if I wanted to collaborate with Portal Theatre, his devised theatre company. I had worked with Michael and Portal in the past. He had directed shows at WOU that I was cast in like *Cabaret* and *Machinal*. I also helped devise an original play at WOU which he directed, called *Frankie’s Flights of Fancy*. On occasion when Portal had shows in Portland, I would help as Front of House or Box Office, collecting tickets. In the fall of 2018, I stepped in for one of the performers in the Portal show *No Belles* at a performance in Edmonton for the WISEST conference (Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, and Technology). Before I even agreed, Michael told me his goal was to create a devised show to tour around the Fringe Circuit.

There are many Fringe Festivals all throughout the world. The biggest and most famous being held in Edinburgh, Scotland for twenty-five days. But on average, most other Fringe festivals are around two weeks in length. Each festival has performers from all over the world come together to perform shows, most of which are original and tend to last fifty minutes. You can see anything from magic shows, dances, stand-up comedy, original plays, or any type of shows you can imagine. I saw around 140 shows during my 6 weeks touring. Some shows of note were a
shadow puppet musical called *The 13 Dead Dreams of Eugene* by Paul Strickland and Erika MacDonald, and a one person horror show (created almost entirely from a sound loop system) called *St. Hilda* by Jody Christopherson. After some consideration, I said yes to working with Portal, and the creation of the show that would be called *Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed*, began. As a true devised piece, we did extensive research on various women we could feature in the show. Phoebe Thompson, Michael and I, agreed that we wanted to focus on women, and if they had a career in the sciences, all the better. However, after a couple months of research, one particular rehearsal changed the whole direction of the show.

In September of 2018, I asked a simple anecdotal question to my Facebook friends. I asked “...I’m doing research for a show I’m devising, and I’m wondering what year in school you were taught Sex Ed?” (Spear, Facebook) More than 50 people responded. After discussing the diverse range of answers, my writing partner Phoebe added they “never had sex ed.” We then went on to each share how unprepared we were in middle school when puberty hit, especially with our periods. Then it moved to gynecologists, bad sex advice, things we never heard in sex ed that are imperative (pregnancy, STI’s, sexual health, consent, etc.) To be honest, our rehearsal was derailed for a good 20 minutes, where the three of us would share our personal experiences with poor sex education. After those twenty minutes, Michael stopped us and said, “This is what our show should be about. You have been more passionate about this than any of the other research we have done.” It was true.

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1 Phoebe Thompson is Non-Binary and will be referred by They/Them pronouns.
This goofy, tangent of a conversation brought out the passion, anger, and humor we felt towards our experience with sex education. If we felt this way, how many other people could relate to our experience? As we dug into the mass of information and research there is on the different sex education systems, we became more impassioned on the topic. But we also learned how to narrow our scope. That meant, writing about topics that were personal to us as theatre artists. We decided that we needed to write about experiences from our lives on how our sex education failed us. It was hard. We had to confront things about our lives, personal, hateful things. Like, awkward sexual encounters, secret shames, trauma from religious teachings, and trauma from sexual assault. In order to ask our audiences to listen, we had to become vulnerable in front of them, to let them know it’s okay to feel awkward, scared, and hurt. From the first conversation where we had shared our personal experiences with sex education, we felt a bond because we knew we weren’t alone in our experiences. We talked openly and without judgment about sex and sex education, because it’s usually seen as a cultural taboo. We wanted to create a show where we could let people know it’s okay to talk about our bodies, and they are not alone in their experiences with sex and sex ed.

Devising is a term that is thrown around very loosely. In order to move forward let me define the term. According to John Walton, artistic director of Fol Espoir, “devising” is a process in which the whole creative team develops a show collaboratively.’ I was introduced to the term my first year of college when I helped

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2 Fol Espoir is a Critically Acclaimed theatre company based in Bristol.
create and write the show *Frankie’s Flights of Fancy* in a group of 15 students. We spent fall term coming up with ideas, working together, and holding each other accountable as we collectively built the script. I had many more opportunities in college to work on devised shows. Acting and blocking with my fellow cast in *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing*, and assistant directing, collecting, and combining all of the student written works that made up the script in *Why Cross Chaos*. Each new show had an entirely different and unique devising process, yet they all required doing research, creating scenes in small collaborative groups, taking pieces that worked, and cutting things that didn’t. These are basic building blocks in devised theatre. However, how we approach the show from there, differs from show to show. For *Why Cross Chaos* for example, it was very loosely based on a series of French silent movies from the 1920’s called *Les Vampires*. *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing* had a complete script to begin with, but we split the script very differently than how it was originally written and we collaboratively, as a cast and crew, blocked and created the vision of the show together. The term “devised” is meant to have a loose definition, so it gives more creative freedom to those who use it. Devised theatre can be comedy or drama, dance or spoken word. It can be whatever the creators need of it. It only requires a group of individuals working together to create a vision, a show for audiences to enjoy.

When we started our own devised project, we didn’t know exactly what we wanted it to be. What we were told by Michael, our director, was that he wanted to
create a show about women, and preferably a woman or women in science. He gave us two books to kick start our initial research, *Bad Girls throughout History: 100 Remarkable Women Who Changed the World*, and *Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World*. Each book gave a short 1-page summary of different incredible women from around the world and their accomplishments. We were told to look through each book and mark down women who we found interesting, who we wanted to do more research on, and who's stories might make a good show.

While we did our individual research on different women, we also did some exploration together of different movement styles and ways to tell stories. The first group Michael introduced us to was RashDash. RashDash is a UK theatre group using music, dance, and theatre to create art. They focus on “reevaluating the femine” and using their bodies to “dismantle the patriarchy” However it was a specific movement exercise created by them called “Under Over” which we explored. It has two people, let’s call them A and B, create a movement sequence together. Partner A takes one part of their body and while touching Partner B, puts it over them. For example, A take’s their head and puts it on B’s shoulder, thereby, “over” them. Then B moves a part of their body and puts it over A. Then A moves and puts their body or body part under B, and it goes on and on until a movement sequence is created. Eventually the same sequence is practiced and practiced until the sequence is one fluid motion, like a dance.³ We also looked at the theatre

³ For a more indepth look, watch RashDash’s masterclass on this movement exercise: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47QhuLMLDL8&feature=youtu.be
company Frantic Assembly for another movement exercise called Hymn’s Hands. Frantic Assembly, another UK based company that does a lot of devised work that focuses on movements and the connections between people. For Hymn’s Hands, let’s use Partner A and B again. A moves B’s left hand, for example, to A’s left shoulder. B then moves A’s left hand a moves it over B’s head to their hip. The goal is to remain in constant contact with each partner and create a fluid sequence of movements. It may look like it is similar to RashDash’s exercise, but how you get to the end goal is completely different.

While we worked on this in rehearsals we researched women for potential topics, at home. As we researched women, Michael brought up a good point. In order to narrow down who we could do a show on, he recommended that we try and look at women who have already died, or in their upper years in age. The more modern the woman is, the harder it is to impersonate her. And, she could still have a lifetime’s worth of research and discoveries ahead of her. So we would only be doing an injustice in trying to act as them. Eventually we narrowed down our search to two women; Karen Horney and Margaret Sanger. Karen Horney was a psychoanalyst who studied under Karl Abraham (who was good friends with Freud) and was well versed in Freud’s theories. After many clinical studies, she realized that the observed behavior did not fit what Freud had been teaching at all. She then created a new study called Neo-Freudism. She argued that society shaped a person’s image of self-worth. Margaret Sanger is known as the pioneer of birth control and founded

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4 For a more indepth look, watch Frantic Assembly’s masterclass on this movement exercise: https://youtu.be/gUqZPFIGX6U?t=347
planned parenthood. However, she was also known as a supporter of eugenics. We found a thin thread connecting the two as they both were feminist-centric women who focused on women’s rights, although in different ways. We thought we could do a show about the two of them and deepen their connection. However that’s when I posted the question on Facebook about sex education, and our topic and style of show completely changed from there. Sometimes, you can do weeks worth of research on something, only to have it all thrown out in an afternoon. When you do devised work, you have to be okay with type of practice. You can work very hard on something, only to have it torn apart and thrown away. You have to kill your babies.

“Kill your babies” is a term coined from actress and director, Jen Rowe. I worked with her when she directed *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing* at Western Oregon University. She told us we needed to learn to let go of ideas. We can love them with all our might, work to find ways to fit it in the show, but if it just doesn’t, we need to “kill them” or cut them from the shoe, and be fine with it. It’s a shocking term I’ll admit, but it cuts right to the point. When you compile research for a devised show or write scenes/sketches, you can’t be overly attached to your work. The same goes for writing a novel. While you may love a joke you wrote or think you have a great idea, if it doesn’t benefit the story as a whole, it’s only gonna drag it down.

We know what devised theatre is, but why did we (Portal Theatre) decide to do it? There are plenty of other styles of theatre we could do out there. We could perform a one act, a pure dance piece, even a full length scripted play. Many Fringe
festivals also have works by famous playwrights like Shakespeare and Lanford Wilson performed, and those shows have merit too. The cast and crew worked hard on those productions. But around 80-90% of the shows at Fringe Festivals are devised pieces. It is part of the culture of the festivals, where massive amounts of creative people from all over the world and all walks of life, tell stories in very unique ways. But most of the shows at Fringe festivals have a few things in common; they are minimal in terms of sets and props, mostly due to the fact you have 15 minutes to set up and 15 minutes to take down whatever set or props you have. The shows also last around 50-55 minutes. In order for audiences to see as many shows as they can, most shows are between 50-80 minutes long, and in that short time, you have to immediately grab the audience’s attention and keep them intrigued throughout the whole time. If they like it they tell their friends and you have more people who come to your show, because word of mouth is arguably the most important promotional aspect of these festivals. And because you have such a short amount of time to tell your story, you can’t get bogged down by too much excess fluff. Fluff meaning long drawn out scripts or excessive sets or costumes. But that doesn’t mean you can’t get a little crazy with technical aspects. So many Fringe shows have amazing visual projections or sound designs. But, this style of theatre performance would not work for most big theaters like the Oregon Shakespeare festival or any production on Broadway because they typically fall into the traps of deadly theatre.
In Peter Brook’s *The Empty Space*, he talks about the “deadly theatre”, which means commercial, big theatrical pieces that focus on mass entertainment that will produce big ticket sales rather than going for off-kilter art pieces that might depress or offend audiences. These productions usually “fail to instruct or elevate” according to Brook. Most theorists say that the goal of theatre is to educate or entertain, a sentiment shared by most theatre practitioners. But if theatre companies repeat the same kind of productions over and over again, any emotional or intellectual challenges it might have posed when it first came out, can become lost. Deadly theatre is still widely loved and people will keep coming to watch it, but it can be dull and predictable. So while big companies can do challenging, smaller works, it won’t be financially worth it for them, in comparison, to another production of *Hamlet*.

This is why devised theatre thrives at Fringe festivals. You expect to see devised shows that are wacky, and unique and challenging. They can be fantastic or the worst thing you have ever seen. That is the biggest draw to all of these festivals. What other place can you see a show with puppets about gender identity and immediately after see a dance/projection piece about Japanese internment camps in Canada.

So why did we choose to create an devised piece for the Fringe festivals? We wanted to tell stories in our own way. We wanted the creative freedom to create a show how we wanted. Finally we wanted to see all of these other devised shows to

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5 *Something in the Water* by S. E. Grummet
6 *Sansei: The Storyteller* by Ikeda
expand how we view what theatre is and help us become more creative in the future. We wanted to be entertained, and educated by this experience and, speaking for myself, all of my expectations were blown out of the water.

After we finally settled into our topic, we focused wholly on writing for the show. We had decided to try and have six different sections to our show with a different style for each section:

Section 1: Menstrual Periods,
Section 2: Sue Johanson and Dr. Ruth,
Section 3: Masturbation,
Section 4: Abstinence,
Section 5: Queer Sex
Section 6: Consent/Assault.

We met once a week to share and give notes to each of our submitted pieces. How I approached writing for this show was to write 3-4 page sketches or a 1 page monologue⁷. I wanted to pitch short scenes that we could potentially develop and expand upon further if we liked the initial idea well enough. While our initial idea was to have six scenes each with a different style, as time went on, we decided to expand our “sections” to 8 (we replaced queer sex with your first time having sex, added a section on bad sex advice, and a finale song) with little factoids to separate each section. We also decided that each of our scenes didn’t need to be in a different

⁷ See Section 9 of Appendix
style. We ended up with loosely around 5 different styles but we weren’t afraid to do multiple monologues or songs in our finished show.

For the section we titled “Period Piece,” it was truly a collaborative project. Phoebe and I wrote two separate monologues about our experiences with our first period. After we read them at a rehearsal, the company decided as a whole that we should combine the stories into one back and forth piece. So Phoebe and I sat down for a few hours and tore apart our monologues and stitched the two together. Emphasizing our mutual experiences, while also pointing out how different they were. But ultimately circling back to the thesis statement of our show, how our sex education left us unprepared for sexual intercourse, sexual health, and puberty. We wanted this piece to feel like a conversation between friends more than anything, so we tried to keep it as casual as possible.

Phoebe and I also wrote our own separate monologues for the show. Phoebe’s at first was about queer sex, but we got some good feedback after a public staged reading, that it was too factual. So it was eventually changed to a very personal story about Phoebe’s first time having sex. Their monologue changed from an okay monologue with factual information on queer sex, to a very funny and painful personal story that was extremely engaging.

I scraped my whole monologue two different times before writing what would become the finished product. I wrote about abstinence only education and its impact on me. It was a tough subject to write about and at times it felt too personal. Eventually I was given a note from Michael just to be as truthful as possible. It seems
like a simple note, but writing about past trauma is no easy task. When you write about trauma, I speak from personal experience, you have to look back and evaluate a really painful time in your life. My first two drafts were very impersonal and too funny for how I actually felt about the subject. Eventually I had to write as personally as possible, and it helped knowing that other people have gone through similar things, and when they hear my monologue they might know they are not alone in their pain.

A very similar and extreme version of this was with the consent piece. Another very collaborative project. Originally, we wanted to do this section as a movement piece with some music. I had already written a song for this one, leaving some room to insert spoken words at the end. We decided to expand that idea and add spoken word throughout the song.

At the time in the writing process, the Kavanaugh hearings to confirm Brett Kavanaugh as a Supreme Court Justice had just wrapped up. Throughout the four day hearing, the negative reaction that the assault victim, Christine Blasey, was receiving was awful to watch. She came forward to be asked by Senators about the alleged assault and to give her testimony. During the hearing and even after, she was being harassed, online and in person, sent death threats, had many people dismiss her out of hand, and call her a hypocrite. I felt a lot of rage at that time watching the hearing and reading the aggressive reactions to Blasey online. It brought up a lot of similar experiences I've seen in my own life from friends and family who have been sexually assaulted. I decided to write a poem in response to my rage over the hateful
reactions a lot of assault victims get when they step forward to report the crime. I’ve seen people sweep the pain and trauma from sexual assault victims under the rug and tell them things like “get over it.” So I decided to use my creativity as a platform to express that anger. Phoebe in the meantime was writing about their own experiences with consent and assault. We decided to combine a lot of our spoken word pieces together, but we felt like phoebe’s was more direct and real, so their stories took up most of the spoken sections. This by far was the hardest section to write, due to the constant revisiting of the real-life traumas that took place. It was easy, in the fact that our script came together fairly quickly with few notes; but editing this section, reading it almost every rehearsal, and then performing it daily was emotionally and mentally draining.

One of the pieces I wrote was the “Sue and Ruth” scene. Before I even started writing this piece, Portal knew we wanted to create a scene where these two sex educators would have a discussion about their views on sex, as they have never actually met before in real life. They are both well known for giving frank and helpful sex advice and educating people everywhere. They both were known for gaining popularity on their respective talk show formats. So I thought it would be an interesting idea to write a scene like a talk show where these two ladies could finally

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8 Sue Johanson Rn, with more than 25 years experience as a sex educator, host of *Sunday Night Sex Show*, and *Talk Sex with Sue Johanson*. She was a published author and founder of the Don Mills Birth Control Clinic (1970) She passed away in 2013 at the age of 81.

9 Dr. Ruth Westheimer, born in 1928 to an Orthodox Jewish family in Frankfurt, Germany. In 1933 when the Nazi’s took over she was sent to a Swiss boarding school for protection. She never saw her family again. After the war she emigrated to Israel then to Palastien and became a sniper for an underground Jewish movement for the creation for the Jewish homeland. She received her Ed. D from Columbia University. In the 1970’s she became a popular radio Talk Show host on the show *Sexually Speaking* which grew immensely popular as she toured around answering people’s questions on sex very frankly. She has written many books and made many appearances in lectures and talk shows.
meet and talk about each of their opinions on different sexual topics. This is the scene I did the most research on. I had to research how a lot of talk shows are set up, and how the conversations tend to flow, but mostly, I watched a lot of Talk Sex with Sue and listened to the radio show Sexually Speaking with Dr. Ruth. I listened to how they talked about sex and would explain sexual pleasure and safety. I would also watch more recent interviews with the two women so when I started writing, I had an idea of their different voices and cadence. For example, Dr. Ruth, who is a native German speaker, uses very few contractions compared to Sue, and Sue has a lot of catchphrases that were consistent with her time on her show. I also needed to find topics the two had both talked about so I could write their opinions accurately by pulling direct quotes or generalized their sentiments. For example, in the script in the Appendix, they both had different opinions sharing your sexual history with a current partner;

“RUTH
Next question. (Reads card) “I just recently got together with my girlfriend, and I’m really nervous about having sex with her. She’s had more partners than I have and I’m nervous she’ll think I’m too inexperienced.”

SUE
Oh no. Don’t be nervous. Talk to her about your sexual history.

RUTH
No, no. See, I disagree. Never! You should never tell your partner of how many people you have had sex with. Loud and clear never! If she asks, look (Grabs SUE’s hand) grab her hand and say, “I am not going to ask you. And you are not going to ask me. We are together and let’s focus on that.”

SUE
Dr. Ruth. I respect you. I love you. But I don’t agree fully with your statement.
RUTH
What?

SUE
I think it very important to discuss your sexual history in order to know about their sexual health.

RUTH
That is not the same.

SUE
I think it is.

RUTH
I am an old fashioned woman. I think it can damage a good relationship if you get tied down with numbers. People compare themselves.

SUE
Ohh. I think humans are a lot more open-minded than you think. Just don’t compare. Then you’re asking for trouble!

RUTH
That is what I am saying. DO NOT COMPARE. I feel you can still talk about your sexual health without putting a number on yourself.

SUE
Oohh, it’s not about numbers it’s about open communication.”

While they are both amazing progressive educators, they still do have differing opinions. I wanted to emphasize those disagreements a little more than they might have been in real life, in order to show that sometimes, there is more than one right answer to some sexual questions. This scene also gave me an opportunity to write in
the use of a lot of props. I asked for this scene to require two wigs, various
notecards, 1 vibrator, 1 sex toy, and Sue’s iconic “hot stuff bag”.

However, there is another scene with quite a few props as well. “Nice to
Meecha” was our puppet-theatre section for the show. It required a blanket, a
mirror, and one anatomically correct vulva puppet. I initially wrote the 3-4 page
pitch near the beginning of our writing process, while Phoebe wrote most of the
finished product. The aim of this scene was to talk about exploring masturbation
and not feeling shame about exploring your body. Most of the fun came out of the
puppet vulva named Vul Kilmer. It was meant to be very goofy and crass, while also
brushing on the topic of sexual shame. This one went through a lot of edits and
changes, we had to cut a lot of one-off jokes and focus up the story of the piece to
make it shorter and more streamlined. We also got some good notes from Natahniel
Dunaway, a fellow playwright. At some point, we started to shame the woman
character in the scene, who didn’t know what her vulva was, without us realizing.
After a staged reading at Western Oregon University, a peer came up to us and told
us the character of Vul felt like they were talking down to the girl in the scene by
using a lot of condescending pet names like, “Honey” and “Sweetie.” After we got the
note, we went back and changed a lot of the language to be more accepting and
positive. When writing, having people outside of the project giving you notes is a
much needed tool. They see things you can’t and have no stake in the finished
product so they will give you blatantly honest notes. We wanted the audience to

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10 [https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9gpe4](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9gpe4) Start at 1:15 for an example of the “Hot Stuff Bag”
have fun watching a puppet vulva onstage, while also letting them know it’s okay to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

The last two scenes came a lot easier to us than the rest. For the section on bed sex advice, we pulled painfully incorrect sex advice quotes throughout history. We pulled them directly from the internet on forums like Reddit, magazines like Cosmopolitan, books, newspapers, any source we could find, and compiled it all together. The humor in this one, comes through the insanity of real life people saying things like “House work, particularly floor scrubbing is not only great for the female figure, but it’s good for the soul, and will help take the edge off your sexual appetite.” (Landers, 83) or like this quote on masturbation:

“Parents should run their children around throughout the day in wild play so the children would be too tired to masturbate before bed. This is particularly applicable to boys, since girls have a ‘low, almost nonexistent sex drive, so only truly deranged females would succumb to the temptations of masturbation.”’ (Anonymous)

We wanted to focus on the quotes and let them speak for themselves, rather than do a commentary about it. And the last section, the finale of our show, was actually the first thing I wrote. I had written a comedy song, in the style of Garfunkle and Oats, about my first sex ed class, and how it left me woefully unprepared. I have always loved music, and had dabbled in writing songs before. I jumped at the chance to include music in the show, and comedy songs have always given me inspiration.

Songs like Sure is a Scary Time for Boys by Lynzy Lab
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N34hehRgw9g) and *Fuck You* by Garfunkle and Oats (https://youtu.be/QM3Fz66yKEc) gave me a clear idea of the style to use for the show. But there is something about writing music, where sometimes, you don’t know where or how the music comes. Sometimes a song just comes to you and you finish a whole song in two days. Tom Petty once explained his process of writing the song “Wildflowers”;

“I just took a deep breath and it came out. The whole song. Stream of consciousness: words, music, chords. Finished it. I mean, I just played it into a tape recorder and I played the whole song and I never played it again. I actually only spent three and a half minutes on that whole song. So I’d come back for days playing that tape, thinking there must be something wrong here because this just came too easy. And then I realized that there’s probably nothing wrong at all.” (Petty)

I feel that way too. While I spend a lot of time trying to find a narrative in a lot of my songs, and work on rhymes or chords that work well in the key I’m writing in, sometimes, music and lyrics just fall out of my head. The song “Birds and Bee’s” was a mix of both. Most of it came naturally, piece by piece. I knocked out two-thirds of it in just a couple of hours. But there were sections like the end of the song and the Bridge, that I did spend days working out kinks, lyrical changes, and music progressions in order to have a musical build. It wasn't just a song, it was the finale to our show so we had to end it on a big note. It is the section I question the most still about it's placement in the show, and the end as a whole. I absolutely love it, but
it wasn’t intended as the finale song so I always feel unsure of how it fits. But you have to make compromises when you write with others, and we all agreed it worked the best at the end compared to everything else we wrote.

With the show finished and ready to perform, how do we categorize it? For the Fringe Festivals, they asked us the same question. They needed to know how to advertise our show in the programs used to publicize the production. We went back and forth on it, but ultimately, Portal decided to submit our show as a dramatic comedy. It never felt completely right, but it was the best descriptor we could find.

But how does our show fit with Peter’s Brooks vision of theatre? In *The Empty Space*, Brook separates theatre into four different categories, “The Deadly Theatre”, “The Holy Theatre”, “The Rough Theatre”, and “The Immediate Theatre”. In his first essay, Brook describes Deadly theatre as dull and unengaging, typically found in big productions of classical or musical theatre. Holy theatre is described as spiritual, and does not deal with everyday life. Rough theatre is based in spontaneity and raw emotions, but can tend to be too shallow. In Brook’s final essay, he talks about “The Immediate Theatre”, a mix of both rough and holy theatre. It is visual and always reveals human truths unknown to the audience. This form of theatre is, according to Brook, is the ideal version. To make the audience engaged, empathetic, and to teach them at the same time, is what makes “good” theatre.

I can say with fair certainty, that *Thing's We (never) Learned in Sex Ed* (TWNLISE) easily does not fit into Deadly or Holy theatre. It does not have the tiredness and refinement seen in overused productions like in Deadly theatre, and it
does not aim to make the audience feel a spiritual release as we adhere to traditions like in Holy. We actively tried to make our show feel like a conversation between humans, and shock the audience with our crass, blatant sexual themes. We want the audience to feel uncomfortable, until they get used to the over exposure to our sexual topics, and they then become comfortable, like exposure therapy. Exposure therapy being the practice of having you interact or “expose you” to the thing that you fear or are anxious about. It starts small, for example; if you have a fear of heights, you go up on a small ladder and stay there for a while. Next time, you go even farther up. Then higher, then higher, the theory being eventually you will overcome your fear. And while we do hope to impact our audience emotionally, our show does not have any spiritualistic attributes like Holy theatre. I believe TWNLISE fits loosely in the Rough theatre category.

Brook starts his essay on Rough theatre beautifully detailing the grit, and dirtiness behind it. The sort of things you don’t typically see in big Broadway productions. It perfectly encapsulates Fringe theatre to me.

“It is always the popular theatre that saves the day. Through the ages it has taken many forms, and there is only one factor that they all have in common—a roughness. Salt, sweat, noise, smell: the theatre that’s not in a theatre, the theatre on carts, on wagons, on trestles, audiences standing, drinking, sitting round tables, audiences joining in, answering back: theatre in back rooms, upstairs rooms, barns; the one-night stands, the torn sheet pinned up across the hall, the battered screen to conceal the quick changes—
that one generic term, theatre, covers all this and the sparkling chandeliers too.” (Brook, 78)

Our show was designed to be minimalistic, to adjust into any space, big or small. It’s designed to be quirkier and off beat from typical comedies or dramas. We are trying to take a stab at bringing forth raw emotions through a mix of personal stories and relatable subjects. To connect with them through the harsh realities of life. Talking about real experiences, personal lives, facts, and facsimilations of things that happen. We aren’t trying to conjure anything invisible or fantastical (except a talking vulva puppet). Sometimes, like in Rough theatre, we are shallow in our content. It was a comment given in one of our reviews. While not all of it is shallow, we do tend to “[stand on a] soapbox sometimes” (Silliphant, StarPheonix) However, there are certain aspects of rough theatre that do not fit with our show. We don’t encourage improvisation or audiences talking with us. There are two sections in our show that have guided, contained improv built in, but it is never encouraged, and is always very controlled. Our connection with the holy, with the more spiritual aspects of theatre that is keeping our production from being categorized as “Immediate Theatre”. It is not that we need something fantastical or religious in our production in order to make it immediate; but we, as actors, directors, creators, need to bring our audiences attention away from everyday mundane life and give the audience some sense of enlightenment through the examination of everyday life. According to a lot of feedback and some self relection, I believe Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed tended to either stay too grounded or go up on a soapbox.
There are many Fringe Festivals held throughout the world: Mexico, the US, Canada, Australia, and many other countries. The biggest and most famous Fringe is held in Edinburgh, Scotland. Our first rehearsal was dedicated to figuring out which festival or festivals we wanted to apply to. Each festival has a different length. For example, Winnipeg's festival is 12 days, while Edinburgh's is 28 days long. Each had pro's and con's. We knew it was either going to be between Edinburgh or the Canadian circuit (multiple Canadian cities). The cost of each, and the probability to make money was a big point to consider. Edinburgh would be a huge adventure, but we would lose money, and the festival is so huge, it could be overwhelming. And there would be a real possibility of only 2-3 people showing up to our performances. With Canada, we had a better chance at making money, there is less competition, and we would have a better chance at getting good reviews that we could use for future promotion. We decided that Canada would be a good first Fringe experience for us, as Phoebe and I were new to the scene and could learn more in a less crowded environment. When we finally got to our first festival in Winnipeg, we started working right away. We walked around the area of the city where the festival was being held and stuck flyers in almost every place we could. Then we went to the ticket center to begin flyering. Flyering is an important part if you are a fringe artist. Basically, you find lines for other Fringe shows about to start, or any place where there is a crowd and you go from person to person, telling them a short spiel about your show in order to get them to come to yours. After, you hand them a flyer with the dates and times of your performance. This is the basics of how you
flyer, and you continue this, going line to line, person to person, trying to get as many people to come to your show as possible. No one knows for sure if this helps, but no one wants to test the theory by not flyering at all.

When the festival finally started, it was working all day everyday. When we got to the festival in the morning, we would flyer as many lines as we could. However, we also got to see many shows in between flyering. I’m not sure how many shows I ended up seeing on my six-week tour of Canada, but I would estimate around 140 shows in total. It can be very stressful flyering all day, everyday. You interact with hundreds of people per day, half of them don’t care about you, and some even flat out turn you away. It is not an easy job, and at times, took a toll on my mental health, but it’s necessary. I learned how to work through anxiety. This is a career I want to pursue, and tasks like flyering and talking to people everyday is a necessary part of that. I found ways to give myself breaks, and keep my mood in check, while still working.

Through all of the mounds of stress, paperwork, and anxiety I experienced during my time writing and performing TWNLISE, I had the most exhilarating time. The responses I got from audience members who came up to me after shows, thanking me, tell me how much our show meant to them, was life changing. Besides that, I felt a calling.

To be able to write and perform a show I had made, and to have people actually see it is a uniquely rewarding feeling. Devising with others is a unique experience and taught me a lot about collaboratively writing and working with
others. It was great to write about what I’m passionate about and share it with audiences. I got to share my unique perspective, and when I saw other shows, I got to see their perspective. It’s a true melting pot of different cultures, lives, opinions, and styles of theatre. You could consider the traditional approach to theatre, as this:

A director picks a play, the actors audition and get cast. You rehearse anywhere from 2-4 weeks and perform for about a month. They are fun, bold, and they typically draw in big crowds. Not always, but sometimes these shows lack emotional substance, and you end up going through the motions of the story, even if the actors try to add depth to established characters. They are the most likely of shows to be classified as “Deadly theatre”. I’ve changed my career trajectory to focus more on writing and performing for Fringe Festivals. I have only written and devised one show so far, but with the tools I learned from my first go at the Fringe circuit, now I can be more efficient with how I write for future projects. I know what works at fringes and what doesn’t, and I know that creativity goes a long way with this style of theatre. It’s the place where I feel I am most likely to achieve the ideal “Immediate Theatre” that is personal, real, and spiritual all at the same time.

The process of creating a show from the ground up is no small task. I had written some theatrical pieces in the past (devised *Why Cross Chaos* and *Frankie’s Flights of Fancy* at WOU, scenes for Portland Center Stages Visions and Voices showcase and Promising Playwright at the Jaw Festival), but never a full length show. With some previous work on devised shows, it was enough to get the gears turning with my fellow company members.
At the time of me writing this, Portal Theatre and I are planning on touring *Things We Never Learned in Sex Ed* to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2021. We were originally supposed to go in 2020, but due to the Covid-19 outbreak, Fringe Festivals and all theatre, globally shut down. We are planning tentatively going in 2021, but only if restrictions let up and it’s a safe environment for the performers and audience members. In the meantime, we are beginning writing a new devised show to tour as well. Even during a time where the arts are struggling, we want to continue to pursue it.

With all traditional approaches to theatre being thrown out the window performers and artists are exploring new ways to create theatrical content online, and for the future. Not only did we write and perform our own show, but we saw countless other shows as we toured the Fringe Festivals. We know what works, what doesn’t, and what we need to make our show more appealing to the general public. However, those standards aren’t always necessary, plenty of shows are weird and out of the box, and they draw in huge crowds too. But we know what direction we want to take with this new show. We plan on foucing this new show on a woman in science and going in depth about her life and accomplishments. We are still unsure how we want to tell her story and who we want to do it on, but we have a starting point to go off of. If we keep in mind what we have learned we could very well create a show that is spiritual, and emotional, and truthful to the source material. We could very well create a show that is, to use Peter Brook’s terminology,
“Immediate”, if we kept it in mind. We will strive to create something impactful together, making sure we aren’t too precious with our written work.

In the long run, Fringe is a harder career path. There is a bigger chance of failure, artistically and monetarily, but the rewards are all the greater. Fringe performers could receive terrible 1 star reviews and dismal audience attendance. There is a lot of money to be lost from spending it on applications fees, food, travel, promotion, and many other expenses. But, you have more creative freedom when you write your own plays. Whether you devise them in a group or write a piece by yourself. You express your thoughts and opinions through words, music, or movement. Many people do find success doing Fringe circuits, and make all of their money just performing on them. It took them years to get there, and now I have had a taste of what Fringe and devised theatre could be, I am willing to write more and more, perform, and tour for years to come, in the hopes of reaching a successful standing. I am willing to try until I can achieve a show that could be considered “Immediate Theatre.”
1. “Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed”
The following is the final script of the play mentioned above, as of August of 2020. This script was produced by Portal Theatre for the purpose of performing and touring it around Fringe Festivals around the world. The show was originally performed by two actors, Lindsay Spear and Phoebe Thompson. In the script, you will find other character names in some scenes, but they are either played by Thompson or Spear. Note whenever the font is indented and italicized, like so;

“LINDSAY AND PHOEBE
Welcome to the start of the show.
We’re gonna talk about touching butts. Ohhh.”
that part of the script is sung. If it is italicized on the far left margin all by itself or in a parenthesis, it is a stage direction.
Things We
(never)
Learned in Sex Ed

Portal Theatre
Opening Song

Lights up on Lindsay and Phoebe on stage, ukuleles in hand. Then, they launch.

LINDSAY AND PHOEBE
Welcome to the start of the show.
We’re gonna talk about touching butts. Ohhh.

PHOEBE
Hi, everyone, I’m Phoebe!

LINDSAY
And, I’m Lindsay.

PHOEBE
And we’re gonna talk about sex! (The music cuts out. The two smile at the audience.)

LINDSAY
Well, not sex exactly. Sex ed, to be specific. Or,

PHOEBE
What it didn’t teach us about sex.

LINDSAY
But, we won’t embarrass you by talking about…you know…actual sex.

PHOEBE
Hah! Yes we will. We’re gonna talk about all the sex. Every bit of the sex. Tons of sex!

LINDSAY AND PHOEBE
Getting the Baloney Pony, the Horizontal tango,
Creaming the twinkie.

LINDSAY
Here’s the thing – in the U.S., at least, our sex ed is all over the damned place.

PHOEBE
I never had sex ed. Not a single class.
LINDSAY
Every state has different laws, different approaches, and different outcomes for sex ed.

PHOEBE
And, we wondered, what the heck is going on with that?

LINDSAY
And, what didn’t we know, that we wished we knew, but we didn’t realize we didn’t know until we needed to know.

PHOEBE
You know?

LINDSAY
Things like:

LINDSAY
Abstinence, pulling out,
IUD’s condoms, ooooh.

BOTH
It would have been nice to know this
All before we

PHOEBE
Had Sex!

BOTH
Puberty hit us hard
From cramps to hormones to bleeding

LINDSAY
Out our vaginas!

BOTH
And the internet is great

34
PHOEBE
Kinda…

LINDSAY
Sorta…

BOTH
Just don’t take advice from…

PHOEBE
Cosmopolitan!

BOTH
I mean we all like sex.
It’s natural and fun
We just wish we were taught

LINDSAY
Consent, no means no, sexual assault,

PHOEBE
Yeah, we’re gonna be talking about that, too.

LINDSAY
Here we go.

Blackout.
A Period Piece

PHOEBE
It’s shark week baby!

LINDSAY
Aunt Flow is here!

PHOEBE
Mother Nature has a present for us.

LINDSAY
Falling to the Communists.

PHOEBE
What?

LINDSAY
The red sea is parting!

PHOEBE
Wait-

LINDSAY
Code red.

PHOEBE
Code red for what?

LINDSAY
Lucifer’s waterfall.

PHOEBE
Oh my god.

LINDSAY
 Bloody Mary.
PHOEBE

Why?

LINDSAY

Dracula’s tea bag.

PHOEBE

That one, I like.

(LINDSAY smiles at PHOEBE)

PHOEBE and LINDSAY

A period piece.

LINDSAY

Ladies, gents, and beautiful inbetweens…let’s talk about that time of the month when we get to shed our uterine lining cuz we didn’t get pregnant.

PHOEBE

Maybe we can talk about cramps so severe you can’t move?

LINDSAY

Depression or PMS?

PHOEBE

Pads or tampons?

LINDSAY

Birth control or abstinence?

PHOEBE

WHY DO I CRAVE WEIRD SHIT?

LINDSAY

I don’t know Phoebe. I really don’t. I-I don’t even know where we begin?

PHOEBE

I think we start at the beginning.
PHOEBE and LINDSAY
Our first period. Awww. I was the last to get my period.

PHOEBE
I didn’t get my period until I was thirteen. All my friends already had their periods. I was a late bloomer.

LINDSAY
I felt like I was disappointing my family because I got it “late.” Both my sisters got their period during camp in sixth grade. I thought I’d be the same, so when I was going to outdoor school, I prepared just in case. Brought pads and everything. But, nothing. Noooo period. I was the weird girl who brought pads to camp.

PHOEBE
I distinctly remember sitting at the lunch table listening to my friends tell stories about how they got their period and how they were ready to try tampons.

PHOEBE and LINDSAY
Gasp/(gasp).

PHOEBE
Meanwhile I was sitting there wishing that I would get my period so I could be a part of these conversations. Every morning, when I woke up I would check my bed and my underwear to see if there was any blood.

LINDSAY
Do you remember in sex ed how they said that period blood can be brown when you first get it?

PHOEBE
I didn’t have sex ed. But wait… really?

LINDSAY
Ohhhhh yeah.

PHOEBE
That makes total sense. Because I remember one weekend I was at home watching movies, and all day I kept feeling like someone was punching me in the stomach.
Repeatedly. So I went to the bathroom, pulled down my pants and saw a brown spot. I was thoroughly confused and I actually thought, “Is this my period?”

LINDSAY
I remember that feeling…

PHOEBE
I went to the bathroom again. I looked, and the brown spot had gotten bigger. After I wiped I saw some red but mainly brown. Now, I didn’t know where it was coming from and so I just left it alone thinking it would go away. Then, after the third time, I started to see more red. And I thought… yeah maybe that’s blood? So I called for my mom and showed her. Without saying anything she went upstairs and brought down this big bag of pads and showed me how to put it on my underwear. She told me I got my period and that was that. I was finally a “woman."

LINDSAY
I’m glad I wasn’t the only one who was freaked when they saw a brown spot in their panties. But unlike you, I didn’t realize that brown shit was a period, quite as fast. You see, I eventually got my period in seventh grade. But exactly when I got it, I don’t know.

PHOEBE
Um, what?

LINDSAY
Let me explain. For a while, I thought I was having some serious digestive issues. I could swear I cleaned up very well after pooping. Like a master wiper. But when I would next go, I’d pull down my pants, and there was brown mess in my undies. And this cycle happened for a while.

PHOEBE
Ummm… for how long? Why-Why didn’t you ask your mom?

LINDSAY
Well, I’d say it went on for a…few months? Three at most!

PHOEBE
Jeez…
LINDSAY
And I didn’t talk to my mom about it because... To be honest, I’m pretty sure I felt uncomfortable bringing up my pooping habits to my mom.

PHOEBE
Fair enough.

LINDSAY
It wasn’t until a family trip to explore a cave that I realized what was happening to my body. When we got out of the car, my brother came up to me and told me I had a brown spot on the back of my pants. I responded with “Oh. I must have sat on a ding dong!”

PHOEBE
A Ding Dong?

LINDSAY
A Ding Dong. Like those chocolate pastries with the white goo inside.

PHOEBE
Did he believe that?

LINDSAY
...You know what, I’m too afraid to ask him.

PHOEBE
Probably smart.

LINDSAY
And you gotta imagine where my head was at during those 3 seconds of silence before I decided I “sat on a Ding Dong.” I had two choices: one, I shit myself. And two, I accidently sat on a Ding Dong, which we were eating throughout the car ride there. I didn’t even think it was my period until my brother walked away. Then, a switch flipped in my head. I put the pieces together like one of those clue boards from a crime show. I got me a period! Thanks for laughing because the next part is awful. I realized I was now, what you would call, a Lady. But I had no pads or tampons with me, an 8-mile hike, there and back, plus walking for 3 hours in the cave. So I had to live with blood soaked underwear and feeling too embarrassed to bring up the very obvious stain on by butt. FOR HOURS.
PHOEBE
I am so sorry.

LINDSAY
Once we got home, I told my mom about my period and she got me some pads. But at least I got out of school the next day. I sure as heck wasn’t going to go to PE after that.

PHOEBE
Screw PE and cramps. I don’t know about you but there are times where all I can do is lay in a fetal position and cry because my cramps are so bad.

LINDSAY
… or throw up…

PHOEBE
My cramps would last the entire week plus a little before and lemme tell you when you’re getting your period every other week cramps are just a constant.

LINDSAY
Wait… every other week?

PHOEBE
Yeah.

LINDSAY
Periods are only supposed to be once a month.

PHOEBE
Oooooh trust me I know. My mom told me:

LINDSAY
“Normally it happens for four to five days once a month.”

PHOEBE
But I think my body decided:

LINDSAY
“Hey since we’re late to the game, we gotta catch up. Let’s make sure you know what you were missing out on.”
PHOEBE
Thanks for making my body sound like a bad Danny DeVito impression.

LINDSAY
No problem.

PHOEBE
But no yeah my periods lasted all seven days every other week and would progressively get heavier and heavier as the week went on.

PHOEBE and LINDSAY
So even though I was the last of my friends to get my period,

PHOEBE
I was the first to go on birth control and have a pelvic exam.

LINDSAY
Really?

PHOEBE
Yeah. My mom took me when I was thirteen to see about options to make my periods less terrible. And lemme tell you, as a kid who knew nothing about their body or the anatomy or what was even happening, having things shoved up there was not the most comfortable experience.

LINDSAY
What’s that like?

PHOEBE
You know in horror movies when someone’s jaw is ripped open like this (demonstrates)?

LINDSAY
Yeah?

PHOEBE
It’s like that… only with your vagina…
LINDSAY
(vague noise)

PHOEBE
I mean it sucks, but I was desperate at that point and… you do whatcha gotta do.

LINDSAY
My parents never even mentioned I should get a pelvic exam. At any point in my life. I had to find out about what a gynecologist is from TV.

PHOEBE
The first time I went, I literally passed out because it was so uncomfortable. Nothing really prepares you for any of this. Not the pain or discomfort. Any of it.

LINDSAY
In sixth grade, my sex ed taught me what a period was, but nothing more about it. But I wish we’d talked about PMS or toxic shock syndrome or premenstrual dysphoric disorder, which is something I didn’t even know existed until this year.

PHOEBE
Wow… can you imagine… having an all encompassing sex ed class that covers all that AND MORE?

LINDSAY
Wow…

PHOEBE and LINDSAY
What a concept… *(PHOEBE and LINDSAY take a moment to think, then: BLACKOUT)*
Factoid – The Colorado Experiment

LINDSAY
In Colorado, a 5-year experiment provided IUDs and implants to any woman that wanted them. For free.

The results were amazing. Teenage birth rates went down by 40%, and abortions fell by 42%. The impact was greatest in the poorest areas of the state. And, every dollar spent on the experiment saved almost $6 for the state’s Medicaid program.

Unwanted pregnancies, often ending in abortion, is a poverty problem. You don’t solve it with abortion bans, like the recent law in Alabama tries to do, or with limiting access to contraceptives. You solve it by helping women take care of themselves, through access and education.
The Truth About Sex

PHOEBE
Remember how I said we would talk about sex? Well here we go, let’s talk about it.

I’m very open with my friends about my sex life. And they’re very open with me, they have told me A LOT, it’s kind of crazy. But no, I can be super open with them, too, and now apparently with a room full of strangers. But it’s not usually like in a sit-com where everyone is sitting around drinking wine and reminiscing on their first time. It’s more like a group of people drunk off wine laughing about how stupid awkward our stories are. The first time I had sex, I was 17, a senior in high school, and I was at a party at my then boyfriends friends parent’s house, it’s complicated. After a few beers my boyfriend and I scurried off and found an empty bedroom. Okay, a little backstory, a few weeks prior, he told me about this party and told me it would be a perfect place to “do it”. Me being the naive teenager I was I said “yeah okay!” We had it set up for weeks that this was the night we would “do it.” So. Pressure was on.

Back to the bedroom. So we lay down, things start heating up, we start getting undressed and then I remembered, condoms. I asked if he had one, I watched TV I remember how panicked Rachel and Monica were about the last condom, so obviously it’s important some how. Also, fun fact, I asked him about the condom right as he took his pants off. He stood there frozen, both of us completely naked, as he told me it was in his car. So he climbed through the sliding glass door that was in the room and ran AROUND the house, bare naked, while I laid there waiting for him in some strangers bed. And it was in that moment that I realized, I had no idea whose bed it was. I think it was the parents, but might have been one of the friends, I don’t remember. As I laid there, panicking, I thought, “Is this worth it?” “Does he still want to do this?” “Should we wash the sheets after?”

At that moment, my boyfriend got back. He was putting the condom on as he was crawling back into the room, it was honestly quite impressive. Impressive enough to where I just thought “fuck it, we’re here lets just do it. How bad could it be?” Well. Lemme tell you. The moment he was on top of me, literally the second he crawled on top of me, one of his friends walked in on us. And we made direct eye contact. He stared into my terrified soul for what felt like an eternity. Like, you know the scene in Rocky Horror, the “Janet!” “Dr. Scott!” “Janet!” “Brad!” “Rocky!” “intense glare” yeah it was like that. Then, he laughed and left. My boyfriend and I looked at each other, I’m sure I looked terrified, because I was! I had no idea what was happening or what to do next. Do
we continue, do we stop, do we go back to the party, do we just run back around the house and leave? My boyfriend just shrugged and moved right along.

The next big test, finding the vagina. And we couldn’t. Straight up we spent about ten minutes trying to find my vagina. He kept jamming his penis into me asking “Here? Here? What about here?” And me being like, “no. No, I think to the right. No. Maybe down?” But we eventually found it. So THEN, he started going at it in a very… sporadic rhythm, but it popped out. So he put it back in, started humping and it popped right out. And again, in, hump, out, in, hump out, in hump, out. This pattern happened for probably three minutes. But luckily, it was enough to get him to cum. For me, I was so tired from all the events leading up to the climax that I was just relieved it was over.

Afterwards he got up, threw the condom away and got dressed. It’s funny, he would always tell me how experienced he was and how he was going to show me the ropes. Turns out we were both terrible.

So yeah. I’d like to see that on a sit-com.

*Blackout*
Sue and Ruth

*Lights up on Ruth sitting down A la talk show.*

RUTH
Hello. I’m Dr. Ruth Westheimer. And this is my show where we answer questions about your sex life to help give you the best, safe experience you can have. For today’s show, we have a very special guest. Please welcome celebrity sex educator and nurse, the one and only Sue Johanson!

*SUE enters, waving to the audience*

SUE
Hello everyone! And, I’m Canadian!

RUTH
Well. Okay.

SUE
Ohhh, and it is wonderful to finally meet you Dr. Ruth! I can’t believe this is our first time meeting.

RUTH
I was about to say the same thing! I have heard about you my whole career. I feel like I’m meeting a celebrity!

While they talk, there can be some overlap or agreeing/disagreeing over statements, just like a real talk show.

SUE
Well I am hot stuff. (Cute Sue movement)

RUTH
People Ask me all the time, “Dr Ruth, you have been doing this for so many years! You are in your 90s now. Do you still have sex?”

SUE
I assume yes.
RUTH
It is yes. Young people don’t understand, The older generations still get it on all the time.

SUE
Exactly the same for me. Everytime I go on a talk show, they seemed shocked that I’m still having the time of my life. (Ruth laughs) I mean, we’re sex educators. Not celibates!

RUTH
Speaking of sex education, we have a little stack of cards with some questions on them from our audience.

SUE
We are both here to answer them as best as we can! Let’s take a look.

RUTH
(Reads card) “I have been dating my partner for a few months now. And we’ve had sex a few times, but I am having a hard time climaxing. What should I do?” Ohhhh this is a very good question.

SUE
Oh yes, yes a very good question, mmmmm.

RUTH
Well first of all, sex is not all about orgasm. Do not put too much pressure on yourself.

SUE
It’s about the journey, not the destination.

RUTH
Well, what I say is, it is all about communication, communicating with your partner what you like, what you don’t like, what you want, what will help you reach that point. Okay?

SUE
Yes, yes I would agree with that. But I also think there are ways to play and explore. There are many, many options. We don’t know what their love life entails, but you could try new positions, try fingering, rimming, oral, or new sex toys, BDSM even-
RUTH

Oh my

SUE

-that does help some people. But the important thing, just as my colleague said, it’s all about communication. Before trying something new, talk about it, make sure you’re both on board.

RUTH

Well yes, those are more extreme ways but communication! Very, very important. But, I have to say, do not rely on sex toys, or vibrators for orgasm.

SUE

But sometimes it can give you that little push you need.

RUTH

Whether used by you or your partner, us humans, cannot replicate that. So have fun, but don’t rely too much on one method.

SUE

Yes, alright, next. (Reads card) “I’m afraid of giving my partner a blowjob in fear that I’ll throw up on him.”

RUTH

Mmmmm yes that is a big issue many couples face.

SUE

Oh yes, yes. Many, many, many people think they should just stick the whole thing in their throat. No, no, no, no. Now, men tend to like it when they feel they have a big member. They think “Wow. I have a HUUUUMUNGOUS penis. Look at me go. She must love this!” But most of us have a sensitive gag reflex or even if your partner does have a HUUUUMUNGOUS penis, then it’s important to know your own boundaries while also being able to satisfy both your needs. Okay? Okay so the first thing is to take your time, it’s not a race.

RUTH

I would have to agree. For oral, I recommend flicking your tongue up as a kind of boundary in the back of your throat.
SUE
Yes, exactly. You see, men can’t tell the difference. And they can still feel pretty good about their penis.

RUTH
See, even in vaginal sex, people think a huge penis will give more pleasure. But the vagina is actually only 3 to 4 inches long. So whether you have a big or a small one, it doesn't matter. What matters is communication and finding ways to pleasure your partner, and yourself.

SUE
Yes, you can do a lot more, with a lot less, I tell you. Even by simply licking the penis, like so (demonstrates on toy) is still very stimulating. Starting off slow to get you both comfortable and ready to go deeper, pun intended, makes it much easier.

RUTH
Well, there are other ways, like rubbing or massages work just the same to stimulate. More gentle and romantic.

SUE
Well, there are options.

RUTH
Next question. (Reads card) “I just recently got together with my girlfriend, and I’m really nervous about having sex with her. She’s had more partners than I have and I’m nervous she’ll think I’m too inexperienced.”

SUE
Oh no. Don’t be nervous. Talk to her about your sexual history.

RUTH
No, no. See, I disagree. Never! You should never tell your partner of how many people you have had sex with. Loud and clear never! If she asks, look (Grabs SUE’s hand) grab her hand and say, “I am not going to ask you. And you are not going to ask me. We are together and let’s focus on that.”

SUE
Dr. Ruth. I respect you. I love you. But I don’t agree fully with your statement.
RUTH

What?

SUE

I think it very important to discuss your sexual history in order to know about their sexual health.

RUTH

That is not the same.

SUE

I think it is.

RUTH

I am an old fashioned woman. I think it can damage a good relationship if you get tied down with numbers. People compare themselves.

SUE

Ohh. I think humans are a lot more open-minded than you think. Just don’t compare. Then you’re asking for trouble!

RUTH

That is what I am saying. DO NOT COMPARE. I feel you can still talk about your sexual health without putting a number on yourself.

SUE

Oohh, it’s not about numbers it’s about open communication.

RUTH

Hmmm. I don’t know if we can agree on this.

SUE

Well, are you happy, mystery audience member? You finally got a topic where Ruth and I disagree.

RUTH

But I still love you!
SUE
Now I think that was our last question today. But don’t worry. That means we have time for the hot stuff bag!

RUTH
The hot stuff bag?

SUE
Yup. You’ll love it. (SUE pulls out a bag with flames on it.) Never leave home without it. Now what’s in the hot stuff bag today? Today we have the “Hummingbird.” (Or, another device that will accomplish the same thing.) You want to touch it?

RUTH
Yes I do! What does it do?

SUE
So you use this. You can stick it to the wall of the shower for some fun.

RUTH
Oh look. It has different settings and speeds.

SUE
Oh yeah. You can work your way up to the big setting.

RUTH
Sounds like a good time.

SUE
See you can stick it like this. (She sticks it on the ground and turns it on.)

RUTH
Oooo! Look at it go! I might have to get this.

SUE
It’s coming for me. Come here big boy!
RUTH

(RUTH is a bit distracted.) Now, I think that’s all the time we have for today.

SUE

(SUE is too.) Yes! We will see you next week!

They ad lib off about the bag and sex toys and how cool they are.

Blackout
Factoid – US Stats

LINDSAY

Only 24 U.S. states, plus DC, mandate sex education. Less than half.

Only 19 provide info on contraceptives.

Only 13 require that sex ed be medically accurate. Seriously. That’s a fact.

Only 9 offer sex ed that is inclusive of sexual orientation.

And 5 are actively negative about sexual orientation. Arizona prohibits teaching about a “homosexual lifestyle” or portraying homosexuality in a positive manner. And Oklahoma teaches that “homosexual activity” is “responsible for contact with the AIDS virus.”

So, obviously, we’re a hot mess when it comes to sex ed. We really are.
Nice to Meecha

A WOMAN is sitting, covered in a blanket. From under the blanket, she pulls out a mirror. She looks at it like it’s her mortal enemy. Then, slowly, she lifts the blanket up a bit and glances down. Then, she, at the pace of continental drift, lowers the mirror under the blanket. It is obvious where it’s headed. She hesitates, blows out a long breath, then looks down. Out of nowhere a vulva puppet pops out and scares the crap out of her. She screams.

VULVA
Oh well hi there! How’s it going, nice to meet you, my name is Vul Kilmer, not to be mixed up with Val Kilmer, maybe you’ve seen some of his movies? But anyway! Where was I? Oh yes, my name is Vul Kilmer and I’m your vulva!

WOMAN
(beat. Speechless) Um… I- what- I’m- wait… my vulva?

VULVA
Yeppers!

WOMAN
I thought… you were my… um… vagina.

VULVA
Ahh I see, well honey that’s totally okay and totally normal not a whole lot of people know the difference, I mean let’s be honest not a lot of people really get to know their genitals but the vagina is-

WOMAN
Wait, wait, wait… you mean… this is normal?

VULVA
What do you mean?

WOMAN
Like… it’s normal for the hooha’s and the pee pee’s to talk.
(big laugh) You know you can call us by our actual names.

Okay…so you’re my…vulva?

Yes. But, you can call me Vul.

Okay…Vul…

I am so excited to finally meet you! Once that period started I knew it would be any moment you would come down here to say hi. I didn’t expect it to take so many years but that’s okay! So, you ready to go?

Go where?

Honey, ya know, start to get to know your way around here a little bit, maybe start playing around. (beat) Masturbate.

Oh, my god.

What? It’s totally normal! A lot of people do it.

Girls can masturbate?

Are you kidding? Of course we can. You can use your fingers, or do you have a vibrator or a dildo or any kind of toy like that? Those are supposed to be very, VERY exciting.

No, I don’t -
VULVA

Well, get one!

WOMAN

Okay, jeez.

VULVA

So where would you like to start? Or do I start? That doesn’t really make a lot of sense…but…

WOMAN

(Under her breath) A lot of things don’t make sense.

VULVA

Let me finish! (silence) I’m sorry I just really hate when I don’t get to finish.

WOMAN

Oh sorry…

VULVA

It’s alright. It’s just important to make sure everyone gets a chance to cum- I mean finish! Haha! Anyway… So! How can I help you get in the mood! Is that the proper saying? Get in the mood? Turn on the sprinklers? Find Nemo?

WOMAN

Oh my god no- why would you-

VULVA

What? Oh cum on it’s funny and you know it.

WOMAN

I don’t- I mean…

VULVA

Let’s not beat around the bush. Just wiggle those hand noodles down here-
WOMAN
Oh my god how do you come up with these things- ahhh okay okay okay, I just… I just have a quick question before we start…

VULVA
Yeeeeeess?

WOMAN
Right… Okay this might be weird but… is- is the clit real? (VULVA is shooketh) Okay let me explain - so I was listening to some friends talk about their... experiences... and someone asked if the clitoris was real and I thought it was a joke but no one said anything after, so now I’m really confused. (VULVA is still shooketh) So… yeah… is the clit actually a thing? I told you it was a weird question…

VULVA
No, no, no! It’s okay! Really…that’s what I’m here for, right? So, is the…

WOMAN
…clit real.

VULVA
Yes! Oh, yes, it is real. It is the realest of reals.

WOMAN
Ok! Good to know.

VULVA
But, let me tell you, the clit is not only real, it’s…well, it’s everything! It’s the Magical Mystery Tour, the Mona Lisa’s smile, and Niagara Falls, all in one. There are 8000 nerve endings in just the tip of the clitoris – that’s a LOT more than in the head of a penis. It’s your Kaboom to his kebab!

WOMAN
Really?

VULVA
Oh, yeah. It is the freakin’ center of your universe. It is mythical!
WOMAN
Ok…wow.

VULVA
And it will also make you cum like Old Faithful. Boom! (The WOMAN is stunned.)

WOMAN
Boom?

VULVA
(Matter of factly:) Boom! You don’t actually need a penis to cum like a tsunami. In fact, a penis alone just can’t get you there. You need some good clitoral stimulation – fingers, tongues, whatever. And a partner who knows how to use them. Or, you just gotta do it yourself. Go ahead. Touch it.

WOMAN
Right now!?

VULVA
Yeah. Just reach down there and give it a little brush. That’s what it’s there for, darling.

WOMAN
…are you sure…?

VULVA
Am I sure!? Of course, I’m sure. I know what I’m talkin’ about, after all. Go ahead. Just a little brush.

WOMAN
…ok… (she reaches under the blanket. A second later, they both jump. The WOMAN nervously laughs.)

VULVA (eager)
Electric, right?

WOMAN (a bit breathless)
Yeah… (She pauses, hand still under the blanket, then they both jump again. The WOMAN bursts into laughter. She starts laughing harder and harder. VULVA joins in, until they’re both laughing uncontrollably.)
VULVA (still laughing)
Why are we laughing?! (more laughter)

WOMAN
I Don’t Know!!! (laughing! Eventually, the laughing begins to subside.) Wow.

VULVA
So whatdya think! You ready to start…finger painting. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink!

WOMAN
What? (VULVA gives her a kermit look.) Oh! I understand… I think so, yeah.

VULVA
Really? Oh good, yes! I’m so glad! Okay, so here’s what I’m thinking, we set the mood, maybe some candles and some music, then we could-

WOMAN
Ooooooh wow you’ve really thought this through haven’t you…

VULVA
You haven’t?

WOMAN
I guess… it hasn’t really… I mean maybe a little?

VULVA
Well, what are you thinking? (Both VUL and ONE start to get turned on…and it builds.)

WOMAN
Umm…. well… I guess I like the idea of candles… definitely some music… maybe The Jonas Brothers.

VULVA
(starting to get turned on) Uhhhh, so sexy –

WOMAN
Nick just makes me feel…

VULVA
Oh Kevin!

WOMAN

*(starting to get excited herself)* and then we would watch something –

VULVA

Oh yeahhhhhhh…

WOMAN

*(more aroused)* Like Top Gun –

VULVA

Oh yeah…

WOMAN

*(even more aroused)* And Tombstone!

VULVA

Uh-huh!

WOMAN

*(climax)* And

VULVA

Na-na-na-na, na-na-na-na…

WOMAN

Batman!

WOMAN and VULVA

Ohhhhh yeaahhhhh! *(Both have “finished”. They take in a deep breath and sigh out.)*

WOMAN

And that’s how we finish the night…

VULVA

And what a finish… *(They both laugh, a tired laugh after a really good time.)*

*Blackout.*
Factoid – Abstinence

PHOEBE
About half of the U.S. states stress abstinence only, and the importance of abstaining from sex until marriage.

The problem? A 2007 report found that abstinence only programs have had “no impact on rates of sexual abstinence.” None.

States with abstinence only programs have a higher teen pregnancy rate than states that emphasize contraception and safe sex. In those states, teen pregnancies declined.

Contraception education leads to better contraception use, which leads to fewer unwanted pregnancies.

The moral of the story: the more teenagers know, the better choices they make. Makes sense, doesn’t it?
Abstinence

LINDSAY

Rejection sucks, right? It’s a part of life. I mean, we are sad and then we learn to get over it. No big deal. But imagine being a part of a group since...as long as you can remember. And they always talk about love and caring and compassion. Then as soon as you hit puberty, they tell you your body is a den of sin. They reject you. They reject you, as a human being. And they choose to see you instead as a sexual being, who’s lustful desires need to be squashed down at all costs. I didn’t even know what sex was at that point. But I knew that I needed to be forgiven for it because it’s something I might do. That’s what my church told me, at least.

It’s scary when you feel that your church is no longer a safe space. Unfortunately, I didn’t recognize that until many years later, after they taught us abstinence only. Back then, I still felt safe, but there was always a mix of guilt in there. I was never able to be myself because I spent most of my time hiding parts of me. I learned from my church to conceal and never acknowledge parts they considered a “sin”. And it carried to my life outside of church too.

It’s crazy because when I was being taught sex ed in school, I was also listening to sermons about abstinence and no sex until marriage. I was learning what a penis and a vagina was during the weekday, but on Sunday’s, I was being taught never to put one into the other. Because God will be sad. Which, is possibly, the most frustrating thing about this. I am not exaggerating when I say they called sex evil. A sin. A rejection of God. But once your married, it’s fine. God doesn’t give a crap. Have all the sex you want. Hearing that message was so confusing, especially being 11-12 years old. I think back to how cruel it is to teach kids that that something so natural is evil, before they even understand it. And believe me, I really had no idea what sex actually was at that time. But if churches are good at anything, they are great at guilt.

But that was right at puberty, and like I said, I didn’t even understand sex until high school. That’s when I started questioning everything. That’s when I saw the scars from my abstinence only ed. I started dating. And I felt awful doing it. I mean, I wanted to date, believe me, I wanted to date, kiss, hook up the whole shebang. But I was always so guarded doing anything remotely sexual because I was taught the big man upstairs is always looking. Always. And wow that’s a lot of pressure for a 15 year old. I was kinda in a constant war with myself now that I’m thinking back to it. I spent so much energy trying to suppress any feeling or urge I was taught was bad, I was never really myself.
And I should mention, for the first two years of high school, I was okay with this behavior. Actually I agreed with what my church said. I wanted to please my church friends, my pastor and youth leaders, and God. So I became a prude. I was shocked at any mention of sex or intimacy in conversation or in my relationships. Which is hard to avoid in high school. Especially as a theatre kid. I mean, I don’t know how often sports or academic kids talked about sex openly, but I’m pretty sure high school theatre kids could make even porn stars blush. And I kinda wanted to join these conversations, and sometimes I would. But I was always so uncomfortable. Feeling conflicted all the while. Then I would pray before bed to ask for forgiveness. But I still wanted to talk to my friends. But I knew it was wrong. Then I would pray again. Talk. Guilt. Forgiveness. It’s a cycle.

I don’t know how many of you grew up in a church, but I used to get stuck in these prayer cycles. It happened when I cursed, made a lewd joke, even got angry towards someone. I didn’t even need reminding anymore. My guilt came automatically sometimes, for things that weren’t even bad. Like getting anxiety. I felt bad and asked for forgiveness. For ANXIETY. Like…? That doesn’t even make sense.

But around junior year, you know what? I loosened up. The catalyst was a sermon against gay people. It was shocking to say the least. I had never heard my church do a sermon like that before, and I had a lot of important people in my life that identified as LGBTQ. So I started questioning more. Started thinking for myself, and recognizing I didn’t have to agree with everything my church taught. And I was discovering who I was. I still am. After 15+ years suppressing that, it’s been a slow process. (Beat.) I mean, who would I be now if I hadn’t wasted so much time and energy on guilt. Would I be a fuller, more well rounded person?

I lived with feeling rejected by my church so long, it became a part of who I am. I’ve struggled in a lot of my relationships because of it. The abstinence only education taught me self-loathing. I mean, if your rhetoric on getting people to agree with you, stems for making them feel guilt and shame about something so natural? That’s not fellowship. That’s emotional and spiritual blackmail. Plus, it’s not actually doing anything to stop teens from having sex. Most of my church friends had premarital sex. And actually, a lot of them didn’t practice safe sex. They didn’t know how to use contraceptives. And some of them are early parents now.
I just hope my church friends realized that shame based sex ed does a lot more harm than good. And they do better for their kids. But I wouldn’t wish my experience on anyone. No one should feel guilty about consensual safe sex. I don’t. Not anymore.

*Blackout*
Factoid – Consent

PHOEBE

Only 8 U.S. states mandate that sex ed curriculum include information about consent.

One of the biggest impacts of the #MeToo movement may be the increased awareness about consent. And some states are beginning to listen. Missouri and Maryland, and a few other states, are in the midst of reforming their sex ed programs to include consent.

It’s a basic idea, isn’t it? No means no, and yes should be enthusiastic. Simple. Now, let’s teach it.
Consent

LINDSAY is sitting with her ukulele. During the first verse, PHOEBE sits in her chair. Lights shift back and forth between them.

LINDSAY
The first time it happened, I said “I don’t know.”
He said, “Just relax and let it go.”
He pushed me down and grabbed my legs
And I don’t like to talk about what’s next.

PHOEBE
When I was 17, I said
I didn’t want to, I wasn’t feeling good.
He said
But I want you so bad
I said
I’d rather lay together and just be...
He said
I really need you
So as I jerked him off,
He pushed my head down,
Shoved his dick in my mouth,
And held me there as he told me:
Spitters are quitters

LINDSAY
From what I hear my experience is not that rare
I am one of millions. How’s that fair?
Voices in pain, voices in need
Strangled out by selfishness and greed.

PHOEBE
When I was 20, he whispered:
Fuck me again.
But I was so tired
I told him not tonight
I got up and said
I should probably go
He grabbed me and started kissing me
I kissed back
He tossed me on the bed
I laughed
He started touching me
I pulled away
He pulled me back
No matter how many times I tried to get away,
He kept pulling me back in
Until he came.

LINDSAY
And yet I still feel like it’s my fault somehow.
In my head I know it’s not, but my body shuts down.
Some days I’m fine, I keep going and just ignore the pain
But some days... I’m not OK.

PHOEBE
There are days when I feel empty.
There are days when I feel like I’m not a real person,
Like my entire identity has been erased and replaced
With what he did to me.
He took away my voice.
He took away my body.
He took away my control.
There are days when I don’t want to keep going.
There are days when I feel like it would be easier
To just stop and end it all.
Right here
Right now
But I can’t
Then he’d win.

LINDSAY
I’m not saying there’s a cure or fix for this.
Just teach our boys and girls, “No” and “Yes.”
Is that so hard to ask? You say you care
But when we need you for change, don’t disappear... Ooooo ooooo oooo
PHOEBE
One night I had a dream where I relived every moment
For weeks, I couldn’t be touched by anyone.
I could feel every inch of my body.
Every scar, every hair, every piece of clothing.
One day, a friend bumped my leg.
I couldn’t stop crying.

I called my mom and told her what happened
She said: That’s too bad. You should apologize to him.”

LINDSAY
And yet I still feel like it’s my fault somehow.
In my head I know it’s not, but my body shuts down.
Some days I’m fine, I keep going and just ignore the pain
But some days... I’m not OK.

PHOEBE
People ask why don’t more victims speak up.

We do.
We try.
We get blamed
They get pity.
We “were asking for it”
They “have their future ahead of them,”
We are too emotional. We’re not emotional enough.
They become a supreme court justice.
Where is the justice for the people who spiral and spiral,
Into depression, into PTSD, into attempted suicide, spiral into fear, into doubt, into believing that somehow, this is their fault.
Feeling abandoned by people who
Think, “Why can’t they just get over it? It been 3 months, a year, 25 years.”
But it becomes a part of you.
A part you have to live with.
LINDSAY

If this happened to me it could happen to you
Don’t trust me? Ask the people who said “Me too.”
Some days are bad, I fight to get through
But today,
I’m okay
But today,
I’m okay

Blackout
Factoid – O, Canada!

PHOEBE
Sex ed in the U.S. is a hodgepodge. But…what about Canada?!?! You didn’t really think we’d let you off the hook that easily, did you?

LINDSAY
Every province and territory sets their own sex ed content, some of which is mandated, some of which isn’t. See? You’re just like us!

PHOEBE
But, Canada has created an exhaustive set of resources for teachers to use. They tend to be medically accurate, and inclusive of sexual orientation, gender fluidity, internet safety, sexting, sexual abuse, and a host of other topics. That’s not true in the States.

LINDSAY
How about sex ed in ______? (When in Winnipeg, it’s Manitoba; when in Saskatoon, it’s Saskatchewan; when in Edmonton, it’s Alberta)

PHOEBE
FOR MANITOBA
In Manitoba (Winnipeg): students learn about reproductive organs in grade 5, STIs in grade 7, and contraception in grade 9, but nothing is required about sexual orientation, gender fluidity, intercourse and sexual pleasure, or consent.

FOR SASKATCHEWAN
In Saskatchewan (Saskatoon): students learn about reproductive organs in grade 5, STIs in grade 9, but nothing is required about sexual orientation, gender fluidity, intercourse and sexual pleasure, contraception, or consent.

FOR ALBERTA
Students learn about reproductive organs in grade 5, STIs in grade 8, and contraception in grade 8, but nothing is required about sexual orientation, gender fluidity, intercourse and sexual pleasure, or consent.
LINDSAY

Then, continues with:
All of these topics might get taught, but that’s determined by the school district or the individual teacher. See? You’re a hodgepodge, too!
Bad Sex Advice

LINDSAY
I gotta question for you.

PHOEBE
Shoot.

LINDSAY
Don’t you think most people already know all this stuff? Are we just preaching to the sexually sophisticated choir?

PHOEBE
Maybe. Maybe not. There’s been a lot of surveys that show that a good percentage of people don’t even know the basics. Sexually speaking.

LINDSAY
Well, but not these people. That’s not describing them, right?

PHOEBE
We could test them.

LINDSAY
What?

PHOEBE
(getting excited about this idea) Oh, yeah, we could pull them up, one by one, and play a game of 20 Sexual Questions. (beat) Who wants to go first???

LINDSAY
Whoa, whoa, whoa. That’s not what we’re about. (a la a really cheesy internet guru) We’re the loving, gentle, female fringe actors. We want everyone to feel comfortable, and safe, and loved.

PHOEBE
Fine. We won’t pull any of you up and embarrass you. (To some poor bloke in the audience.) Except maybe you. We’re watching you.
LINDSAY
But, we do want you to feel comfortable, we really do. The vulva puppet wasn’t too much, was it?

PHOEBE
You know, another reason some people may not know the basics is because there’s a LOT of bad sex advice out there.

LINDSAY
Oh, yeah. And that’s nothing new. Bad sex advice has been around for … well, as long as bad sex. I guess.

PHOEBE
Thank the goddess for the printing press. It allows us to actually read bad sex advice from the past.

LINDSAY
For example…

PHOEBE
From 1680, we have The School of Venus, or The Ladies Delight Reduced into Rules of Practice, by Anonymous. Of course. No one’s sure whether this was a sex advice book, or just some good old Restoration pornography.

LINDSAY
“In the day time he often makes me stoop down with my head almost between my legs, throwing my coats backwards over my head, he considers me in that posture, and having secured the door that we are not surprised, then he runs at me with a standing prick, and fucks me briskly, and hath often protested to me he takes more pleasure this way than any other.”

PHOEBE
Frisky, frisky, frisky!!

LINDSAY
In 1861, James Ashton wrote, in The Book of Nature:
PHOEBE
“When a man is performing this act,…”

LINDSAY
Meaning sex.

PHOEBE
“…if his thoughts wander, the product…”

LINDSAY
Meaning semen.

PHOEBE
“…will be feeble, and if his wife become pregnant the offspring will be inferior.”

LINDSAY
Meaning stupid.

PHOEBE
So, gents… if you want your kids to be smart, you gotta pay attention! No thinking of baseball, kay? (to same guy as before) I’m lookin’ at you.

LINDSAY
In 1897, Sylvanus Stall wrote What A Husband Out to Know.

PHOEBE
And may have written the best bad sex advice ever.

LINDSAY
“The proper master of your sexual nature will be worth all it costs… Do not stimulate impure thinking by theatre-going, the reading of salacious books, participation in the round dance, the presence of nude statuary and suggestive pictures….All these things tend only to enervate and exhaust your wife and to rob and wrong you of the best there is in store for you.”

PHOEBE
Basically, the arts will fuck you up, y’all. We are happy to contribute to your downfall.
LINDSAY
You might have noticed that all of this sex advice was written by men. So let’s see what these men have to say about the women!

PHOEBE
“The female sex was created weaker than the male. It is easy to influence women, even when it harms her. She worries about being beautiful and liked more than she is careful about her health and happiness ... The woman sheds her embarrassment, can not control herself when she sees a handsome man and gives the signs she wants to 'be one with him.' If she is rejected, she becomes truly wild. Her eyes sparkle in anger and almost burst out of their sockets. This isn't far from 'total insanity.'”

LINDSAY
(Beat) Yep. We’re just totally insane, doncha know. Isn’t that just hysterical?

PHOEBE
“Women frequently shock men with their talk in bed. They use words and expressions that are seldom used even in saloons. They say such things as the following:

LINDSAY
‘Oh, darling, I've been with many men, so I know, and I want to tell you that you are the best, really, darling.’

PHOEBE
“It is truly astounding how many relatively decent women lose all control of their mouths and minds when they jump into bed beside a man.”

LINDSAY
“Housework, particularly floor scrubbing, is not only great for the female figure, but it’s good for the soul. And it will help you take the edge off your sexual appetite.”

PHOEBE
And, that last one is by a woman –

LINDSAY
None other than Anne Landers.

PHOEBE
But, perhaps, the most important…”
…ridiculous…

…helpful…

…stupid…

…bad sex advice…

…really bad sex advice…

…is about that most horrible…

…destroyer of young people everywhere!

Masturbation!!

The game of fascination. (to the much picked on guy-) We’re looking at you.

“In all girls, big or little, that show a tendency to masturbate or simply to handle the genitals, the clitoris should be examined and if adhesions are found they should be separated. This can easily be done under a local anesthesia.”

Holy shit…does that mean what I think it does?

I think it does. Keep your hand off your clit, or we might operate on it.
LINDSAY
“Wholesome companions, lots of good fun, constant occupation and determination will help a boy who has acquired the habit of masturbation (‘self-abuse’) to overcome it and repair any harm it may have done. It is a selfish, childish, stupid habit.”

PHOEBE
“Parents should run their children around throughout the day in wild play so the children would be too tired to masturbate before bed. This is particularly applicable to boys, since girls have a ‘low, almost nonexistent sex drive, so only truly deranged females would succumb to the temptations of masturbation.’”

LINDSAY
Masturbation will cause you to “get sick,”…”develop a mental disease”…and eventually lead to the “destruction of society.”

PHOEBE
“Don’t sit around and read junk that fires your imagination and stimulates you sexually. Channel your energies into constructive outlets. Go out for football, basketball or baseball. Play tennis, golf, ping-pong, soccer, or handball. Improve your swimming, wash the car, paint the garage, practice the trombone, build a boat, do your homework, mow the lawn, clean the attic.”

LINDSAY
(pause) Can I just say, all that handling of balls is an excellent way to avoid masturbation. Especially handballs.

PHOEBE
Practicing the trombone … come on, just think about it.

LINDSAY
And if you play with your balls and practice your trombone enough…

PHOEBE
You might just paint the garage!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Beat)

LINDSAY
Here’s the thing. Bad sex advice isn’t just a relic of the past.
PHOEBE
Oh no – there are plenty of examples of bad sex advice on the internet, and in magazines like Cosmo.

LINDSAY
If you sleep with more than 5 guys, you’re going to wake up one morning when you’re 35 and hate yourself.

PHOEBE
Wrap a shoelace around the middle of his shaft once, so you have two long ends. Then, pull on the strings, flossing it up and down.

LINDSAY
Yeesh.

PHOEBE
Sprinkle a little pepper under his nose right before he climaxes. Sneeze can feel similar to an orgasm and amplify the feel-good effects.

LINDSAY
Gently stick his penis through the hole of a doughnut then nibble around it, stopping to suck him once in a while. The sugary texture of your tongue will add an interesting new dimension.

PHOEBE
Dammit. I like doughnuts. Now I’m not going to be able to eat a doughnut without thinking about that.

LINDSAY
(To the guy.) I bet you won’t either.

PHOEBE
Very softly bite the skin of his scrotum – use plenty of teeth. Blokes love teeth, it drives them crazy. Bite the clit.

LINDSAY
NO. No biting! At least not without consent.
PHOEBE
When you go down on a girl you spell the alphabet with your tongue like ‘blulululu” and when you really want to turn up the juice you go ‘BLALALALA!!!

LINDSAY
And, of course, there’s really bad advice about getting pregnant.

PHOEBE
If you pull out three-fourths of the way, the sperm won’t make it all the way up and she won’t get pregnant.

LINDSAY
If you want to get pregnant, all you have to do is put your legs in the air afterwards.

PHOEBE
If you don’t want a baby, just stand up right away. Foolproof.

LINDSAY
Dip your balls in a mug of hot water to kill all the sperm.

PHOEBE
Pee inside the girl after you finish, but before you pull out so you don’t have to use a condom. The ammonia in your urine will neutralize the sperm.

LINDSAY
(beat) I bet all of these folks are parents.

PHOEBE
I bet they are.

Blackout
The Birds and the Bees

Lights up to find LINDSAY and PHOEBE with their ukuleles. Mirror image of the start of the show.

PHOEBE
Lindsay, I know we talked about how I didn’t really have sex ed. And how crappy that was.

LINDSAY
Yeah, it sounded awful.

PHOEBE
But between the two of us, you actually had sex ed.

LINDSAY
6th grade, 12th, and a bit in 8th.

PHOEBE
I mean, that’s a lot.

LINDSAY
Eh.

PHOEBE
Way better than what I had.

LINDSAY
Oh yeah.

PHOEBE
Better than what a lot of people get.

LINDSAY
Most definitely.

PHOEBE
You went to liberal schools, in a fairly liberal town.
LINDSAY

Keep Portland weird!

PHOEBE

So why are you complaining?

LINDSAY

Huh?

PHOEBE

It sounds like you learned a lot.

LINDSAY

Well Phoebe -

My first experience with sex
Was when they taught me at school.
They made us take home permission slips,
And split our class in two.

They taught us 'bout the birds and the bees.
Though I learned nothing useful to me.
We watched someone give birth
But I found nothing worth my time.

Okay, that's not really fair.
I learned about pubic hair,
Periods, and ovaries,
But nothing about men's pee pee's.

They taught us 'bout the birds and the bees
It was strictly 'bout anatomy.
Didn't learn nothing 'bout men,
But when they came back they were (spoken) quiet...

From then on, I didn't really learn zip.
The sex ed at school was shit.
I mostly learned from TV
Vague sex scenes on screen

It taught me ‘bout the birds and the bees
Through implied scenes that are not PG
   I didn’t really learn
   But it’s hard to discern…

What sex is.
Never really told me about sex
I had to teach myself about sex ed.
Didn’t learn ‘bout birth control until senior year,
   Very late into my career.

(Spoken) That’s not true. It’s true for a lot of people, but not me. It just rhymes better. 1, 2, 1, 2, 3!

They taught me ‘bout the birds and the bees.
They taught what they thought was good for me.
   Though we all eventually learn,
   It’s a cause for concern
   That it will be too late,
   And we will make mistakes
   Before we even know what sex is!

Blackout!
2. **Descriptions – Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed**  
Each time we were accepted into a different Fringe Festival, they each require many different things were required in terms of promotion and publication. Programs from the festivals require short summaries of our show. These summaries were used in programs, web pages, press releases, and promotional packets. Each required different word lengths for our show. The descriptions could be as many as 90 words, and as little as 20. As can be seen, there are all different variations of the same description, and in order to keep track of them all, they were all put into one document for future use if we perform this show at future festivals or venues.

### 90 Word Description

Let’s Talk About Sex, Maybe? Or, maybe not? After having radically different experiences with Sex Ed, Lindsay and Phoebe try to figure out exactly what they were supposed to learn, why they didn’t, and where they go from here! A fun, sometimes silly, sometimes serious look at all the things they wish they’d learned about before the Big Event. When it would have been...you know...useful. From the company who brought you No Belles (5 STARS – Edmonton Sun, Broadway Baby, The Star Phoenix) and 73 Seconds (4½ STARS – Winnipeg Free Press).

### 65 Word Description

Let’s Talk About Sex, Maybe? Or, maybe not? After having radically different experiences with Sex Ed, Lindsay and Phoebe try to figure out exactly what they were supposed to learn, why they didn’t, and where they go from here! A fun, sometimes silly, sometimes serious look at all the things they wish they’d learned about before the Big Event. When it would have been...you know...useful.
Let's Talk About Sex, Maybe? Or, maybe not? After having radically different experiences with Sex Ed, Lindsay and Phoebe try to figure out exactly what they were supposed to learn, why they didn’t, and where they go from here!

SPECIFICALLY FOR SASKATOON (80 words)

Let’s Talk About Sex, Maybe? Or, maybe not? After having radically different experiences with Sex Ed, Lindsay and Phoebe try to figure out exactly what they were supposed to learn, why they didn’t, and where they go from here! A fun, sometimes silly, sometimes serious look at all the things they wish they knew before the Big Event. When it would have been...you know...useful. From 2015’s Best of Fest winner, Portal Theatre (5 Stars, The Star Phoenix for No Belles)
**50 Word Description for Edmonton**

Let’s Talk About Sex, Maybe? Or, maybe not? After having radically different experiences with Sex Ed, Lindsay and Phoebe try to figure out exactly what they were supposed to learn, and where they go from here! From the company who brought you No Belles (***** – Edmonton Sun, The Star Phoenix).

**3. Recording of “Opening Song”**

This piece went through the most changes, lyrically and musically. It was also the most collaboratively written song in the show. Music and lyrics were by Lindsay Spear and Micheal Phillips, Phoebe Thompson, and Spear wrote the dialogue in this piece.

([https://youtu.be/-j871wamgoE](https://youtu.be/-j871wamgoE))

**4. Recording of “Consent Song”**

This piece was written by Lindsay Spear in collaboration with Phoebe Thompson. Lindsay wrote the music of this piece and left gaps in between each stanza (verse or chorus) in order to include spoken word/poetry moments in this scene. The written pieces in this song mostly came from Thompson with Spear co-writing the last stanza of poetry.


**5. Recording of “The Birds and the Bees”**

This piece was written by Lindsay Spear. It was the first piece written for the show and ended up becoming the finale to our show.

([https://youtu.be/TmK9pg7oSlg](https://youtu.be/TmK9pg7oSlg))
6. Reviews

The following are three different reviews we got throughout our time touring Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton. The Jenny Review is a local paper in Winnipeg, that while does not give star ratings like most publications, gave *Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed* a fairly positive review. The Winnipeg Free Press is another Winnipeg publication which did us the show a star rating of 3½ stars. The compilation from the Saskatoon Fringe Festival has a review from the news publication Star Phoenix, as well as reviews from audience members who can submit peer reviews on the Festival’s website. The CBC, or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, is a country-wide news publication that reviewed the show at the Edmonton Fringe Festival. The Edmonton Journal is a publication from Edmonton.

**Jenny Review**

*The Buzz Reviews*

*From Fringe 2019*

*Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed*

*Portal Theatre—Son of Warehouse*

A broad (comedic) remedial lesson for all the Sex Ed lessons you missed by virtue of poor or generally misinformed public education. Simultaneously hilarious and informative, the show manages to balance musical comedy with very serious sexual issues, namely sexual assault and consent. Well worth the watch, even if you think your Sex Ed was superb.

*Josh Fidelak*
Most sex ed classes leave students woefully unprepared for sex in real life. Oregon-based actors Lindsay Spear and Phoebe Thompson talk about their own experiences with sex ed and the disparity between curriculums in the United States (and Canada) in this hour-long dramedy.

Using ukuleles and an anatomically correct vulva puppet, the women openly recount their first periods, awkward sexual encounters and the basics of masturbation. It’s entertaining — particularly a sketch featuring famous sex therapists Ruth Westheimer and Sue Johanson — and informative.

If the subject matter has you squirming in your seat, Spear and Thompson have made their point about society's negative attitude towards sexual awareness.

The show also deals with sexual assault and the #MeToo movement through some heavy, personal storytelling.

— Eva Wasney
Overall, this show was very funny and I think most adults would enjoy it and find at least one piece that they can relate to. One note is that despite being very much about how sex education is not inclusive or comprehensive, the show itself suffers somewhat from cisnormativity and might benefit from minor rewrites before future tours. Similarly, the sex toys featured in the show are not considered body safe and should be replaced in future tours. Those two small complaints aside, the show is both educational and entertaining. It strikes a balance between informative and vulnerable, with the inclusion of personal experiences from the creators. Would recommend!

J. R.
Things We (Never) Learned In Sex Ed is an extremely (perhaps disappointingly) relevant show, given the uneven, mixed-bag state of sex ed curriculum across North America. The show wastes no time diving into this larger problem, but always ties things back to personal experience, detailing each of the two performers’ encounters with public school sex education (or lack thereof). The result is a collection of charming tales of amusing, often hilariously awkward sexual encounters, interspersed with more serious, sobering looks at the state of the curriculum in different parts of the world, and its potential impact on future generations. It feels odd to say that it’d be nice if we didn’t need this show, but as long as we do, I’m glad we have such engaging informative, and genuinely funny performers to guide us through.

Robyn Slack

Sex Education is messed up. And what makes it so messed up is that no one does it the same way. This show tackles the hilarity and awkwardness of sexual education with a harsh look at the ways our education ignores important issues. You’ll find yourself laughing and sighing at just how ridiculous and
terrible sex ed. can often be. From abstinence only education, to a lack of dialogue on consent, to programs that avoid or even speak negatively about homosexuality, no topic is too taboo in this show's critical and hilarious look at just how poorly we teach people about one of the most normal things humans do. From musical numbers, to personal stories, to puppets, to facts, this hilarious and brilliant show lets us laugh at our lack of education, and leave wanting to make sure we don’t screw up the next generation too.

Brian James Hildebrand

CBC

★★★★ STARS

Sex education in the U.S. is a "hot mess," say Oregon performers Lindsay Spear and Phoebe Thompson — and that’s what they’re out to change in this well-intentioned and entertaining hour.

They look at the state of sex ed (only marginally better in Canada, they note) through a series of monologues, chats, "factoids," sketches and songs. It sometimes feels a little lecture-y — and let's be clear, at a Fringe festival, they're probably preaching to the choir.

But they're engaging and charismatic performers. More importantly, they're frank, open and clear in talking about sex — traits, it's evident from the statistics they cite, that are sorely needed in more sex ed programs.

— Reviewed by Joff Schmidt
Fringe review: Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed

Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed, 4 stars out of 5, Stage 4, Academy at King Edward

Dustin Cook
Aug 17, 2019 • Last Updated 1 year ago • 1 minute read

Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed

• 4 stars out of 5
• Stage 4, Academy at King Edward

If you didn’t get a proper sex education in school, or one at all for that matter, then Lindsay Spear and Phoebe Thompson from Monmouth, Oregon are here to help.

Because they didn’t either and it left them confused and unprepared when it was time to tackle their first experiences. So they’re taking the opportunity to talk about what they wished they learned through a funny and creative look into what they believe is lacking in school curriculums.

The two performers have great chemistry, not only finishing each other’s sentences but also speaking multiple lines at the exact same time flawlessly. Using different methods such as a talk show format or even talking reproductive organs, the duo looks at when they first learned about the menstrual cycle and sexual intercourse — when they were experiencing them both for the first time.

Sometimes the show tries to bite off a bit more than it can chew and loses its focus, but quickly lands back on track as it flips to a new segment. Also, being a show crafted in the United States, most of the stats throughout are based on teachings in the U.S. But they do breeze through Canada’s, and more specifically Alberta’s, sex education curriculum toward the end with the same conclusion — it’s not enough.

A welcome surprise and really the standout, the show includes several musical numbers with Spear and Thompson strumming along on their ukuleles and showcasing powerful vocals — to really make it feel like just a casual conversation about sexual experiences among friends.

— Dustin Cook
7. Press Releases

Portal Theatre had to submit three different press release files for each of the cities we toured. Each one is given to the festival who gives it out to different news/media outlets to use when they either do an article about the show or review us. It can include headshots, descriptions of the show, notes from the artistic team, and info on the company’s earlier works. The requirement for each city/festival is different so some sections are smaller or larger depending on what is required. But all the press releases must have the title of the show, the times and dates of all performances, and where our show is being performed.
“Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed” by Portal Theatre
at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival
July 17-28, 2019

What: “Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed,” written by Phoebe Thompson, Lindsay Spear, and Michael Phillips

Cast: Phoebe Thompson and Lindsay Spear

Where: Son of Warehouse
140 Rupert Ave, Winnipeg

When: Thursday, July 18th: 5:00 pm
Saturday, July 20th: 6:30 pm
Sunday, July 21st: 9:45 pm
Tuesday, July 23rd: 3:15 pm
Thursday, July 25th: 7:00 pm
Friday, July 26th: 12:00 pm
Saturday, July 27th: 10:45 pm

Portal Theatre
Contact: Michael Phillips, 503-319-3924, m-phillips@comcast.net

Official Hashtags @PortalTheatre #PortalTheatre @SexEd

About “Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed”
Let’s Talk About Sex, Maybe? Or, maybe not? After having radically different experiences with Sex Ed, Lindsay and Phoebe try to figure out exactly what they were supposed to learn, why they didn’t, and where they go from here! A fun, sometimes silly, sometimes serious look at all the things they wish they’d learned about before the Big Event. When it would have been...you know...useful.

About Portal Theatre
Portal Theatre is a group of artists dedicated to making exciting and challenging theatre that is socially and culturally relevant. We specialize in storytelling, but use a variety of modes and performance techniques to do so. All of our shows are company created.

About Our Earlier Work
Our previous shows, “No Belles,” (2015) about women who have (or should have) won the Nobel Prize in the sciences, won 5 Star reviews from Broadway Baby, The Cult Den, The Edmonton Sun, and The Star Phoenix. Our most recent show, “73 Seconds,” (2017) about the Space Shuttle Challenger, received a 4½ Star review from the Winnipeg Free Press.
“Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed” by Portal Theatre
at the Nutrien Fringe Theatre Festival
August 1-10, 2019

What: “Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed,” written by Phoebe Thompson, Lindsay Spear, and Michael Phillips

Cast: Phoebe Thompson and Lindsay Spear

Where: Victoria School Gymnasium
639 Broadway Ave., Saskatoon

When:
Friday, August 2nd: 7:30 pm
Saturday, August 3rd: 3:50 pm
Sunday, August 4th: 7:30 pm
Monday, August 5th: 9:15 pm
Tuesday, August 6th: 9:25 pm
Thursday, August 8th: 5:45 pm
Saturday, August 10th: 7:30 pm

Contact: Michael Phillips, 503-319-3924, m-phillips@comcast.net

Hashtags @PortalTheatre #PortalTheatre #SexEd

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From the Artistic Team
“Our show is, in part, a response to the wide range of Sex Education – from comprehensive to abstinence only to none at all – practiced in the U.S. But, it’s also in response to the various attacks on women’s reproductive rights and the #MeToo movement. We wrap all of that in a mostly comedic and sometimes serious show (we don’t shy away from issues like consent and sexual assault) that includes the personal experiences of the actors, sketches, and a number of songs.” – Michael Phillips, Artistic Director

“No matter what your Sex Ed background is, you can find something in this show you can relate to. Having had both a fairly liberal Sex Ed curriculum in school and a conservative religious background, I wanted to show how conflicted and confused I was during puberty. And maybe laugh about how awful it was, together.” – Lindsay Spear, Actor

“Having had no Sex Ed in school, growing up and figuring out how my body works was both awkward and hysterical. Through this show I hope you’re able to laugh along with our experiences, while also being able to look back and laugh at your own.” - Phoebe Thompson, Actor
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“Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed” by Portal Theatre
at the Edmonton International Fringe Festival
August 15-25, 2019

What: “Things We (never) Learned in Sex Ed,” written by Phoebe Thompson, Lindsay Spear, and Michael Phillips

Cast: Phoebe Thompson and Lindsay Spear

Where: Academy at King Edward
8525 101 Street, Edmonton

When: Friday, August 16th: 12:00 pm
Saturday, August 17th: 6:30 pm
Monday, August 19th: 8:45 pm
Tuesday, August 20th: 4:00 pm
Thursday, August 22nd: 4:30 pm
Friday, August 23rd: 9:30 pm
Sunday, August 25th: 2:15 pm

Contact: Michael Phillips, 503-319-3924, m-phillips@comcast.net

Hashtags @PortalTheatre #PortalTheatre #SexEd

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8. Posters and Promotional Pictures

The promotional pictures were used for posters, flyers, and press releases. While we had the same photo used for our poster, we decided it would be fun to have different pictures for our flyers so there would be variations out among the public. If we ever “flyersed” the patrons of the festival multiple times, they could perhaps collect the whole set. And, we really liked the different pictures look, so we wanted to use more than just the same picture. Each poster had different dates and times, and the flyers matched the information, for each of the three cities we toured.
Things We Never Learned in Sex Ed

Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival
Venue #5 – Son of Warehouse

Thursday 18 July, 5:00 p.m.
Saturday 20 July, 6:30 p.m.
Sunday 21 July, 9:45 p.m.
Tuesday 23 July, 3:15 p.m.
Thursday 25 July, 7:00 p.m.
Friday 26 July, 12:00 p.m.
Saturday 27 July, 10:45 p.m.

Tickets: $12

Previous shows
73 Seconds ★★★★ 1/2
Winnipeg Free Press

No Belles ★★★★★
The Edmonton Sun
The Star Phoenix
Things we never learned in Sex Ed

Nutrian Fringe Theatre Festival
Venue - Victoria School Gymnasium

Friday 2 August, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday 3 August, 3:50 p.m.
Sunday 4 August, 7:30 p.m.
Monday 5 August, 9:15 p.m.
Tuesday 6 August, 9:25 p.m.
Thursday 8 August, 5:45 p.m.
Saturday 10 August, 7:30 p.m.
Tickets: $15

From 2015’s Best of Fest winner
No Belles ★★★★★
The Star Phoenix

PORTAL THEATRE
Things We Never Learned in Sex Ed

Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival
Venue #4 - Academy at King Edward

Friday 16 August, 12:00 p.m.
Saturday 17 August, 6:30 p.m.
Monday 19 August, 8:45 p.m.
Tuesday 20 August, 4:00 p.m.
Thursday 22 August, 4:30 p.m.
Friday 23 August, 9:30 p.m.
Sunday 25 August, 2:15 p.m.

Tickets: $13

Previous shows
73 Seconds ★★★★ 1/2
Winnipeg Free Press

No Belles ★★★★★
The Edmonton Sun
The Star Phoenix
9. Early Drafts of Sex Education Scenes
Once Portal Theatre had picked a topic for the new show to be created as well as well as the style, we all wrote different pitches. These pitches were short 4-8 page scenes about different topics in sex education we wanted to go indepth on. They were not finished scenes, hardly edited, but they were intended just to give an idea of a potential scene we could add to our show. Some were expanded and changed into full scenes that were put into the final script, others were wholly unused. The following scenes are works by Lindsay Spear and are representative of several pitches used in the process.

Me Too

*Person A and B are two women at a party, Freshman year of college. They are lost and unfamiliar with this environment. They eventually find each other. (Note: Topics may increase in severity, but it’s all dealt lightly and happily.)*

A

Uh, Hi.

B

Hi.

A

Cool Party, huh?

B

Yeah. This is actually my first party at college.
A

You’re a freshman?

B

Yeah.

A

Me too!

B

No way! Cool. I’m B.

A

I’m A. Nice to meet you.

Awkward beat.

A/B

So—Oh no. Sorry.

A

You go.
B

I was just gonna ask what your major is?

A

I’m studying “generic major”.

B

No way. Me too!

A

Awesome! I originally wanted to study “cool major” but my parents told me they would only pay for college if I got a “real major.”

B

No. Way. Me too!

A

Really?
Yeah, they said I need to get a corporate job so I can make money instead of do what I'm passionate about.

A

Me too! They said if I wanted a good life, I need to either make money or marry someone who does.

B

Me too! Parent’s, am I right?

A

Totally. My parents keep asking me how my love life is going, and I’m like “Woah, hold up. I just got out of high school.”

B

What, really?

A

Yeah, they want me to make babies as soon as possible. But I ain’t anywhere near that.

B

Me too. I actually just got out a relationship.
A
Me too!

B
Wow. We’re both single that’s crazy.

A
Yeah it’s crazy that we met up, and have so much in common.

B
It’s funny, I was about to get outta here before I met you.

A
Actually, me too! I didn’t really know anyone here!

B
Me too! Actually I finally got away from this guy who was following me around.

A
Wow that’s crazy!
Yeah! I was really scared he was gonna escalate and attack me!

A
No. Frickin’. Way.

B
It’s crazy how I’ve already gotten harassed in my first term here.

A
Me too!!!

B
No way!

A
Yeah!! Catcalls, unwanted butt grab, people following me in the streets!

B
Me. Too! Sexual harassment, am I right?

A
Yeah, like come on! No means no!

B

You know, they never even taught us consent in high school!

A

Me too! I had to learn about that phrase from the internet.

B

Yeah! Why would they teach about sexual harassment, if they didn’t even teach us about consent?

They laugh at their mutual experiences.

B

Oh. I’m out of alcohol.

A

Me too!

B

I’m gonna head over there and grab some more...
Beat.

A
Me too.

Conversations with my vagina

A
Hey. Wanna hang out tonight?

B
Sorry can’t. Got plans.

A
Oh. What are you doing?

B
I got a date.

A
Woah! With who?
B

With my Vagina

Beat.

A

Hmm?

B

Yeah I have a date planned with my vagina. Or Viggo Mortensen as she likes to be called.

A

But like. You date. Your Vagina.

B

No. Like, we're not dating. It's just a pre-planned time where we can hang and talk. Catch up, you know?

A

Kay. I've just never heard of anybody like talking to their vagina...
B

Well you should probably talk to them. Get to know them, see what they like or dislike. Otherwise it’s like...ya know, going through the motions. They’re gonna get bored.

A

Vagina’s can’t get bored

B

How dare you talk to her like that! She as feelings

A

I thought you said its name was Viggo Mort—

B

Viggo can be a girl’s name!

A

That is literally a man’s—

B
Hey! I don’t choose what she identifies as. It’s her choice.

A
But—

B
So you’re trying to tell me you’ve never treat yo’ selfed, but with your lady garden?

A
Gross but like no. I don’t even know how to “treat yo’ muff”?

B
Close your eyes. (A does reluctantly) Imagine a nice restaurant.

A
In public?

B
It’s a simulation. It’s just the two of you, nobody’s around to bother you. Its candle lit and romantic string music plays. Now. Talk to them.

A
Talk?
Yeah. Just get to know them.

Okay... umm. Hey. (Silence) Umm. Really nice in here, huh? (Silence) I don't think—

Don't give up. Keep trying.

Umm what's your name?

(B brings out a vagina puppet. B does the voice of Vagina)

Val Kilmer.

Oh, Val! Nice to meet you. I love your movies!
Vagina

I’ve never been in a movie. You must be thinking of my twin. Val Kilmer.

A

Oh. Twin?

Vagina

Family stuff. It’s complicated

A

Oh. I won’t press.

Vagina

Thank you I appreciate it.

A

So. (Beat.) This is kinda weird, right?

Vagina

What do you mean?

A
Us talking. I didn’t even think it was possible.

Vagina

I never thought you’d even look at me to be honest.

A

What? Why would you think that?

Vagina

Well, you never give me a second glance. You’re always so busy with your friends and partner that... I don’t know. I just kinda gave up hoping that we...

A

We what?

Vagina

I don’t know. It’s difficult to say now. But maybe we can work up to...us?

A

I’d— I’d like that.

(A opens their eyes and the vagina puppet disappears.)
A
Wow.

B
I know, right?

A
I—I think I’m gonna go home and spend time getting to know Val Kilmer.

B
Val Kilmer’s his name?

A
*Her* name. They’re twins. It’s complicated.

B
I see. I’m glad I could help you out.

A
Yeah thanks! It was...enlightening.

(Pause.)
B
You’re gonna masturbate—

A
Oh yeah.

**Sitting on a Ding Dong**

I had my first sex ed class in sixth grade. That doesn’t mean it was my first experience with sex ed. I knew about periods in 5\textsuperscript{th} grade...but not really. I could see a couple girls in my school getting bigger boobs and a very obvious sex drive. We called it getting a period, but I had no idea about puberty or blood falling out of your vagina. Heck, what even was a vagina at that point?

In sixth grade I finally got to learn about all the anatomy of the sex organs. Penises and vaginas, baby. It was all anatomy so I got to learn about the egg, the fallopian tube, and blood lining the walls of the uterus, stuff like that. It really was just boring school stuff to learn at that point since I didn’t have my period yet. The boys and girls hadn’t even been separated yet. Until a certain point... We split and we got more in-depth lessons: Body hair, zits, periods and PMSing. Hooo-weee do I not remember any of what we learned. What I do remember is not learning much about boys either. Just the scientific words for things and then, boom, done.
And then there was the day we came back together and we could all write anonymous questions we wanted answered and put into a box. I don’t remember what I wrote because it was a BS question (Still no period. Did not understand.) But, I remember a couple questions. One was about “my period is inconsistent and doesn’t follow a monthly routine?” There, I got to learn about how your first few periods are weird but eventually they get into a cycle. The second question was about the color of your period. This question asked about it not being red. (Pause) Yeah this is the answer I wish I’d remembered sooner. Long story short periods can be brownish for a while and eventually becomes red.

So to make a quick detour I have two sisters that are older than me. I started talking to my mom and sisters about periods after school. They told me that both of them got their first period at outdoor school, a week long school camping trip for 6th graders. So I prepared just in case. Brought pads and everything. (Beat.) Noooo period. I was getting kinda worried I was gonna get it pretty late.

I eventually got it in seventh grade. But when I got it I don’t know. So for a while I thought I was having some digestive issues. I could swear I cleaned up very well after pooping. But when I would next go, I’d pull down my pants, and there was brown mess in my undies. It wasn’t until a caving trip with my family until I realized. We were going to the spelunk in the middle of the Oregon woods and before we went in, we took family pictures. My brother went up to me during, and told me I had a brown spot on my pants. I responded with “Oh. I must have sat on a ding dong in the car!” But in my head I was going a mile a minute. I finally figured it out! I put the pieces together like one of those clue boards from a crime show. But I had no pads or tampons with me, an 8 mile hike there and back, plus walking in the cave. So pretty rough “first period.” But I got out of school the next day. No way I was going to PE after all that.

**EVERY SEX SCENE ON TV EVER (TV taught me sex)**

The heat

The connection
Electricity they call it.

Attraction.

Eyes. Eyes. Eyes staring at each other.

The heat off their bodies almost palpable.

Stillness.

Light flicks between them as a wick slowly is consumed.

Pasta grows colder.

Silence.

Slamming bodies on the wall.

The woman pinned as the man efficiently undresses.

How does he undress so efficiently?

He was wearing a nice suit jacket and a button up. That's a lot to do while also making.

Oh yeah they're macking too. Their macking never stops.

Macking.

Lips push against each other.

Tongues never visible.

The heat still permeates the clean room.

Bed perfectly made. The thinnest of comforters rests on top.

It's the dead of winter.

Does he not use a blanket? Does he own a blanket?
They are both undressed.

Well, she’s in a matching pair of bra and underwear.

Nice.

His pants are still on. They are both undressed.

They move from the wall to the bed. The woman is now resting on top of the man. A Pause as the lights dim

A soft shift.

They are both under the sheets. Breathing heavily.

The woman has her breasts covered by the thin comforter. The man has his hands behind his head and his chest showing.

Did they have sex? Who knows.

Did they use a condom? Who knows.

Did they talk about STD’s before they did it? Who knows.

Did they pee after they did it? Who knows.

But they undressed so efficiently.

I understand. This is what sex is.


