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News

OR-A-TRIX - all girl, all word

by Jamie Theuer
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Spoken-word group OR-A-TRIX performed for a full-house crowd Friday at The Factory as a stop on their "All Girl. All Word." tour. The show consisted of solo, duet, and group performances ranging from comical rants about relationship break-up to serious, confessional pieces relating to family heritage.

OR-A-TRIX members Kristin Aurora, Tara Hardy, Katinka Kraft, Brenda Brown, Amy Mahoney, Alexandria Red and Gigi Grinstad are Seattle-based poetry slammers, delivering their words dynamically and energetically.

"Some pieces are serious, but we also like to poke fun and look at the crazy things that have happened in our lives," Red said.

OR-A-TRIX met three and a half years ago in a writing class facilitated by now-member Tara Hardy. They found common ground examining heritage and family relationship issues in an environment where they were able to take risks in their writing, Red said.

"Tara is an honest, giving, open teacher who's not afraid to share about what she's learned the hard way," Red said.

In appreciation to Hardy, the six women put on a show at the Richard Hugo House in Seattle that was open to the public. While this was not the first time most of them had performed on stage, the good energy they felt and positive response from the audience led to the creation of OR-A-TRIX, Red said. The name stems from the Latin meaning, "female who speaks."

Mahoney got the show rolling Friday with an expressive piece about breaking down gender norm walls, followed by Brown's rendition of her exposure to sex workers as a child. Aurora and Grinstad brought some humor to the show with a back-and-forth conversational piece about all the sadistic things they were going to do to their exes.

Kraft opened her heart to the crowd with a personal piece, as well as a response to the current U.S. political situation. She is German-born and described what it was like being called a "Nazi" by classmates in the sixth-grade. She talked about having a grand-father that fought for Hitler, questioning herself: "My ancestors were monsters/ Am I a monster?" and goes on, recalling her memory of her grand-father and how "his presence was full of love for me." She recalls her father teaching her that fear stems from hate, and her repeated line throughout the piece warns, "Be wary of a country in fear."

They closed the show and got the crowd roaring with a group piece that begins, "The worst sex I ever had..." and goes on to describe a series of embarrassing moments and compromising situations.

The women have now been performing in and around the Seattle area for about a year. This marks their first full-length tour and will include dates throughout the Pacific Northwest and California. When they are not performing, they are a combination of writers, teachers, youth advocacy volunteers, political activists, and workshop facilitators.

OR-A-TRIX currently has one recording of their work out, mainly solo performances from their show at the Richard Hugo House. They hope to record some of their group pieces soon. OR-A-TRIX members come from diverse backgrounds and this is exemplified in their group pieces, where different writing styles are blended and different voices can be heard, Red said.

"I found [the show] very empowering and stimulating. It opened my eyes to different perspectives and gave me inspiration to go home and write about my own personal and political view," Western student Nicole Mills said.