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Not-so-right feeling at concert for women

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YOU are a fighter of women's rights and naturally you do not tolerate any injustice towards women. But in an effort to raise funds, you organise a concert which unwittingly has an item which pokes fun at women. Not politically correct is it, even if the "jokes" are directed at certain quarters.

This was basically what happened at the All Women's Action Society's (AWAM) fundraising concert - "Break the Silence! Celebrating Women's Voices" last week where Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir was the patron.

The organisation - which has been campaigning for Violence Against Women for the past 10 years - had invited Instant Cafe Theatre who did a spoof of the Sound of Music number "My favourite Things".

With improvised lyrics, the performing trio - Sandra Sodhy, Shantini and Sukania Venugopal - had unwittingly belittled women, by playing the parts of rich ladies who had philandering husbands, who didn't care what their husbands were up to or who they had affairs with, as long as they were given money to shop, shop, shop.

No doubt their little musical sketch drew laughs but there were also those in the crowd who were displeased with their antics.

The group's next performance again showed women in a not-so-favourable light when it featured two not-too-bright women. One was a politician and the other a beauty queen, who planned a far-fetched alliance to help women in their causes.

Maybe it was just a fun skit, a comment on current politics. But why was it that only the women were made to look like fools and become the subject of scorn and ridicule at a special night for women?

Thankfully, there were also some fine, "more appropriate" items.

This included a splendid poem recital, written by Ann Lee (who was the host that night) entitled This Thing Called Rape, well-delivered by Jit Murad and Arfah Abdullah.

The duo, in an easy, light-hearted manner, expressed their concern of how rape cases are treated by society.

In a call to find a cure for rape, the duo were actually caustic towards policy makers and society at large. Through the poem, they impressed that rape is not to be taken lightly as how it is being tackled today.

Jit and Arfah emphasised that the fight against rape should be made a national priority.

"Why not let Malaysia be known as the country to have succeeded in eliminating rape for all times, by the year 2020 maybe?" the duo suggested.

Another inspirational performance was by The Shakti Dances. They did three dances on domestic violence, sexual harrassment and on a relationship between man and woman.

Of the three, the first performance was the most absorbing. It portrayed a woman who was often sexually abused by her husband, who wanted to run away but was afraid to go out on her own.

She leaves but ends up returning home again, enduring the pain and torture of her violent, abusive husband and suffering in silence behind closed doors. The performance drove home a strong message.

The night ended with singer Prema Lucas showing off her singing prowess and rendering several numbers.

All in all, it was a pleasant night of entertainment but it would have

been more meaningful had the organisers been more focused, and not just
let anything pass in order to get the laughs.

(END)