

## CHEMO BARBIE



*Broadway World.com*

Cancer is a life-changing experience for the (sadly) increasing number of people who get the disease and have to endure a combination of surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy. It is not uncommon for cancer stories to be told by former patients in order to educate others to empathise with those going through treatment. Heather Keller brings her personal story to the Edinburgh Fringe in a solo theatre piece, Chemo Barbie.

The piece features a montage of multimedia, from photos, to real-life video footage and audio from her period of treatment from 2015 onwards to complement Keller's monologues as both herself and characters involved in her survival story. Keller creatively anonymises individuals she interacted with as the emotions she associated with them during her treatment - from her responsive friends as "Peace" and "Tranquillity", to a consultant called "Dr. Fates" (they had control over her future) and a neglectful friend "Narcissicist". She honestly shares the truth she discovered that cancer and other major life events show who your real friends are.

Keller recounts breast reconstructive surgery consultancies, cold-capping sessions overseen by her loyal husband in order to keep her hair after chemotherapy, and how she now lives in response to being a breast cancer survivor. She closes by sharing the reality of always being under surveillance and never really being "cured"; and how she and her husband have handled family planning, showing that life does go on for many cancer patients, proving it is no longer always the death sentence it is stereotypically perceived as. She urges the audience to make the most of the time they currently have, as you never know when the cancer pause button on life will be pressed.

Chemo Barbie is a touching reflection on one woman's survival story. It educates and is almost therapeutic (for other patients no doubt) to hear a creative candid account of life with cancer.