

'Monologues' approved at ND

■ March 26-28 production will include academic panels.

BY MARGARET FOSMOE
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SOUTH BEND — A student performance of "The Vagina Monologues" has been approved for March 26, 27 and 28 at the University of Notre Dame.

The student organizers cannot use the production as a fundraiser for community groups, and each evening will include an academic panel discussion that presents the Catholic Church's teachings on issues related to sexuality.

"For me, (the play) is important to raise awareness of violence against women all across the world," said Notre Dame senior Jordy Brooks, one of five student organizers of this year's production. The women have been planning the production since the start of the academic year.

"The Vagina Monologues," by playwright Eve Ensler, is a theater production that deals frankly with women's views on

their bodies and sexuality. It is performed annually on hundreds of college campuses with the goal of raising awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence.

The play for years has been the focus of controversy at Notre Dame. Advocates praise its candid approach to uncomfortable sexual topics, while critics condemn its content and say it conflicts with Catholic teachings.

The performances will be in Room 101 DeBartolo Hall. The production will be free and open to the general public. Information about how to obtain tickets is not yet available.

The student organizers proposed the performance and gained the backing of three departments as academic sponsors: sociology, anthropology and political science. The final proposal then was submitted to Mark Roche, dean of the College of Arts & Letters, who approved it.

In a statement issued Monday, the Rev. John I. Jenkins, Notre Dame's president, said he is satisfied that the proposal meets the criteria for presentations on campus. (See related story.)

Brooks, a senior political science and gender studies major

from Cazenovia, N.Y., performed in a campus production of the play during her freshman year. She said each time she sees the play, she finds it more powerful.

A theological seminar for Catholic bishops that had been scheduled at Notre Dame in February was moved to a convent in Mishawaka because of concerns that the university planned to allow a campus performance of "The Vagina Monologues" this spring.

Because of the likelihood that the play would be presented on campus, the bishops made a collective decision to move the seminar off campus, the Most Rev. John M. D'Arcy, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, said in a written statement in early February.

D'Arcy in the past has publicly criticized Notre Dame and Jenkins for allowing the play on campus.

Student productions of the play were performed annually on campus from 2002 to 2006, and an off-campus version was presented last year.

In addition, Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College each annually present locally written pro-

ductions based on student experiences and in the monologue format of Ensler's play. Notre Dame's is called "Loyal Daughters and Sons," and the Saint Mary's production is titled "SMC Monologues."

Jenkins in 2006 considered banning "The Vagina Monologues" because he was troubled that the play's portrayal of sexuality opposes Catholic teachings. That prompted an extensive debate about Notre Dame's Catholic identity.

After listening to widespread campus discussion, Jenkins announced that a Catholic university has nothing to fear from engaging in topics of the wider culture and did not ban the play. However, performances must be in a classroom, the production cannot be used to raise money for community groups and each show much include an academic panel discussion.

The Notre Dame board of trustees in 2006 passed a resolution backing Jenkins' handling of the matter.

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