

# Madame Ovary

**BroadStreet Theatre  
tells two-dozen tales of  
feminine force**

by **Warren Francke**

**W**hen women jump off trains and out of planes, stage a “pee protest” or stand up to anyone from rapists to male chauvinist pigs, *That Takes Ovaries*, says the title of the latest BroadStreet Theatre production.

Add the subtitle, *Bold Women, Brazen Acts*, and the bottom line on the postcard which promotes the play by asking, “How Big Are Yours?” If that doesn’t have you boasting, “Elephantine!” you still may buy into another pitch that promises this “ultimate girls’ night out will have you shouting, ‘You go, girl.’”

Perhaps life cast you in a different gender role, sans ovaries, and you’re wondering why it takes big eggs, for example, for a fat girl to wear a tank top or to climb a rope. Director Roxanne Wach and her cast of five women will quickly enlighten you.

“Sometimes it’s harder to deal with very personal issues,” Wach explained, such as body image problems, than to perform such heroic acts as stopping a rapist or uncovering sex slavery in a Bombay brothel.

The show tells 24 stories taken from a book of the same name by Rivka Solomon, and each actress appears in at least five episodes. Each was asked about their favorites among the stories. Emily Jane Thompson prefers the woman in the tank top. “She has a bubbly personality,” but “talks about what she can’t do because of her body type.”

Some stories deal with more obviously momentous challenges, such as Sara Planck’s portrayal of a woman on “the night before my double mastectomy.” She’s supported by friends who help her think positively about its

top 10 advantages, such as a quick way to lose a few pounds.

Colleen O’Doherty plays an “urban guerrilla,” who plasters over billboards of skinny models. “She does what I think would be cool,” and her director agreed, “I could see Colleen doing that.”

Wach had great flexibility on drawing additional stories from the 64 in the book and in excluding some of those stories originally selected for the stage version.

“I probably picked out 10 more stories from the book and took out a few from the play,” she noted. One was excluded because the character

room table, Roxanne sat on her living room couch as her five talents rehearsed. After the opening ensemble scene, Andrea Lang jumped out of an airplane and described her drop from two miles.

The others, sometimes solo, sometimes paired, told their stories. Denise Chevalier did her favorite, an 8-year-old enthusing about marching with her two moms in a gay pride parade. Then she switched to a woman in a wheelchair, who explained, “I have no legs,” after a house fire, and couldn’t get access to campus bathroom stalls. She confronted the school’s top administrator who brushed her off



LADIES WITH ELEPHANTINE OVARIES (FROM L TO R): Denise Chevalier, Sara Planck, Colleen O’Doherty, Emily Jane Thompson, Andrea Lang.

needs to be an Asian woman, and “some were chosen to suit the talents of our actors.”

She was in frequent contact with the author for several months, “and she approved all the changes. Rivka was very gracious.” The writer has more often worked with less experienced companies, so “we were given great latitude.”

So far, the provocative title hasn’t caused any posters to be rejected, as was the case with their earlier *Vagina Monologues*, with its singular focus on “down there.” Unlike that play, and their *Hot Flashes*, dealing with menopause, *Ovaries* deals more broadly with terms the characters announce in the opening scene — not just “bold” and “courageous,” but “foolhardy” and “outrageous.”

As Dan Wach, the director’s husband, functioned as stage manager from the dining

— until she organized a “pee protest.”

Planck became a med school professor who made herself available to students to practice pelvic exams, a role which not only required her to recline on her back, knees apart, turned away from the audience, but to trip “gynecological” off her tongue.

Lang was then a social worker counseling a dying woman and giving her permission to “let go,” assuring the woman that she’d done all she could do. All acts of women, some bold, some brazen, often noble and uplifting, sometimes funny and never without human interest.

Wach and producer Mary Carrick will invite women to share similar stories at performances with those selected receiving a “Golden Ovary” award. **RR**

## COLD CREAM

■ Somewhere out in Theaterville, news that *Shelterbelt* had postponed its *Instant Theater* weekend until April 2-3 must have inspired a few producers to sigh, “There but for the grace of God and good timing go I.”

Fortunately for *Chanticleer’s Barefoot in the Park* and *BroadStreet’s That Takes Ovaries*, openings arrive this weekend, not during the minus-40 wind chills of last week. And the touring cast of *Little House on the Prairie* missed our bone-chilling blizzard by a few days, but will find us empathetic when the Ingalls family faces winter hardship.

And count the *Omaha Community Playhouse*, *Bellevue Little Theater* and *Skulduggery* lucky, too, with shows starting next weekend, namely the OCP’s *Cheaper by the Dozen*, BLT’s *Noises Off* and *SkullRoots!*, a compilation of short plays from its recent seasons.

Though *Shelterbelt* had to delay the one-night stand (it seemed ironic when its press release seemed happy to have more time to prepare for “instant” theater), better than Jan. 21 when they return with *From Shelterbelt with Love 9*.

Imagine all the avoided hassles over “to be or not to be” performing on nasty nights. In a better world we could all skip past the first half of January and move on to balmy days. Less lucky were the *Christmas Carol* touring companies that had to mush about America during those storms of late December.

■ *Barefoot* in the Bluffs sounds promising in large part because we’ll be treated to another good character role for Barb Ross. Jonathan Wilhoft directs a cast featuring Jay Huse and Kate Simmons as Paul and Corie Bratter, with John Kuehl, Scott Fowler and Jeff Lively.

If you saw it on stage in the 1960s or on film in 1967, you may recall that it starred a much younger Robert Redford and Jane Fonda.

You can read more about *That Takes Ovaries* elsewhere in *The Reader*, but recalling Ms. Fonda circa ’67 raises the question: whether you love her or hate her, it took some big ones to risk the hostility aimed at “Hanoi Jane.” And the question is: Do you suppose she had any clue how long her critics would continue to condemn her activism?

But I digress, given that there’s not much controversial about *Barefoot in the Park*. Like most of the others mentioned above, it’s warm fare for frigid times.

— Warren Francke

Cold Cream looks at theater in the metro area. Email information to [coldcream@thereader.com](mailto:coldcream@thereader.com).

*That Takes Ovaries! Bold Women, Brazen Acts* runs Jan. 15-24, Fri.-Sat. 7:30 p.m. and Sun. 6 p.m. at the OM Center (Omaha Healing Arts), 1216 Howard St. in the Old Market. Tickets are \$15, \$13 students and seniors. Call 344.3257.