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This "Menopause Mama" Doesn't Have Hot Flashes, She Has Power Surges

By VIRGINIA TREHERNE-THOMAS

Menopause was a revered rite of passage in ancient China and Native American tribes. So, how did it come to be considered a curse in modern western societies?

Why has the change been discussed in hushed tones in America? Were hot flashes, night sweats and (God forbid) low libido not appropriate subjects in polite conversation. Or were they simply not recognized at all? In Victorian times, woman who had "outbursts" were deemed hysterical and decades of doctors belittled woman's woes encouraging them to transfer their complaints into a life of service for others. In short, the myth is that women go batty for a few years, sink into depression, mourn their lost youth and fade into the woodwork.

In truth, menopause can be a bridge to a vital and liberated period in a woman's life and Rose Weaver is here to tell you about it in her original one-woman show, "Menopause Mama," at Perishable Theatre in Providence.

She is gutsy, playful, talented, hot-headed and kick-ass courageous as she shuffles on stage belting out "Miss Celie's blues" (written by Quincy Jones for *The Color Purple*). It's a song about "shuffling down the lonesome road." Calling out to her sisters, Weaver tells them, "We've been hookers, presidents, doctors and activists and there is nothing under the sun we can't do," she sings. "We have seen a lot of suns gone down but we still got plenty of time."

In pink pants and a pink top, a straw hat with a rose on top, an ample bosom, sexy and comfortable in her middle-age body, Weaver looks like she has a whole lot of time left, to share with us, through her various characters, what she has learned from the struggles in her own life. And (thank God) she does it with

humor, dabbing her face with a handkerchief, giving us lessons in the proper use of a fan and how to snap it open before handing some out to likely looking menopausal-age sisters in the audience. (Like me, but I'm ok with it, baby!)

From hot flashes to the subject of chin hairs, she pleads to make sure that someone "plucks those hairy suckers off" when she's in her coffin and then tells us how we can save money on bras by tucking our boobs under our belt. Weaver has good timing and the sequences are sweet and funny.

In the next scene, she plays a woman at the supermarket handing out petitions to have all feminine products put in their own section. Then using the petitions theme, she brings in some new characters. A teenager with clumpy shoes and a pink shoulder bag who talks the teenage lingo: "Like I don't know what this is all about. Like give me a break and why do they call it a period anyway. Like it's not the end of anything";

There's a token male menopausal Beau Brummel, who swaggers across the stage in his sports car, oblivious to any problems that middle age might bring. "Do you think I might need the blue pill?" he says, looking a tad forlorn.

Weaver uses hats to define her characters. Wrapping her head in a turban, she adopts a West Indian accent becoming a woman who delves into the seriousness of what is happening to her life. "I am forgetting things. I feel like my body has been rearranged, and our sex life is gone". It is a bittersweet monologue that brings depth and sadness to what really happens in the aging process. "My husband pushes up the sheet when he is sleeping and how I long to be that sheet." Weaver shows us the husband who follows his wife's moods, bringing her chocolates, but never really understanding her mysterious needs.

Weaver's last monologue is her best. She plays a intelligent, contemporary woman placing a personal ad on the Internet. "I love good food, long walks, fireplaces, and laughter. SBF looking for LTR (that's long term relationship) I am strong, sexy and in menopause" Ah, there's the catch... She gets a response. "What's wrong with him," she wonders.

He calls himself Isis and through the loudspeaker we hear his sexy voice responding with what any woman would kill to hear. "I don't believe there's a Miss Right, I believe you gotta make it right" and "To search for love is one of life's true priorities" He drives a cab which freaks her out. "What will my friends say?" But when his picture comes up, all is changed "He's a hunk" Yes, yes I do want somebody" Weaver captures the poignancy of the moment with hard and clear honesty. It's a moment that works.

So hats off (or on) to you Ms. Weaver for being you and for taking an uncompromising and celebratory view of a subject that is often swept under the rug. As a true artist, we thank you for accepting, exploring and celebrating the

second half of your life and giving us the gift of looking at ourselves differently.

"Menopause Mama" continues at Perishable Theatre 95 Empire St., Providence, through August 17. Tickets \$25 (wed. 2 for \$25. Phone 401-331-2695 ext. 101. On the web at: <http://www.perishable.org/>.

Read Bill Gale's [review of "Menopause Mama."](#)

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