

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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## Funny transcends gender

**COMEDY**  
**MICHAEL POSNER**

**Women Fully Clothed**  
At the Winter Garden Theatre  
In Toronto on Thursday  
Rating: ★★½

**Y**ou only have four days left to catch *Women Fully Clothed*, the sketch comedy show playing at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre. I offer that advisory up front because, if you have a chance to see the five women responsible for this delightful evening — Robin Duke, Kathryn Greenwood, Teresa Pavlinek, Jayne Eastwood and Debra McGrath — you certainly won't regret it. If there's a group of finer comediennees working these days, I'm not aware of them.

The show is a remount, back by popular demand. Created largely in improv sessions, it played some out-of-town venues last spring and enjoyed a short, well-reviewed run, also at the Winter Garden Theatre. There are plans, apparently, to take it on the road and give it a national exposure it surely deserves.

Given the cast's composition and the title, the objects of this gentle satire are, not entirely surprisingly, issues that women are all too familiar with: book clubs, Oprah, difficult mothers, mammograms, psychics, shopping, therapists who only want to talk about themselves, feeling trapped in suburbia with two young kids and no sex — all of it recognizably drawn from the bitter-sweet world we now inhabit. Although the audience on opening night was, by my reckoning, 95-per cent female, this is not remotely an exercise in male bashing.



Kathryn Greenwood, left, and Teresa Pavlinek are two of the top-notch comediennees starring in the sketch show *Women Fully Clothed*.

Besides, funny transcends gender.

The writing here is sharp and the characterizations, though broad, ring true.

All of the women, veterans of

stage, film and television, shine.

I was particularly impressed by Robin Duke's Mona, the definitive stalking saleswoman who, all expressions of encouragement aside, is determined to sabotage Green-

wood's attempt to buy low-slung jeans — "for my son's soccer tournament next week."

In a single phone call, McGrath brilliantly captures the love-hate component of relationships with her mother and grandmother.

Pavlinek offers two small gems, first as one of those insipid movie-theatre attendants charged with introducing the film (in this case a new film by Atom Egoyan, *My Long, Slow Walk into Death*), as well as a fine Margaret Atwood impression: She turns up at a women's book club evening with the line, delivered with the writer's characteristic husky-nasal voice, "Sorry I'm late. I was just accepting another Giller Prize."

Eastwood, who seems to have most of the show's best one-liners and thus harvests some of the largest laughs, does a very nice turn as a fiftysomething woman, starting over at the Second Chance Club by reading her own poetry. "I am a sexual huntress. . . I crave the wiener like a dog craves the bone."

Greenwood perfectly embodies the sentiments of a trapped suburban mother who bumps into Rachel (Pavlinek), a bohemian, world-travelling old college friend working in a vegan restaurant.

When Rachel recounts the scariest 10 minutes of her life (being held up on a bus in Tibet), Greenwood counters: "The scariest 10 minutes of my life were in Fabri-land."

In sum, this is a memorable evening of sketch comedy. *Women Fully Clothed* leaves its audience fully satisfied.

*Women Fully Clothed* continues at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre tonight and Dec. 1, 2 and 3 (416-314-2901).