

V-Day event at Lido today

The 'Vagina Monologues' will be performed to raise awareness of domestic violence.

By Elia Powers
Daily Pilot

As part of the V-Day movement, which aims to end violence against women, "The Vagina Monologues" is making a one-night stop tonight at the Regency Lido Theater in Newport Beach.

And Nelson Nio is the man behind the production.

The Newport Beach resident booked the venue, searched for the actresses, hand-picked the directors and sought publicity for the show, which will raise money for Human Options, an Irvine shelter for domestic-violence survivors.

Nio's motivation came in August 2003, when a female friend was attacked while walking outside her home in Costa Mesa.

"People think nothing like that happens here, but this [incident] was proof it goes on in our back yard," Nio said.

"When I did research on the impact of violence against women, I knew I had to take action."

Nio read about V-Day, then in its third year, and was determined to bring an event to Orange County. He decided to utilize Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues," which debuted in 1996 in off-Broadway performances.

The show runs about 100 minutes and costs \$20.

Nio solicited the help of Emily Germano and Shannah Laumeister, who are directing the Newport Beach production.

Germano, 20, auditioned for the show when it played at Glendale Community College, where she is a second-year student.

She has two roles in the 11-woman show, which she describes as a mix of drama and comedy, most relating to issues of women's empowerment.

Germano said she plans to address the audience at the end of the play about a range of topics, including the mission of V-Day.

"I'm passionate about issues in the play," she said. "I want to let people know what's going

IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** "The Vagina Monologues"
- **WHEN:** 7:30 tonight
- **WHERE:** Regency Lido Theater, 3459 Via Lido, Newport Beach
- **COST:** \$20
- **CONTACT:** (949) 619-8351 or (949) 903-1199

on in the world with domestic violence and sexual assault."

Germano said she was a victim of domestic violence as a child living in the Philippines.

Nio said he was inundated with verbal abuse when he was growing up in Indonesia. He said native Indonesians often yelled obscenities at Chinese Indonesians like himself.

"I got into a lot of street fights," he said. "I felt like I needed to protect myself."

So Nio, then a teenager, learned martial arts.

When he moved to Fullerton in 1986, Nio continued to practice the skill. In October, he started Shield, a women's self-defense program.

Nio, a mortgage banker, rented a gymnasium in Newport Beach and now runs six-week classes for groups of eight to 12 women. He takes

them through meditation exercises and a range of kung fu drills, especially elbow and knee strikes, he said.

The training focuses on balance, body alignment and breathing techniques. It includes an arrangement where a woman is blindfolded and surrounded by people acting as assailants.

"It simulates real attacks," he said. "The biggest thing they need to be comfortable with is the ability to fend off the freeze response."

San Juan Capistrano resident Veronica Orosco was a student of the class.

"I wasn't aware of how critical it is to protect myself," she said. "When he [Nio] started talking about self defense, I thought about all the times I have walked alone."

Orosco and Nio said they hope to see the day when self-defense training isn't necessary.

For now, though, they say events like V-Day and programs like Shield are the best educational tools.

"It's a chance for people to learn about the realities of violence and abuse in this county," Nio said.