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ACTRESS ANTONIA PREBBLE AND AUTHOR KATE HOLDEN'S CURRENT WORKS BOTH INVOLVE INTIMATE AND GRAPHIC DISCUSSIONS OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

"A Paris, chaque coin était une photo," said Loretta West as she takes a hearty sip of her flat white. Then, she begins to recount exciting tales of her time in France, cycling through long, leafy streets and visiting *les marchés*. It soon becomes clear that Loretta West is a cerebral, good-natured sort with a terrific grasp of the French language. Well, the *real* Loretta West that is.

The real Loretta West goes by the name of Antonia Prebble, a fun and amicable human being who will readily conduct half an interview in French. As a young girl, Prebble, now 26 years old, wanted nothing more than to become an actress, or, if she was particularly lucky, a supermarket checkout girl. It so happened that she took up the former and soon scored various TV gigs such as *The Tribe*, a deliciously curious and addictive show set in a post-apocalyptic world ruled by teenagers. But the role for which she is now best known is that of *Outrageous Fortune*'s resident bitch, Loretta West.

Evidently, Prebble is no stranger to the unconventional. So, it's hardly a surprise that her latest project is *The Vagina Monologues*. Okay, it is a little surprising. No matter how renowned an actress is for her daring roles, one is still a little taken aback when she decides to star in a production all about female genitalia. That sort of thing takes balls, or in this case, a vagina. Prebble, who harbours no qualms about the subject herself, admits she is very much aware that just the title can make some a little squeamish. As a teenager, Prebble attended *The Vagina Monologues* when it was last performed in her hometown of Wellington several years ago and recalls the actresses sharing stories about their privates "as though it was the weather."

This sort of enviable thespian ease makes you wonder: 'How do actors do it? How does a young Meryl Streep conquer the screen as a conflicted Sophie? How does a Bette Davis command heartstrings as an aging Eve? And how will Antonia Prebble wow us with her vagina monologue?' Prebble ponders this question for a while and finally decides that it is "a play that will stretch both its cast and its viewers." In spite of being demanding in both its subject matter and structure, Prebble describes *The Vagina Monologues* as an uplifting, "feel good play" that implants an I-am-woman-hear-me-roar sensation in the viewers. Men are also allowed to feel a little roar-y, of course.

For that matter, how roar-y is Antonia Prebble and why does she keep getting offered oddball, eccentric roles? Prebble laughs and adds, "I always have babies on-screen too. I don't know what that's about. Clearly, I'm a weirdo, and bound to childbearing." Then, she becomes more serious. "I guess I like characters who are complex and multi-faceted. To me, they're more interesting, and to play them is a constant discovery." For the average *Outrageous Fortune* viewer who is used to seeing a conniving Loretta West curse and behave in a very anti-social manner, one of the most remarkable things is to see Antonia Prebble behave in the exact opposite fashion.

Yes, Prebble is one talented lady. Whether in a theatre or on television, she has shown she has the chops to steal any show. Of course, actors who dabble in both theatre and film tend to arouse curiosity about which realm they prefer. For Prebble, such a 'this or that' concept does not exist as she is "equally comfortable, or, rather, uncomfortable" in both. In the end, it is a deep-rooted love of performing that drives her.

However, Prebble is no acting vegetable. The sheer quantity of 'hobbies' in which she indulges raises suspicions as to whether she possesses a Tardis of some sort, for sans Tardis, such a life seems too hectic to imagine. Presently, she is studying English literature at Massey University with a strong mind to take up *le Français* as well. For added intellectual stimulation, she takes a weekly philosophy course on top of her monthly book club meetings and her regular singing lessons.

Does this mean Prebble has her hopes set on becoming New Zealand's next top Aristotelian Francophone rockstar actress literary critic? No; for now, Prebble is more than happy with her job and cannot wait to get her hands on another challenging role. Without being too presumptuous, I say that if she can do vaginas, the girl can do anything. Interview Kelly Jin Image Stephen Langdon at Reload Agency Fashion Hannah Sim Makeup Amy Elgar for MAC Hair Richard Kavanagh *The Vagina Monologues* runs at *The Basement*, Auckland, from 25 August to 11 September.



ANTONIA WEARS BODYSUIT & DRESS BY LONELY HEARTS & VINTAGE SCARF & NECKLACE FROM FAST & LOOSE