Female comic

Barbarian from Jo Randerson’s *Banging Cymbal, Clanging Gong*

**Time:** day or night

**Location:** a stage in a theatre or lecture hall

This excerpt is from a one-act solo performance. The script has been abridged to offer a short monologue that introduces the audience to the character.

*The house lights fade. “I did it my way” by Sid Vicious plays loudly. Lights come up on a podium, an easel, an old chair and a piano. A crudely painted sign on the easel reads: “Warning; this show contains drinking, cussing, generally aggressive behaviour.”*

*A figure appears peeking out behind the curtain from one side, then the other, drinking a beer. She pokes her head through the middle of the curtains. As she walks behind them her hand trails along, moving them about. Finally she comes out, aggressively staring at the audience. She spits beer on the floor, then exits again. There is shouting offstage. She enters again reluctantly, takes her place in front of the podium and pulls out some papers.*

*She gestures to the sound operator to turn the music off.*

*The music stays on. She signals again – it is turned up louder. She storms up to the booth. There are raised voices and loud crashes. The music stops. She comes back onto the stage, and gives the finger to the sound tech.*

*She contemplates the audience.*
BARBARIAN: I like you to think of this not so much as a piece of theatre. I like you to think of this more as a ball that is bouncing through the game of life. Or if you like you can think of it as a little baby-child who is lying in his crib imagining that he is like to Jesus Christ. Or you can simply think of it as a happy-go lucky gun that is shooting up at the sky for not any reason in particular.

She exits, more shouting off-stage, then she comes back on again. She keeps reading from her papers.

I am here as a demonstration to you of another way of life. I am here not as the main-bill, but as a side-show, like a freak show. I am like an animal in a zoological gardens, and you are all looking at me thinking, “What a funny looking one that one is. See how it has those … uh. (gestures to some head growth) funny horn things … How glad I am that I do not look like that one.”

I am here as a disincentive. I am here as a contrast. I am here as a qu’est-ce que la, how can you say … yeah okay, its like a very fat boy or a very fat girl who is wearing extremely tight pants and you think to yourself, “at least if I was that fat I would know to wear baggy clothes.” Do you understand?

I am the one-armed leper at the side of the road, you throw me some money and you smile
pleasantly at me, but you are so glad you don’t have to take me home. I am the cripple and you are thanking God that you still have both your legs.

Anyway.

_She goes back to the podium._

I come here, not of my own accord but as a messenger from my race. I come from a very long heritage, extremely long actually. I come from the race of Barbarians, or mongrels, half-castes, bastards. We have no mothers. We have no fathers. We are pretty much alone, except for each other and you know we don’t always trust each other. I mean we like each other sure, you know, but we don’t really trust, no, because who is smiling at you one moment when you turn around they will be with a sword or a knife at your throat, you know, which is a bit of a surprise, but it keeps you on your toes you know so that’s a good thing, but we don’t really trust, no.

We as a race are sometimes described as rejects among men.

Everything that is appropriate, we are not.

Everything that is tasteful and pleasant, we are not. We are enemies to these things. Yes!! Absolute enemies. Absolute. Our hair is tangled and unclean, we are aggressive, filthy and extremely ugly.
We run with the beasts in the wild forests, we go to the toilet behind the trees, and much worse than that, much, much worse, that is just the tip of the iceberg. We brush alongside extremely dangerous and uncontrollable animals, that can bite your head off with only one bite, or break you in half and suck the life-juice out of you, like that, just like that. We run with these creatures. Yes, oh yes. And what is more we enjoy it. We enjoy the running.

Once a gentleman comes to our village. He sits and watches us for many days. And he is watching me as I am running here, and running there, just like I am usually doing. And anyway after very many days, one week actually, he comes up to me and he stops me. And he says to me, “You must not run. You must learn to walk before you learn to run. Otherwise you will trip and surely hurt yourself. Do not run. Instead walk.” Before I brokeed his skull open with my bare hands and sucked his brain out through his naval, nav – sorry, nasal cavity; before I swung his saggy torso high in the air above my head and watched as you know as the blood was going around, around, around like this on the walls in a beautiful pattern like modern art; before I laid his tender corpse on the round and marvelled at the perfect beauty of this man I had just been forced to kill; before I did all of these things, I said to him, ‘I have to run. I have to. If I do not run, I think that I will surely die. And besides, how else am I going to feel the breezes on my skin?’

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
She goes over to the piano. Plays song by J.S. Bach *Invention in A minor*. Suddenly stops.

And so on and so on, it pretty much goes on much the same from here.

You know they have to build special seats for us in theatres. Do you know why? Well there are lots of reasons. One is because we are quite smelly and apparently people do not like to sit by a toilet, well I can understand that. But also because we cannot watch shows quietly. No we can’t. Because we are so affected by what we see you know. We cannot not react, you understand, it is physically impossibility.

If we see it is sad, we are crying a lot and apparently “too loud”. So they like to sit us by ourselves at the back where they can keep an eye on us.

Also there is another reason that actually I am personally responsible for us sitting in separate seats and that is one time, there was a pretty nasty man on the stage and I guess you can say I did not take a real shine to him. And he was up there doing something pretty nasty to a lady you know, and I do not like to watch that happening. I can not just sit there and do nothing while that is going on, and so I get my sword and get up on the stage, and I killed the man which is apparently not a good thing to do because he is only “acting” and it is only a show you know and so apparently it is not real. And so they are very quickly up there with

handcuffs and ropes you know and next thing I know I am all locked up in the jail which is pretty funny.

They have tried to explain to me many times what the difference between theatre and real life is but I am a little bit simple, I do not understand it, I can’t … Anyway, now they have a special room for me with bars and things so that I cannot get out on the stage, and I have heard that the actors are getting a little bit nervous if they know that I am going to be in the audience, and so often when I go to a show they do not do as in rehearsal but instead they are always saying nice things to each other and smiling and laughing you know, it is all “Hello, how are you going?” “Yes I love you very much too and isn’t everything all very nice at the moment …?”

And I think that is why sometimes I find the theatre a little boring you know.

Commentary

_Banging Cymbal, Clanging Gong_ is a solo performance in the form of a mock lecture. Originally devised by Jo Randerson when she was attending an international theatre festival, the show was first performed in the Allen Hall Theatre at Otago University and has subsequently been performed at BATS Theatre as part of the Wellington Fringe Festival.

➢ Compare this lecture-style performance with Sally Rodwell’s Rhonda Gonne.