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Going Ape in the Theatre: Guerrilla Girls on Tour

**Written by Yolanda Shoshana
Photos Courtesy of the Guerilla
Girls**



If you see a gorilla in a theatre, your eyes are not playing tricks on you. More than likely it is a Guerrilla Girl On Tour stirring things up. The fearless group was formed by former members of the Guerilla Girls and their mission is to create plays, performances and street theatre that fight racism and sexism in the arts and beyond.

The group is anonymous so they wear masks when they make appearances. Some might ask if the masks are just another cheesy gimmick. According to group member, Aphra Behn (named for the famous playwright), "Each of us has taken the name of a dead woman artist and when we appear in public we wear gorilla masks to conceal our true identities. We do this to put all of the focus of our work on the issues of discrimination and sexism rather than on our own personalities. In other words, no one can accuse us of doing this just to advance our own personal careers." A group of theatre artists who site artistic organizations for discrimination is sure to make waves. All of the members are working theatre professionals, which is another reason for their concealed identities.

Do not think the group is living high on the hog from their fame; all of the activists work full time and does this volunteer work. Like most artist they are "juggling" their lives. Behn stated, "It's very hard being a full time artist, having a day job and doing activist work. Many members take time off to recoup and refresh themselves before coming back for another protest. You have to realize that we are a very small group of about twenty members. It is possible to create change with just a handful of funny feminists."

Since we all can't be a Guerrilla Girl On Tour, I asked Behn what someone like myself could do to support the cause, "You can write letters to your local artistic directors asking them why they don't produce more plays by women or hire more female directors. You can download our stickers at www.guerrillagirlsontour.com

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and plaster them up at local theatres that are not producing any plays by women this season (Roundabout, Atlantic, Jean Cocteau, Theatre for a New Audience and the Classic Stage Company in NYC). And if you don't have any time for activist work, donate some money to your favorite activist cause".

The group is now in their seventh year and appears to be going strong as they tour 15-20 times a year. According to Behn, the vision that Guerrilla Girls On Tour is for "A world where 50% of all the plays produced are written by women. A country that hires women directors and men directors equally. And the Broadway production of "Guerrilla Girls on Tour Show" - our new play about the recovered herstory of women in world theatre". A vision like that deserves a round of bananas!

To find out when the Guerrilla Girls on Tour will be swinging into a theatre near you log onto: www.guerrillagirlsontour.com
