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A CurtainUp Review The Sensuous Woman

By [Simon Saltzman](#)

I don't like anal. — Margaret Cho



Margaret Cho
(Photo: Carol Rosegg)

Margaret Cho's *The Sensuous Woman* is a burlesque styled vaudeville revue that is all about sex, sexuality, sexual preferences, transsexuals, pansexuals, homosexuals and sexual homos. As conceived by and starring Cho and featuring a few others, this outspoken unconventional revue, under the direction of Randall Rapstine, is a mixed bag of self-congratulatory striptease and stultifying comedy routines.

The Korean-American comedienne's mission to support equal rights for all regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity is a wonderful thing and gets my vote. She who has suffered from the effects of an eating disorder and a distorted body image for her entire life has plenty of chutzpah and demonstrates commendable daring and more in the face of a persistently resistant culture. Neither is she afraid to put her impressive collection of tattoos on display, even a xxx accessory on a body part that isn't often exposed on stage.

Cho, a social activist who uses trenchant comedy to make her point, headlines a company of the most unusual entertainers you could ever hope to see, most of whom also get to show us everything they've got. The revue on stage at the funky Zipper Theater is best described as a kind of Cirque du Salacious. Known for her frank and funny discourses that embrace and encourage women's sense of self and sensuality, Cho's inclination to have sex with women doesn't preclude having sex with her husband. She can be said to be standing up for coming out of the closet (pardon the cliché) and also going down on whomever you like.

There is, to the delight of her predominantly gay audience, an emphasis on celebrating the variables and vicissitudes of gay men and lesbian women in all their transparent and transitional glory. In this outing, Cho focuses her perspective primarily on the celebration of women's bodies, all kinds—his, even to the point of approving of Britney Spears. "Leave Britney alone," she screams in defense of the singer's recently plumped up body. Real politics and a politician like Senator Larry Craig gets only a passing lick and tumble. "There are no gays in Iran. If there are, they are hung," says Cho quoting Iran's President Mamoud Ahmedinejad in one of her all-too brief monologues. With that exception, there aren't many skits and shtick that depend on a double entendre.

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For the most part, all the acts give it to us straight; well, not exactly, as the revue is basically a rather crude carnival of naked and near-naked souls. What better way is there to celebrate the body than by stripping? Out of a perambulator jumps a decidedly vertically-challenged woman Selene Luna, who I'm guessing is about three-feet tall. To the accompaniment of traditional bump and grind music, she peels off her baby clothes down to her red pasties to the delight of the whooping and hollering audience. In contrast, is the exceedingly zaftig Miss Dirty Martini, who, decked out like an American Flag and holding the scales of justice, bumps it with a gimmick that I don't have the nerve to describe. Then there is Ryan Heffington, the revue's only male stripper, who makes you wonder why.

Cho is no slouch when it comes to the b and g and, with no apologies to the renowned fan dancer Sally Rand, she uses two large feathered fans to advantage to the strains of Wagner's "Liebestodt." Her funniest number has her outfitted in full military dress as Chairman MeeOw (Mao) and performing the traditional Chinese ribbon dance, as a prelude to a peeling in which she dexterously twirls a set of red tassels.

Unfortunately, it's the comic talent that Cho has surrounded herself with that begs our indulgence. Kurt Hall is a gay rapper who should take the rap for his routine. Looking and sounding like a valley girl on Quaaludes, Liam Sullivan performs two awful songs, one in which the word "shoes" is repeated to death, and the other in which "Can I borrow that top," gets the same grating amount of repetition. Diana Yanez pops in and out (literally) as a Spanish maid. Then there is an Oz-ified Princess Farnana, as Dorothy and Ian Harvie, as a flying monkey. . . oh, never mind. Just know that what you are getting here is something you won't see on TV. . .yet.

In many ways, Kitty McNamee's in-your-face choreography (did Minsky call it that?) was the best part of the revue.

Margaret Cho's The Sensuous Woman

By Margaret Cho

Directed by Randall Rapstine

Cast: Margaret Cho, Princess Farhana, Kurt Hall, Ian Harvie, Ryan Heffington, Kelly, Selene Luna, Diana Yanez, Miss Dirty Martini

Choreography by Kitty McNamee

Set Designer: Steven Capone

Lighting Designer: Josh Monroe

Running Time: 1 hour 30 minutes no intermission

The Zipper Factory, 336 West 37th Street (212) 352- 3101 or (866) 811-4111 (toll free) or www.thezipperfactory.com

Tickets (\$45 & \$55)

Performances: Wednesday to Saturday

From 9/26/07; opening 10/06/07; closing 11/03/07 -- an extension from 10//26/07 before the official opening.

Review by Simon Saltzman based on performance 10/04/07

