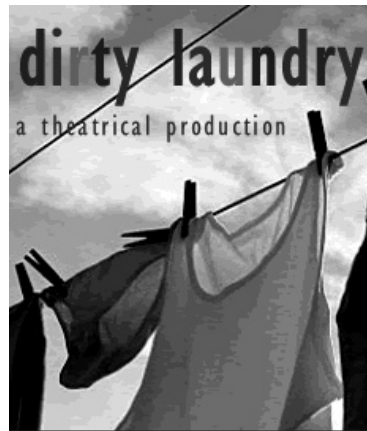


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Dirty Laundry

by *Brady Tighe*

One of the best parts about theatre is the way it can describe and bring dialogue to certain social issues that are otherwise difficult to broach. However, some issues still seem to be glanced over, left un-talked about. One of these untouched issues is mental illness. *Dirty Laundry* is a one-woman play that plans to change this stigma with a smartly written and brilliantly acted stage play.

The star, Marian Avient never considered herself an actress or a play writer. However, in the aftermath of a talk she had given in Parksville about her personal experiences with mental illness (Avient was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and severe depression), a woman called her and said that the talk had affected her so deeply that she felt it should be made into a stage play immediately.

Avient had no acting experience at all. But she wasn't about to let that stop her, and in her own words, "I just sat down and did it. It's my story so I'm the one to tell it." She enlisted the help of director Gary Davey, grabbed a producer and an assistant, and nine months later had a play ready to go.

The result, *Dirty Laundry*, is a play that goes through one woman's breakdown from depression. Since its start last Sept., many viewers have given testimonials to its power, including VIU's own Rachel Cooper, a Psychology professor. Cooper says of that play: "What a brilliant presentation! I would give my psychology students credit for attending the performance. They will learn more about what it means to be human from *Dirty Laundry* than from the insights any introductory text could offer."

However, Avient's goal is something more than just good theatre. She wants to bring light to an epidemic of depression, to incite dialogue that can help those who feel alone. "We are trying to get people who are depressed and hiding it to come out and talk about it to somebody," she says. Through her own experiences, she also hopes to show families that are suffering through similar situations that there is hope and a way out. She also hopes that students will see it, "For a look at real-life person who has suffered or is suffering from depression, and not something in a textbook."

Her overall goal for the play is, "To tell the people who go through life, go to work, and go to school feeling lousy and thinking that that is normal. I want them to know that there is somebody out there that wants to talk to you. Some people

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don't even know or think there is anything wrong with being depressed all the time. Those are the people I would truly love to see come out."

Throughout the last year, Avient has been performing her play for most of Western Canada. She will be performing in Nanaimo on Dec. 4th. For any and all details concerning the play, please visit <www.dirtylaundrytheatre.ca>

NOTE: The play does contain some harsh language and adult themes. Suitable for adults and older teens, but not children.

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