

The Betty Show

Directed by Sara Melleri

Delta Venus & Kansallisteatteri

Synopsis in English

1. Betty prologue

The Betties go through memory lane reminiscing a time when they seduced a famous director in Chateau Marmont to get a role in *Rebel without a cause*. We learn that she doesn't shy away from using her feminine assets to get ahead in her career. Betty talks about an after-party where she insisted on having group sex in a bath tub filled with champagne, just like actress Natalie Wood had done, and Jean Harlow, and Marilyn Monroe. Betty lets us know that before *The Betty Show* is over, we will witness her bathing in 350 bottles of champagne which will fill this Tampere Theatre up to the roof.

Betty desires love, and sometimes that means arranging a champagne orgy. It's a pity that champagne can sting and cause a rash, too. Just like love.

2. Old actress interview

We hear a snippet of a real radio interview where the radio host interviews a theatre legend who will go unnamed. Tonight she's Betty. The radio host goes through Betty's impressive career from poetry nights to big stage roles and movies. Betty's praised as a diva, a goddess of Thalia and theatre, an incredible poet, Die Betty, La Betty.. we could praise her on and on.

In a long monologue, based on a real interview of a famous (now deceased) actress legend, Betty goes through her first audition trying to impress the men in a room wearing a fancy big hat. The men tell her to take the hat off, and she's embarrassed. Famous movie director Valentin Vaala gives Betty a gig, and her career takes off from there. We learn that Betty idolized her Theatre School principal Vilho, and that every word from his mouth was sacred to Betty. Betty plays a mute part, "a pale virgin maid", in a legendary play about seven brothers who live in the woods. She adores the charismatic male actors who get to play all the fun parts. Then she gets so carried away with her maid role, that she starts drinking every night after the show, and gets a "high" from each performance, that she wants to continue even after the play is over. She invites her male colleagues to get a night cap, and she gets really drunk and dreams of sex with one of them, but instead she wakes up alone in her own shit. Betty's ashamed and confused, and wants to get rid of the shit but she doesn't have a working washing machine. She goes to her friends' house to wash the dirty laundry and sings an aria out of Puccini's *Tosca*.

3. Pre-party

The Betties stumble to the stage and start reciting poetry in a drunken haze. The poetry is like lines out of a classic Turner movie. Betty wants to ride a horse, wants to be terribly happy, wants to get slapped and wants to get a drink. She's thinking about having a nervous breakdown, she wants to squeeze a lemon into your drink, she's sorry about your yacht, she wants to rage and go on a rampage, she's going to make out with you, it's been a long day and Betty is thirsty. One of the Betties is too drunk to participate in all of this.

4. Butoh Betty

Betty dances as we hear a real life recording of one of the actresses talking to her iphone after a long day of shooting and three hours of drinking wine after it. In the voice memo Betty analyzes her drinking, her voice has been distorted, and she comes to the conclusion that she loves wine, loves to get drunk, loves the feeling of a high right when you start drinking and the feeling that anything is possible. She loves how confident it makes her feel, and she loves her attitude and how outrageous she can get after drinking.

5. Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?

This scene is inspired by the movie, *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* which is about a tragic middle-aged couple who drink and fight and play games with a younger couple. Betty stumbles to her divan and dreams drunken dreams, and she starts going through some of the lines in the movie. She plays through all the parts in a messy way, fights with herself and basically acts with herself. She's trying to find her pills so that she could feel better. She wants to have a drink. She starts the party and she's exhilarated that the festivities start again!

6. Betty's Bongo Song

One of the Bettys, now wearing a fancy ringmaster jacket, is feeling good and wants everyone to know about it. She starts the party. She tells us that she's a "Malibu Betty" and that she drinks Malibu. She takes everything, and she takes everyone, and she gives her all to everybody. She tells us all the dances she can do: Lambada, ketchup song, lapdance and a waltz. Betty buys a round for everybody, she tells us that she's not poor, and she wants to sing karaoke, and she will never pass out.

7. Benzodiazepine Betty

We seem to be in some sort of Theatre gala, a gala (like Sag awards!) for theatre makers and actors, and another Betty, in a ringmaster coat, tells us that we're about to see a legendary performance. Kind of like in the first monologue, the host praises Betty and calls her a Priestess of Theatre, The Great Betty, La Betty and Die Betty again... Betty won't show up.. the host goes out to look for her as the music plays. Finally an intoxicated Betty crawls to the stage and can't even get up to her chair. She's given a microphone so that we could hear her famous monologue. Instead, Betty starts going through how much she has taken benzodiazepines with alcohol and how it's making her feel. She analyzes how tired she feels, how her eyes can't stay open, how her mouth is dry, and how she has many ideas, and how she also feels a little sad. She says that sometimes a night can have unexpected events, like tonight. Betty bursts into a song.

8. Aili Somersalmi

In the Finnish National Theatre was a famous and loved actress called Aili Somersalmi (1891-1962) who worked in the theatre with her actor husband, who ended up killing her with an axe that he got as a gift from the Association of Actors. This scene is dedicated to Aili. There have been rumors that her husband was an alcoholic, but we don't know, we weren't there. In this scene a haunted Aili wanders in the theatre, unable to get some rest. In the scene she sort of plays both her husband and herself. The ghost spooks herself, and sings, and runs in circles. Then she goes through some lines from one of her legendary plays in the mirror and looks at herself, and dances with herself as Betty does. The picture we see on the screen here is a real picture of Aili.

9. Betty's boyfriend

Betty jumps to the stage again and goes through her drunken night out in a disco. She trips down memory lane as she goes through the events leading to her being accepted to the Theatre School where she always wanted. She sees a boy in the disco that she finds hot. She lets us know that she'd like to let him fuck her. Her friends are trying to warn her, because the boy has a girlfriend, but Betty doesn't care. Betty plays the boy and herself, as she goes through the events. They end up fucking at the boys' house where his mom sleeps in the next room, and where they have a stinky drooling dog. Betty doesn't care. She wakes up in the morning as the boy vomits all over her! The boys' mom knocks and comes into the room (played by Betty), and cleans up after her son. Betty and the boy fuck again. They both try to get into the theatre school. Betty gets in, the boy does not, and he throws a tantrum. Betty calls the boy, and he's out drinking and crying because he didn't get into the school. The boy

accuses Betty of getting into the school by showing her tits to the judges. Betty bursts into a song.

10. The Betty Talkshow

This scene is based on a real womens talkshow on tv, where a hang-overed host plays a sort of interviewer/lousy therapist to her guests with multiple problems. The text in the scene is a transcript of one of the episodes about women and alcoholism. The idea of the show is that the guests bring “treats” or desserts that they all eat together while drinking huge amounts of coffee, and going through serious issues. In this scene all of them are Betties, of course. The two Betties are guests, recovered alcoholics, who go through how they started (as teeangers), how they’ve dabbled with marijuana, and how they’ve made cakes by recipes their daughters have given to them. The other Betty has found solace in nature, the other Betty started when she was 12 and then she ended up being married to men who were unable to be fathers to her children. The bottle was her only friend at night while watching tv while the children slept. The host is inconsiderate and she doesn’t really listen. She tells the recovering Betties that they are not “normal people” and she shames them between the lines.

11. Stay-at-home Betty

We see the Betty from the previous talkshow spending a normal night at home while her kids are sleeping. She’s watching a reality show from tv where has-been singers sing each others songs. Betty tells us that she’s bored and that it has always been hard for her to stay at home on a friday night. “Life is mostly boring”, her mother tells her but she doesn’t care. Betty remembers that she has something exciting in the bathroom. She left “it” there the night before. She tries to resist the urge and says that she will save it for another night. She gets more wine and listens to some music.

She changes her mind and wants to get “it” from the bathroom. It’s not that bad, she tells herself. She wants to feel more alive, more awake.

Betty gets the cocaine and jumps into the champagne bath.

The other Betties arrive and they dance together ‘til the end.