

As someone who has experienced abuse and self-mutilation, howes stresses what both men and women have to learn: the power to survive post-sexual abuse trauma comes from within. "One of the most important things for survival," howes suggests, "is for trauma sufferers to develop a strong personal philosophy so that we can live despite the evil in the world that caused our pain. Once that philosophy exists, we can start to build a healthy self-image and then work for positive change in the world. If this doesn't happen, the self destructive urges that may result from sexual abuse can last a lifetime."

"And while *mystics* is one woman's story, it deals with basic human conflicts: creation versus destruction; hope versus despair; life versus death – these are the issues all men and women must address in their lives," howes says. This woman's story may represent one voice but it is a voice drawn from community, a particular life but a common soul."

The approach *mystics* takes to speak to abuse is worth noting. To bring the audience closer to the inner workings of trauma and the psychological maze controlling the central character's life, howes has constructed a complex weave of video, sound, music, dance and theatre. Poetry, scenes, monologues and a disturbing video dream sequence help to paint the haunting picture of a life in chaos. *Mystics* looks inside the tragedy of abuse from everyone's perspective.

Once pain exists, what can we do to stop it? The question is before us. The consequences of ignoring it are all around us. Are we ready, finally, to take the first step, then let the next ones follow? Can we do more than point fingers at abuse victims for their malaise? In human terms, can we afford any longer not to?

Should you want more information, to help, or to present *mystics* to a community you love, call 874-6212 in Vancouver. ☎

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