



"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate: Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date..." said the Bard of his love.

If you don't know him by his nickname, maybe William Shakespeare will ring a bell. Or, maybe you know him as Terra Taylor Knudson does as "Willy." Willy, is her great love and she spins him a love letter like none other in her one-woman show, "Willy's Lil Virgin Queen;" which like summer's lease hath all too short a date. It has already come and gone from its too brief a run at the Garage Theatre last weekend.

Produced by Cat Elrod and Olio Theatre Works, directed by and developed with Jessica Lynn Johnson, Knudson tells the tale of her journey to find her inner strength through Shakespeare's words. From her first introduction as a girl at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival to her college days to her career on stage, we see her life through the lens of some of the greatest fictional females to ever be conjured with a quill. Throughout the all too brief 75 minutes, your head is left spinning as you experience her lifetime, British royal history, and glimpses into some of Shakespeare's best scenes and soliloquies.



Knudsen has that kind of grasp of the language that gives you a deeper access to the words. She speaks and the poetry is plain speech to your ear even as you are moved by the turn of phrase. It is no wonder that she has been awarded the 2005 “Distinguished Arts Professional of the Year” by the Arts Council for Long Beach. Likewise, the show itself has garnered the praise of others, winning multiple awards and making Knudson the featured guest artist at several local venues.

The show began as a 60-minute lecture on Shakespeare’s women that was given at libraries across Southern California and Colorado. In 2016, the lecture began to grow into the splendid tour-de-force that it is today. In 2017, it premiered in its current form at the Hollywood Fringe Festival, where it played to packed houses. There are plans to take it on tour, so there is hope that you too can enjoy this “buckle your seat belt” ride through parallel histories.

My only druther would be that I want a second act — and maybe more costume changes — and a more specific set. So, just more! I wanted more!!!

Most of the show involves the first part of Knudsen's life. I felt like we were headed toward even juicer stuff and I was absolutely happy to stay glued to my slightly uncomfortable chair for her. I didn’t care how long I sat there, I was in her spell and "Willy's" spell.

It takes a powerful talent to take on the greatest playwright and use his work to tell her story. It is an expansive story and I hope someday, when it comes back this way, to see it again. Maybe I will be allowed to spend even more time in the vortex of beautiful language spun by Terra Taylor Knudsen.

Alas, till then, I shall have my memories of this summer’s day.