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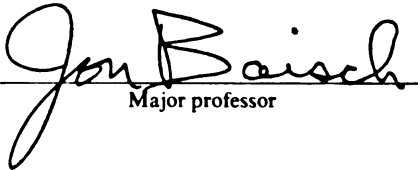
ALONE ON STAGE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ACTING
CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS, PROBLEMS AND TECHNIQUES
INHERENT TO THE PERFORMANCE OF ONE-PERSON SHOWS

presented by

James Dale Ryan

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

PhD degree in Theatre


Major professor

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ALONE ON STAGE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ACTING
CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS, PROBLEMS AND TECHNIQUES INHERENT TO
THE PERFORMANCE OF ONE-PERSON SHOWS

By

James Dale Ryan

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ABSTRACT

ALONE ON STAGE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ACTING
CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS, PROBLEMS AND TECHNIQUES INHERENT TO
THE PERFORMANCE OF ONE-PERSON SHOWS

By

James Dale Ryan

Actors are turning to the one-person show in ever-increasing numbers. The lure of added financial stability and creative autonomy are but two of the principal reasons. While this performance genre reaches back to antiquity, little research has been done into the performance methodology employed by the solo actor. It is the aim of this study to illuminate considerations, concerns, problems and techniques which may be viewed as inherent to the acting of a one-person show. For the purposes of the investigation, one-person show is defined as a theatrical presentation that is scripted and spoken, and that has character, form, a unifying theme or subject and is performed by one person. Terms such as solo acting, solo performing, solo performance and monodrama are used synonymously. Stand-up comedy, performance art, variety acts and strictly musical

productions are excluded, as are largely unscripted, personal-reflection, autobiographical monologues.

Through a series of in-depth interviews, noted actors including Brian Bedford, Pat Carroll, the late Colleen Dewhurst, Julie Harris, Hal Holbrook, Madeleine Sherwood, Silvia Miles and Robert Vaughn, as well as directors, teachers and theorists such as Charles Nelson Reilly, Robert Benedetti, Robert Cohen and Michael Kahn offer unique insights into the demands of solo performing. Related considerations, concerns and problems revealed by the interview respondents have been grouped into inclusive Focus Areas which are examined in the analysis of the data. The Focus Areas are: FOCUS AREA I: ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS, FOCUS AREA II: GENERATING AND MAINTAINING ENERGY AND CONCENTRATION, FOCUS AREA III: ACHIEVING VARIETY, FOCUS AREA IV: BEING ALONE ON STAGE, FOCUS AREA V: MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE/MAINTAINING A 'THIRD EYE', FOCUS AREA VI: IDIOSYNCRATIC CONCERNS.

The study discloses those considerations, concerns and problems central to solo performance and describes techniques to address them. The one-person show is a significant element in the fabric of American theatre. It is, therefore, important to understand what is distinctive to it.

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To Grandma, In Loving Memory

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I am grateful to the actors and theorists who volunteered their time during extensive interviews. Their candor and insight constitute the heart of this study.

Fond thoughts go to Dr. Joseph Earley of Loyola Marymount University for his friendship, council, and immeasurable assistance. And to all the Pacers, my thanks for their help in teaching me the meaning of endurance. Long may they run.

Finally, with deepest sincerity and appreciation I acknowledge my mother, my late father, my brother and his family, and my aunt for their love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II	
METHODOLOGY.....	19
CHAPTER III	
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.....	40
FOCUS AREA ONE: ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS....	40
FOCUS AREA TWO: GENERATING AND MAINTAINING ENERGY AND CONCENTRATION.....	94
FOCUS AREA THREE: ACHIEVING VARIETY.....	106
FOCUS AREA FOUR: BEING ALONE ON STAGE.....	121
FOCUS AREA FIVE: MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE/MAINTAINING A 'THIRD EYE'.....	136
FOCUS AREA SIX: IDIOSYNCRATIC CONCERNS.....	145
CHAPTER IV	
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	167
APPENDIX	
REGIONAL THEATRE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE and HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS.....	181
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	185

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1	
CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS and PROBLEMS MATRIX.....	36
TABLE 1	
(cont'd)	37

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1	
FOCUS AREA DESIGNATION.....	38

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

...you have to have a talented person who brings all the ocean of their experience with other actors to this, because the one-person play is definitive, what the theatre is about...what is possible for that which is known as an actor to do. It is what an actor is supposed to do and any actor can grow in this form...if you just believe it...if you really take your soul and heart and put it out there and sell what you're selling.¹

___Charles Nelson Reilly

An actor, standing alone, attempting to interest, entertain, educate or inspire an audience, is a theatrical tradition which pre-dates the dawn of tragedy. He or she ventures forth with nothing save a passionate belief in the material, a fervent desire to communicate it, faith in his or her abilities, and the courage to face such a challenge. In the seventh century BC, long before Aeschylus added a second actor to dramatic presentations, Solon, in the guise of a foreign traveller, burst into an Athenian market place and delivered an impassioned performance of his elegiac poem, Salamis, to a startled citizenry, warning them of the impending Persian threat. This was indeed a one-man

performance--solo recitation blended with impersonation--involving interplay between performer and spectators. The *rhapsodes* of the sixth century BC were individual performers: lone oral readers of Homeric poetry. It may also be safe to surmise that due to the absence of a second actor with whom to relate, Thespis, the first actor, the first *hypokrites* or 'answerer,' incorporated a considerable amount of presentational, direct-address interaction with the audience in his primitive dramas as well as the reactive, responsorial interplay between himself and the chorus.

The lineage of the one-person show continued with Rome's emphasis upon and appreciation for an oral tradition which included storytelling as well as the display of rhetorical skill. As John S. Gentile indicates in Cast of One,² throughout northern and western Europe, following the fall of the Empire, another type of solo performer thrived: the saga singer. In Germanic territories, the *scop* wove his tales of heros from Teutonic lore and by so doing won an honored place in society. In France, that itinerant medieval entertainer, the *jongleur*, proved his worth in juggling, acrobatics, music and recitation. And yet another troubadour, the *trouvère*, flourished from the eleventh century to the fourteenth, composing and presenting primarily narrative works.

The tradition of solo performance has been carried forth unbroken to the present. In the eighteenth century Samuel

Foote presented The Diversions of the Morning, George Stevens offered the immensely popular Lecture Upon Heads, and Charles Mathews toured with his humorous At Homes series of character portrayals. While Charles Dickens presented the most acclaimed one-person show of the nineteenth century, The Public Readings of Charles Dickens, many other performers, including Edgar Allan Poe, Anna Cora Mowatt, Fanny Kemble, Charlotte Cushman, and Mark Twain were extremely successful with solo tours, thus contributing to an era which has been referred to as The Golden Age of Platform Performances.³

Many of these one-person shows were readings or lecture-style presentations involving little acting as such. However, their link in the evolutionary chain of this genre is undeniable. The early twentieth century saw the rise and eventual collapse of the Lyceum and Tent Chautauqua circuits, forums used primarily for the presentation of touring one-person shows, and the emergence of solo performing as a legitimate form of theatre. In the second quarter of the century, such performers as Cissie Loftus, Ruth Draper, Cornelia Otis Skinner and Charles Laughton brought increased critical acclaim to and public acceptance of the genre. It has continued to proliferate in varying forms. Emlyn Williams, Hal Holbrook, James Whitmore and Robert Morse performed biographical one-person shows. John Gielgud, Ian McKellen and Brian Bedford paid homage to Shakespeare in solo presentations. Spalding Gray has laid bare his personal life

in autobiographical confessions. Julie Harris, Pat Carroll and Eileen Atkins have provided insights into the private thoughts of well known women of letters. And Lily Tomlin and Whoopi Goldberg are skilled monologuists in the tradition of Draper and Skinner.⁴ The monodrama is indeed becoming an increasingly evident thread in the fabric of theatrical expression.⁵

Why has the one-person show become such a popular vehicle for actors? One obvious answer is an increased opportunity for financial stability. As Jordon Young states:

Actors are especially conscious of being numbers. The Screen Actors Guild and Actors Equity, the stage actors' union, have a combined membership of approximately 100,000 members. With 85-90% of their number out of work, the one-man show has become a hedge against unemployment, a do-it-yourself pension plan and a ticket out of the rut.⁶

____Jordon Young

Hal Holbrook would seem to agree, as the following statement indicates:

I just worked on this solo thing because I thought it was potentially a good idea and I thought I could get some bookings and I thought it could help me earn a living. I mean, you know, the need to earn a living is a tremendous motivating factor.⁷

____Hal Holbrook

Beyond the financial considerations, however, actors find that in a profession where they rarely ever completely gain control over the direction of their careers, the one-person show affords them artistic autonomy. It provides the opportunity to create something that is uniquely their own,

that is reflective of their sensibilities and talents and is consequently immensely rewarding. As Hal Holbrook relates:

[the show] is a direct connection with my brain...I know exactly what I need, or I think I know what I need. It is not somebody else who will say to himself as he is researching for me, I think what he wants is this, or maybe this is a good. You know, you cut the middleman out.⁸

____Hal Holbrook

Canadian director Clarke Rogers states, "Actors are the labor corps of the theatre. But more and more people want their own personal input, and unless you're a director, you don't really feel that you have much control."⁹ William Windom, who toured with a one-person show based on the life of humorist James Thurber, offers the following observation:

[the one-person show] is more efficient and quick. The job gets done more efficiently, and you don't have to worry if Sally has a runny nose or if someone's made the dinner reservations. In fact, the addition of human beings, whether they're playing tennis or raising children, brings additional problems.¹⁰

____William Windom

But on the road to greater financial security and artistic control, what are the problems or pitfalls that the would-be solo performer or even the seasoned veteran might encounter? What abilities must the actor possess? What specific considerations should he or she address prior to stepping onto the stage alone? Which skills will be taxed or which special demands need to be met during performance? These are among the questions explored in this examination of the acting of one-person shows.

The general subject matter of this dissertation is performance methodology. The specific purpose of the study is to reveal considerations, concerns, problems and areas of emphasis in the preparation and the presentation of one-person shows which are common to the experience and sensibilities of expert performers and theorists and consequently may be assumed to be inherent to this type of presentation. It will also discuss techniques employed by these noted professionals to address their concerns and considerations. The study does not, however, presume that the areas of investigation are found solely in one-person shows and are not applicable to traditional ensemble performing, only that different dynamics and dimensions with respect to these considerations, concerns, problems and techniques exist within this form of theatre. Uta Hagen writes in her introduction to Respect for Acting, "I teach acting as I approach it--from the human and technical problems which I have experienced through living and practice."¹¹ Through the experiences and practices of acknowledged experts, it is the aim of the current investigation to shed light on the performance demands and techniques of this growing entertainment genre.

For the purposes of this study, one-person show is defined as: a theatrical presentation that is scripted and spoken, and that has character, form, a unifying theme or subject and is performed by one person. Terms such as solo

acting, solo performing, solo performance and monodrama refer to the one-person show. Stand-up comedy, performance art, variety acts and strictly musical performances are excluded from consideration. While in no way discounting the immense creativity, vitality, and spontaneity needed to maintain audience interest during extended, often unscripted personal reflection, autobiographical monologuists such as Spalding Gray (Swimming to Cambodia), Paul Linke (Time Flies When You're Alive), Shane McCabe (No Place Like Home), Reno (Reno: Once Removed), and Jackie Mason (The World According to Me) fall outside the focus of the current investigation.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that there are considerations, concerns, and problems which seem to be generic to the preparation and performance of a one-person show. And that there are specific techniques which may be used to address these considerations, concerns and problems. Therefore the two basic questions the study will pose are:

1. What are the considerations, concerns, and problems which commonly arise when preparing and performing a one-person show?
2. What are techniques which may be used to address them?

There is an increasing awareness that actors are performing one-person shows in escalating numbers. As John S. Gentile writes, "During the nearly forty-year period following 1950, the one-person show has enjoyed a popularity

reminiscent of the popularity of platform readings during the Victorian age."¹² Jordon Young refers to acting solo as "a growing trend."¹³ The more probable reasons for this proliferation have previously been mentioned. In addition, theatre managers and/or artistic directors often find the one-person show an inviting and fiscally sound alternative to increasingly expensive conventional theatrical productions. David Richards of the New York Times offers the following observation:

I always assumed the one-person show was the theater's way of dealing with the shrinking dollar. You really can't get more basic--a performer, a platform, a text....Economics, of course, is not to be discounted....The new penury is upon us. The city is cutting back on services, department stores on their inventories, restaurants on the \$50 entrees. It follows that the theater would scale back, too....¹⁴

____David Richards

William Luce, in discussing the one-person show, states:

...I think it's here to stay. Well, for one reason it's so economical. The theatre has become so expensive and producing a play is just astronomical now. Besides that, I think it's pure theatre. To me, it's what poetry is. It's to conventional theatre what poetry is to prose. It's the essence of drama and if you have a gifted, brilliant... performer...it can be just as entertaining as a monster musical. I do think it's here to stay....¹⁵

____William Luce

In the fall of 1990, Dr. Joseph Earley, Econometrician (Economic Statistician) at Loyola Marymount University, an acknowledged expert in statistical analysis; Dr. Archie Calise, Higher Education officer at The City University of

New York, a specialist in research and analysis of questionnaire data; and this writer conducted a stratified sample of Artistic Directors of regional theaters throughout the United States. One hundred and sixty-one questionnaires were mailed in which the following questions were asked:

1. Do you present, or have you presented in the past, one-person shows at your theatre?
2. If you have presented one-person shows, in the past ten years approximately how many have you presented?
3. Do you regularly consider one-person shows in selecting your season's schedule?
4. Do any of your actors perform or have they performed one-person shows?
5. Are you presenting more one-person shows at your theatre now than ten years ago? More than five years ago?
6. In your estimation is the one-person show an increasingly popular form of theatre? If yes, can you explain this increase?

The analysis of the survey data consisted of classic hypothesis-testing procedures involving correlations, regression analysis (study of the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables with the idea of estimating and forecasting relationships), chi-square analysis (used to correlate qualitative variables such

as geographic areas), and cross-tabulations. This survey, however, focused on the Z-Test for determining significance of a proportion when the sample size is more than thirty, as is the case in this instance. Its pivotal question was: **In your estimation is the one-person show an increasingly popular form of theatre?** Seventy artistic directors responded to this question. Twenty-eight answered 'yes' and forty-two answered 'no'. Of those who replied, forty percent responded positively. By using the Z-Test, which develops a ninety-five percent interval for the 'true proportion' (in this case all the LORT artistic directors) it was determined that a ninety-five percent certainty existed that the 'true percentage' of LORT artistic directors who believe that the one-person show is an increasingly popular form of theatre is between thirty (29.9) and fifty (50.1) percent and is consequently statistically significant. The test also revealed that the probability of a forty percent positive response being statistically insignificant is effectively zero (p-value for this test is 0.000000000001). (For complete Hypothesis Testing Results see the Appendix). Thus, a significantly large group of professionals believe that this genre is increasingly popular. It can safely be said, therefore, that solo acting, the one-person show, occupies a prominent place in theatre today. For this reason it would seem incumbent upon artists and practitioners interested in the craft of acting to develop an awareness of what is

distinctive to it. This study is an attempt to explore an area of performance methodology which has largely been neglected and in so doing provide information to aid teachers, students, directors and actors in their approach to the one-person show.

Inquiry into solo presentation has been scant and in-depth exploration of acting procedures/considerations in this type of theatrical offering largely ignored. John S. Gentile has made important contributions toward an understanding of the history of the one-person show in America. His dissertation entitled The One-Person Show in America: From the Victorian Platform to the Contemporary Stage, written at Northwestern University in 1984, provides a thorough examination of the origins, evolution, and outstanding contributors to this performance genre. It is a chronological treatise divided into three major periods: the second half of the nineteenth century, the first half of the twentieth century, and from 1950 to the present. Reasons for the growth of the one-person show, such as Victorian antipathy to commercial theatre (platform performance was considered a non-theatre form of entertainment with considerable educational potential) and improvements in transportation (the railroad) are explained. The establishment of the Lyceum and Chautauqua Institution, the rise and fall of the tent Chautauqua circuits, and the eventual acceptance of the one-person show as a legitimate

type of theatrical presentation are discussed. Personalities profiled and their one-person shows described in detail include, among others, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Fanny Kemble, Charlotte Cushman, Robert McLean Cumnock (head of the Chautauqua Institution's Department of Elocution), Leland Powers, Mark Twain, Carl Sandburg, Ruth Draper, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Emlyn Williams (given considerable emphasis, including a reproduction of his personal log book of solo performances from 25 July 1951 to 16 October 1982), and Hal Holbrook. In addition, many other performers such as James Whitmore, Julie Harris and Spalding Gray are mentioned. The study concludes with implications for further research, including the observation that a deeper understanding of the actor's problems in the performance of one-person shows is warranted.

Gentile's book, Cast of One, published in 1989, parallels his dissertation quite closely. It offers, however, a greater selection of portraits of outstanding solo performers including Anna Cora Mowatt, Cissie Loftus, Dorothy Sands, and Charles Laughton. It also provides a more developed section on the biographical one-person show as well as a discussion of the autobiographical one-person show such as that presented by Spalding Gray and Quentin Crisp. There is an examination of the Shakespearean solo performer in which John Gielgud and Ian McKellen are profiled and also a description of Alec McGowen's recital of St. Mark's Gospel.

Contemporary monologists such as Lily Tomlin, Whoopi Goldberg and Eric Bogosian as well as writer-performers in the mold of Dylan Thomas are discussed. The book also includes a brief reference to direct presentation and the nature of the performer/audience relationship in which mention is made of Eunice Ruth Eifert's research (description to follow). Both of Gentile's works are history-based and history-focused with performance practices and techniques given minimal emphasis.

The Art of Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands Within the Tradition of Solo Performance, is a dissertation written by Linda Sue Long in 1982 at the University of Texas, Austin. Dr. Long profiles the lives and works of these three women who were among the most prominent monodramatists in the early twentieth century. She concludes that their major contribution to the art of solo performance was a demand for increased and specific audience/performer interaction, an objective shared by the majority of later twentieth-century actors presenting one-person shows.

Acting Solo by Jordon Young is largely a descriptive discussion written for popular consumption in which prominent one-person shows, their origins and evolution are examined. While not possessing the broad historical sweep of Gentile's studies, it does provide the reader with an introduction to and an understanding of the key players, shows and categories found in this type of theatre. Although performers offer

their impressions of the solo format, and some mention of technique is presented, in the main, acting considerations and methods, and performance theory are not central to the subject matter.

The Fourth-Wall Shattered: A Study of the Performer-Audience Relationship in Selected Full-Length Monodramas, is a dissertation completed in 1984 at the University of Minnesota by Eunice Ruth Eifert. In this descriptive analysis, the author investigates persona and how it relates to and is influenced by the audience. Persona is defined as character, realized and projected through word and action--a combination of the writer's vision and the voice, body, personality and sensibilities of the actor. It is the living entity seen and heard by the spectator. The study explores the role played by the audience in the successful projection of the actor's stage persona during the monodrama--a single performer portraying one character for two or more hours. Shows such as those performed by Ruth Draper and John Gielgud in which multiple characters or sketches are presented are excluded from Eifert's consideration. Although limited discussion concerning techniques employed for the realization of persona is included, as well as minimal references to performer problems, the core of the investigation is not actor-centered or methodological, but rather focuses on the persona actualized and the audience's experience watching, listening to and interacting with it.

The majority of critical literature concerning the one-person show has been descriptive not prescriptive. Generic performance methodology is not revealed. The focus of this investigation is upon specific acting considerations, concerns, problems, and techniques of one-person shows as revealed by noted professionals during extensive interviews. The study is designed to express the performer's and performance theorist's perspective and sensibilities.

Because of their notoriety, many of the interviewees included in this investigation have been the subject of a myriad of articles and interviews focusing on them as celebrities or upon productions in which they have appeared. Few, however, examine or extensively investigate their theories of solo performance. From a methodological standpoint, therefore, a great amount of research in the area of solo performance has not been done. Although many highly respected theorists and teachers of acting such as Uta Hagen in Respect for Acting, Stella Adler in The Technique of Acting, and Robert Cohen in Acting Power discuss techniques for the delivery of monologues and soliloquies, as well as brief observations concerning the actor/audience relationship, they do not specifically address the one-person show. It must, however, be brought to the reader's attention that as this study unfolds, concerns, considerations, problems, and techniques of solo performing such as vocal proficiency, energy, concentration, relaxation and the

elimination of tension or fear may also be found to exist in conventional theatre.

The roots of the one-person show reach back to antiquity. The popularity of the genre increased dramatically during the second half of the nineteenth century and is burgeoning once more as we approach the close of the twentieth. Because of the proliferation of this performance genre and the absence of research which addresses it from a methodological standpoint, it is the aim of this investigation to illuminate specific acting considerations, concerns, problems and techniques inherent to it. The study now continues with a discussion of the methodology which was employed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Charles Nelson Reilly, telephone interview, 8 August 1990.

²John S. Gentile, Cast of One: One Person Shows from the Chautauqua to the Broadway Stage (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1989) 3.

³ Gentile 3.

⁴ Gentile 169.

⁵ Much of this brief discussion concerning the history of the one-person show has been based on Gentile's study. For a full understanding of the history of the one-person show, his book, Cast of One, is highly recommended.

⁶Jordon Young, Acting Solo (Beverly Hills: Moonstone Press, 1989) 22.

⁷Hal Holbrook, telephone interview, 31 July 1990.

⁸Holbrook, telephone interview, '90.

⁹Quoted in Bruce McDougall, "The Bare Necessity of One-Man Shows," Performing Arts In Canada 17 (Summer, 1980): 30.

¹⁰Quoted in McDougall, "Bare Necessity," 30.

¹¹Uta Hagen, with Haskel Frankel, Respect for Acting (New York: Macmillan, 1973) 9.

¹²Gentile 118.

¹³Young 22.

¹⁴David Richards, "Secret Sharers: Solo Acts in a Confessional Age," New York Times 14 April 1991, sec. 2: 1+.

¹⁵William Luce, telephone interview, 24 August 1990.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The body of material which revealed those acting considerations, concerns, and problems deemed, by their frequency of occurrence, to be inherent to the performance of one-person shows has been gathered through a series of in-depth, tape-recorded telephone interviews. The interviews were conducted with noted, highly esteemed actors, theorists/instructors, writers and directors. Criteria for the selection of these professionals were: 1) artistic reputation, 2) an overall respected body of work (which in several cases has warranted their inclusion in The Oxford Companion to American Theatre), 3) accessibility (willingness to be interviewed and quoted), and, in the case of the actors, 4) the preparation and performance of one or more one-person shows. Interviewees include:

BRIAN BEDFORD

Noted Shakespearean actor and director, Mr. Bedford is a perennial favorite at Canada's Stratford Shakespeare Festival. His stage roles

are numerous and varied, including appearances in the Mike Nichols' production of The Knack (for which he received the Obie and New York Drama Desk Award) and School for Wives (for which he won the Tony Award for best actor). He has appeared in such television shows as Cheers, The Equalizer, and Murder, She Wrote. His acclaimed one-man Shakespeare show The Lunatic, The Lover, and The Poet has been presented throughout the country.

PAT CARROLL

Winner of an Emmy Award for the Sid Caesar Hour, Ms. Carroll has appeared in many television shows, films, Broadway, Off-Broadway and touring productions. In 1990, her performance as Sir John Falstaff in The Merry Wives of Windsor, directed by Michael Kahn at the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, was critically lauded. Her one-person show Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein won a Grammy Award, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award in 1980.

COLLEEN DEWHURST

The late Colleen Dewhurst was among the country's foremost performing artists, starring in all media during a professional career which spanned more than forty years and earned her a place in The Oxford Companion To American Theatre. Winner of

two Tony Awards and one Emmy, she was perhaps best known for her powerful portrayal of the women in the plays of Eugene O'Neill. Her one-woman show, My Gene, in which she played Carlotta O'Neill, was performed at the New York Shakespeare Festival as well as the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

JULIE HARRIS

One of America's most acclaimed performers, Ms. Harris is in the fifth decade of her illustrious career. She has been the recipient of five Tony Awards--the highest number ever accumulated by a performer. She was an Academy Award nominee for her performance of Frankie in the film version of Carson McCuller's The Member of the Wedding and played Abra, opposite James Dean, in Elia Kazan's adaptation of the John Steinbeck classic East of Eden. Her one-woman shows include The Belle of Amherst (Tony and Grammy Award winning performance), Brontë, and Lucifer's Child each of which were written by William Luce. She is included in The Oxford Companion To American Theatre.

HAL HOLBROOK

Mr. Holbrook has starred in more than twenty films and is the winner of four Emmy Awards for his performances in television productions ranging from

The Senator, to Sandburg's Lincoln, Pueblo and Portrait of America. He is currently a co-star in the series Evening Shade. He has appeared in many theatrical productions including Camelot, Henry IV, pt. 1, Richard II, and King Lear and is listed in The Oxford Companion To American Theatre. Mr. Holbrook ranks among the more seminal and influential of the great solo performers of the twentieth century. His one-man show, Mark Twain Tonight! has been acclaimed throughout the world and has been awarded an Obie, Vernon Rice and Tony Award as well as being nominated for an Emmy.

SILVIA MILES

A veteran of theatre, films and television, Ms. Miles was nominated for an Academy Award for her performance in Midnight Cowboy. She received a similar honor for Farewell My Lovely. Additional films include Crossing Delancy, Wall Street and Evil Under the Sun. Among the many television shows in which she has been featured are Miami Vice and The Equalizer. On the stage she has appeared in The Iceman Cometh with Jason Robards, The Kitchen with Rip Torn, The Night of the Iguana with Richard Chamberlain, A Stone For Danny Fisher with Zero Mostel as well as many other productions. Her

one-woman show, performed in April, 1981, was entitled, It's Me, Sylvia.¹

MADELEINE SHERWOOD

Ms. Sherwood has starred and been featured in eighteen original productions on Broadway, many off-Broadway and showcase plays. She has been featured in ten movies and countless television dramas, including a starring role in the series The Flying Nun with Sally Field. She has worked with major playwrights during the past three decades including Arthur Miller (The Crucible), Tennessee Williams (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof), Edward Albee (All Over), and John Osborne (Inadmissible Evidence). She conducts Master Classes in acting throughout the country. In her one-woman show, Edwina--Shared Memories, written by Patrick Brawford, she portrayed Tennessee Williams' mother.

ROBERT VAUGHN

Perhaps best known as The Man From U.N.C.L.E., Mr. Vaughn has appeared in over two hundred television programs including Washington: Behind Closed Doors for which he received an Emmy Award. His many feature films include Towering Inferno, S.O.B., Superman III, and The Young Philadelphians for which he was nominated for an Academy Award as best supporting actor. He earned a PhD in Mass

Communications from the University of Southern California in 1972. Mr. Vaughn holds the distinction of having portrayed four American presidents: Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Harry S. Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt who is the subject of his one-person show, F.D.R.

DR. ROBERT BENEDETTI

Dr. Beneditti received his PhD from Northwestern University. He has served as the Chair of Acting Programs at the Yale Drama School and the Theatre Program at York University in Toronto as well as being a Master Teacher at the National Theatre School of Canada at Montreal. From 1974 until 1980 he was the Dean of the School of Theatre at the California Institute of the Arts. He has also served at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art and the National Theatre Institute at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center. His publications include The Actor at Work, The Director at Work, and a section in Master Teachers of Theatre, "Zen in the Art of Actor Training." He currently functions as the President of Walkabout Productions and is now producing feature films and television.

DR. ROBERT COHEN

Dr. Cohen earned his PhD from the Yale School of Drama. He is currently the Chair of Drama at the University of California at Irvine. His publications include: Acting In Shakespeare, Acting Power, Theatre and Theatre Brief Edition, Eight Plays for Theatre, Creative Play Direction, Acting One, Giraudoux: Three Faces of Destiny, and Acting Professionally. His essays have appeared in Essays in Theatre, Contemporary Literary Criticism, The Drama Review, Theatre Journal and many other literary journals. He has directed throughout the country including at Yale, UC Irvine, Connecticut College, the Utah Shakespearean Festival, and the Image Theatre in Boston.

SABIN EPSTEIN

A noted director and teacher of acting, Mr. Epstein serves as Director of the Conservatory at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. His Main Stage productions include Tale of Two Cities, The Immigrant and Private Lives. He is a co-founder of the 29th Street Project in New York, and has directed for the Georgia, Oregon and Utah Shakespeare Festivals, the San Diego Rep, and the Skylight Opera in Milwaukee. He has been a guest director at the University of Washington, California

Institute of the Arts, and the New Zeland Drama School.

ARTHUR FRENCH

Mr. French teaches acting at the renowned Herbert Berghof (HB) studio in New York. An original member of the Negro Ensemble Company, he has appeared regionally at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and Louisville's Actor's Theatre. His Broadway productions include Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, You Can't Take It With You, Death of a Salesman, The Iceman Cometh, and The River Niger. On film, Mr. French can be seen in 'Round Midnight, Splash, Hanky Panky, and Car Wash. He has appeared in the television shows, Dress Gray, The Gentleman Bandit, and Another World.

MICHAEL KAHN

Mr. Kahn is currently Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger and Coordinator of Interpretation and Languag/Acting at The Juilliard School Drama Division. In the summer of 1992 he will assume the position of Director of the Drama Division at Juilliard. A director of many productions, he also serves on the faculty of New York University's Graduate School of the Arts.

WILLIAM LUCE

Mr. Luce is a California writer of one-person shows: most notably, the acclaimed The Belle of Amherst, Brontë and Lucifer's Child, each of which starred Julie Harris.

DR. GERALD R. MILLER

Dr. Miller received his PhD from the University of Iowa. He is Chair of the Department of Communication at Michigan State University and author of Between People: A New Analysis of Interpersonal Communication. He has also written, The Current Status of Theory and Research in Interpersonal Communication and is a four-time recipient of the Speech Communication Association's (SCA) Golden Anniversary Prize Fund Award for outstanding scholarship.

CHARLES NELSON REILLY

Mr. Reilly is a well-known actor, director and television personality who has received critical acclaim for his direction of several one-person shows including The Belle of Amherst, and Brontë, starring Julie Harris and Paul Robeson with James Earl Jones.

CHARLES WAXBERG

A playwright and teacher of acting in New York City, Mr. Waxberg also teaches Text for Actors at

the Stella Adler Conservatory as well as New York University.

Since the purpose of this study is to discover common considerations, concerns, problems and techniques inherent to the performance of one-person shows, the initial questions asked during the interviews were broad and in every case the same. Modified phrasing which was used for theorists, writers and directors is found in the parentheses.

1. What specific acting considerations and concerns did you have and/or problems did you encounter during (would you perceive to be inherent to) the preparation and performance of your (a) one-person show?
2. What technique/s were (can be) employed to address them?

Follow-up questions derived from the common knowledge of and experience in ensemble performing were employed to stimulate and continue the interviews, but in no way to lead the interviewees. Prerequisites to effective acting in conventional, multi-character productions which are stressed to varying degrees in the majority of acting texts, served as a frame of reference for the selection of these follow-up questions. The prerequisites include: vocal and physical control and expressiveness, concentration, energy, relaxation, the suppression of tension or fear, and the need for genuine interaction or communion on stage. Therefore,

the degree to which these considerations are emphasized when evaluating traditional acting served as the rationale for their inclusion in the form of subsequent questions beyond those of the general opening inquiries.

The interviews were then transcribed and a separate and thorough examination of each conducted to establish specific considerations, concerns and problems which arose during the preparation and performance of the one-person shows or which were felt by the theorists to be elemental to solo acting. Following the individual analysis, a standard cross-tabulation table was employed in which the variables were the actors/theorists/writers/directors interviewed and the considerations, concerns, and problems experienced (every major consideration, concern etc. mentioned in the interviews). The findings were then summarized through the use of the cross-tabulation table. Considerations, concerns, and problems which were deemed common or basic (and therefore inherent to the genre) and also those which may be termed idiosyncratic were revealed. According to Dr. Joseph Earely, noted Economic Statistician at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, the standard 'ideal' or 'significant' number in a study involving cross-tabulation is five. Thus, for the purposes of this study, a consideration which appears five or more times in the cross tabulation has been deemed 'common', 'basic', or 'inherent' and is therefore the focus of the discussion. A consideration which, although mentioned less

often, can be directly and logically related to another which qualifies, has likewise been so designated (see discussion of Focus Areas below). Those appearing less frequently have been termed 'Idiosyncratic'. No effort was made toward greater stratification such as acting problems related to gender variation, race or ethnicity.

Techniques used to address any acting problem are a question of individuation and hence the attempt here, through the use of examples furnished by the experts interviewed, is simply to be suggestive. No cross-tabulation table was employed to determine inherent techniques. Those techniques mentioned in the interviews and described in this investigation are offered as examples of, or possible models for ways to address the common or inherent considerations, concerns and problems of solo performing.

Following the cross-tabulation, the categories were clustered on the basis of their similarities or relatedness into more inclusive groupings referred to as Focus Areas. These are discussed in detail in the ensuing chapter, **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**, and form the body of the study. The Focus Areas are:

FOCUS AREA I: ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

The actor does not operate in a vacuum, but in a world of stimulus and response--of relationships. Things are done by the actor because things are done to the actor. It is a world of connection and communion. In conventional theatre

the actor finds this communion, these connections, with his or her fellow actors. Actions and reactions are, for the most part, 'other-directed' and 'other-generated.' In the absence of fellow actors, however, the stage becomes a world of self-generated impulse and action. Therefore, the need to make connections, to establish some form of communion, to find a catalyst, wherever and whenever possible, which triggers internal reaction and propels external action is paramount in the performance of one-person shows. This Focus Area includes and discusses:

- A. Relating to/Selecting Material**
- B. Relating to the Audience**
- C. Relating to Imaginary Characters**
- D. Relating to/ Using Props, Music, Lighting, and the Physical Environment.**

FOCUS AREA II: GENERATING AND MAINTAINING ENERGY AND CONCENTRATION

Although an actor must always be energized and focused while on stage, it is reasonable to assume and generally acknowledged that in an ensemble production the thrust or weight of the action is at times carried by different members of the cast. While there is no doubt or dispute that an actor will need to concentrate and will expend energy when playing a member of the Roman crowd, it is also common sense to assume that the demands are dramatically increased and the dynamics significantly altered when he is playing Mark

Antony. When acting solo, the performer has no one else to 'take center stage', no opportunity to re-energize oneself backstage, no time when concentration may flag. The actor must 'hold forth' from opening to final curtain, with only a brief intermission, in some cases, as a respite. Thus, energy and concentration are often central concerns to those who perform one-person shows and hence are topics of discussion in this investigation. Inasmuch as concentration involves the focusing and directing of energy, and, conversely, maintenance of energy may be thought of as a form of concentration, this Focus Area includes both **Generating and Maintaining Energy** and **Maintaining Concentration**.

FOCUS AREA III: ACHIEVING VARIETY

In a conventional, ensemble production, vocal and visual variety is needed to sustain audience interest and, consequently, is an important consideration during rehearsals and in performance. Actors with varying physical characteristics and vocal qualities, wearing different costumes and forming different groups, create a shifting stage picture. In bringing flesh and blood to the dramatis personae they also provide the audience with changing visual and aural stimulation. In solo acting, on the other hand, there is but one body, one voice, one presence for the entire production. The question of variety--how to hold the audience's attention, how to avoid becoming tedious when one is alone on stage for two hours--is consequently a vital

consideration to those who would approach this genre. As color and variation in an actor's performance is achieved primarily through vocal and emotional shading, subtlety and control, Focus Area III includes **Meeting the Vocal and Technical Demands.**

FOCUS AREA IV: BEING ALONE ON STAGE

The natural state of the actor on stage is to be 'in relation', to seek connections, to foster and be nourished by a symbiotic union with his or her fellow performers. This natural state not only furnishes the give and take, stimulus/response, transactional exchange needed to propel the action forward but also provides the actor with a source of comfort and security. In the one-person show, such a union does not exist and relationships must be sought in other ways. Many of the interviewees indicated that a feeling of isolation, of being alone on stage, was a principal factor in their experiences with the genre of solo performance. Germane to being alone on stage and therefore included in this Focus Area are the cross-tabulation categories, **Dealing With Fears, Avoiding Self-Consciousness, Maintaining Vulnerability, and Achieving/Maintaining Spontaneity.**

FOCUS AREA V: MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE/MAINTAINING A 'THIRD EYE'

The majority of one-person shows are presentational in style, incorporating direct address to the audience. They do

not conform to 'fourth wall' conventions. Accordingly, there was a recognition on the part of a significant number of those interviewed that the experience of solo performance was similar to story telling, lecturing or stand-up comedy. There existed a tendency to maintain a greater distance between the performer and his or her material; a consciousness of technique; an awareness of the performance in progress more prevalent than that found in representational, 'fourth wall' productions. It was felt that in many cases a keen 'third eye' was used to monitor the presentation to a degree beyond that extant in ensemble playing.

FOCUS AREA VI: IDIOSYNCRATIC CONSIDERATIONS

The considerations, concerns and problems indicated above were shared by many of the interviewees. There were, however, several areas of concern which were mentioned by fewer than the required five respondents and which could not logically be included in a previously established Focus Area. Nevertheless, as a point of interest and further edification they are included and briefly discussed in this section of the study. These concerns are: **Preparing and Presenting Bits and Pieces; Approximating Historical Characters: Imitation Versus Suggestion; Assessing One's Talent; and Revealing and Reliving Personal Agonies.**

This dissertation has certain limitations. The interviews were conducted solely with well-respected

professional actors and theorists who are familiar with and experienced in the area of solo performance. No attempt was made to study inexperienced actors, students or those unfamiliar with or newly exposed to one-person shows.

While each actor and theorist was asked the same questions relating to concerns, considerations, problems and techniques, due to the diversity of their personalities the interviews often proceeded in varying directions. Therefore, it was frequently necessary to re-direct or focus the conversation with follow-up questions (discussed earlier). It is impossible to say with complete assurance whether these Focus Areas would have been emphasized in this particular manner had such subsequent questions not been asked.

The following chapter will concentrate on an analysis of the data.

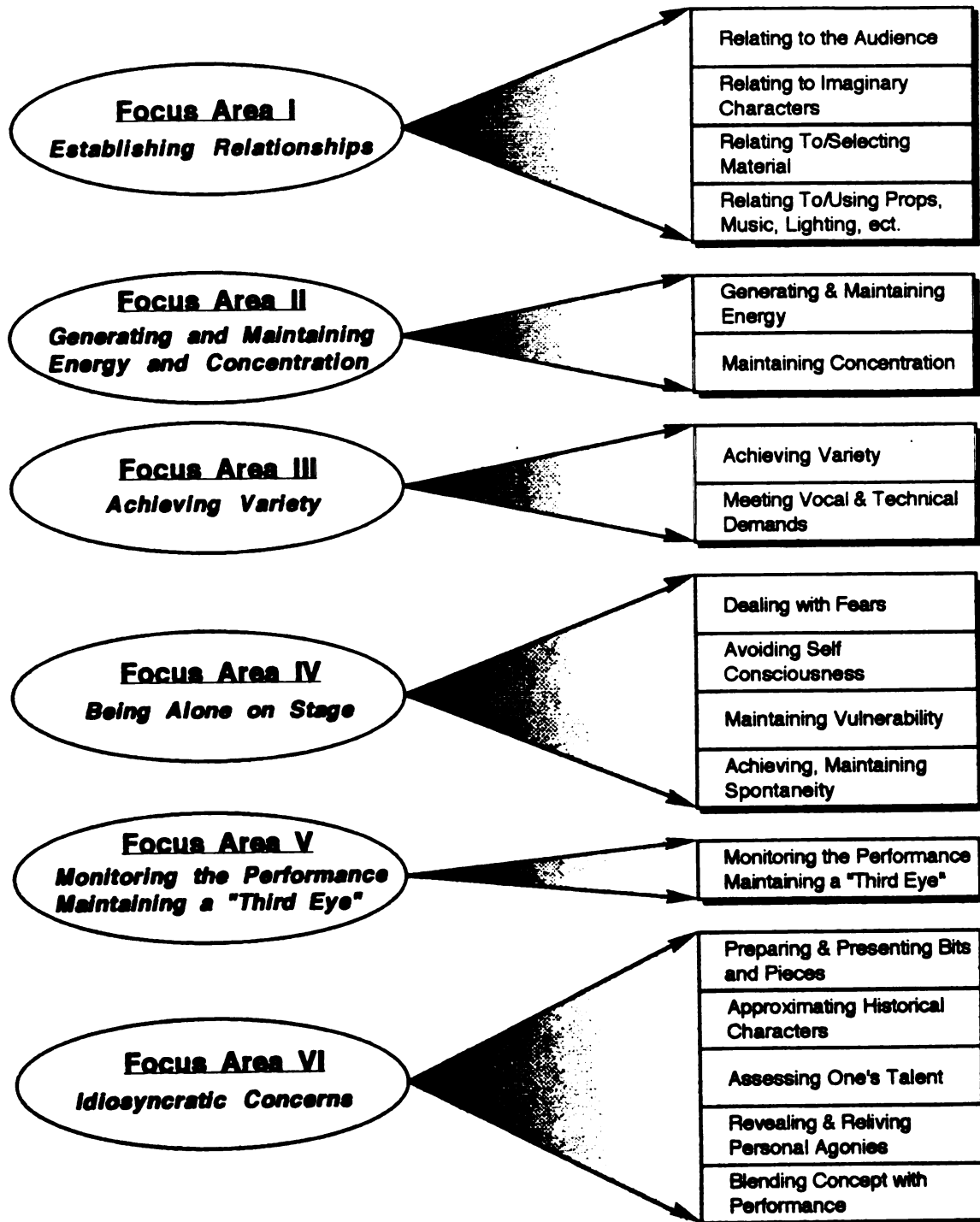
TABLE 1
CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS and PROBLEMS MATRIX

ACTORS:	1.General- ing & Main- taining Ener- gy	2.Relat- ing to the Audience	3.Relating to Imaginary Characters	4.Relating to/ Select- ing Material	5.Relating to/ Using Props, Music, Light- ing, etc.	6.Achiev- ing Variety	7.Maintain- ing Con- centration	8.Dealing with Fears	9.Monitoring the Perform- ance/ Main- taining a "Third Eye"	10.Prepar- ing & Pre- senting Bits & Pieces	11.Being Alone on Stage
Brian Bedford	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Pat Carroll	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Coleen Dewhurst	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Julie Harris		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓
Hal Holbrook	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sylvia Miles	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓
Madeline Sherwood	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Robert Vaughn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
THEORISTS, WRITERS, DIRECTORS:											
Robert Benedetti		✓	✓			✓					
Robert Cohen	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Sabine Epstein	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Arthur French	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Michael Kahn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
William Luce		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Gerald Miller		✓		✓		✓			✓		
Charles Nelson Reilly		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Charles Watberg		✓		✓			✓				✓
TOTALS:	11	16	12	14	9	14	9	8	11	2	12

TABLE 1 (cont'd)

ACTORS:	12. Meeting Vocal & Technical Demands	13. Appropriating Historical Characters: Immitation versus Suggestion	14. Avoiding Self-consciousness	15. Maintaining Vulnerability	16. Achieving, Maintaining Spontaneity	17. Assessing One's Talent	18. Revealing & Hiding Personal Agenda	19. Blending Concept with Performance
Brian Bedford								
Pat Carroll	✓							
Colleen Dewhurst								
Julie Harris								
Hil Holbrook								
Sylvia Miles							✓	
Madeline Sherwood	✓							
Robert Vaughn		✓						
THEORISTS, WRITERS, DIRECTORS:								
Robert Benedetti			✓	✓	✓			
Robert Cohen								
Sabine Epstein								
Arthur French								
Michael Kahn	✓							
William Luce								
Gerald Miller								✓
Charles Nelson Reilly						✓		
Charles Washberg	✓							
TOTALS:	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Figure 1
Focus Area Designation



NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹As the printed publicity material advertising It's Me, Sylvia, states, it was "written, sung and lived" by Sylvia Miles. Due to the autobiographical nature of this presentation, therefore, it would seem to fall outside the parameters established for this study. However, because of her performance experience in theatre and media, it was felt that her insights concerning solo acting contributed to the investigation.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Evaluation and cross-tabulation of the interview responses has revealed common considerations, concerns, problems, and aspects of performance which, for the purposes of this investigation, have been organized into related groups entitled Focus Areas. Using the observations and opinions of the interviewees, the study will now explore and illuminate these Focus Areas, as well as describe techniques employed to address said considerations, concerns and problems.

FOCUS AREA I: ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

...I remember thinking I don't think I can continue this. I don't know whether I can really create anything here. What am I doing? I'm doing it in a vacuum in some kind of way. I have no...I have no company.¹

____Madeleine Sherwood

Israeli philosopher Martin Buber, in his book, I and Thou, voiced the belief that man's true essence can only be *dis*covered in the presence of an 'other', a connection with *ot*her objects or beings.² Robert L. Benedetti concurs with

this position when he writes in The Actor at Work, "Personalty on stage, as in life, is rooted in relationship, in dynamic interaction...within a given situation."³ In the one-person show there is no 'other' on stage with which to relate. To what degree does the actor sense this absence? Is this question of connection a significant consideration, concern or problem in his or her preparation and presentation of a solo production? Many of the respondents in this study felt it was indeed a pivotal factor in their experiences with this performance genre.

During the interviews, four kinds of relationships, used to create 'dynamic interaction' in the place of conventional actor-actor interplay, emerged as important considerations or concerns in the performance of one-person shows. These relationships are: 1) Relating to/selecting material, 2) Relating to the audience, 3) Relating to imaginary characters and 4) Relating to/using props, music, lighting and the physical environment. They are examined in this Focus Area.

Relating to/Selecting Material

Your relationship to the text is essential. There's nothing else. I mean, the basis of the work is the text and you're relating to it is absolutely essential. It is the story. It's what your doing.⁴

____Julie Harris

The solo performer, in the absence of fellow actors, has a heightened need to establish relationships, to make elemental connections. Fourteen of the actors, theorists, writers and directors surveyed felt that the one-person show

demanded a level of interaction with and commitment to the material exceeding that found in conventional, multi-actor drama. Arthur French states:

It's just more critical in a one-person show. It's just more critical because there's no way out of it if you're not totally immersed in the text, and know who this person is...I think that will give you the confidence to come out there and say, I'm gonna show you, I'm gonna reveal...something about this person to you. At the end of the evening, you're really going to know who this is. You're gonna learn something about me and hopefully, I'll learn something about you and from you...I think it's critical. It's critical that you...and the text have to be one...⁵

____Arthur French

Sabin Epstein is of a similar belief:

I go back again and again and again, the most important thing is the text. You can be an extraordinary actor but if the text isn't good, forget it. Nobody is going to care. You've got to be intrigued by it enough and so excited by it that you want other people to know it. They [solo performers] have to have a passion. I mean, a biting passion and fascination for that person or topic. That is what sustains you in doing the work. The selecting of the material...that's the most important element.⁶

____Sabin Epstein

Hal Holbrook, speaking of the task involved in maintaining audience attention offers the following:

And in the one-person show, you have a bigger load on you because you are all alone out there. You don't have much action, the only action you have is the action that goes on in people's minds. So that puts you down to material, that's where the material becomes extraordinarily important in a one-person show. Because it has to develop...excitement in the audience's mind, otherwise you don't have anything. You [don't] have people fighting each other with swords or shooting each other or screaming at each other

across the stage to divert, all you've got is the material.⁷

___Hal Holbrook

He is acutely aware of the unique bond which must exist between the actor and his material in this form of theatre, as the following indicates:

I think you have to either have immediately or be able to develop an intense connection with the material and character you are playing or else you are going down a dead-end street. It is often said that shows are successful because there is a peculiar and special... connection with the magic or whatever you want to call it. And when you get to a one-man show, a one-person show, all that becomes heightened in importance, I think.⁸

___Hal Holbrook

A common observation among those interviewed was that a passion and enthusiasm for the material, an intense relationship with and commitment to the text is essential if one is to succeed in the field of solo performance. Julie Harris, in speaking of The Belle of Amherst, expressed vividly the joy of such commitment when she said, "I had the great advantage of loving my material. I couldn't think that Emily Dickinson would be boring to anybody. I couldn't wait, I couldn't wait to tell it to somebody. I was like an evangelist."⁹

If a fervency for the subject matter, an intense *i*dentification with and relationship to the material is *p*aramount in the one-person show, how does the performer *i*n*s*ure such a connection? One way is to maintain complete

control of the production's content, to be its sole artistic consciousness. Hal Holbrook explains:

And I was just very lucky. I mean there was no way for me to know when I started doing Twain that I was going to be able to come up with something as good as it is. There was no way for me to know that. That's what is discouraging about trying to start a project like this and any project in life, in fact. You know, so many people today feel that they ought to be able to skip the discouraging first stages of a career and leap immediately into prominence and wealth. You know, the theme of the day is, I want to be a star. And I want to get rich. And I don't want to start out doing a lot of dull, sweaty labor for twelve dollars an hour. But, when you start out with a project, especially a solo show, you are all alone. Particularly if you do it in what I consider to be the right way which is put the material together yourself, do all the research, do all the work yourself. You are all alone and you have no idea in the world whether you are just wasting your time or not...you don't even know if your effort is going to get a chance to be shown, that's even more difficult. It makes you work harder. It deepens your commitment. You are just, you know, it proves right away that you've either got the commitment or you don't. It is just a very, it is very difficult, but doing a show like this is very difficult. It looks easy when it works, but it is very difficult, very discouraging, very lonely and I just feel that...the commitment is much bigger if you do it all yourself. Plus, of course, you really get to know what you are doing better than anyone else...I mean you've got to know what you are doing. You are doing it...you are taking on the total responsibility, and you are doing it. And you are forced against the wall, you have to learn, you have to figure out how to make this stuff work. And I'm sure that it would...take less time if you get some help, but basically I think everybody should just start on their own and do their own work and do their own research. To begin with, you are just going to learn more about your subject, you are going to learn more about your man, I mean, if you do the work yourself. It's difficult to describe...the mystical insights that you can receive by doing your own work. I mean when I was researching Twain...[the research] covered many years, or quite a few years anyway, it wasn't

something, you know, you got up in a year. I would have times when I was trying to put some material together, you know, I'd look and I'd find a little story or a paragraph or two from his autobiography and then I'd remember a line that was over in Huckleberry Finn, I can pluck out and attach to it. And another, well infamous speech somewhere or another little anecdote I could put together and pretty soon I have a five, six, seven minute number and...I'd have still gaps in it, I would still know that it wasn't strong enough. I needed another good line to create a laugh to release a laugh that was maybe in the material I couldn't bring out. And I didn't want to try to write something myself, I wanted something by Twain. And sometimes I would pick up a book, maybe I'd wake up in the middle of the night and I'd pick up a book and I'd open it and there on the page was what I was looking for. Well, I don't want to stress too much on that, but you see, when you have experiences like that you learn to love what you are doing.¹⁰

____Hal Holbrook

Pat Carroll, although her show Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein was written by Marty Martin, has a similar view regarding the performer's involvement in the creation of the material:

I'll tell you what I feel about the text...I don't know how an actor doing a one-person show cannot be involved in the making of the text or at least in the construction of the text. Because to me it is like having a dressmaker make you a dress, rather than going to a rack. You know, that is not demeaning the rack, some of them are extremely expensive, but I think if you know this character...I don't know why anybody would want to do a one-person show unless they were intrigued by the character to be displayed...because the work is too hard. Why would you want to do that unless you had a feeling about this character that you are doing?¹¹

____Pat Carroll

Many of those interviewed echoed this belief that a *connection* to the text is enhanced through direct

participation in its development and personal research into its subject matter. Brian Bedford states that...

I did all of this reading and in some cases re-reading... of the entire works of William Shakespeare because I didn't know what the evening was going to be like... So I went into this one-man show... business and I think in the back of my mind there was always this idea that I would like to explore the possible biographical elements of Shakespeare's work.... What I wanted to do, eventually I realized was, you know, the Droshout Engraving of Shakespeare. I wanted to put some blood and soul and heart, in other words some dimension, to Droshout's Engraving and this is what evolved from my reading the complete works of Shakespeare.... that I would try and invoke or try and enhance, shall we say, people's perception of William Shakespeare, the man...¹²

____ Brian Bedford

The general consensus, then, is that to know one's subject thoroughly, to be intimately engaged in the research for and creation of the show is to intensify one's relationship to the material and, consequently, increase one's performance efficacy. This was true in the case of Brian Bedford's production, The Lunatic, The Lover, and The Poet:

I found it fascinating and I found that it added a dimension to one's perception of a speech like Oberon's speech to Puck, "Thou rememb'rest since once I sat upon a promontory, and heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath..." (A Midsummer Night's Dream, act 2, scene 1). I find the fact that one could tie it up with Shakespeare having seen as a child this wonderful pageant for Queen Elizabeth's visit... which took place comparatively near to where Shakespeare was living. And his father being Mayor of Stratford would obviously have been invited... and he took the boy to the show and then over twenty years later the boy remembered the fireworks in the sky and the mermaid, the

mechanical mermaids floating on the lake, you know. I just found all of that, that it added something to it, and this is just an example of what I was trying to do.¹³

____ Brian Bedford

The respondents indicated a belief that should the actor choose to rely on the talents of a writer, a close, collaborative working relationship was essential if the same connection to the material is to be achieved. Pat Carroll, Madeleine Sherwood, and William Luce spoke of such collaborative endeavors:

I think it behooves the...actor who is to do a one-person character to work with the playwright. It doesn't mean you are going to write for him. But I think many times, certainly in my working with Marty Martin, I had many, many years of professional experience behind me. Marty had written, but had never been produced professionally. I felt I could save him time and effort by saying, 'I don't think that will work, Marty, because of such and such.' Most of the time, it was logical. A couple of times it was simply emotional.¹⁴

____ Pat Carroll

It appeared as though it was going to be easy. When you get a script handed to you by Patrick Brawford in this case my director but he was also the writer of the piece, and when I first got it and first read it my first impression was, 'hey this is great, this will be wonderful for me.' He wrote it more or less for me, tailored it to me. The subject matter is Tennessee Williams...but it's his early life and up until the time when he was put into a mental hospital by his brother...[But] when you start writing a show...and you're going to talk through the mouth of a famous man's mother you've got a lot of problems right there. I'm a mother and we all...know very well that mothers tend to have a different slant on their children than anyone else in the world. Right? It was also hard to make it not appear to be just a mother's love for her son and have some perspective that

encompassed more of the problems, the working habits, the things that his mother may not have really known too much about. So that required a lot of digging on Patrick's part certainly and some adjustment on our part, some presumption on our part that she did know certain things. He dealt with it very much the way we feel that Mrs. Williams would have. I knew Mrs. Williams slightly because I had met her several times, having been in Tennessee's original plays. At opening night parties Mrs. Williams was always there, so I had an advantage of knowing her personality, public personality. I didn't know her private personality and they are two different things. However, it was very valuable for me obviously to have known her in that way. I was a friend of his [Patrick's]...I had great respect for him and he for me. He was a younger man than I am, didn't have as much experience. He was beginning to a certain extent. He had done a lot of work but he was just beginning in a professional theater and I could get angry with him and say, 'go fly off,' and say, 'this isn't working,' and so on and so forth, if I felt like it and I knew it was okay. But at the same time that was fine as a director but he had written the piece and I began to recognize that what he could take...in a very normal fashion as an actor and director---having a discussion or even having a fight---the person behind that person couldn't deal with. The writer, the writer was defensive and so therefore it became very difficult and we had some real fights.¹⁵

____Madeleine Sherwood

...as far as Julie is concerned, I guess I work more with her than with others, and she is so steeped in the subject by the time she calls me in. For instance on this, [Lucifer's Child] she had visited London, Denmark. She'd gone to Kenya and seen Karen Blixen's home there. She had researched so much. She'd read all the letters. And finally she asked me if I would write it and she optioned the material for me and then commissioned me to do it and has worked very closely with me on it, telling me things that she'd like to deal with in the play. And the same was true of Brontë, which she was very close to, and, of course, The Belle of Amherst. In all of those, she had a great input. The actor who brings it to me is usually fired with the idea.¹⁶

____William Luce

In working autonomously, the actor can carefully tailor the material to suit his or her areas of strength or include selections of particular interest. In collaborating with a writer, it becomes especially important that the performer be specific as to what he or she feels capable of or comfortable doing. Brian Bedford stated that his show...

...was for me and...had to be tailored somewhat to my capabilities and my talents. The pieces that were chosen were the ones that in my estimation increased people's perception of William Shakespeare. They were chosen because I thought they had a biographical connection to Shakespeare himself and also bits [that I could do]. I mean I couldn't for instance, it's not within my range, for example, to do Falstaff or something like that.¹⁷

____Brian Bedford

Pat Carroll feels strongly that if the connection to the material is to be strong, the final decision as to the content of a one-person show must rest with the person who is to perform it:

The time that he brought me two pages on Stein's emotional encounter with Mae Bookstaver and I said, 'Marty, lovely writing, [but] an audience is not going to sit still for this. Essentially they won't care because this isn't sharp enough emotionally.' I said, 'for those who will understand that it is a homosexual experience fine, for those who don't they won't know what all the broo hah hah is about.' I said, 'turn this into a minute.' He said, 'well I can't,' I said, 'yes you can or just forget it.' He said, 'I can't forget it, it is very important to her character, it is important to why she goes to your place.' 'Then do it in a minute and a half at the most.' He came back having distilled two pages into approximately four sentences that are dynamite because they do exactly what I asked him to do. I mean it is up to you....Now maybe that would not have happened if Marty and I had not been working together....To

say, 'this is not going to work, I know this isn't going to work. Marty, trust me. And I'm going to trust you as a playwright to come back with this,'...which he did brilliantly. So with my lack of knowledge of the one-person theatrical area I was able to dive in and do something that was full of effrontery. I don't know, but...the ego of our profession is so limited now by union restrictions, by standard operational procedure restrictions. Instead of people just saying, 'look, I feel this ain't going to work, now what are we going to do to correct this? If I'm the person playing it we have to, because I can't play this. Okay?' Many playwrights are protected so that there is no rewriting...which is good for the playwright, because how many times have they been desecrated. But on the other hand it allows them the ego of thinking every word is a diamond and a pearl and...as an actor you say, 'oh really, I have to say the words, Charlie. Okay? Do you understand that? And I, as this particular actress, cannot make that work because it ain't workable, okay?' I know playwrights that don't particularly want to listen to the actor. I kind of love it because they are forced to listen to us eventually because the audience echoes what we are telling them. There is also the tremendous ego of the actor who may not be able to accomplish what the playwright has in mind because of our individual limitations. We may have more theory than reality in our own work. So I understand both sides of the fence, but it seems to me you have got to work more closely with the person who is writing the material for one-person theater than you would normally.¹⁸

___Pat Carroll

The late Colleen Dewhurst agreed that it is the actor who, on an intuitive, gut level, is the best judge of material--of what will or will not work for that performer:

...because as an actor you can come to certain points and go, 'I tried this every way, I came up as a blip here, no matter what I'd do.' That can be true in any new play where you suddenly, go, 'right in here something is wrong, because I've tried this every way but standing on my head.' And so something has to intuitively tell me that either we don't need it or that [we must change it].¹⁹

___Colleen Dewhurst

According to William Luce and Charles Nelson Reilly, another factor which will intensify one's relationship to the material is to select a person to portray whose spoken or written words may be used in the portrayal (notable exceptions, however, include: Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, in which none of Stein's actual words were used):

I've dealt with writers. I mean, there's Lillian Hellman and Emily Dickinson, Charlotte Brontë and Zelda Fitzgerald because of her writing. They're characters that have had something to say, that have journals, diaries, a body of thought, ideas. And, of course, you get the genuine article then when you put it up on stage. I was once asked to write a play on Greta Garbo and there was really nothing to draw on. What did she say? What did she think? We would never know what her personality was really like because there really was no reservoir of ideas to use. So I think whether one is a writer writing...a one-person play, or an actor or actress selecting a subject, it has to be one that has some kind of resource material, underlying material. But the playwright can't depend on language alone to make his play. I mean, you hear it said that the theater is losing its beautiful language and we need more language. But a play has to be a show and it has to be a visual depiction of ideas....The important thing is to make it an entertainment. Language is important, it's a spoken art and plays depend on words but it has to be ideas made visual.²⁰

____William Luce

I think most of them [one-person shows] fail because they celebrate a person that never was in any way literary. If you don't have the words you're in trouble 'cause two hours is a long time....If you get a lot of diaries, books and all those things...then you're on third base 'cause you have all the words. Lillian Hellman, I love that play only because I never quite could get through Lillian Hellman's writing, but through this play, which is all her own words, I became a Lillian

Hellman fan. See, you couldn't buy a Dickinson poetry book, more or less before The Belle of Amherst, and now you can go into Jupiter, Florida in the mall or in the smallest town in Connecticut and buy a book or her poetry. Select material that [you] can identify with and a person that has written something.²¹

____Charles Nelson Reilly

One type of relationship which assumes greater significance in the preparation and performance of a one-person show is that of the actor to his or her material. This relationship is deepened when the performer researches, writes and organizes the text him/herself, or works in close collaboration with a writer. In both instances the performer's interests, abilities, and limitations are constant considerations. According to a number of the experts interviewed, it is also to the actor's advantage if the actual written or spoken words of the subject are woven into the production. The study now moves from a consideration of the bond between performer and material to a second, equally important relationship in solo performing---that which exists between the actor and the audience.

Relating to the Audience

...the first time I stood up...at rehearsal, I began talking to the director. He said, 'Why are you addressing the audience?' I said, 'Because they are there....I don't know why they are there, but they are...and who else am I going to share it with...who else do I share it with? I'm not going to talk to myself, I'm not going to pretend I'm going mad.' I said, 'If you have another idea, give it to me, but right now it seems to me I'm talking to the audience because they are there.'²²

____Pat Carroll

According to Dr. Gerald Miller, there exists a general notion that...

...communications is sort of a transactional process that...involves some kind of a reciprocal exchange of stimulating responses such that the responses of one communicator are used as a form of information by the others--called feedback or some such term--which would then in turn lead to...all ranges [of] verbal and nonverbal behavior...to accommodate the perceived response of the other communicator...²³

____Gerald Miller

Perhaps the principal task facing an actor alone on stage is the establishment of this transactional or communication loop. While a strong enthusiasm for and connection to the material is crucial, it cannot replace the moment-to-moment interaction between performers which exists in conventional productions; an interaction missing in the one-person show. Madeleine Sherwood realized early in rehearsals the difficulty of her task. She also experienced a sense of isolation commonly felt in solo performance:

I knew from experience (in other forms of theatre) it (the one-person show) wasn't going to be easy, but I didn't think it was going to be quite so difficult to get into it...and you have to do it all by yourself. You don't have a feeling that you have some cooperation, some interplay.²⁴

____Madeleine Sherwood

Michael Kahn reduced the one-person show to an elemental level when he stated, "...you see, an actor is fed by another actor on stage. By the tone of their voice, by the rhythm that they give you, by their emotion. So to get fed, [in solo performance] you have to do it yourself."²⁵ Robert

Cohen echoes this awareness of the challenges of solo performance: "You're probably more conscious that you're creating the whole drama....so the actor has to work harder at it, I think, than you do in a multi-character play."²⁶ Also in agreement is Robert Benedetti: "Being alone makes it harder to achieve, in the true Aristotelian sense, being 'in action'. That's what's hard about it. It's tougher to be 'in action' when you're alone."²⁷

To fill the void created by the absence of fellow performers, the solo actor must seek interaction elsewhere. It is imperative that he or she find a way to complete the transactional process, to build personal relationships. In the majority of one-person shows the fourth-wall is broken and the audience is addressed directly. The performer invites, and indeed urges, the spectator to become the other actor--the missing link in the vital communication chain. Michael Kahn feels this approach is logical and effective:

I don't think it is so difficult to do that [direct address] unless it is the kind of actor who really has to create a world for themselves in which they are private. And I don't think that is a very good one-person show...because it is too insular, we are not involved. I've never seen one in which the person just dropped the fourth-wall and we watched him live in another world. I've never seen that, nor do I think it would be interesting. Usually we are the other major character.²⁸

___Michael Kahn

Robert Benedetti concurs with the opinion that relating directly to the audience is the most effective approach to solo performing:

Far and away I think the most successful form for a one-person show or for a solo performing situation to take is...direct address so that the audience can be related to in the same way as if it were another character in the scene....The feedback loop is continuous. It's not just that you get something and then you respond and then they give you something back and then you respond. It's not that kind of digital on-off kind of thing. I think the in-flow and the out-flow are both simultaneous. I think that in the very moment that you are acting towards someone you are also receiving signals from them that cause subtle adjustments in your behavior. And the actor has to be in that continual feedback kind of loop situation. My preference would be to use the audience as the other part of the loop whenever possible, whenever the..material permits. The one-person shows that I've enjoyed the most had a lot of direct addressing. There was a tremendous sense of comradery, of intimacy between the audience and the created character.²⁹

____Robert Benedetti

Having directed a number of one-person shows, Charles Nelson Reilly has reached a similar opinion concerning the importance and efficacy of direct address: "...in my experience as a director, direct address just continually involves the audience...one has to treat the audience members as other actors."³⁰ This belief is shared by others including Charles Waxberg, Robert Vaughn and Julie Harris:

[the actor to the audience]...that's where your action is gonna come from. Because it won't be like creating a show of private moments. It's not a character that we're peering through a fourth-wall and seeing them alone in their room or in their office or wherever. They are developing a relationship with us and everything that you, every action you play as an actor in a one-person show is designed to create some kind of effect on the other character which is the audience.³¹

____Charles Waxberg

...you pretty much don't pay that much attention to the audience when you are acting in a normal drama. You are involved with the scene and the other actor more than you are in the one-man show where you are more involved with paying attention to yourself and the audience. There is just the two of you involved--the audience and you. There is no other entity or other person that you have to work with.³²

____Robert Vaughn

I can't figure out how to tell you what it is. It's just different. You're talking to the audience in the one-person play and you're not in the other. You're talking so they can overhear you. [In the one-person show] You're really confronting them. It's more confrontational.³³

____Julie Harris

There exists a common sensibility among those interviewed that the establishment of a personal relationship with the audience is imperative, a central consideration in the preparation and performance of the one-person show.

Representative comments include:

Well, in a one-person play, there's nobody else on stage with you so the interaction...has to be presumed to be someone in the audience....The one relationship that really exists in a one-person show is between the actor and the audience and somehow you have to identify the audience. I would say, summarizing this, the big question is identifying the audience. What role does the audience play in the one-person show and how do you address the audience? Do you address them directly and if so, in what guise? Who are they? Are you addressing them as a modern audience or as a sixteenth century audience? Does the audience become a character in the play, such as [the psychiatrist in Arthur Miller's After the Fall] or is it the people who happen to arrive at the St. James Theater on a particular night?³⁴

____Robert Cohen

So as a general principle when the actor is alone on stage their great problem is to find a way of relating their energy outward towards another...the audience is the easiest solution, and towards a desired change, towards the future--what do I want from these people that I do not now have? And I think that the one-person show, the solo situation makes it much more difficult to achieve those two conditions...but they must be met.³⁵

___Robert Benedetti

I think you have to define the relationship with the audience. This is a major concern. Is the person, the singular actor, the solo player, going to speak directly to the audience, break a fourth-wall, be in the same space, or are they going to maintain a fourth-wall and work completely in isolation. . .where there is absolutely no recognition of the audience? And that becomes a primary concern because everything is based on, certainly from a directorial and coaching point of view, everything is based on that, and my own preference, of course, is to break the fourth-wall. The audience is involved with or witnessing or somehow in an exchange with the actor.³⁶

___Sabin Epstein

...the audience is the other character. The audience is a very strong part of it so you must be open to them. Any one-man play in general is about intimacy, a chance for these people to get to meet somebody who they never had or never will meet in their lifetime. Might possibly be because they're dead, but here's a chance for you to talk to Abraham Lincoln or Richard Nixon or Truman Capote and even though you're not necessarily talking to them, you are a part of it. Your response to them is important...I think the critical difference between doing a one-person show and doing any other kind of show is that you have to be that much more in tune to the other characters in the show which happen to be sitting in the audience. They will not talk to you and for the most part, you will not be able to see them so the problem to solve there is, picking up on that thread. Picking up on that silent communication between you and them...³⁷

___Charles Waxberg

And my first problem was one of solving, do you talk directly to the audience, do you include them in on your thinkings and I thought yes...³⁸

____Pat Carroll

Relating to the audience is a cardinal concern for the majority of actors who engage in one-person shows. But what methods are available to the performer to facilitate this connection? According to the respondents, there are several which are important. Many seek to give their audience an identity; to relate to them in the same way they would to another character in a conventional, multi-actor play. The 'character' which the actor assigns to the audience may in fact be that of spectators, listeners who have come to the theatre to hear a noted personality speak or read. Such was the case in Emlyn Williams' portrayal of Charles Dickens and is in Hal Holbrook's Mark Twain Tonight!. As Holbrook relates:

I picked a man who was doing something that was very easy to recreate on the stage. I picked a man who was talking to an audience. That's what he is doing. Now, of course, when he wrote all this material, he wasn't talking to an audience, he was writing it in a book. So I had to adapt the material so that it seemed right for him to be telling it to an audience. That is part of the adaptation process of putting it on the stage, but basically I am playing a man who is talking to an audience.³⁹

____Hal Holbrook

Others seek to justify direct address and complete the communication loop by actually 'casting' the audience in a

role apart from that of listeners. Pat Carroll discloses her thoughts concerning this process:

I make them the other actor, period, there is nothing else. They become my other actor. And as an audience takes on that oneness of being I could always tell, oh within a minute and a half or two minutes, how that other actor was going to play. It was fascinating....There is a sense of an audience as you would sense a new actor playing a role that had been played before. Like we've had understudies going on in Merry Wives. Every night, I was facing an understudy of the original player and that understudy was a new audience every evening. Well you find yourself not wary, but you are on your toes and you are more concentrated with an understudy because you have fallen into automatic responses with an actor you've played a role with for a long time. I mean it just becomes automatic. You don't even have to think, you don't have to talk, you just do. But with a new person there, there is a new presence, there is a new persona that you don't know that well, you haven't experienced together that much, so you are dancing, you are testing, you are watching, you are sniffing, it is almost animal, but I did the same thing with an audience every night. It was really, I suppose like the blind do, the bouncing off the skins, you just, you sense it, you feel it...I just think people do this all day long and don't even think about it. I think we do it in so many areas. I think we do it at cocktail parties, I think we do it in families sitting around a table, I think we do it in so many areas. We feel each other, we sense each other and we draw away from certain people--I suppose for many different reasons. Maybe our auras clang or something. But I think we do have like ants, you know, we have that stuff, that antennae that whatever comes out of us that we recognize we either go around it, we hug it or we run the other way...And I spoke to them, I mean had I invited these people here, did they just come to my place, did I put a sign down at the market, come to Gertrude's Place tonight? Why are they here, I don't know why they are here, but they are here so I'm talking to them. I'm a good hostess, I'm not going to exclude anybody.⁴⁰

____Pat Carroll

Robert Vaughn also used this 'visitor' image for the audience in his production F.D.R.: "I wanted...to make the audience feel that this was Roosevelt come to life sitting in his chair telling them the story of his life as he would if they had been invited to Hyde Park to sit and chat with him when he was alive."⁴¹ Julie Harris stated, "I use the audience very definitely in that they're listening to me and I am addressing them and I am telling them this, giving them this story. They're important. They become like, really like one person sitting there listening to me."⁴² Madeleine Sherwood felt a similar desire to relate to the audience as she would to guests:

I wanted it to be directed to the audience which was the way it was when we did it at the Actor's Studio. We did a long segment of it at the Actor's Studio and...I addressed the audience as though they were, had been invited to my home. I...was coming home from the hospital and walked in and apologized to them for keeping them waiting. But they were all supposed to be in my home. There was a tremendous sense of, 'oh my goodness I'm not prepared for all of you people to be here.' They had been let in by someone else, by a neighbor next door. They were waiting. It was late and I arrived and I, being a very proper southern woman always, always polite and, you know, in good form and never showing anything of family problems, this was a very dramatic beginning. It was a very good beginning in that sense. And so what I had to do was work towards calming myself down, getting my house in order, putting away the evidence and being charming to the audience and inviting them to just, to wait for a moment and in a few minutes we'd have tea.⁴³

____ Madeleine Sherwood

Charles Nelson Reilly offers the following description of another one-person show in which the audience is assigned a role:

Now, in Arasthmus, the play begins where he comes out of this big trunk which is like a coffin, but it's really the prop trunk, and he goes to the Pearly Gates, the gates of Heaven, and he turns to the audience and he says, 'I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get ahead of you.' So right away the audience is given an identity. They are people who have...died and are waiting in line and what happens is he asks them to please decide whether he should go into heaven or not. That's the trick...which you've got to do from the beginning. You've got to give the audience an identity.⁴⁴

____ Charles Nelson Reilly

Playwright William Luce presents a dissenting opinion when he states, "...I feel that the audiences like peeking through a window at a character sometimes, and they don't feel that terrible need to explain their existence or why they're hearing all of these personal things."⁴⁵ The overriding view, however, is that held by Robert Benedetti and Arthur French:

The trick is to encourage the actor to relate to the audience just as if they were a character on stage. That is to expand their available awareness. To make themselves available to being present with the audience and allow the audience to be present with them so that contact is really made and they play off [each other]....When you're alone, if you can use the audience, then you have to receive from the audience in precisely the same way that you would want to receive from another character. So that's your motivation, which then generates through the reaction that you make to what you're getting, your aspiration.⁴⁶

____ Robert Benedetti

One of the things I suggest when people have things to talk to the audience, is to determine who is that audience. Who are those people? If we're going to talk directly out, then we can make those people who we choose to make them. Are they our peers? Are we, you know, are we a teacher teaching them something? Are they friends? Are they enemies? Who are they? Why would they care about what I have to say. Very often I say to actors, 'you know that the only reason that people in the audience listen to you is because we're in the classroom, we're in the auditorium,' but you must ask yourself, 'I've got a story I want to tell. Who cares about this? Who cares about...this story or this experience I want to share with them? Who are these people?' So that the actor then, in order to continue this chain, must determine who he's speaking to and why he has a need to tell them this story.⁴⁷

____Arthur French

In addition to determining the audience's identity, the actor must have a need to tell his or her story and a specific objective or intention which, in most cases, is directed toward those seated in the auditorium. According to Professor Gerald Miller, there exists a correlation between the performer's need to relate the material and the audience's attention and receptiveness to it:

Most of the theories that have to do with receiver retention and response usually will focus...on what are called New-Look Theories of Perception. That is to say the notion that we tend to perceive those stimuli in the overall environment that are most in harmony with our needs, requirements of that time. Notions...called 'selective exposure' [state] that [we are] more likely to expose ourselves to information and to behavior that is congruent with our beliefs or in harmony with those beliefs and more likely to avoid information and behavior that's discrepant. So I think...you could say that the mere fact that an audience member is there and paid a reasonably fair amount of money...to come and see this performance or participate in this performance as a viewer, a listener, would say they

must have some interest in what's going on. So I would think one advantage might be that the performer or performers would have an audience that was initially predisposed to attending to them....[In addition] if they [the audience] perceived some need to associate with whatever his or her message might be they're likely to attend more closely. The extent that the performer is able to generate an enthusiasm and an urgency about their message, this already reasonably high level of interest ought to be further enhanced.⁴⁸

____Gerald Miller

Charles Nelson Reilly states that, "They [solo performers] just have to believe what they're doing is important because as my teacher [Uta Hagen] said, 'the most important thing in the theatre is the importance of the event.'"⁴⁹ William Luce is in agreement: "...the character has to be imbued with a motivation....I mean the audience has to feel...this is coming, pouring out because of this crucial situation on stage."⁵⁰ Arthur French relates the following:

I think the first thing you must do, you must be interested in it and you must have a need, your own personal need to tell this story. The story must be important to you. You must have, then, a need to share this story with these people for whatever reason you determine, whether it's to enlighten them, to share with them if they're your buddies, whatever. You're interested in the story. It's exciting to you and then you will convey it to us for whatever purpose. If it's not interesting to you, then who cares about it?⁵¹

____Arthur French

The interviewees felt that this enthusiasm for the story and the need to communicate it to an audience must be translated into carefully considered and specific objectives. Michael Kahn refers to this as, "the old-fashioned word

'intention'. Whether it is to confide, to convince, to know...I mean...what are you doing here?"⁵² As Charles Waxberg describes it...

The essence of all theatre is conflict...what you have to do is find something to play against and that depends on the show itself. So the audience has got to become something very real to you and it has to be something in them that you are trying to overcome so they become some kind of obstacle, not necessarily a hostile one, but they become some, you've turned them into something that will help you convey what you're trying to do within the play. There's a reason you're sharing something. Either you're trying to, for example, correct a misconception of the kind of person you are or you are trying to instruct them. You're basically talking about your life so there's something you want to convey through the process of your life. Now, whatever it is you choose to do, the audience has got to, in some way, serve as something that interferes with your immediate communication of that.⁵³

___ Charles Waxberg

To have concrete objectives in one's relation to the audience is also viewed as crucial by Hal Holbrook, Robert Benedetti and Robert Cohen:

I'm projecting thoughts. That's all there is to it. I'm projecting thoughts, whatever you are getting--if you are imagining I'm talking to you--is because you are receiving my thoughts. I don't even have to be looking at you for you to feel that way. If I'm out there acting up a storm waving my arms around trying to do all this clever kind of showy stuff, then I'm not dealing in the realm of thought. The secret to Mark Twain's material, at least, probably most material, is that you are out there trying to get thoughts across to an audience and make them think with you. That's the key to it as far as I can make out. I'm not trying to do any particular thing at all in terms of contacting an audience or making them feel one way or another, except to make them think with me--to get ideas, to receive my idea, to receive my thought. And they get the thought and it explodes in their mind,

whether it is a humorous thought that makes them laugh or a serious thought that suddenly quiets them...and I'm drilling it into their heads. It is intention--it just goes back to good acting...the word really is intention.⁵⁴

___Hal Holbrook

[In the one-person show] all of the same acting techniques involving the sense of objective, something that you're trying to get, a desired change that you're trying to get from the other person, which is the way that I like to express the sense of objective, [apply]. The objective is something, a change, that you're trying to win from the other person. So the question to ask the actor at those points is, what do you want from the audience? Do you want them to understand the difficulty that you're having? Do you want them to agree with your point of view? Are you using them as a sounding board where...you would like them to give you advice? Whatever the relationship might be [it should be] in an active form so that the actor is seeking for, aspiring as Stanislavski would put it, has an aspiration to achieve, an objective which takes the form of a change in the audience. And I guess I could say that underneath all of this, I think in the years that I've been teaching acting I've perceived only two principles that I believe absolutely must be achieved in any acting situation: that is that the actor's awareness and the actor's energy must be flowing outward towards an external objective, whether that's another character in the scene or whether it's to the god's or whatever... but the energy has to be going outward towards another. It does not work for an actor's energy to be directed inwardly. It stops the dramatic event.⁵⁵

___Robert Benedetti

I think [the connection is made] by making the text a series of invocations, appeals, threats...to put pressure on the audience, to request and demand assistance from the audience. I think the key words here are invocation and proposal and solicitation and attempts to amuse...I'm trying to win over some new friends. I want a counsel. Who doesn't want a counsel? Don't you want a counsel? Let's have some counsels around here. The trouble with this world is there's not enough counsels, right?⁵⁶

___Robert Cohen

____Robert Cohen

Once the actor has given the audience an identity, generated a fervent need to tell them the story, and established concrete objectives, he must then determine, specifically, the most effective techniques of presentation. Those interviewed offered a number of insights into the acting of one-person shows. A number disclosed that performing in a direct address situation reminded them of story telling, public speaking or, in several cases, what they perceived to be the experience of doing stand-up comedy:

I find that the connection with the audience, the one-to-one connection, I find that tremendously helpful. I just want to think of it as telling a bunch of people who are interested in the subject anyway...telling them, you know, the story of my little evening.⁵⁷

____Brian Bedford

Every once in a while I am asked to talk to executives about doing speeches....It is exactly the same thing, you know, when an executive does a public speech or a politician....If they are scared of the people, if they can't really look at one person and another person in the eye when they speak, the speech is not effective because the person who is listening doesn't feel effective to it, doesn't feel sucked into it. And I think it is the same principle actually. [In] speeches where the person has talked to the room generally and we have not felt so involved, I think if we felt we had been talked to it would have made a difference. So I think it is the same.⁵⁸

____Michael Kahn

Actors are alarmed when they have to talk directly to an audience and...if you're talking to the audience, you talk to the audience like you talk to like, well, like in All My Sons the father will talk to the son, only the father now talks to the audience. It's really the same process except the partner is not in the set area where the actors usually are but they're out in the house. But it's

still the same process...and most actors get along with that....Once [they] get over the fact that they're alone...and the fact that they are talking to the audience, like Henny Youngman, at the Sands Hotel, then they're fine. That takes just a little while and they realize it's sort of like the same thing.⁵⁹

___Charles Nelson Reilly

You know the thing that just struck me as we're talking in terms of this is that the big lesson, of course, in all of this is to watch stand-up comics work. [Working the audience]...that's exactly what it is. I remember watching James Whitmore doing Will Rogers and the stories about Hal Holbrook as well, doing Mark Twain. I mean, he reached a point from what I understand that he had just vast amounts of material and he could change in the course of performance, just shift from one story to another to another, depending on the feel of the house and that's basically an ideal concept of the situation, what we want to be able to do.⁶⁰

___Sabin Epstein

And also in a one-person show, interestingly enough, if you're talking to the audience, then you have to deal with them. You know, are you telling them a joke and if you're telling a funny story, I'm sure it's going to be different for you if they laugh or if they just kind of sit there and it doesn't work. You have to then, the same way we would deal with another character, respond to that, to get a feel from that audience. Is this audience really listening to this story here?...The actor then, you know, if you tell a joke like you do in real life where you tell something, you see how a person responds to it. Are they laughing or are they just smiling or are they wondering what was suppose to be funny? And I think that will also take the performer somewhere else. It will tell you, whoa,...it's a rough night. I've got to work a little harder here or they're not a responsive audience or maybe they're responding in a different way. So with all the things I've said we still go back...that we have to respond then to what we're getting back.⁶¹

___Arthur French

In the case of this particular production [F.D.R.] a great deal of conversation was me working in one to the audience. In other words, I opened the show sitting in the wheelchair talking to the audience and I would go in and out of the scene, so we had two turntables and we would go in and out of the scenes with other people, then go back to bridge the scenes when the turntable would move around to bring in new furniture. I would go back below the turntable and talk to the audience. So it was a combination of doing kind of a nightclub act in the sense of talking to the audience and doing jokes during that period and then going back up and doing an actual semi-play for them where I was talking to imaginary people. I go back to the phrase 'nightclub act', because after awhile I began to realize when I was playing it on stage, all alone...that playing a one-man show is like working as a comedian, in one with an audience, because you can basically do anything you want and they'll go along with it. You can take enormous pauses and get off on a sidetrack if you want to for whatever reason, losing your lines or forgetting something, a piece of business and since you are the only one they are looking at, it doesn't make any difference within reason how long you take to do anything. Because they are assuming that the next thing that is going to happen of any importance you are going to do anyway. So it is kind of a unique experience. It is very much, as I say, like working in a nightclub where the audience is only looking at you.⁶²

___Robert Vaughn

Other techniques were discussed, all of which having been employed in an effort to make the one-person show more inclusive: to strengthen the relationship between actor and audience. These techniques seemed to parallel those used in the previously discussed direct address areas of public speaking and stand-up comedy. Brian Bedford stated that he would consciously, "dish it out to various areas." He added, "you have to do that."⁶³ Distribution of focus, in fact, was mentioned by a number of the respondents. Robert Vaughn said that he, "would address as much of the theatre area,

including the balconies, as I could, just by generally looking around to make everybody feel included...."64

Charles Waxberg and Robert Benedetti also agreed that this was an important method to increase audience/performer interaction:

I would compare it most favorably with a good fourth-wall technique. When you are doing a play, you can't be as close, as intimate as you might be during a love scene in real life because you need to include the audience so what you create is your fourth-wall and on that fourth wall might be moldings or photographs, pipes, cracks in the ceiling and as you speak, your eye wanders around the room as anyone's does...Well, if you're doing a one-person show, then you need to include the audience. But you have to be more specific in looking at them. So, if you were to pick twelve people, I wouldn't put them house left. I would put them scattered through the house. You may decide that they do move around. Or I would put them close enough that they do fill the entire scope of your vision. You imagine someone sitting, I don't know, eighteen feet from you, twelve people lined up in a circle of chairs, that'll cover pretty much house left to right and center, of course.⁶⁵

___Charles Waxberg

Actually, I think that the best way to handle that is for the actor to relate personally to a limited number of people that are scattered in the general area of the audience. It doesn't work to relate to an anonymous mass so I think you do have to single out individual people that become in a sense representatives of the rest of the audience. And it's best if, of course, geographically those points of focus, those individuals that you're focusing on are scattered around so that you don't play exclusively to only one element, one part of the audience....There was about a ten year period of my life when every play I directed regardless of it's form was done with the house lights on. Because even in a naturalistic play I believed that the actor is wearing his hat to include the audience in the loop.⁶⁶

___Robert Benedetti

Madeleine Sherwood relates an interesting story concerning her method of gaining confidence and skill in direct address:

The first time I did it I wanted to see the people's faces so, therefore, we had full house lights so that I could. It also starts to get you over the agony of actually looking at an audience. It's not easy looking at an audience. It's very difficult to break down the fourth-wall and be in total contact. And then I would pick somebody that I knew that I was not very close with or had had some...words with or whatever. When I wanted to engender a different kind of feeling in the beast, for instance, if I was talking about the doctor who I hated, you know, it helped to have somebody there that I was not fond of, to say it lightly. Or at another point in the piece it might have been very helpful to have somebody there in the audience that I could look at that would give me all of the sympathy I wanted, and I wanted sympathy for what Tom was going through in the hospital. What it did was help me very much when I got down to a place where I knew nobody in the audience.⁶⁷

____Madeleine Sherwood

Robert Benedetti states that whenever it is appropriate he encourages the actor to "move...down center and relate as personally and as directly to the audience as possible...."⁶⁸

Sabin Epstein has several suggestions:

...the most obvious thing is that you search out and ferret out all the humor that you possibly can so that you work for direct, immediate response, direct feedback through laughter. The big gauge, always, certainly when I'm watching something that I've worked on, I try and sit in the back of the house and I watch the audience rather than what's happening on stage to judge from the quality of the stillness and the quality of the silence or the points in time when people lean into the action [or] when they shift--shifting is also a major cue. I mean, it has everything to do with the level of engagement of an audience and that's what one works for all the time. I mean, they're really elemental and basic tricks in terms of being able to do some of that stuff, in terms of changing tempo, changing volume, slowing things down,

getting quieter, use of lighting, revelation of secrets or those kinds of dramatic moments that will pretty much pull an audience in.⁶⁹

____Sabin Epstein

A key point that Epstein raises, and one which was repeated in several of the interviews, is that in a one-person show the performer can immediately gauge how the audience is responding, and be directly effected by those responses:

...and they get the thought and it explodes in their mind, whether it is a humorous thought that makes them laugh or a serious thought that suddenly quiets them down. I feel, I sense it. I'm listening. My ears are wide open and I'm hearing everything. The silence is as much or more than the laughter and it is a communication of thoughts.⁷⁰

____Hal Holbrook

I mean, every actor can sense the audience's reaction, their silence, their breathing patterns, their chuckles, their coughs, the rustling of programs and you know how attentive an audience is always on stage and you know how alive they are.⁷¹

____Robert Cohen

I start the play and then I always remember saying, 'Oh, people really are listening.' I can hear them listening...because of the quality of the silence. You can listen to silence. I can anyway, can't you? As the play goes on, there's this sort of difference in the silence...The Belle has a lot of laughter in it, but in the more serious parts, I could really hear them listening.⁷²

____Julie Harris

Perhaps the most obvious and important technique to employ when performing a one-person show is to genuinely speak to

the audience. Charles Nelson Reilly relates the following story:

I never saw The Belle of Amherst with anybody but Miss Harris except one night. My friend...Timothy Helgeson, directed a production in San Francisco at this wonderful theater, the Berkeley Repertory Theater....And it was very interesting 'cause the actress was superb. [She] did one scene better than Miss Harris. You can write that down. Anyway, the rejection scene from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, she did amazing. But the point is, she came out, it was opening night, and she came out and she performed an act and a half brilliantly talking to the audience. You know, how the play goes, 'This is my mother, my garden is out that window and look at the bird.' And what happened was, in the middle of the second act, she went higher than a kite 'cause it hit her that she was almost through and she got through it alive because it's difficult. And she panicked and she went up on my favorite line which is, 'I never cared for Abbey Farley. I always thought she was a little tart, but Otis says she makes good apple pie.' Now, that line doesn't mean anything but I think it's the most clever line in the world....I mean, she really was gone and then she talked to the audience and she said, 'I'm sorry but I have to go off and look at it. I'm petrified.' Well, what would you do? You can't turn to the chorus and say, 'sing it again.' You can't turn to anybody. And she was superb. She really was wonderful, Joy Clement, I think her name is. She walked out. She looked at the script and came back. But you see what was so interesting as an acting teacher is, although she comes out in the very beginning at 8 o'clock or 8:06, and says, 'My name is Emily Elizabeth Dickinson...I'm named after my cousin Elizabeth on Father's side.'...But the point I want to make is, she talked to the audience at 8:06 and...the original director and conceiver of the play thought she was brilliant and then at ten minutes to ten, she really talked...and the stage lit up. I mean, it was like there was a light cue because although I was fooled, the whole audience [was] when she was talking to us about the garden...when she really had to talk to us, she really talked to us...[She had] fooled us, and she even fooled the original conceiver'I've got to go off.' I mean, it was real. And so should have been the whole play. 'That's the little garden

path out that window,' then it wouldn't show when she really talked to us, it wouldn't have stuck out. Only she wasn't talking to us when she was talking to us, that's why it stuck out like the lights went up six hundred volts.⁷³

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Perhaps the most significant relationship exists between the actor and the audience. It is through this interaction that the give and take inherent to conventional, multi-character presentations is approximated. The majority of solo actors choose direct address to engage the audience. The interviewees expressed a belief that an effective technique to establish this connection is to cast the audience as the 'other character'. In addition they felt that the actor must have a strong need to tell his or her story, and a specific audience-centered objective. Techniques of address include methods used in story telling, public speaking and stand-up comedy. Of these, the most important is perhaps the most elemental--simply and honestly talking to the audience and being sensitive and responsive to their reactions. The study will now focus on a third type of relationship which is evident in the one-person show--relating to imaginary characters.

Relating to Imaginary Characters

...it's a little like doing Harvey or something, you know, where I've got to follow that rabbit around and not lose it for one single second--and it's not easy. It's very difficult. That in itself posed an enormous problem. An enormous challenge is a better word for it. It was challenging creating that character and making her work.⁷⁴

Relating to the audience through direct address is, in the main, the method of choice when performing a one-person show. However, interacting with imaginary characters is also used, to varying degrees, in solo productions. Presented in this fashion, the one-person show retains many of the features of fourth-wall drama: the performer creates his acting partners in his 'mind's eye' and relates to them as if they were present on stage. The audience is not formally acknowledged. The specificity and vividness of his/her vision and the skill with which interaction is simulated, determines, to a great degree, whether or not the spectator will accept the convention and, consequently, whether the show succeeds or fails. Twelve of the respondents considered the use of illusory characters a topic of sufficient significance to warrant discussion. There are those, in fact, who would argue that this technique provides a more satisfying theatrical experience for the viewer than does direct address. Bruce McDougall, in his article, "The Bare Necessity of One-Man Shows," writes:

These productions [one-person shows using imaginary characters]...free the performers from the restrictions of addressing the audience directly--the fourth-wall can be rebuilt so the audience remains detached from the action on stage. And the playwright and the performer can draw from a wider range of theatrical effects than if the material were presented directly to the audience. As Clarke Rogers says, many one-person shows are no longer addressed directly to the audience because such a presentation leads to 'rhetorical inevitability' and can become very 'school-teacherish. An audience comes to the theatre to exercise its

imagination, not for facts. If they want facts, they can watch the news.'⁷⁵

____Bruce McDougall

While William Luce, in his plays, has "gradually gotten away from having the protagonist address unseen characters on stage,"⁷⁶ he agrees that this tactic can be most effective:

...with The Belle of Amherst, I did employ the address of unseen characters...and others have done that, too. And an audience has accepted that device...[although] once in awhile a critic who doesn't like that feels cheated, feels it's a trick....But it's very successful with audiences, there is a readiness to accept these devices and they seem to work wonderfully. For instance, in the second act of this Dennison play [Lucifer's Child], suddenly Julie is thinking of Dennis Finchhatten and how elusive he was and how he didn't want to commit himself to a relationship. And she enters into an argument immediately with him and takes both parts, which she does so beautifully. So she's raging at him and he is talking back to her and finally at the end, she suddenly sags and she says, 'What has happened to us, Dennis Finchhatten, my old friend,' and she turns away. In other words, dismisses him and with a lighting change, she's back with the audience again.⁷⁷

____William Luce

'Imaging' or to 'image' is defined as follows: 1. To call up a mental picture of. 2. To describe or portray in a vivid manner. 3. To make appear.⁷⁸ If unseen characters are to be employed as a means of establishing relationships in a one-person show, and if these characters are to live in the audience's imagination, they must be made flesh and blood in the performer's eye. They must be vividly imaged. Charles Nelson Reilly, also speaking of Julie Harris, relates...

...When Julie was in one of her great moods, I would actually see in the dark shadows in the night scene, her brother's broadcloth collar on his coat, standing in front of her and I saw that many times....So in other words the other characters are so evoked that you can costume them....And sometimes I would see the cat, and in Brontë there is a scene about a mouse running around the stage and one night, truly, a real mouse was out there in exactly the same place where it usually is imaginary. She would do the same thing she did [when] the real mouse was there. The audience always said the mouse was wonderful...because it looked like the same thing with or without the mouse. I think that's interesting.⁷⁹

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Sabin Epstein discusses the need for specificity when relating to unseen characters:

...imaging is crucial in not just a one-person show but in any piece. But when you are alone on stage...one of the major things that you have to avoid is generalizations. The thing that holds an audience's attention is when you are specific; when the actor is specific, whether it's talking about a specific incident or a specific object or another person....The actor's task is to recreate life, whether they're alone on stage or with other people and quite often when you're talking about the past, you have to be able to see it as we do in real life. You see it to describe it. And [in] that process of imaging--there are different steps to it--whether it's substitution or personalization or endowment,...it [must all be made] personal, personal enough that you can speak about it from a point of personal reference, so that it has meaning, and hopefully not just meaning but passion.⁸⁰

____Sabin Epstein

In presenting a similar view, Arthur French states:

We don't see the other person but the actor must see that person, must hear that person, must know that other person's response so that they can then respond to their image's responses. If the other person is sneering at them or laughing at them or laughing with them or crying, then the actor must

see it. Because if the actor doesn't see it, we in the audience sure in hell will never see it. In a one-person show what that actor must do is make us see that other person and make us know what that person's responses are.⁸¹

____Arthur French

Vivid creation of imaginary characters can indeed prove to be a compelling effect on stage. It is, however, in the words of Michael Kahn, not easy: "And so I think they [the actors] have to imagine very, very carefully who those people [the imagined characters] are and what they are saying....You really do two actor's work. You have to do yours and theirs."⁸²

The task is undeniably a difficult one. But what methods can the performer employ to facilitate this conjuring of imagined characters? How is it possible to enhance his or her connection to unseen stage companions and in so doing increase the audience's acceptance and understanding of the convention? According to the interviewees, the aim must be for specificity. Charles Nelson Reilly believes that this specificity resides in and results from the actor's imagination:

You don't need ice, roller skates or mirrors or chandeliers...all the sound systems and the light shows. You don't need any of that. You need [as Julie Harris provided in The Belle of Amherst] the imaginary broadcloth collar of the brother...and then you're in the theatre....We don't need the other actors. An actor just needs a mind.⁸³

____Charles Nelson Reilly

In discussing the imaging of other characters, Robert Cohen offers the following:

The other characters aren't on stage so you have to have very specific notions of who they are. In my Mad Ludwig, there were a whole bunch of historical characters and fortunately the person who was doing it was the author and he had very clear ideas of who these people were that he was talking about and so did the audience. I mean, he was not an expert actor, unfortunately, but he was able to compensate in many ways by the vividness of his portrayal of these people. Every time he referred to them and kind of looked off in the direction that he envisioned them, his breathing rate changed to the way he would breathe in their presence. Do you know what I mean? And his eyes would narrow when he looked at people who had betrayed him. I mean, it was just kind of a natural reaction for him....As a director, I say clarity is my middle name. Whenever anybody, in any play I direct, refers to somebody important, who's not a character in the play but is important in the context of the play, I try to locate that person geographically so that sometimes they'll even kind of look off in the direction, I mean, if the play is in Venice and this character is Milan, Milan is over here. It's not that every time they refer to them they look over in the direction of Milan. But at key moments that they do. They really have a sense of where that person is geographically and who that person is very specifically so that they respond to a human presence, not just an abstraction. I think it's even more important in a one-person play.⁸⁴

____Robert Cohen

Robert Benedetti also addressed the difficulty of using illusory characters and the need for vivid and specific images:

I've seen one-person shows in which some of the material at least assumed the presence of another person...who ought not to be in the audience given the nature of the material. What does the actor do?...It's a tremendous spiritual exercise, I think, for the actor to create a sense of the other character that is so complete that the actor is able to respond to it really as if it had a life of

its own....It is possible to get to that point. It is possible to get to the point where you so totally believe in the presence of the other character that you begin to relate to it as if it were another person...⁸⁵

____Robert Benedetti

The question still remains: what tangible techniques can be employed by the performer to make these unseen characters 'live'? How does the actor breathe life so deeply into them, so vividly imagine them, that they furnish the give-and-take relationship normally provided by other actors? Clarity seems to be paramount. As Robert Cohen indicated, it is essential that these characters be 'placed' or 'blocked' with absolute precision so that the actor has a clear and constant sense of where they are located. In agreeing with Cohen, Robert Benedetti comments:

I think it helps to place that image on a tangible object, an exit sign or a pillar in the balcony....I do a lot of film and television acting now, and when they come to shoot your reactions you're supposedly looking at the other person and usually the other person is there helping you out, standing off camera and you can actually look at them. But once in a while, because of the demands of the camera, your eyes have to be focused on a spot that's impossible for anybody to get to and then we usually ask for a target. We ask for one of the grips to put a piece of tape or to put a little paper plate or any real object that we can allow our eyes to settle on. And I think that the actor needs to do the same thing. In a live theater situation when they're relating to an imagined character at the back of the auditorium, they have to pick a spot, a physical thing that they can see which provides an actual physical target for their eyes. Then they can turn that into the person that they're talking to a lot easier than if they're just staring blankly into space and trying to project like a hologram.⁸⁶

____Robert Benedetti

Arthur French believes that, in addition to giving these characters precise locations, the actor must be clear in his attitudes toward them:

People we refer to...in the presentational kind of one-man show...we must have a full view of who that person is. If I'm talking about my mother, well, I must know how I feel about my mother? Was she a loving mother? Was she a bitch? Was she overbearing or was she sweet? Was she kind? What was she?...Even if I talk about her, without going into deep thing, it will be colored in a certain way. So even though I'm not, I'm not talking to her, you will get a sense of how I feel about my mother. How I feel about my wife, my child, my husband, my lover, whatever. But those, anyone you talk about certainly, you must have a clear picture of who they are, how you feel about them, any place we talk about, including whatever environment we're in. If I say, well, I went to Paris, but then before we do this, I must have a clear sense of what Paris meant to me. Was it a wonderful, exciting time or was it the pits so that when I speak of all of these places as the show goes on, as I talk of other people, which is gonna happen in any show. What is he gonna talk about? He's gonna talk about a place. He's gonna talk about people. They're gonna talk about the law or their environment in their time, so we must then, in the script as we work on it, have a clear, a very clear idea of what do I feel about this. Am I talking about the queen? How do I feel about my cat that I have? Is he a joy to me or is he, you know, an imp or what? And if we have this, if we know who these people are, what we feel about them. What we feel about our surroundings. What we feel about the places we've traveled. People in one-person plays talk about their childhood--when they grew up. Well, it's very important than to know if that was a pleasant childhood. Was it wonderful or was it not so wonderful? Are you glad it's over or do you wish you were back there? So, if we really work and know who we are and know these people we're talking about---it's gonna be different if I talk about Aunt Mary than if I talk about Aunt Susie. If I have clear pictures, it will come out different.⁸⁷

____Arthur French

Several of the respondents felt that such specificity was reached through extensive research, the use of photographs or paintings and assigning the imagined characters specific tasks or dialogue:

I talk to people. In both the Brontë and The Belle of Amherst, I know exactly from photographs or paintings, how the people looked so...I carry on as if they are really there....it's almost as if I'd had a stand in but it's just in my mind. In Brontë, when the father comes into the study for the first time after Charlotte has come home, I picture him, he greets me and he breaks down and cries and I have to comfort him. So, I actually give them things to do which I respond to. So then I help him into the chair and I try to comfort him. I pat his hand. It's not pantomime. I don't think it's pantomime. I don't do it as if it's pantomime. I do it as if the hand is really there. I mean by that...it's an emotional thing. It's just as if you were standing there and I'd help you into the chair....Although I never did it with a real person, I take hold of his arm and I help him into the chair.⁸⁸

____Julie Harris

So there is another acting problem, how do you people the stage? I don't know how you do that. I think you imagine it....I think in your own mind, in that wonderful area called imagination, you see those people....I'll tell you something else I used. Those marvelous pictures of Gertrude and Leo when they first went to Paris and how her arm is in his and she is looking up at him like, 'Oh!, my wonderful big brother, my protector, my leader, my mentor'. The next picture they are shoulder to shoulder. The third picture, the other brother and sister-in-law are standing between them and they are quite distanced and that is the way that relationship seemed to crumble. And I found the more I got into the play, the more I used the image of those photographs. I used those photographs of Leo and Gertrude...and I really got so lost in that scene [the fight between them] that sometimes ...when the scene was over I really felt schizoid. For the first time in my life I had the feeling that you can be two people and represent two different viewpoints....It is incredible. Well, I'll tell you, in my entire life in this

profession, I've never done a piece of work like that.⁸⁹

____Pat Carroll

Since this was a real man [F.D.R.] who talked to real people, I spent a great deal of time prior to going into rehearsal researching who the people were and what they looked like and what the relationship was to them. I spent a whole week at the Hyde Park library in New York with access to all the film that that library contains on Roosevelt from the beginning of his career, when he was first photographed. Plus all the other film that had people in it who were actually in the play also. Many of these people were eliminated during the course of the editing, but I knew what everybody looked like and I knew basically what his relationship was to them and how tall they were and if they were standing next to him, whether they were five feet tall or six feet four, and I tried to incorporate that to the most part in the performance, which meant nothing to anybody in the audience, only to me....[Also] the director would improvise the dialogue with me. It was important to me because if it wasn't clear to me, it wouldn't be clear to the audience.⁹⁰

____Robert Vaughn

Another technique felt to enhance the reality with which the solo performer relates to unseen characters, is the use of other people during rehearsals. Robert Benedetti is one who believes this to be an effective tool:

...but when you create a scene that's being played with another person who's not really there it's a little tougher to really be in action and have the competency...to give us as much of a tangible basis to that relationship as he can provide. Perhaps by rehearsing the scene with other people present...we develop a kind of sense memory specifically for the playing of that scene....I think it would be great in a one-person show, just as I sometimes do in multiple person shows, to go to locations that are appropriate to the locations in which the character is meant to be living and I certainly think that somebody doing a one-person show that involves other characters ought to spend some time

rehearsing with other actors present playing those other characters.⁹¹

____Robert Benedetti

In agreement is Arthur French:

What I've suggested is that when people even do monologues, because most monologues are really not monologues, they're duologues with one person talking and some person listening, I've even suggested that you get the people there in the rehearsal process...so that you get a sense that it's not just an actor standing in front of a group of people reading a monologue...it's someone talking to someone else. There are very few true monologues. There are some soliloquies, but if you take these monologues out, you'll find that it's a person talking to someone and the other person is listening and reacting even though we don't see them. So, I've even suggested in monologues that people set the set up. Get the other person there for the purpose of rehearsal. So you get a sense of what that person's response might be. You can choose or pick it as you like, but to get a sense of that so that when we then eliminate it, you have a sense of what happens when you say certain things to someone, how they might react to it.⁹²

____Arthur French

A slightly different approach, but with a similar aim, was taken by Madeliene Sherwood. While not using other actors during rehearsals, she made a specific and detailed choice as to the identity of her unseen stage partner and gave this character precise dialogue and actions which in turn served to stimulate her own responses:

I found someone for myself and it changed during the first week of rehearsal. It changed until I finally popped on to the person that was really going to work for me. As an actor I could make them anything that I wanted...within my own self working I could make them who I wanted, make her who I wanted, it was a her...I had to wait for her response quite often so that I could come up with the next answer to the question that she presumably

asked me....She became someone who was very very special to me. She was a very personable person. I found her maybe six or seven days into rehearsal and that was who it was for the rest of the time. I'm not going to say who it was, because if I do it again...I may be using the same person and I know that from actors' ways of working a lot of us don't like to give away what we think of as our secret.⁹³

____Madeleine Sherwood

Relating to imaginary characters, either in addition to or in place of direct address, is an approach taken by many solo performers. Its effectiveness is dependent upon the vividness, the specificity with which the actor peoples the stage with these unseen characters. Techniques to improve the efficacy of imaging include: 1) carefully 'placing' imaginary characters in particular and consistent locations, 2) the use of paintings and photographs to imprint an actual image within the actor's mind, 3) having other actors assume the roles and responses of these imagined figures during rehearsals, and 4) drawing from one's own experiences to determine evocative images.

The final type of relationship to be considered in this Focus Area is the actor's interaction with props, music, lighting and the physical environment.

Relating to/Using Props, Music, Lighting and the Physical Environment

...when they [the other actors] are not there, then I think whatever else there is that can help the actor to be centered and grounded and not self-conscious, such as props or music, I think is important. I think they are all evocative and also give the actor someplace to concentrate.⁹⁴

____Michael Kahn

Other resources to further a sense of connection include the use of props, music, sound effects, lighting and the physical environment in which the actor is to perform. Nine of the respondents felt that these elements contribute significantly to the art of solo performance. Arthur French, for example, states that the use of props in a one-person show is an important and effective way to reveal the actor's character to an audience:

...they are critical. With the help of all the elements, the lighting, the sets, props, all of that--we will come out with a unique character, and not one that you've kind of sat down and pumped into your computer and just rolls out everyday....The set and your props certainly are important [and] it's very important how you handle props [because] the way you handle them tells us something about this character, how this character feels about certain things.⁹⁵

____Arthur French

To Sabin Epstein, props serve as a visual link to what the spectator hears and therefore help to facilitate the actor/audience relationship:

...the objects become extraordinarily powerful props... external sources to redirect an audience's focus. Because what we hear is so tied into what we see that the visual can stimulate your ear...[for example] by changing the light level you will change the way the audience hears. An actor can speak at exactly the same point of volume but if you raise the lights two points, the audience will think that the actor is louder. [Props, music, or lighting] are more crucial [in a one-person show]...because every object has to tell a story and every object that is there has to relate to the person who is speaking, so that everything has a history and provides a form of visual relief.⁹⁶

____Sabin Epstein

While props, music and lighting can serve to heighten an audience's enjoyment and understanding of a one-person show, of greater relevance is their impact upon and contribution to the actor during performance. From a practical standpoint, as Sabin Epstein points out, they provide external sources of stimulation:

...having objects is very helpful, props, because they can help trigger you. They can help guide you back. They provide a source of stimulation....It's possible at times to build in physical associations with objects, things that will trigger a story or an image at a crucial moment. If you get lost, you can go back to them to help guide you.⁹⁷

____Sabin Epstein

Colleen Dewhurst relied heavily upon lighting and props during My Gene:

They were very important. I mean the lighting was important in certain areas. The isolation of her, particularly when you went into other roles. Just to define for the house and for you yourself a change, you know, if it went to moonlight and at the end when she describes...his death. That was very easy to do...and then to be able to handle anything (laughter)!!! To be able to find some things, to sit at a desk and even put your hands on the desk and kind of address them. I had little things, little earrings, little gloves that half the time wouldn't go on, things like that, but at least it gave me a self-involvement.⁹⁸

____Colleen Dewhurst

In speaking of the use of props by the solo performer, Robert Cohen simply says, "I would say they are absolutely crucial. More so in a one-person show because that's the whole world. You have to create a world through one person, and beautiful work with props creates the whole world."⁹⁹

Charles Nelson Reilly also is an enthusiastic believer in the importance of props:

...I use lots of props. Props are interesting. When Ann Jackson spoke at my friend's, Geraldine Page's, funeral, she said, 'Geraldine Page taught me the importance of props.' I just think props are so important...if we don't have the other actors.¹⁰⁰

___Charles Nelson Reilly

According to a number of the respondents, however, the actor must be careful to avoid generalizations in the use of props as well as an over-reliance upon them. His/her connection to each article must be specific, and the number and employment of props judiciously planned. As Michael Kahn relates, "I think a good one-person show doesn't have a lot of props. I think it has essential ones--a book, or a letter. It isn't just millions of objects. But I think they have to be important."¹⁰¹ Robert Vaughn concurs with Kahn's observations that, in regard to props, perhaps less is indeed more:

...the stuff that we had was...the exact kind of stuff that Roosevelt actually had on his desk. For instance, Roosevelt's desk was very cluttered, his desk in the White House for all thirteen years looked like a child's room....And all those things were on the desk. But actually during the course of rehearsal we found there were too many things on the desk. I couldn't really function well because there was so much stuff. We had to try eliminating it for the sake of making phone calls and moving around and so on....If they weren't an asset they weren't there...we got rid of a lot of stuff because it was just too cluttered. But I think the thing that you learn in doing a one-man show is, you are so terribly frightened of being alone on the stage for two hours if you haven't done nightclub work or something like that, that you

tend to overdo as far as helping things are concerned...and eventually you find that the more secure you become, the less you need of anything external and the more you just rely on yourself to create the scene and let the audience go along with you.¹⁰²

___Robert Vaughn

In the opinion of Arthur French, the key to effectively using props is for the actor to carefully define, to particularize, his relationship to each object:

...props certainly are important here [in a one-person show] and it's very important again, how you handle props. If they're there, what are they there for? If you're gonna use them, then how are you using them? Are you picking up this object lovingly? Are you picking it up, you know, carelessly? How do you feel about these objects that surround you so even when you use a prop, if you light a cigarette, if you drink a cup of coffee or something, is it, are you familiar with them? Do you like these items? Is it a precious item? Is it just an ordinary item that doesn't mean too much to you? When you sit in a chair...there's a difference if you sit in a chair in your house or you sit in a chair and you come here. You know, so when you have props, it is really essential that you know how you feel about the objects.¹⁰³

___Arthur French

The principal contribution that props, music, lighting and other elements in the physical environment bring to solo performance, is that they provide a means of involvement, a road to evocative connections. In the absence of other characters, they present the actor with tangible stimuli to which he or she can react. Julie Harris speaks of how specific sounds would trigger effective responses during her performances of Brontë:

...Sound...when Charlotte is in Brussels and she is wandering the streets, she hears the church bells ringing. So, very often we had that. Or the first time she sees the ocean, we had sea gulls crying. Church bell sounds are beautiful to me.¹⁰⁴

____Julie Harris

William Luce, Silvia Miles and Pat Carroll discuss an actor's relationship to and use of props, music/sound and lighting and how these elements often stimulate emotional involvement, as well as action, in a one-person show:

The thing is, you use all of the resources...you think in terms of what the lighting will be and how you'll lose the present [and then] suddenly you'll be in the past. And you also think of immediate things, immediacy...of what props you'll be using because...they're the present tense of the play and they sometimes...trigger memories. Sometimes they call people back. On stage they call the performer back to the present situation. In Lillian, for instance, the light floods across the stage from this room where Dachel is dying. It calls her back to that situation. She goes over to the door and looks in and then turns away. The light goes out and then she starts talking about Dachel again. All those things you kind of conceive as you go along....In the Barrymore play [one-person play about John Barrymore] as an example, the situation is that he's on his last leg, which he was for quite a few years, but he is going to try Richard the Third once more, maybe a comeback, to see if he can really get back up on top again. And his Richard the Third, he's going to try it with a prompter, to get through the lines. On this, these two hours when there's an audience there...it's on a stage with the suggestion of part of the set--throne, you know, and a few steps going up to it and a prop trunk and a table with a telephone and few other props. But out of that all comes a wonderful opportunity for characters. And he's trying to find the right props for Richard in this trunk but he happens upon an old wig and feathered hat and all the different things and suddenly he remembers his grandmother Drew, who was the matriarch of this acting dynasty, famous for being Mrs. Malaprop, so he suddenly becomes Mrs. Malaprop with the fan and everything. I mean all of the

things that are possible you try to come up with...¹⁰⁵

___William Luce

...I was writing my life...it was based in my apartment...which they came and photographed and Eugene Lee blew up all of the furniture in cardboard blow-ups and there was my apartment on stage....[I was] relating to my artifacts...there were so many characters in my play--the things on stage were characters, there are characters in my apartment. There are things, memories, and those memories were on stage and they were very viable and they were used in it. They were all in the play...they were all characters...and I would talk to them. There as a picture of Andy [Warhol] there. I'd say, 'Andy, Andy' what did you do?' You know, I would talk to these people. There were pictures there of everybody. There's a cutout of Rod Stewart wearing all my clothes...I mean if you walked in, you'd be startled because it looks like there's somebody standing there in my clothes.¹⁰⁶

___Silvia Miles

...the rain was very important to the beginning of the second act, rain and thunder, very important. The lamp on stage was very important for periods of time, for me, I don't know how the audience felt about it. The texture of the rug, because I looked at the rug a lot when thinking, the texture of the rug was very important. There were patterns in the rug. The feel of the chair in which I sat for most of the play was very important. The stuffing in the chair was very important, because I sprung a spring at one time. Very important how that felt (laughter). I think also a certain pen, Mary Ellen Devy went out of her way to find a pen that I wrote with in the play, an exact period pen. I think that the touching, the feeling, the using of that was important. I think my sense memory is not as great as it should be, but those things all added into it. There was a penholder, an inkwell, a penholder on the table that was also very important--as many times I've touched that [and] it gave me a feeling of something. A handkerchief in my pocket which I specified should be there mostly because I perspire so heavily during performance and I simply didn't want to sit there dripping and yet it seemed part of that character. And I also used the image of the nuns who had taught me when I

was quite young, how they always brought out of their pockets such wonderful things: big hankies and holy cards and candies and pencils and Band-Aids and their pockets were always full of good things. So every time I brought that handkerchief out, always the feelings those little sisters came out with it and they were my red cross, they mopped my brow, they kept me going. The handkerchief was very important, it also became a punctuation mark for me like George Burn's cigar.¹⁰⁷

___Pat Carroll

Hal Holbrook employs similar 'punctuation marks' in his portrayal of Mark Twain. In the following observations, he perfectly illustrates how important skillfully used props are to the solo actor: what a significant contribution they, as well as other elements in the physical environment, make to the effectiveness of a one-person show:

...when I started out with Twain...I knew I wanted to play him at seventy years old or so, because he was most colorful looking then. He had white hair. He often wore a white suit which was colorful. I knew that I had to try to do something about his physical appearance and manner on the stage that would be unusual, slightly unusual at least. It would be eccentric, let's say, whatever word you want to use, it would be different, something different. What could I do? I thought, 'well I'll have him wear the white suit'. By that time, I knew that he didn't wear the white suit when he was lecturing, he wore a formal black suit and tails. But I thought well in that respect I can depart, I can take dramatic license. Because, the more I read about him, reviews of his lectures and all, the one truth that came across about his manner on the stage is he was considered eccentric in his time. That is, his manner of delivering a lecture was considered eccentric. He didn't just stand at the podium like Dickens, he moved around the stage. He slouched against things, that was considered not only eccentric, but bad form. Slouched against the lectern, he was criticized for it in reviews. He took a long time, he paused, he slurred, some people thought he was loaded, you know, he was exaggerated in manner. But all these things in

those days were considered unique and even daring. Not today. There is nothing daring about slouching or walking around....So I said to myself, 'well I'm going to have to do the walking and I'm going to have to look for the unusual, so I'll have him in a white suit, that will already be colorful and a little bit strange.' And then I thought, 'well he is famous for the cigar, but he never smoked on the platform, he wouldn't do that, it was the Victorian era, I mean he was a gentleman, he wouldn't do that. But, what if I have him smoke? That will be breaking another rule, it is a little unusual to have a man up there on the platform giving a lecture and smoking. That really makes it seem casual.' Then I realized that I'd have to have an ashtray somewhere. That meant I was going to have to have a table on the stage. So I had a lectern and table now, suddenly my set was developing. And then I found, well movement, the cigar began to give me a reason for moving because I would go over once in a while and drop an ash. And then, the next thing I found out is sometimes I start to go to drop an ash and an impulse would say, 'wait a minute, just be struck by a new idea and don't drop the ash now. Go on with the new idea, it interrupts your thought and then a while later go back and drop the ash.' So then I started developing this sense of, 'what the hell is he going to do next? Is he going to drop the ash or not.' Because I'm alone on the stage, I've got a lectern, I've got a table and a chair, I've got a water glass and a water pitcher, I've got six books and I've got an ashtray and a cigar in my hand. This can create suspense. 'When is he going to drop the ash. If there are no other people on the stage, and there are just those few props and me, dropping the ash in an ashtray becomes a small event. That creates suspense. That's how you develop the dramatic. 'When is he going to go over there and drink out of that water glass.' After forty minutes, somebody might be thinking, 'when the hell is he going to take a drink of water!' I know that. It is not by accident that I don't go. And you see, when I do take a drink of water, I don't drink it right away. I might start to pour it and then forget and get lost, because that is the technique, that's the style of the performance as it developed, as I conceived Mark Twain's style was. The thing to do is to seem to be thinking, to be getting a new idea, to forget what you were just doing and start, the way older people do, the way people do when they are interested in what they are

thinking. That is what was leading the parade, as far as I was concerned. And that developed all the eccentricities which, in turn, developed a sense of suspense on the stage.¹⁰⁸

____Hal Holbrook

Props, music, sound effects, lighting and the physical environment serve the solo actor in several ways. They assist in the revelation of character: an audience is given clues into the nature of someone by the way in which he or she relates to objects and/or outside stimuli. Props give the actor something to do, something to handle. They help keep him or her 'on track' during the performance as well as furnish visual relief for the spectator. In some instances, as with Hal Holbrook's cigar, a prop may exert a major influence on an actor's performance style or become the source and focal point of stage business. Principally, however, these elements help the performer become emotionally involved. They provide something with which to be connected, to be in relation. The artful employment of props, music, sound effects, lighting, and the physical environment, along with material which has been carefully and enthusiastically selected and prepared, and interaction with the audience and/or vividly imagined unseen characters, all function to aid the actor in his/her primary task--the establishment of relationships in the absence of other performers. While this concern is central, it is by no means the sole consideration in preparing and performing a one-person show. We now

examine a second Focus Area which emerged during discussions with the interviewees.

**FOCUS AREA II: GENERATING AND MAINTAINING ENERGY AND
CONCENTRATION**

A tremendous amount of energy was required...people don't realize this. You can't relate this to any kind of television acting. This is like being a marathon runner. You have to have a tremendous amount of strength to do this kind of thing. I mean to stand up there for an hour and forty minutes without stopping is a tremendous amount of work. I was doing everything. It was like a marathon. It was like running a marathon every day. It was exhausting. This is exhausting when I talk about it.¹⁰⁹

____Silvia Miles

Being focused and energized is essential if the actor is to present an interesting, engaging performance. In an ensemble production, his/her concentration and energy must, at all times, be directed toward the moment to moment interaction unfolding on stage. However, much like a runningback on the gridiron, the actor in a conventional play, typically, is not expected to 'carry the ball' the entire game. In a multi-character play there will be times when the thrust of the action will be initiated by different members of the cast. Such is not the case in a one-person show. The weight of the production rests squarely and relentlessly on a lone performer. To several of those interviewed, this responsibility presents no great problem. Robert Benedetti expressed the opinion that...

...it's more exhausting in the sense that you're on stage for a very long period of time without being able to get off to catch a breather. But that's the reason that it's tiring, not because you're

alone, [not] because it's unrelieved. A performance that involves your being on stage with other actors for a long period of time is exactly as tiring if you're doing your job. I mean, this is only to say that sometimes when there's more than one actor on stage one of them can get away with not doing their job completely because the audience isn't looking at them all of the time. But if they're all doing their job fully then I don't see why a solo performance would be anymore tiring than any other kind of performance except that you don't get off stage to take a rest. So I just think that every actor should be as complete on stage when they're with other actors as they would be if they were the only actor on stage.¹¹⁰

___Robert Benedetti

Robert Vaughn offers the following:

...my great concern at the beginning was whether I had the energy to do it. You know, every night, eight performances a week....[But] once we had frozen the script at two hours...then when I was aware that the audience was not about to look anywhere on that stage except at me, it was quite relaxing. My concentration, I didn't have to worry about where they were going to look, or whether they were going to pay attention to me, because there wasn't anything else going on, except me. So it was probably more relaxing and less concentrated than a normal play would be in that sense....I didn't have to worry about anybody else. I only had myself to worry about. And in a play, you always have to worry about [whether] the other guy is going to do what he did last night in the same way and is he going to have the same energy level...[here, you] only have yourself to worry about, which in one sense was easier.¹¹¹

___Robert Vaughn

This view, however, was distinctly a minority one. A significant number of the respondents indicated that the amount of energy and level of concentration required during solo performance was indeed a leading concern. Pat Carroll relates:

...I'd never done a one-person show. My preparation had been in different areas of performing. I had stood up in supper clubs by myself and entertained...and when you have bits and pieces you don't have to sustain the energy, you have to program, but you don't have to sustain the energy. So for me, the major problem was how do you act for two hours and twenty minutes? ...Stamina, a very basic acting problem. How do I sustain energy for two hours?...I mean, the kind of controlled energy it took was exhausting, absolutely exhausting....If I lost my concentration, forget it, I didn't know where I was. If I was not honed in from the minute I walked toward that stage to make the first entrance, forget it. [In a multi-person show] the responsibility is split. For example, [in] Merry Wives I'm doing very difficult physical work which means I have to keep my concentration as well...but I also have swatches of time in between doing that, whereby I can regenerate my energies. When you are on that stage alone, there is no time to go to the potty, there is no time to say, 'well, I'll put my head down for a few minutes here and just, you know, close my eyes and I'll be fine.' You have none of that....It behooves actors never to be tired, I figure. I figure that's the only area in which we commit mortal sins because if you are tired, I don't think you can concentrate. I don't think you can physically do what you have to do and I don't think that electricity...that voltage that has to be a bright light blinking, paa, paa, paa, paa, paa, paa, like a dynamo [can be there]. With the knowledge that you are going out totally by yourself for two hours, my concern was always am I in voice and do I have the energy...112

____Pat Carroll

Hal Holbrook, having, at the time of the interview, recently performed the title role in King Lear, presents an interesting observation:

Energy evolves out of concentration, and in a solo performance, the concentration is probably more intense....Much to my astonishment, I was coming to the conclusion, after a couple of weeks, that Twain was just as hard as Lear, maybe a little more difficult...I was at the end of the performance [and] I wasn't as tired as I was doing

Twain....When you are in the hot seat all the time, why you know, you are there and the beam is on you and your concentration is tense or it better be.¹¹³

____Hal Holbrook

Both Julie Harris and Michael Kahn share this view:

...I think the biggest problem is that it [the one-person show] needs an enormous amount of energy and concentration. I mean there's no one to help you with a line or a thought or anything. You have to have the whole map of the play in your head and know where you're going every minute of the time you're on the stage. It has to be very concentrated.¹¹⁴

____Julie Harris

When you are all by yourself you want to have the energy to drive through something....This question of energy...I think you have to have enormous energy, like you were doing a concert....I don't think there are any wasted moments in one-person shows. And I think this is another difficulty. I mean there is no casual [time]. Everything counts because the audience can't go away. So the actor just can't ever let down....There are so many things to concentrate on in a multi-person show. I mean first of all, there are all the other actors, so if you are really relaxed you could look at another actor and whatever they are doing can interest you. Here, there aren't any of those things...you can probably lose your concentration...at any given moment. That is the hardest thing for an actor.¹¹⁵

____Michael Kahn

Great energy and intense concentration is integral to solo performance. The fact that this energy and intensity has but one source is a primary consideration to a number of the professionals interviewed. Robert Cohen states that...

...in a drama with lots of people on stage and lots of action, the intensity is pretty much pulled out of you. I mean if you have somebody running and saying, 'We just caught the king!' well you're

gonna be pretty fired up. But here you've got to generate everything....You have to continually create the intensity of the situation or the tension, the desperateness of the plight, whatever it is that's driving you to speak.¹¹⁶

____Robert Cohen

Colleen Dewhurst felt that being alone on stage is not only difficult but is also an unnatural state for the actor: "Your energy just has to keep at such a high level of concentration because you have no one there. It is self-generated energy. It becomes a non-life situation."¹¹⁷

In what ways can the performer prepare him/herself for the physical and emotional demands, the level of concentration and energy, required in a one-person show? What techniques are there to insure that these demands will be met during performance? The respondents suggested a variety of methods. One commonly mentioned was physical fitness. Silvia Miles, in describing her experience in solo performing as being similar to marathon running, said, "Did I work out? Did I prepare? You better believe I did!"¹¹⁸ In the words of Charles Waxberg, solo actors...

...should be capable of sustaining their energy for the length of the show without a stop....What can you do about that? You stay in shape. Now whatever it is that makes you strong in stamina, whether it be exercise or, I don't know what else, [you do].¹¹⁹

____Charles Waxberg

Others shared the opinion that the one-person show requires an actor to be highly conditioned, maintain a nutritious diet, get an adequate amount of rest and plan the

activities of his/her day in such a way as to allow the availability of sufficient energy reserves during performance. According to Sabin Epstein...

...when people...do one-person shows, they've got to be in the most extraordinary physical condition because the mental work is so acute that you've got to be in great shape. When I direct, everything is involved with the mind and the eye and in order to be able to sustain concentration, I've got to be in good shape. You can't lag and it's the same with actors doing it [a one-person show]. They cannot lag, and physical workout, running, some kind of aerobic, cardiovascular work, helps relieve the tension of it and helps build mental concentration. Diet becomes important as well. You have to be in a state of training. Your whole day is gauged around [the performance]. When you're doing a one-person show you cannot expend a great deal of energy. You can't do anything that's superfluous. You have to guide, control, and plan your timing so that you don't get too exhausted. You have to eat early enough that you're not going to get bogged down by anything that you had. You have to gauge the amount of time after a show to come down. You know, all that's crucial, even more so, than when you're in a conventional and traditional piece with another player. Even a two-person show, you've got somebody else to rely on, who can pick up the ball and carry it if you lag a little bit. You don't have that with the one-person show.¹²⁰

____Sabin Epstein

Pat Carroll and Madeleine Sherwood discuss their awareness of the physical demands of solo performing and describe their methods of preparation:

...I could orchestrate myself. I guess 'flow and go' is what I called it in a way and that's why I had to rest so much. I go to bed every day from four to six and sleep and get up and do physical exercises, because I knew there was only so much in the well of energy and I knew I had to have it. No matter how the play went that evening, with my other actor, the audience, I had to be ready for that. I had to be prepared with a full tank. Now, where I used the full tank, where I spun out the

line, very, very far and pulled it in and how much energy, that changed every night too.¹²¹

____Pat Carroll

I just got into a routine...I had a good friend come down and help me with this routine. I would go to bed at maybe nine or ten o'clock at the very latest and set my alarm and get up at four and work myself from four to six. She would work with me from six until eight. From eight in the morning until nine I would do my exercises and have breakfast. She would make it for me, so I wouldn't even do anything like that. So I took one hour off to do exercises and eat, and then she would work with me until I went to rehearsal...I walked to the theater, walked a long way each time, working on the problems of the script and arriving at ten and working through until two, taking an hour break and then working from three until about six sometimes seven, [and then] walking home. Polly would have my dinner all ready for me. I would have my dinner and just leave the script for an hour and that would be eight o'clock or so. We'd review the script as much as I knew and I'd go to bed and then tomorrow start over. So that was my routine, it was like a fighter I think. You must have that, or I do anyway. I mean, I have to live a very Spartan life. I have to eat very, very carefully. I mean, I had to space my fun in half hour or hour segments because I wouldn't take myself away....[During the run of the show] I dealt with it [the physical demands] by trying to get enough sleep and by having a routine...and I didn't vary very much from that, so that I always knew what stage I was at during the day and how close I was getting to the time when I had to use that energy....It was very important for me to do my exercises both when I got up in the morning and at the theater. I'd go very early to the theater...and just get that feeling that I'm back stage, that this is where I love to be, that this is my theater, my church, my religion to a certain extent, it is my love, it is all of these things....I like to have that little time there to have that feeling wrap around me and become secure in that feeling. I like to be by myself, I like to have the time to be very quiet there and do some more exercise, just stretch, like yoga type stretches and things and be very, very quiet--I'm not a person who likes sound, radio, anything like that, television never in the dressing room--and be very quiet with myself. A lot

of the time just setting, allowing myself to drift and sort of looking in the mirror, the makeup mirror, really looking and discovering and becoming her. That's one reason why I like to take a long time to makeup because I find the best way to become the other person is through the concentration of eyes, eyes in the mirror, or touching my face in a way that's different then when I'm just sort of resting my hand on my chest or touching my hair. This is almost like a person removed but part of you. It's an objective person. My hand putting on the makeup becomes the objective person and tying the mirror person and me, the flesh person, together. So that I am getting myself ready to take my energy out on the stage.¹²²

___Madeleine Sherwood

A number of those interviewed stressed the importance of carefully planning the emotional levels required in a one-person show, as well as the necessity of pacing oneself during performance. It is Sabin Epstein's feeling that...

...you plot it out. I mean, you literally plot out the down times. The image of a symphony, of playing a score, is apt, because if you're never off stage, there are going to be peaks and there are going to be valleys and you have to know what is what and when you can slow down and when you can relax and when you can put, metaphorically, your feet up and have a cigarette or whatever it is you do, get a cup of coffee, kind of coast, and when you need to search. If an actor thinks that they have to do it all at every moment, play it full of intensity, you're not going to have an audience after fifteen minutes. I mean when an actor plays most of the time, you structure it. That's what you spend your rehearsal time working on. Whether it's in a scripted piece with other actors or a solo piece, you are looking to uncover the structure of the scene and then you look to play it, how you play it, and how it builds and crests and how it releases and you work that out and then the joy of performance is the joy of the variation in the playing from night to night.¹²³

___Sabin Epstein

Charles Waxberg similarly underscores the need to emotionally 'change up' during a solo performance:

If the play is well written, and you're doing a good job with it, you're not going to stay at one energy level the whole time, anyway. Hopefully, there'll be a build to it. But it's not going to be a steady build. It will have its different changes and directions and one may cost a lot more emotionally and very little physically and another may be extremely physical but cost you very little on an emotional level. And with the discovery you will then be able to take care of it piece by piece, where you need to be re-grouped. It's like...if you put every color, if you have a light or some kind of unit that projects red, green, blue, yellow, all the lights, [and] if you put them all on maximum the whole time, what you're gonna get is white. But if you put your red on intensely and let the green rest, you will have a bright red and as you then beam up the yellow, you're going to start going into the oranges. You may then bring up the green and then drop the red a little bit so the red will, therefore, have a chance to cool off.¹²⁴

____ Charles Waxberg

Brian Bedford states that, "It's just you for about an hour and a half and that in itself presents difficulties, you know. You have to pace yourself the way a runner has to."¹²⁵

Julie Harris agrees: "Well, you learn that you have to have the energy for the two hours and you learn how to pace it. You're never at one peak, so to speak, of emotion or feeling throughout the whole play. It ebbs and flows."¹²⁶

In addition to being physically fit, carefully planning emotional variations in the program, and pacing oneself, actors can increase their energy reserves by simply making sure they breathe correctly during performance. This may seem elementary. Several of the respondents, however,

strongly emphasized this point, indicating that breathing properly was indeed a concern. Pat Carroll, for one, found it to be a major problem:

Thank God for a brilliant lady at Temple University, Dr. Julia Wing. When I was doing run-throughs in Philadelphia of the piece, I said to Mary Ellen Devery, the producer, I said, 'Mary, I've got to find someone to help me bridge in the middle of the second act after the fight with Leo. I am just so exhausted, I have no energy and I've got still twenty more minutes of the show to do.' So I said, 'I've got to find someone to help me in that area.' Mary Ellen was manager for the Richard the Third company with Al Pacino. So she had contacted Dr. Wing to voice coach the Al Pacino company....So she asked Dr. Wing if she'd come watch a run-through. At the end of Act I, Dr. Wing came up to me and we were discussing problems. I said, 'Dr. Wing, will you watch for a specific break in energy that I have after the fight with Leo in this next act?' And I saw her with her notepad. At the end of the run-through the second night, she came to me, she said, 'I have an absolute solution for you.' She said, 'what you are suffering from is, you've hyperventilated so much in that fight scene,' she said, 'that you are lacking air, you are lacking oxygen, you are lacking breathing. So when you turn up stage after the fight,' she said, 'take the time, which will hold dramatically, to take three, four, five truly deep breaths to oxygenate yourself again and you'll find you have the energy.' She was right on the money. Right on the money! The next time I did a run-through, I did exactly that, never had a problem with energy again. Well, you know, come on, let's face it, Dr. Wing, Elizabeth Smith, who is a vocal coach here at the Shakespeare theater [at the Folger]...the whole basis of everything that they do is breathing. The basis of yoga, breathing. It is the most important thing all of us do and we take it so for granted or forget it. And we wonder why, if we are upset or angry, that we feel like we are choking. It is because we've allowed ourselves not to breathe. Dr. Julia Wing...said, 'Any time during the show, any time that you feel that drop, which sometime can be a sugar drop if you haven't eaten correctly during the day, there could be a number of reasons', she said, 'simply sit back, you don't have to do breathing exercises in your chair, but

she said breathe, just breathe. You will find everything will come together in a very short time.' I said, 'what about the audience.' She said, 'they will go along with you because life is happening when you are breathing.'¹²⁷

____Pat Carroll

Madeleine Sherwood also found breathing to be more of a concern in solo performance than she had previously experienced in conventional theatre:

...breathing was something which I've never had problems with. I breathe well, my voice is well-placed. I feel as though I usually have never had trouble breathing or [with] losing my voice...but I found breathing [in the one-person show] to be a chore...I found myself gasping for breath sometimes.¹²⁸

____Madeleine Sherwood

Silvia Miles is in agreement:

Breathing, you constantly work on your breathing. I had to stop smoking. I mean you really need all the breath you can--you really need a tremendous amount of breath...But also b-r-e-a-d-t-h, besides breath. That's stamina, you know, that diaphragmatic stamina. You can't have a hoarse voice and you can't appear tired and you can't appear that you are spent. You have to pace it all the time--like a race horse or like a racing car driver.¹²⁹

____Silvia Miles

Finally, a number of the interviewees felt that if the artist has a strong connection to the material, and an enthusiastic desire to communicate it, sufficient energy will follow. According to Arthur French...

...if you really need to tell the story, your energy will be there [and] you will not be tired, even if you're tired going in. Many times you get to the theatre and of course you're tired. You've had a hard day....But once [you've done] whatever

preparation you do and you relax and it starts, you will find the energy there because you are clear about what you are doing. You're clear about the need. I have a need to tell this story now. So, my energy is not going to flag as long as I have that need.¹³⁰

____Arthur French

Brian Bedford states: "I don't think I ever ran out of energy. And I think I felt quite the opposite really. I felt that the work actually stimulated energy in me. I didn't do a single performance that I didn't really enjoy."¹³¹ Another who concurs with the belief that a need to tell the story will infuse the performance with the required dynamism is Charles Nelson Reilly. He offers the following observations:

I never use the word energy. My teacher, Miss Hagen, never used the word energy. It's again, the importance of the event. If it's important to you, it will have energy....If you really, really have to say this, then that need to say it will have an energy....Miss [Julie] Harris is such a great artist. She said she should do it [The Belle of Amherst] without an intermission. After she had been playing it for years...she would come out like a gazelle on one-night stands and she said, 'I'm not doing this. Emily is. I'm too old. Emily is doing this.'¹³²

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Julie Harris's own words attest to the accuracy of Reilly's remarks: "...I just felt like I was being carried away and that I could go on and on and on as long as the audience would stay there. I had the feeling that I was, I told people it was like riding on a magic carpet through the sky."¹³³

Acting alone on stage demands an extraordinarily high level of energy and intensity of concentration. The task is compounded by the fact that this energy and concentration is self-generated. It can come solely from the performer, and must not, for a moment, flag if the audience is to remain engaged. Ways in which the actor can increase energy and facilitate concentration include the maintenance of good physical conditioning; plotting the show carefully to include sections of lower intensity in which he/she is allowed to recharge; breathing properly; and having a commitment to the material and a strong need to share it. A third Focus Area, one concerned with the question of variety in solo productions, will now be considered.

FOCUS AREA III: ACHIEVING VARIETY

...you need an incredible amount of variety in pitch, timber and rhythm because they're listening to one person for a long period of time, and unless you throw in constant vocal change, they're gonna tune out.¹³⁴

___Sabin Epstein

...if you are going to play that piece, you have to be prepared to sit at the organ at Radio City Music Hall and pull out all the stops.¹³⁵

___Pat Carroll

A significant number of the respondents in this study were concerned with their ability to interest an audience for the duration of a one-person show. "Why would anyone want to hear me talk for two hours?" or "How can I possibly hold them for that length of time?" were feelings verbalized or

inferred in many instances. This worry was fueled in part by a common awareness of a sentiment described by Robert Cohen:

I, as a theater-goer am probably like a lot of lay people. I see it's a one-person show, [and] I don't want to go. My immediate impulse on a one-person show is, 'well, I don't think I want to see it.' And why not? I've loved one-person shows. I've liked a lot of one-person shows. But I have a reluctance to go to them because, well, it's only one person. It's like I'm getting cheated. I want to spend less money. I'm only going to see one performer.¹³⁶

____ Robert Cohen

The interviewees indicated that an abiding faith in one's material is the surest way to ease such doubts. They further expressed a recognition of the need to consciously strive for variety if success in solo performance is to be attained. In a multi-person show the stage is filled with changing stimuli: actors possessing a range of vocal qualities and physical characteristics, different costumes and colors, entrances and exits, shifting stage pictures. Variety is manifest in such a setting. However, as Professor Gerald Miller indicates, in a one-person show the realization of this diverseness is a more difficult undertaking:

...when you've got ten or eleven characters out there you've got a richer stimulus configuration and you've got more novelty. When you're attending James Whitmore, even though he's a fine actor...you're getting a much less rich, complex, total stimulus...So I think it would just be a harder job to maintain that kind of interest, to get as much richness. When you've got a cast of six or eight people out there on the stage to attend to, all with their idiosyncratic features, [it] creates a much richer stimulus field.¹³⁷

____ Gerald Miller

Achieving vocal and visual variation in a monodrama is essential. As Michael Kahn states:

I suppose it would seem self-evident, but certainly the fact that someone doesn't have someone else to act with makes...the real need for the actor to have an enormous amount of variety, both vocally, physically and imaginatively really important.¹³⁸

____Michael Kahn

The majority of respondents shared this view. Representative comments are offered by Robert Vaughn, Hal Holbrook, and Brian Bedford:

Well, the single word that we discussed most often during the rehearsal was variety, because it is two hours of one person on stage [and] nobody is that interesting, and then if they are not capable of giving a lot of variety to what they are doing....And even though I was doing other people's voices to some extent and some of that kind of stuff, I had to be constantly aware that I was capable of boring the audience by being on one level, whatever it might be, whether dramatic or comic for too long a period of time.¹³⁹

____Robert Vaughn

You worry about [variety] all the time. Because variety has to do with what I said in the beginning which is suspense. Without variety the suspense goes. So variety of thought which requires a variety of material is essential. And a variety in the actions that you are doing is important. In other words, as far as the Twain show is concerned, you know, you can use the word variety. I mean it just means the same idea, I think. You know, variety, how to surprise them, how to keep them surprised, the same idea as, in a sense, suspense, you know. Variety--anytime you put a show on, you start one way and you go somewhere, you know, that creates variety.¹⁴⁰

____Hal Holbrook

Variety is something that's always in my mind to do with acting of any kind. I think it's a very, very

important ingredient, especially with classical acting. I mean, classical acting is successful to the degree that you can make the text come vibrantly alive and engaging to the audience. And part of that technique which I learned many, many years ago from John Gielgud, is the necessity for the variety in tone and pace, and degree of emotion too. And that's an ever present need I think in any kind of acting. As I say, when I was, I think I was twenty-two or something, I had the great privilege of working with John Gielgud in The Tempest. He played Prospero and I played Ariel, and it was directed by Peter Brooke. Brooke and I had just been working in a play in the West End of London, View From The Bridge, and he offered me The Tempest. And part of the preparation for this, which seems just unbelievably fortuitous, was that John Gielgud was to give me verse speaking. And one of the things that I learned from that period of time working with John Gielgud, one of the main things, one of the most valuable things, was the need for variation, variety in a Shakespearean speech. He had learned this previously when he was very young from Harley Granville Barker, and he was passing this on to me and, of course, I was very young and very impressionable and this, the absolute essential need for variety was plunged into me at a very early age....This is something which is ever present in my thinking about classical text, the need for variety.¹⁴¹

____Brian Bedford

Several of the actors and theorists were of the opinion that variety, while unquestionably central to the preparation and performance of a one-person show, must not be a purely technical or mechanical consideration. Rather, it should result from and reflect a sense of the structure of the text as well as an organic, emotional response to changes within it. In the words of Sabin Epstein...

I think an actor tends to identify...create names and labels for them [sections of the show]. This is the mustache section. This is the cream puff story. This is the this. This is the that. So that you tend to think of these beats or scenes in

terms of a theme or image and that helps organize and color the way that you approach them. And it also prepares you in terms of how you're going to launch into it. It's like creating a map or a menu. You go from this to this to this to this and it's got ups and downs and different dynamics to it and different tonality. There are usually a series of anecdotes or memories. I mean, most one-person shows that I've been involved with or seen are character studies, so that what you're doing is revealing something about that individual by a specific choice of what you're talking about and so...the sequencing of it becomes important for the actor in terms of the overall structure of the piece, the flow of it, and where it's going to crest, where it's going to crescendo or not....I tend to think that most actors do have a sense of structure.¹⁴²

____Sabin Epstein

Charles Waxberg states quite succinctly:

...if the script is well written and has different moods and feelings in it, you're gonna sound different...you find it within the script. That's where your variety comes from.¹⁴³

____Charles Waxberg

Of a similar opinion is Arthur French:

...I think it [variety] is essential. I mean, of course it enters in because you have to say, 'who wants to hear me talk for two hours?'....[But] I think rather than take that as a separate thing, you know, of saying, 'do I have to heighten here' or 'I've got to color it here. I've got to use different things,' it's really treated the way you should treat any scene which is to find all those varied levels that any character has. As you work...you try to find the subtext, the different levels--good, bad, sense of humor, whatever...what is it about this person that's gonna interest these people for two hours....We'll know certain parts of this person in each scene or as he reveals or tells whatever story he or she is going to tell....So we must know these things so that when we talk about them it will color itself.¹⁴⁴

____Arthur French

Robert Benedetti would also caution the solo performer against approaching the matter of variety as strictly a technical concern:

Variety is a symptom, and I'm not sure that we always want to pay a lot of attention, a lot of direct attention to symptoms. You know, we sit there and we think to ourselves, 'this lacks variety, this is getting monotonous, I'm hearing only one tone of voice, I'm hearing only one dynamic.' I don't think the way to fix that is to fix the symptom. And I don't think it is at all useful to say to an actor, 'this needs more variety,' because immediately that sends their attention to externals. I would rather take that as a symptom of a lack of completeness or involvement...To set any vocal requirements, that you've got to talk like this, you know, is absolutely to take the actor out of the living moment and to put them at a distance from themselves. I would never do that to an actor in any situation including a one-person show. A character in a scene has an objective--maybe the actor has not sufficiently fulfilled what the changes, the psychological and physical changes are that this character undergoes, but that's what I would direct their attention to, not the matter of variety.¹⁴⁵

___Robert Benedetti

Madeleine Sherwood considered variety a by-product of emotional involvement:

One way I dealt with it [variety] was to try to make it clear that each story had a different emotional thrust....Perhaps one time immediately excitable--remembering some detail and plunging in and in another I was angry and it started out in a completely different tone and therefore the whole thing was colored by that.¹⁴⁶

___Madeleine Sherwood

Julie Harris eloquently expresses a strong belief that variety springs directly from emotion and a heartfelt connection to one's material:

...the work itself dictates that it should have variety. The timing and the pacing is dictated by the text. The writer hasn't just written in one sort of monotone, but he's written ups and downs for you. The way I score my voice, the way I score the piece musically with my voice, just comes from doing it. I don't figure that out. I don't try to figure that out before hand. It all has to do with what I'm feeling. The voice, if you ever heard Eleanor Roosevelt speak or if you hear her speak, her voice, more than any other I ever heard in my lifetime, was connected right to the heart. And because she suffered so terribly as a child and young girl, her voice mirrored whatever she was feeling. Well, that's what the actor has to do ultimately....After I've worked on a play, rehearsed it and then performed it for a time, I think you could make musical notes from the way I do the play. But you could never reproduce it that way because you have to feel it....You know, at first she [Emily] can hardly speak from shyness. Well, that dictates what you've got to do. And then a memory comes in and she remembers her funny aunt, so then that's funny and she gets a little bit out of the shyness. Then any time she talks about her father, there's a kind of awe and this wanting to please him, and a very emotional scene where he finds her writing at night and he says, 'You know, you're supposed to be in bed.' And she says, 'I know, but it's the only time when the house is quiet.' And he says, 'Well, read me a poem.' And she reads him a poem and he's dumbstruck, and says, 'Oh, alright, then. That's very nice. You can stay up and write.' I mean, her father, she loved the most of anyone at that time in her life, and for him to have given his permission that way is just, she can't get over. So that's what, I mean, those things, they dictates what you should be feeling. There's no tentativeness. There's no uncertainty about what that means.¹⁴⁷

____Julie Harris

Few, if any, of the respondents would disagree with the contention that a well-written script, in most cases, affords an actor ample opportunity to demonstrate substantial emotional range and, as a result, variety logically follows.

Nonetheless, a number felt that there are additional ways in which diversity can be enhanced. Robert Cohen states, "...the actor has to really show a lot of virtuosity...has to be, if I can use the word, theatrical, because you're speaking to a large group."¹⁴⁸ Cohen is speaking primarily of vocal virtuosity. He continues:

I give lectures sometimes, maybe to a thousand people. Well, I can't just come on and talk in the way that I would talk to my daughter or talk to a colleague. I mean, I just can't do that. It would not hold the attention of a vast audience who have a lot of different interests and other things to do. So the actor must be somewhat theatrical or dramatic or rhetorical or at least have a structured way of speaking that is charismatic.¹⁴⁹

___Robert Cohen

Earlier in this study it was recommended that if a relationship is to be established between the solo performer and the members of the audience, specifically during direct address, the actor must indeed simply talk to them. Cohen's comments should not be taken as contrary to that position. The need for a well-trained, expressive voice, one capable of subtle shadings and range, clear diction, power and musicality was stressed by many of those interviewed. However, the most important thing, as Brian Bedford relates, "...is to hide the variety and make it seem inevitable. The clever thing, you see, is to make it sound the way we're talking now. To make it sound just as real, as one person talking to another person..."¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in a one-person show, as Charles Waxberg puts it, "...you've got to

have a lot of tricks up your sleeve."¹⁵¹ What sort of tricks? William Luce and Sabin Epstein discuss some possibilities:

Variety must be a prime consideration. Have the star play other characters. To take other characters, maybe with dialects, but make it very varied, interesting, textured, ornamented, you know, anything you can think of to give variety, and most good actors are wonderful at doing other characters.¹⁵²

____William Luce

...it has everything to do with tempo, pitch, volume and timing. This is crucial in terms of how you launch into a sequence to give an audience a sort of an upbeat, and a breath of fresh air and pull them into it so that they gradually have to lean in to find out what's going to happen next or what did happen....I would think in general what you try and do is start off with a bit of volume and gradually build down to a sort of pianissimo so that you're quite quiet and they really need to strain just a little bit to get it all. They need to lean forward. Then you build in a point of release where they can laugh or have some kind of emotional response and then settle back down again, literally settle back into their chair.¹⁵³

____Sabin Epstein

Pat Carroll has described solo performance as being similar to a single flute player standing before a group of people who are expecting to hear a symphony. Her fear of boring the audience and her ardent concern for variety resulted in extensive vocal preparation:

...when you are one person up there for two hours, I really think you've got to consider the voice an instrument. It is the only music you are going to make. Dr. Wing and I worked for a long, long time...she raised my voice about an octave so I was able to play a two octave range on my voice. At that point I did head tones that I never knew I had, and I was literally doing a two scale octave

in speech. We would kind of orchestrate and color speeches so that the sound never got like a heartbeat on one of those machines in the hospital shows, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep....dead. So for the first time in my life, all of those craft things that I'd always [done] naturally, I now had to break down, re-examine, like taking apart the engine of a car, and I had to clean them, I had to oil them, I had to replace them and put back the engine, you know, with replaced parts if necessary or the old parts cleaned up. And I must say it was an illumination to me to go back to basics....And after studying with Dr. Wing I was ready to compete with anybody in our profession vocally.¹⁵⁴

____Pat Carroll

In a one-person show variety is achieved primarily through vocal expressiveness. In the words of Michael Kahn:

You don't want to feel that the actor who is doing a one-person show is just doing a funny voice, or a deep voice, you'd get a little tired of that. And you don't want to be so conscious of the fact that they are imitating other people, so they need to have the ability to subtly do that....I mean, I think it is really difficult. The person really has to have vocal and emotional range. If they don't, I don't think this [solo performance] is a good field of endeavor. I mean if somebody has got a very distinctive voice, but doesn't do much with it, I have a feeling a one-person show would be very hard for them....Like a singer, they have to have the notes. If they don't have them or the possibility of them, if you are not an actor who vocally has any colors then it is not a good business...¹⁵⁵

____Michael Kahn

In addition to vocal artistry, the respondents discussed other methods of infusing variety into the one-person show. According to Robert Benedetti, bio-energetic awareness and sensitivity is important. He offers the following explanation:

...you want to achieve as much of a differentiation ...as you can. So that at some point, usually very late in the rehearsal process, I take them through a series of checks on their physicalization and their vocalization. I do it in terms of a bio-energetic character structure exercise in which we see where the character center is and how the energy flows through that characters body. Because that incorporates the voice as well as the body. And then I encourage them...to select as much as possible different centers, different charges, you know, weak, strong, different directions of flow, different blockages, different character structures for each of the characters that they play so if one character is head-centered try to make the other one chest-centered. In other words to delineate as much as is possible without distorting or falsifying the characters. Again I'd like to focus on the sense of center and innerbody dynamic. I don't want the actor to be thinking in terms of poses or posture or the way their voice sounds. I would rather find adjustments in the inner condition in the organism itself that produces these external results, rather than allow the actor's attention to be directed towards the external results directly. That produces very false acting.¹⁵⁶

____Robert Benedetti

To help her become more emotionally responsive to her material and consequently more varied in her presentation, Pat Carroll employed an interesting technique:

Dr.Wing and I also worked on a thing when I found the text becoming automatic. Dr. Wing suggested using different colors in the text. You know, actually thinking a mauve instead of an orange, thinking a green instead of a blue--colors that particularly excited me or that calmed me or that depressed me or angered me. And the proof that that was communicated, one night some people came back stage, strangers to me, not friends of mine, and this woman said, 'you know, I actually saw colors on the stage.' And I said, 'I beg your pardon.' She said, 'I actually saw colors.' I said, 'when specifically?' She stated a moment in the play and I had used orange and she saw orange on the stage. And I don't think it is doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, doo [Twilight Zone].

These are electrical impulses, brain waves sent out, and you sense it more when you are working alone on the stage than you ever do when you are working in a company.¹⁵⁷

____Pat Carroll

Madeleine Sherwood feels similarly that visual stimuli, such as color, can trigger emotions and foster variety:

At the Eslin Institute I took a workshop in painting called the Painting Experience [and] took to it like a duck to water. I love it. And I'm up here in the country and I have my paints set up and I paint every day...So I found myself painting different scenes in the play. I am sure that if I do [a one-person show] again, I'll probably paint it, paint the character or the setting...to help stimulate [me]...I feel getting to something on paint is my way of organically discovering things that one couldn't discover simply from saying words.¹⁵⁸

____Madeleine Sherwood

Many of the interviewees rely on humor as a means of injecting diversity into a solo production. To William Luce, in fact, "Humor...is the most important, which is why having Charles Nelson Reilly direct was invaluable."¹⁵⁹ Reilly himself confirms his faith in humor as a tool of contrast and relief:

...because I'm comedic I have a gift of finding humor in the worst kind of situations. I have a lot of laughter in the plays I do, and if you have a lot of laughter, when the play gets serious, the audience is right there. It's [through] the laughter that they step like [on] a gangplank to the character. And if you get the laughter, it's so important. If they laugh, then they are confessing that they are part of it. And they will not laugh at the serious parts but they will be no less part of it because the laughter has been the glue. And then the silences become as severe as the laughter. You can hear the silences and then you

know you're home free.¹⁶⁰

____ Charles Nelson Reilly

In discussing F.D.R., Robert Vaughn also indicated his desire to include as much humor as possible:

...Roosevelt loved to tell jokes, loved to tell stories. We incorporated a lot of stories, a lot of jokes into the script for that reason [variety]. And so in the course of telling the story, if I could find any way to justify the fact that Roosevelt would use different voices to tell his jokes, I would do that. So I was actually doing mimicry of other people.¹⁶¹

____ Robert Vaughn

As one would expect, a show featuring the works of Mark Twain has humor as an essential and inevitable aim. Hal Holbrook describes his efforts to blend levity and gravity into the fabric of Mark Twain Tonight!:

...I decided obviously that the thing for me to do was to start out funny and then to evolve into the more serious material in the lexicon of Twain, you know. In the beginning, all I wanted to do was to make them laugh, but then that was a short show, fifty minutes, you know, in a high school assembly in the morning. And I had to do an evening show, well I had to do an hour and fifteen minutes with a brief intermission, so...I started thinking of variety. And since by that time I had discovered a lot of interesting material, you know, like the Shurburn bog shooting in Huckleberry Finn is a wonderful, dramatic piece....I thought well here is a switch, a change of pace, you know, variety whatever you want to call it. So, I mean when I got to the Shurburn bog, I made that change, [and] then I had comedy and then I had that number [the Shurburn bog selection], you know, which is my dramatic number.¹⁶²

____ Hal Holbrook

Several of the respondents felt that movement, visual variety, was also important. In the opinion of Michael Kahn, for example, movement should be included in solo performances...

...just for the the audience more than it is for the actor, probably. So that the audience has visually some changes. And then, of course, the audience, if they are only looking at one person, begins to be more subtly aware of the person's body than they are if they are watching [a number of actors]. So I think that you can tell the audience something by your posture. I mean that's a word I never use, but I think that, you know, since they have nothing to look at but one person...you want physical variety on the stage--sitting, standing all that kind of stuff, [using] different parts of the stage, and I also think that what you do with your body, they probably, in a way, as in the dance world, simply [by] looking at your body, they probably read stuff from your body that is very essential. Probably in the best of these shows the person is physically very available and their body shows you what they are feeling....Your physical attitude, I am sure, reads very strongly.¹⁶³

____Michael Kahn

Robert Vaughn also sought variety through the use of physical changes and movement:

Fortunately, the show moved along very rapidly, the scenes were very short...there was so much going on....We moved this, we intentionally moved the actual setting and the lighting and the movement as fast as we could from right to left center...you know, suddenly lights would come up on Roosevelt downstage left where we'd last seen him on stage right on the turntable behind the desk.¹⁶⁴

____Robert Vaughn

The effectiveness of carefully planned movement during a one-person show is clearly illustrated by Charles Nelson Reilly:

...movement is very important. I mean you have to. As animated as it can be is good. Usually the

movement comes easily. Now this is very interesting. I have a piece that is so delicious that's playing around the country now about Oscar Levant, okay? It's called, At Wits End. Oscar Levant used to do these concerts in concert halls that said they were a concert with comment. So anyway, it's a concert hall so the set for the play is a concert hall. So you have the theater and the first thing that happens is this smoke comes out 'cause he's smoking in the wings before he goes on. And by the time it's ready for the play to start, it's really like a fire. It's very funny because that's the truth, you can't smoke upstage in a concert. So he's waiting in the wings and you see this smoke and the audience keeps laughing and they're laughing and he comes out coughing and they're already laughing before the play starts or the music starts. Now, you've got a man in a tuxedo that's gonna sit at a piano at a concert. What am I gonna do? So what happens is, he's talking to the audience and about eight, nine, twelve minutes into it, he puts his foot up, you know, how you put your foot up and you talk, and his shoe is untied and he ties it. Now when you don't have any movement, you have to invent certain things, and the slightest movement, like tying his shoe...when you have nothing, this minute thing suddenly becomes the rumble from West Side Story. So it's really not that difficult. If you're smart enough to pick out a little toothpick, you don't need a big log....You've got to find ways to do those things in a one-person play.¹⁶⁵

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Dr. Gerald Miller states that among the principal challenges facing a solo performer is to "manipulate external stimuli so as to create a little more novelty in the situation."¹⁶⁶ Variety is essential if a lone actor is to effectively sustain an audience's interest for an extended period of time. Those interviewed were aware of and concerned with this fact. Some felt diversity results naturally from emotional changes dictated by a well-written script. Many others indicated that a prerequisite to the

presentation of a one-person show, perhaps more so than in traditional productions, is a well-trained, expressive voice: as all the colors emanate from one source, that source must be capable of producing a broad spectrum of hues. Additional suggestions included the use of dialects and/or the portrayal of several different characters within the show; color coding the script to indicate areas of emotional change; and altering bio-energetic centers for various characters or speeches. Several of the respondents expressed a belief that humor should be introduced into the performance whenever possible. Visual variety, such as movement, was also cited as important. The study now progresses to a closer investigation of the experience of being alone on stage.

FOCUS AREA IV: BEING ALONE ON STAGE

...it is different for the actor. They have to get used to the fact that, 'Oh my God, I am alone!' It's just getting used to the fact you are there all by yourself. No one's gonna help you get out of anything...no one says 'cut'.¹⁶⁷

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Performing in a one-person show affords the actor an opportunity for unparalleled artistic control and, therefore, can provide an immensely rewarding and stimulating experience. However, being alone on stage can also seem artistically inhibiting, and unnatural: an event fraught with a sense of loneliness, anxiety and fear. In fact, solo performance can at once be liberating and exhilarating as well as terrifying. The respondents offered substantial insight into the duality of experience that exists when one

accepts the challenge to act alone. Several of those interviewed found that acting in a one-person show gave them a feeling of power and autonomy--aloneness was synonymous with freedom. In the words of Hal Holbrook, "It is a very powerful feeling and you have to rise to it. You can't fade away and be shy."¹⁶⁸ Silvia Miles experienced this sense of power and control during It's Me, Silvia:

It's self-empowering. I wish I could do that right now. Oh, it's fabulous to be able to create! I mean don't forget, here I am sitting in front of, 'Limited Engagement! Stephen Greenberg presents Silvia Miles in It's Me, Silvia. Lived, written, and even sung by the above.' I mean, here's the poster. I'm looking at it now. 'Book and lyrics by Silvia Miles. Music by Galt McDermot. Scenery by Eugene Lee. Lighting by Roger Morgan. Costumes by Clifford Capone. Musical Director, Galt McDermot. Executive Producer, Jeffery Madrick. Associate Producer, Lisa Mark.' I mean here's the play. I'm looking at the poster. That's, you know, fabulous! It's one in a million, right?....The thing is, you're in more control when you're by yourself. If something happens, if something falls down, you can relate to it. The people don't freeze up. I didn't freeze up.¹⁶⁹

____Silvia Miles

Charles Nelson Reilly is of the opinion that in certain instances a feeling of aloneness can actually increase the efficacy of a solo performance. He explains:

...you see what's wonderful, like a Charlotte Brontë or Emily, they did live alone after their families died. They did live alone at the time of their lives depicted in the plays. They [the characters] are alone and their [the actor's] feeling of aloneness enhances the fabric of the whole performance.¹⁷⁰

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Reilly relates that Julie Harris was, for a time, concerned about the prospects of being alone on stage:

What was so interesting was that after having this glorious career of forty-five years or whatever, it was the first time she was alone on the stage...you know, she was by herself and that was a great concern. Then I helped in some way to show her that's not even to think about.¹⁷¹

___Charles Nelson Reilly

From the following quotation, one can see that Harris has eliminated her concerns relating to being alone on stage. She in fact feels great elation, freedom and control when performing solo:

...there's a kind of freedom because you're not dependent on anyone else and they're not dependent on you. If you should make a mistake or your mind should wander for a moment, the audience doesn't know and you can use all that as part of the character...incorporate it into what you're doing. For instance, in The Belle of Amherst, I was somewhere, in Cornell, Iowa, and I was very tired and I started a matinee performance and I came to the poem with "the narrow fellow in the grass, occasionally rides" and I couldn't think of the word 'occasionally'. So, I stopped and began again, couldn't think of it again, and then I just looked at the audience and said, 'well, I've forgotten that one.' And they thought, 'oh, it was wonderful'. And then later on in the play I remembered the word 'occasionally' so I said, 'oh, now I remember it' and so I told them the poem then. They think, 'oh, that's all part of the play.' There's terrific freedom because it's as if you're making it up and you could just go with that feeling.¹⁷²

___Julie Harris

Beyond the self-gratification, the rush, the euphoric sense of freedom and control that one often experiences when performing solo, there may also be negatives. Among these

are a sense of aloneness, the missing of one's fellow actors and a longing for the shared experience of ensemble playing, the feeling of shouldering the entire 'weight' of the production, and finally the sheer terror of being unable to remember one's lines and knowing there is no one upon whom to depend for help. According to the interviewees, acting alone does indeed have its dark side. In the words of Silvia Miles, the solo performer is, "always naked on the stage."¹⁷³ Charles Waxberg states that, "If you are the one-person show, you have got to create the show on your own and that means everything that a show requires, you've got to do all by yourself."¹⁷⁴ Brian Bedford acknowledges this feeling of responsibility and states further that it can be quite intimidating:

...it's a pretty scary thing, you know, putting yourself up there all alone. You're virtually by yourself and it's scary. When you're in a play, you know, you share the responsibility with your fellow actors and the director who is...in charge of the production as a whole. You know, your responsibility is diminished somewhat. ...[But] in a one-man show it's just you, you're sort of, you're really sticking your neck out.¹⁷⁵

____ Brian Bedford

For Colleen Dewhurst, solo performance was, in many ways, unsettling and unpleasant. She explains:

I think the most difficult [thing] was that so much work on stage is the contact that I have with the other actors and I began to realize that [in the one-person show] you are out there by yourself...I mean you think of the stage finally and ultimately when you are out there as living some slice of life. No matter how good or bad the script is....there is contact going on between you and

other people. Except here...because you just are so isolated....I think the actual acting is disturbing because it is self-generating, you are not playing off anybody...nobody interferes as they do in life...nothing is being introduced to set me off on a track, arouse some emotion in me. So again, you are self-generating....You begin to understand more and more what's happening to you and what is coming at you from the other characters...but in this you just couldn't.¹⁷⁶

____Colleen Dewhurst

The isolation felt by the solo performer can be pervasive.

Madeleine Sherwood provides an insight into this sense of aloneness:

I have one word, loneliness--which surprised me. I mean, I thought loneliness. I was so busy I don't know how I had any time to be lonely, but upon reflecting I recognized that except for Patrick [Brawford], who was both directing and writing, I was by myself all of the time. I had no one to bounce off of. I had no one except him, and we were good friends, but still and all he's outside, he's not within the framework of creating the character. [And]...I was also lonely as I was working, which is not something that I ever remember working with other people. I might sometimes have been bored when I was working in other plays, which is, I suppose, a form of loneliness but it's not that I was alone. And the result of that feeling of loneliness was often that I would take off after rehearsal and walk for hours and hours and hours. Now I'm a big walker anyway, but I would walk to shake off the feeling that I had gathered. [And] it was more intensified [waiting backstage]. It was different, but it was very intensified then. I did feel a tremendous sense of aloneness backstage...I didn't have a dresser backstage. I didn't have anybody for make-up. I didn't have any fellow actors. I didn't have the stage manager, [in] modern theaters the stage managers are not backstage they are up in the booths away from you....So, yes I was very, very aware of my aloneness...¹⁷⁷

____Madeleine Sherwood

The loneliness of the solo performer can extend beyond the stage. While the actor's life-style would seem to rest outside the parameters of this investigation, it is nonetheless informative and illuminating to read Hal Holbrook's vivid account of the sense of isolation he often experiences when touring his one-person show:

The life-style is lonely. It is terribly lonely being out there on the road. You know, I have my stage manager, Bennett Thompson, Bennett has been with the show twenty-four years now and, you know, usually we eat dinner together, and then after the show we always eat together, maybe with some people who come back or whatever, the promoter. But you know, I mean we are pretty used to each other. We've pretty much gone over all the exciting topics, you know. And we have a nice time talking, we are real good friends and everything and I'm very fond of him, he is a wonderful man, but you know, it is lonely out there on the road. You go to your hotel room and usually I end up getting on the phone and trying to call people. I don't think about it, but when I do think about it I realize it is because I'm so damn lonely. I get on the phone, I call home and you know, if I can't get my wife or she doesn't want to talk too much or I sense that she is busy, you know, I feel bad and then I call my children constantly and all the kids, find out how they are doing and maybe I get them, maybe I don't. I call back to my office, [my] secretary. I leave messages on services all over the country and you know, I'm on the phone most of the time. And you know, I have to realize that when I think about it, it is not all really necessary. I'm not much for watching television because it makes me so angry to watch it most of the time, it is so goddamn terrible and dull and sickening and cheap and crummy, it makes me angry so I don't particularly want to watch that. I would like to see some movies, if they were good ones, if there is a good one playing in the town [and] if you can find it. Because most of these towns don't have any movies downtown where I have to stay, they are all out at a shopping center, about a thousand miles out of town. (laughter) If you can find one, you know, you say 'well I have to eat dinner and then after I eat dinner, oh hell, it will be so

late, I'll just go back to the hotel and see what's on TV or read or whatever.' The best thing is when I have a project like Lear going where I have a lot of material to read and I'm all excited about it.¹⁷⁸

____Hal Holbrook

A sense of aloneness is prominent in the one-person show. To Colleen Dewhurst, acting alone signals self-generated action and emotion--an absence of contact. Madeleine Sherwood was lonely both on and off stage. Neither of these professionals offer techniques to ease their isolation. Rather, they seem resigned to the fact that a feeling of aloneness comes with the territory in solo performance and must simply be dealt with. In addition, Hal Holbrook finds the solitary life-style of touring difficult to bear.

But beyond the loneliness experienced both on and off the stage, there are specific fears which frequently haunt the solo performer. Perhaps the most prevalent of these is the fear of forgetting one's lines. A number of those interviewed reported having experienced this anxiety to varying degrees. Sabin Epstein states that...

Fear is the actor's constant. I mean, I think that's what actors spend their lives combating on a day to day basis...fear is always sitting on your left shoulder. It's always there. And fear of forgetting lines? In the theatre? Absolutely. I mean certainly doing a one-person show because there's nobody to rescue you. There's no way to get out of it. It's just you and the elements and the stage.¹⁷⁹

____Sabin Epstein

Despite his many years of performing Mark Twain Tonight!, Hal Holbrook admits that he is not immune to this elemental concern:

...there have been times when I experienced a wave of fear that I might forget and I might not remember all the lines....There is no prompt book, there is no script. I haven't had it very much. It's just once in a while you get scared....Fortunately, I've been able to get myself out of the few holes I've dug myself into.¹⁸⁰

___Hal Holbrook

In discussing the fear of forgetting, Charles Nelson Reilly offers the following insight:

...there's a different concern in the one-person play. You don't forget lines, you forget sections. You jump. That's the horror. You jump. In other words, if the staging is similar and you play this for a few months and you're doing this on a chair over in this corner of the room, chances are you could jump to the scene that's the next one in the corner of the room. It's not forgetting the lines so much, it's jumping. It's jumping from section to section, 'cause they are in sections. You know, they have the end beat and then the beginning new beat.¹⁸¹

___Charles Nelson Reilly

Whether it is a fear of being unable to remember individual lines or of jumping entire sections of the show, the terror of going blank during solo performance is very real to a number of the respondents. Certainly it was to Colleen Dewhurst:

I mean I really had trouble learning the lines. Oh, it drove me crazy, because I jumped so much from one thing to the other, you know. I had great difficulty during rehearsal, which made me anxious on a level I'd never been anxious before, which was to see an area coming up in which I thought, 'what does this segue into? Nothing! There is nothing

out there! Nothing!' And [there is] no way that you could--I mean you got to save yourself out there. And it was so...the whole rehearsal period was one of agony....[because] when the final thing came and the lights went on, you were going to be the one. And so you were carrying baggage that normally you wouldn't be carrying. You...just had no idea of how it was going. [Normally] you have a feeling of a flow, you know, like the first time you come in without the script for the first act--you've thrown that aside, [and] now you really begin to work. Whereas [in this--the one-person show], it was as if the script was attached to my arm and you had a date and you had to be ready for it...it was like the train coming through the tunnel, you know, nothing could stop it. The first night was pure agony. You had no idea how this would work, because you never got on a track. In a play...some nights you just go 'oh good,' or you just know you are on and everybody else is on and it is just going to be easy...Whereas with this, you never know. There was like something jerking you by the neck. Kind of like you were a horse that got running in one direction, and you felt terrific and suddenly the reins came down and pulled you and you were starting off in another direction after you emotionally got rolling in one....Sometimes there were sections that went wonderfully, where...I suddenly get to it and everything about me would relax, because I knew exactly where I was going. I didn't need to build up anything safe to get there, I just needed to go along with it and that was lovely. That is always a lovely feeling. But the rest of the time you were swimming upstream.¹⁸²

___Colleen Dewhurst

Of this same sentiment was Madeleine Sherwood:

...the fear of going up was a very big fear for me because the last couple of plays I've done I've found that I don't learn lines as quickly as I used to and I don't retain them for as long and this was a nightmare....It was a big problem and I don't think it goes away immediately...if you're doing [a one-person show] you have no one there to rescue you....It happened to me once in St. Petersburg. It happened with no warning, but thinking back on it I realize that I had had a slip of concentration and feared that I was going to forget lines. It didn't happen right away but I went to sit down in

a chair [and] I sat down and I realized that I had gone totally blank. And this was maybe ten minutes after I had thought, 'oh my God, I'm going to forget something tonight!'"...And I sat down in this chair and I was a total, complete, absolute blank in a place that I had never gone up in either rehearsal or in performance.¹⁸³

____Madeleine Sherwood

Pat Carroll provides not only a compelling narrative of the panic that can grip a solo performer when one's memory fails, but also offers insights into methods of dealing with such fear:

I went up, I totally went up! I didn't know where I was, I didn't know why those people were out there staring at me. I had no idea what I was doing! Well, during the [rehearsals] I went to a hypnotist because I was fearful that I would forget the text. Dr.Silver said to me, "well, of course, you are going to forget the text depending on how you are going to play it because you are going to go on automatic pilot, and some day your conscious pilot is going to say, 'wait a minute, I'm taking over here,' and the automatic pilot is going to say, 'okay, go ahead.' Then the conscious pilot says, 'well what do I say!'"(laughter) Which became true that day. And I remembered, thank God, that Dr.Silver said, 'When that happens, and it will, simply stop' and isn't it strange how the medical field crosses over into the voice field, 'stop, take a very deep breath and allow the automatic pilot to take over again.' Which is exactly what I did. I looked at my hand and it had flop sweat on it. Now this took no more than a minute, but what crossed my mind was, 'I could just leave the stage now, apologize to the audience, leave the stage, but I will never walk back on a stage again if I do or I can tough this out and do what Dr.Silver recommended I do when this happened.' I thought, 'well, I have too many commitments ahead of me, I can't walk off the stage and never walk back on again.' So I simply stood there and I said, 'okay, take a deep breath,' which I did. I said 'now just talk.' When we later sorted this out, I'd only missed two lines. So Dr.Silver, the psychiatric hypnotist, knew what he

was talking about. And so did Dr.Wing. I later found out that the problem was I had forgotten to eat breakfast, so I'd had a sugar drop. [It] behooves actors again [to] make sure that you are watered and oiled before you perform...The end of that story [is], I was in tears, I was in absolute panicky tears when my dresser met me coming off stage. I said, 'I don't know the second act! I don't know the second act! I don't know the play at all!' I went down the stairs to my dressing room and the stage manager had gone to get Mary Ellen Devry, the producer. And [Mary Ellen] stood in the doorway and said, 'Now Pat,'--and we were celebrating our two hundredth performance that day,--she said, 'now Pat, this really is interesting. An actress who has done two hundred performances of this play and you can't remember.' I said, 'Mary, I don't know what happened to me, but I can't do the second act.' She said, 'alright, fine,' she said, 'don't cry, don't be upset. I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll go upstairs and I'll tell the people you've been taken ill and that they will get their money back, but you will pay for that.' And I said, 'no, no, I think I remember! I think I remember!' I was so panicked by the fact that I might have to return the money! (laughter) I went in the bathroom and I held my eyes so I couldn't cry anymore and ruin my makeup and I came back up and everybody in the company was standing upstairs watching me and Mary Ellen said literally, the blood was drained out of my face. And I started to talk and all of a sudden it was like a cartoon show, you know, where the thermometer slowly begins to fill again. You could literally see the color come back into my face. I was shaky, but at least I did it. At least I got through it. I got back up on that bloody horse and rode it again...I knew now that by following the advice of two brilliant professional people, I was equipped for emergency and it was just like dive, dive, dive that if the emergency came I knew what to do. But thank God, the computer of my mind had gone over my alternate possibilities. One was to walk off the stage and never work again or one was to stay and tough this out. So fortunately I stayed and toughed it out. I'll tell you it was horrible. I think I lost that fear because the worst happened to me. And if that is the bottom line worst that could happen to you during a one-person show, then I went through the test of fire and I did come out stronger...It never happened

again, maybe because I wasn't afraid of it anymore.¹⁸⁴

___Pat Carroll

Strategies used to counter the fear of forgetting lines are varied. Brian Bedford relates:

If you notice I do have a copy of the script there [on stage]. I bring it on with me...It's actually a copy of the evening's show. I used it a couple of times at the very beginning...unfortunately it happened in the middle of a sonnet. I think I spoke the first couple of lines and I couldn't remember the third line, so I had to go to the book. I don't think people mind that kind of thing, I feel it's probably a joy [for them] when things go wrong.¹⁸⁵

___Brian Bedford

Hal Holbrook simply says, "...I don't sit around dwelling about it, I just go out and do it."¹⁸⁶ Silvia Miles is of a similar mind: "...there's always that fear...but then as an artist who is committed, you just do it. You don't know that you can't do it."¹⁸⁷ To Madeleine Sherwood, if one is to overcome the fear of forgetting lines, concentration is the key:

...when your concentration goes anywhere...outside the framework of what it is you're working on and you have this fear, the first thing you think is, 'Oh my God, am I going to remember it?' And usually when I say, 'am I going to remember it,' I forget it....Most of the time the feeling was not so much of fear, fear, fear, that I was going to forget, but the awareness that I had stepped outside of my concentration...¹⁸⁸

___Madeleine Sherwood

Techniques, then, used to overcome the fear of forgetting lines or to assist one in getting back on track in

the event they are forgotten, include: breathing deeply and taking the time to gather oneself, having the script on stage in case of emergencies, and making sure to harness one's concentration and, in so doing, not allow the mind to wander. Of course to Pat Carroll, avoiding substantial monetary loss was incentive enough to surmount even the most terrifying of memory lapses.

Although anxiety over a perceived inability to learn and/or retain material was predominant among the respondents, it was not their sole apprehension. Robert Vaughn was consistent with the majority of the professionals in stating that, "...the chief fear was being boring."¹⁸⁹ To Hal Holbrook the ultimate concern was not one of forgetting lines, or being uninteresting, but rather...

...of not doing a good job, of letting down. It is a fear that I won't give as good a performance as I want to, that's the only fear I really have....I've always been frightened of getting tired of doing my show. I've always been frightened to death that some critic will criticize me for not being spontaneous anymore, for just having a tired old show. I've carried this fear with me from the beginning and it still haunts me and fuels me to do everything I can to keep my show fresh.¹⁹⁰

____Hal Holbrook

Both Pat Carroll and Arthur French are of the opinion that no matter the fear, the actor must be capable of incorporating it into his or her performance:

All of these [fears] are subliminal feelings, attitudes, thoughts...it was like juggling every night. I felt like a juggler with various colored balls...I felt that many, many times, but I used it, as all actors, I think, must....I think to

utilize those feelings, wherever they come from, is to be an actor. Every human being wallows in their feelings, but an actor is able to control those feelings, utilize them, focus them and, we hope, have them come out creatively.¹⁹¹

____Pat Carroll

...fear enters into it. I think there's often fear when you do any show. There's nervousness....You just kind of acknowledge it...once you acknowledge it then you can find a way to channel it within what you're doing....Then it becomes alright, because you say, 'okay, I'm nervous. I'll find a way within what I'm doing to channel this.' Then you can calm down. I'm sure there's fear in saying, 'My God, I'm going out there. All those people are there. They've paid their money to see the whole cast and it's me!'....Most people come out and kind of introduce themselves in these shows and whatever nervousness we have in meeting another person, [is lessened] if we just say, 'My gosh, it's nice to meet you. Let's go on this trip together. You're nervous and I'm nervous and let's see what happens.'¹⁹²

____Arthur French

The experience of being alone on stage presents the actor with obstacles beyond that of identifying and overcoming fears. Robert Benedetti believes the solo performer must keep in mind that he/she "...has an objective toward the audience and that is to get the story across and see that they are responding."¹⁹³ It is his belief that the actor in a one-person show risks "a level of self-consciousness that's going to destroy the performance" if this objective is forgotten because of an excessive concern for technical, especially vocal, requirements. To him, "the fundamental problem of acting is the elimination of self-consciousness."¹⁹⁴

Perhaps the principal lure of solo performance is its promise of artistic control. Benedetti, however, cautions that this sense of autonomy can in fact prove to be an artistic pitfall if the actor is not careful to retain vulnerability:

I think the great danger is that you feel more in control. I think that's a danger because it reduces an element of risk and an element of unpredictability in the performance. And I think that an actor who is alone on stage has got to remain just as vulnerable. I think it's harder for an actor alone obviously to surrender control but he's still got to do it. You've got to rediscover the part moment to moment and that takes great courage...¹⁹⁵

___Robert Benedetti

Finally, Benedetti warns against a possible loss of spontaneity resulting from the fact that all stimuli in a one-person show are self-generated:

...when you've got somebody else on stage and you are really tuned in to what they are giving you...you're going to be getting something slightly different in every performance. And if you're awakened and present and available and are responding to those differences, responding to it as it is really happening rather than to your rehearsed image of what it is, then there's no way that your performance is going to go stale or become stiff because you are responding to an ever changing stimulus. The problem for the solo actor is that since they sometimes have to provide a visualization of the stimulus they run the risk of becoming rigid, of the performance falling into a kind of sameness....So you've got to have the courage to allow the form to be rediscovered and it's harder when you're alone on stage because you're not being fed by stimuli that are beyond your control and that again I think is the biggest problem of solo performance.¹⁹⁶

___Robert Benedetti

The lone actor is afforded an opportunity for immense freedom and complete artistic control. Many solo performers are infused with a sense of power; they revel in this state of 'aloneness'. Others, however, are simply lonely or perhaps apprehensive. The one-person show is often fertile ground for anxiety. The fear of forgetting lines is common, as are other concerns. It is often difficult to avoid self-consciousness or to maintain vulnerability and spontaneity. To those who would approach this performance genre, Pat Carroll has the following advice:

...I always quote Ethel Merman, 'if they [the audience] could do it as well as I can they'd be up here.' (laughter) Isn't that marvelous! I think every actor should have that tattooed on their wrist. It is an angry statement, but you know sometimes it takes anger or wit or vinegar to really bring you to your senses and to stop those self-destructive demons. Because I think actors tend to have that little part of our brain that wants to get ya. We all have it, every human being has it. And that little self-destructive part is the part that keeps us from accomplishing what we want to accomplish. So you just have to say to it, 'shut up, get back in there, whatever Pandora's Box you come from, and leave me alone!'¹⁹⁷

____Pat Carroll

We will now consider the topic of engagement during the one-person show: the degree to which the solo actor must maintain objectivity or, conversely, avoid immersion while performing.

FOCUS AREA V: MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE/MAINTAINING A

'THIRD EYE'

You always have to be aware...because you are walking through a mine field, and to get from point A to the end of the mine

field, point B, you have to watch carefully where you step...you have to be aware every minute. You have to be aware of yourself and you have to be aware of what is going on outside yourself constantly, constantly.¹⁹⁸

___Pat Carroll

In the late nineteenth century, the preeminent French actor Constant-Benoît Coquelin stated:

...in the actor...that part of us which sees should rule as absolutely as possible the part of us which executes. Though this is always true, it is especially true of the moment of representation. In other words, the actor should remain master of himself. Even when the public, carried away by his action, conceives him to be abandoned to his passion, he should be able to see what he is doing, to judge his effects, and to control himself...¹⁹⁹

___Constant-Benoît Coquelin

To what extent an actor can, does, or should immerse him/herself in a role--become emotionally engaged while playing, is a long-standing and frequently-debated question dating back to Denise Diderot's Paradox of Acting, and William Archer's Masks or Faces?. One would, in most cases, expect a member of the Actor's Studio to view the question of organic engagement in a different light than perhaps someone trained in the grand and technical tradition of the Comédie Française or conceivably even the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The majority of one-person shows are presentational in style. And while there exists the added dynamic of characterization, these productions, nonetheless, employ direct address in the manner of story telling, public speaking or stand-up comedy. Is there, then, an inherent tendency or increased need for the actor to be emotionally

disengaged while performing? Must the actor monitor the progress of the performance more closely than he or she would during an ensemble production? The subject of immersion, of maintaining a 'third eye' during performance, was addressed by eleven of the respondents. Charles Nelson Reilly was quite emphatic in his opinion:

I don't think you should view yourself at any time....Miss Ethel Barrymore, she was on Broadway, she made history, right? The Barrymores. She came to Hollywood. She was making her first movie, and everyone said, 'Oh Miss Barrymore, you don't go to the rushes. Miss Barrymore, you weren't at the rushes. You don't go to the daylies, Miss Barrymore.' She said, 'I never saw myself on stage.' You never see yourself more than you see yourself in life. That's what I believe. 'I never saw myself on the stage.' You can't in life look at yourself. You're too busy living.²⁰⁰

____Charles Nelson Reilly

Robert Cohen presents a contrasting view:

...the American tradition is for the actor to avoid doing so, to flee from the idea that he/she is controlling the performance, directing their own performance. I think the one-person show naturally demands that the actor be more the instrumentalist. I think actors might have a problem in dealing with that because they're trained as American actors and they're trained to either feel that they're out of control or feel that they're not manipulating the audience or feel that they have to pretend that they're not manipulating the audience and it's harder to do that in a one-person show....The American actor sometime has to be coaxed into admitting that there's a certain self-consciousness to their performance. I think there's self-consciousness in all performing. I don't think there's a performer alive who is not self-conscious to a certain degree at virtually every moment....I think Stanislavski wrote his books because he was worried that he was too self-conscious on stage. In any event, in a one-person show, you've got to be self-conscious if you're on stage. You can't not be. There's no way you can avoid being self-

conscious if you're on stage. When I give a lecture, I'm self-conscious 'cause I'm giving a lecture. It doesn't prevent me from giving a lecture, but every now and then the thought flashes through your mind, 'hey, if I forgot what to say or had a coughing fit or couldn't speak or got embarrassed or had a nervous breakdown right now, the lecture would stop. These people would be very disappointed.' It's just a fact of life and in a one-person show, it's bound to occur to you. I don't think you have to work to maintain that edge of self-consciousness. I think what you have to do is work, in your preparation, to justify its existence and make it work for you....I think you just have to give in to the theatricality of the situation of the one-person show. I am here. I am talking to a thousand people and a balcony and a main orchestra. I am doing something very unnatural and unusual that one ordinarily never does in real life and I'm contriving a story for them. I am telling them the story of my life, say Truman Capote or of somebody else's life, Gertrude Stein's, and I'm using the venue of a theater to do it.²⁰¹

____Robert Cohen

Engagement, immersion, organically grounded characterization as a fundamental aim of the actor was first championed in America by Minnie Maddern Fiske and her pioneering work in psychological naturalism at the Manhattan Theatre during the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁰² Subsequently, the American Laboratory, the Group Theatre and in particular the Actor's Studio, embracing the theories of Constantin Stanislavski, stressed the concepts of inner justification and emotional involvement as being consistent with and a requirement of fourth-wall realism. The American actor is steeped in a tradition that rejects the idea of emotionally-distanced, self-conscious, monitored performance. With this in mind, it is not surprising to find that several

of those interviewed found the level of self-awareness in a one-person show to be unpleasant, uncomfortable, and quite foreign to their performance instincts. To these artists, maintaining a 'third eye' is a necessary, inevitable evil. Colleen Dewhurst was certainly of this persuasion, as is Madeleine Sherwood:

I try never to. I mean I'm in trouble and I know I'm in trouble when I'm watching myself, or God knows, listening to myself. If I haven't been able to submerge enough not to do that, I'm in trouble...that's what made the evening not fulfilling, once in a while you had to. You know, the abruptness of things would flow you into a stream and you'd go, 'whoops, whoops, whoops, I'm over here now. What happened?...'²⁰³

___ Colleen Dewhurst

I was very aware of the audience, more aware of the audience than I've ever been in anything. I was more aware of a program rustling or a person moving or someone turning to speak to somebody than I've ever been...and I regret it. But I feel it's probably necessary...I feel very much so that this is one of the traps, it's one of the difficulties of watching yourself. It's a trap and it's something which I found myself on stage consciously saying, 'stop looking at yourself, come back, it doesn't matter how it's going.' And I would try my best to immerse myself so completely that I had no awareness of anything....I had that feeling several times in several performances and I like best performing when I'm not aware of myself. And yet, for a one-person show, I do have to maintain some awareness of myself...you have to have that awareness otherwise there would be a lot of bodies on the stage. So, there's a fine balance for actors between this reality of immersing yourself in the role and being technically aware of yourself in the role....The actor is the only artist who is both instrumentalist and the instrument. There's no one else. Everyone else has some aid, we play our own instrument. We play our own bodies, our own minds so it stands to reason that we need to know all parts of our instruments.²⁰⁴

___ Madeleine Sherwood

There are those who feel that self-awareness and immersion are not mutually exclusive. According to Silvia Miles...

...you always have to have that [control] as an actor because that's the reality of the stage. You have to look where you're going, you know what I mean? You have to know that you're doing it. The audience has to hear you. You have to have that 'third eye,' but it doesn't prevent you from being totally involved. It's just part of the technique.²⁰⁵

____Silvia Miles

Julie Harris also believes that emotional responsiveness and accessibility does not have to be sacrificed because of the control demanded in a solo performance:

You always want to be in control, every moment, but I certainly don't say that you can't feel it. If you indicate a feeling without really feeling it yourself, I think the audience doesn't get interested. The actor, I think, has to learn to feel and still be in control....Sometimes you don't reach that and it's very discouraging [and] sometimes you're enough in control that people don't realize that you're not there, but they are experiencing something....You just keep going, but sometimes it's just not as right...the only way I can correct that is just not to strain for it, but to go back into myself and try to connect with myself more.²⁰⁶

____Julie Harris

Many theorists are of the opinion that total emotional engagement is an impossibility--that the actor is in fact always monitoring the performance. In Sabin Epstein's judgment, this certainly is the case during a one-person show:

I don't know one actor, no matter how involved they are, that does not have somewhere, an antenna out, checking audience response or the house or some way

keeping a critical eye out. And of course it's heightened in a one-person show, because it's all you....There's always that, making little notes, 'I want to try this. I've got to remember to keep that. This is really working tonight or how did that happen.' That's always going on.²⁰⁷

____Sabin Epstein

In Michael Kahn's estimation, the audience in fact attends a one-person show to witness the actor in this process of monitoring. They go to see artistry, to celebrate the performer consciously practicing his art. To Kahn, the question of immersion is irrelevant:

I don't think anyone can so impersonate another person that anybody knows so well for that length of time. I don't think that that makes sense anyway. I also don't think that the audience goes to just have an active impersonation. I don't think they really go to see an imitation. I don't think that's what they go for. I don't think you'd go see Tru, let's say, just to see someone be Truman Capote. You go to experience two hours in that personality. Now, that personality has to be both a personality of the person it is about and the actor's personality. It would have to be, it cannot not be. There is no way that an actor can so totally become another person in something like this. So therefore, I think you are also celebrating the actor's art. I mean when Gertrude Stein was over, it wasn't Gertrude Stein I was applauding, it was Pat as an actress having made two really wonderful hours on stage about someone I was interested in. But it was Pat Carroll who I was celebrating when it was over. The same way I think with Robert Morse. The reason that they gave him a Tony and the reason they gave Julie Harris a Tony for The Belle of Amherst, was not that they were such good imitations, who in the hell knows what Emily Dickinson sounded like, but that we saw an actor using all of their equipment and so we enjoyed the art of acting. And I don't think we ever get fooled that Robert Morse is Truman Capote. I don't think we care about that. We've seen Truman Capote on television, we know he is dead. We enjoy watching him being impersonated, but what we mostly enjoy is the humor and the warmth and all

of that stuff that comes from the actor. And I don't see how an actor can give up their personality when they do that. That doesn't mean they don't transform themselves, but I mean obviously their humor, their timing, their warmth, all of that's got to come from the actor.²⁰⁸

____Michael Kahn

A number of the interviewees indicated that monitoring the performance, maintaining a 'third eye', is required during a one-person show. Robert Vaughn, for example, declares...

...in addition to doing Roosevelt, I also had to be tuned in to the technical problems of the show each night. I had this man that was stage managing the show, one of my oldest friends, and he had to give whatever there were, a hundred light cues. So I was constantly in contact with him. I would, you know, if something didn't happen the way it was supposed to happen because you were changing theaters and towns every two or three days and there were always problems with the lighting and staging and so on, I would be aware of him off stage very much. When something was going wrong, then I would have to fill in some way....Whatever was going wrong I was pretty much in contact with him off stage. So he would be able to gesture to me or say to me, 'something isn't working'. In other words...I'm certain that, based upon my other experiences on stage working in normal situations, you are not nearly as emotionally engaged as you are when you are creating a character with other people on the stage with you.²⁰⁹

____Robert Vaughn

For Hal Holbrook, being aware of himself while performing is natural:

...because of the way I'm constructed, I guess, as a person, I have an intensely clear sense of what I'm doing physically and otherwise. That doesn't mean that I'm conscious of every gesture, I'm not. But physically I'm conscious of what I'm doing...of an effect I want to create...I'm totally conscious of what I'm doing all the time. I've always been

totally conscious as an actor. You know, I have an outside eye. It's just built into my being. I have an outside eye.²¹⁰

___Hal Holbrook

Being as concerned as he is with vocal variety and other technical matters, Brian Bedford simply says, "...the instrumentalist is more instrumental with a one-person show. I think that's a distinct help with this business of speaking for an hour and a half non-stop."²¹¹ According to Dr. Gerald Miller, successfully monitoring one's performance is a measure of effective acting:

...the essence of good acting is being able to manage one's behavior....The issue becomes one of saying, 'what kind of behavioral display would be most in keeping with this portion of the script?...How should I behave to get this kind of response here'...Thinking about what kind of emotional and/or cognitive response you're aiming at and then saying, 'what's the kind of behavioral displays that are going to generate those kinds of responses...'²¹²

___Gerald Miller

Miller also states that consciously orchestrating the performance is a necessity because the audience's responses are often unpredictable and frequently differ from night to night:

No matter how damn good you are, you can't attain feedback from a thousand people the same way I can attain feedback from you when its one on one. The other problem is that even if they're real good in doing it they're only going to be able to process a portion of the responses they are getting from some of the members of the audience. So I think it would make sense that from night to night...actors do things differently. They do things differently and probably some of the reasons they do them differently is because they sense that the

responses they're getting from the audience aren't the same responses that they got from last night's audience or last week's audience...so they behaviorally try to change it.²¹³

____Gerald Miller

Many actors and theorists acknowledge a tendency toward self-consciousness and 'third-eye' disengagement in the one-person show. The necessity to control one's performance, and the degree to which such control is required, was viewed by some of the respondents as foreign to their instincts and consequently unnatural and uncomfortable. Some felt emotional engagement and control were not mutually exclusive, while others voiced the opinion that avoiding self-awareness during performance is an impossibility. Michael Kahn argued that whether or not the actor becomes absorbed in a character is irrelevant; the viewer in fact wants to see and celebrate conspicuous and conscious artistry. Finally, Dr. Gerald Miller expressed the opinion that because of the unpredictability and variation of the stimuli which the solo performer receives from the audience, it is essential to closely and continually monitor one's actions.

This chapter concludes with a brief look at several idiosyncratic considerations, concerns and problems discussed during the interviews.

FOCUS AREA VI: IDIOSYNCRATIC CONCERNS

...it's interesting today what actors think they are. It's interesting what's happening. It's just becoming awful.²¹⁴

____Charles Nelson Reilly

It has been the aim of this study, thus far, to shed light on those concerns which may be deemed generic to solo acting. The attempt has been to examine what may be termed common performance sensibilities among those who act in, direct, coach or write one-person shows. During the course of the interviews, however, several additional performance considerations were mentioned which, while not shared by the requisite number of respondents to be considered common or inherent to solo acting, are nonetheless of sufficient importance and interest to warrant inclusion at this time.

Both Brian Bedford and Colleen Dewhurst found a challenge in performing bits and pieces of various roles rather than the sustained, through-line character portrayal of conventional productions. For Bedford, an added difficulty arose from the fact that a number of these pieces were from roles which he had never played:

I had already seen a couple of Shakespeare one-man shows, the most notable, of course, being John Gielgud's Ages of Man, which I saw several times and which was just a knockout as far as I was concerned. It was a very great act--you know, giving us Shakespeare's greatest hits...I didn't want it [my show] to be Shakespeare's greatest hits because I didn't want it to be a retrospective of my Shakespearean career...[so] the problems really arose from the things that I hadn't done before...I've actually performed some of the plays that I do bits from, but I haven't played the Duke in Measure for Measure and I've never played Romeo, strangely. So really the difficulty was just working on bits of parts that I have never actually done before...²¹⁵

____Brian Bedford

Although Dewhurst portrayed Carlotta Monterey (O'Neill) throughout My Gene, the show also presented portraits of other women from the plays of Eugene O'Neill, and therefore necessitated quick cuts and shifting. This posed a problem:

I found it very difficult because of the way My Gene was, in terms of jumping from situation to situation...you have the invasion all along of O'Neill's women coming in. So that for me it was really trying to train the instrument so that I could jump quickly from Carlotta into Long Day's Journey or into Moon for the Misbegotten...I found the first fifteen minutes agony because what I was doing was...tap dancing so fast...I felt that I was swinging them so quickly. I thought it was an interesting idea starting her in a sanitarium so that she could go in and out of character quickly, but it was just...agonizing....What you were trying to do was draw between the life of O'Neill and his plays...I mean when you play in his plays, there is never a night that you don't discover something [but] now you were up there and you cannot tell the audience what the experience is of doing O'Neill, you are just kind of into bits and pieces of him....Going through an experience, I think, would be more to my liking, one experience, not forty-five...you just have the feeling that you were giving them the tip of the iceberg very quickly....I always had the feeling the audience was like, 'wait a minute!'.I think something where you just came on to do a one-woman show and you spoke only as that woman would be easier.²¹⁶

____Colleen Dewhurst

An actor who chooses to present a one-person show based on the life of a well-known historical figure must contend with the fact that the audience is, in many cases, at least somewhat familiar with the character, and therefore may not only have specific ideas of how that person should be portrayed or the material which should be included but also may find it more difficult to suspend their disbelief or even

accept the performance. A decision must be made by the actor whether or not to seek, as closely as possible, imitation, or strive rather to suggest the essence of the character. Hal Holbrook seeks transformation, as four hours in the makeup chair would attest. Others such as James Whitmore (Will Rogers', U.S.A., and Give 'Em Hell, Harry!) and Henry Fonda (Clarence Darrow) chose suggestion.²¹⁷ According to Michael Kahn...

...you don't want to be so conscious of the fact that they are imitating other people, so they need to have the ability to subtly do that...I know that when we did Eleanor that, you know, Eleanor Roosevelt had a certain kind of voice. Now Eileen Heckart's voice is quite different from Eleanor Roosevelt's, but Eleanor Roosevelt had a way of talking in a speech pattern that was rather, elocutionary...and so we adopted that. But we found that if we just did that, it got tiresome after a while. So it had to be a mixture of what we remembered of Roosevelt and a lot of Eileen Heckart; so that Eileen Heckart could have the chance, within her own range, to make jokes, to be sad...so it was not a slavish imitation, but more a suggestion.²¹⁸

____Michael Kahn

Robert Vaughn describes his experience with imitation versus approximation in his portrayal of F.D.R:

I was able to pick up the general Roosevelt cadence more than his sound fairly early on to the satisfaction of the director....Because as everybody always says when they are doing anyone that is this well-known, you fear the audience's attention is on perfection of the mimicry, instead of what's being said. Then particularly in a one-man play, it is alienating for the audience, because they are so taken up by your ability to impersonate, they tend to not pay attention to the story....I couldn't, I'm not gifted enough to do Roosevelt perfectly, so I had to put that aside to begin with and try to get the essence of the

cadence. I keep going back to the word cadence, because I had dinner one night with Jimmy Roosevelt, one of his sons, and I said, 'in all the recordings I've heard and all the film I've looked at up to this point, I've never really seen or heard your father at any point, when he seemed to be talking in any normal way, as you might talk if you were being interviewed on 60 Minutes or A Night in the White House with Dan Rather. I mean I never heard him speaking what I consider a conversational tone.' He said, 'Well he didn't speak in a conversational tone. He always spoke like you heard him.' Which was an interesting insight, because he did tend to always speak in a particular kind of sound like that which was unusual. It wasn't a normal conversation. So his own son told me that's the way he spoke. So I thought, 'well I won't worry about it, I'll continue to not try to find a conversational Roosevelt, I'll just try to do the one that everybody is used to.' That was my justification for not doing it [an impersonation]. However, perhaps I could have done it. I would have realized that the audience would have gone along with it, since half the audience didn't know his voice anyway as I said. So I don't know that my choices were limited to the choice that I made which was, because I didn't think I could really do it perfectly, I'd have to do the best I could. But in the case of Roosevelt, he was so extraordinarily theatrical in his entire body language and his entire attitude vocally and his use of his cigarette holder, use of an opera club, use of the hat. He was truly almost a John Barrymore in the White House as far as theatrical mannerisms were concerned. So that, plus the distinctiveness of his voice, combined to make a very interesting person on stage, [even] if he hadn't been well-known at all, if no one had ever known who Roosevelt was. If you just got out there on stage and did all that stuff with the hat and the cigarette holder and the opera club, so on, you would still be [interesting]....Basically the tilt of the head and taking the cigarette holder in and out of the mouth and the general attitude, physically...he always was, even in his last few weeks of his life, an impressive looking man physically.²¹⁹

____Robert Vaughn

Charles Nelson Reilly feels strongly that before attempting a one-person show, today's actors must accurately assess, not only their own abilities, but the talents required for solo performance:

Ruth Draper did a little piece, explaining a portrait, a painting in a museum, to a child and it's very funny. I mean it's amazing what her humor's like. And she held the little girl's hand and I know that the girl had white socks, patent leather shoes, a cream colored dress with a blue sash down the back and a straw hat. When I think of it in my mind I see two figures and not one....In other words, the other characters are so evoked that you can costume them...with Ruth Draper that becomes possible, but this is because the woman was a genius. I mean it's just a passion I have....it's a possibility [to achieve this]. Just like the young singers today [who] know opera in three languages. My friend, Roberta Peters, can sing La Traviata in four....That's the possibility of an artist. So, today when an actor reads three cue cards, everyone applauds on the set, 'Fabulous Billy!' Ruth Draper has got to bring us back to the possibility of what the mind can do...to the young singers who know the operas in three languages. See, then they're using their minds. Young actors today...nobody thinks like this. There's the other singer who goes up on "Bridge Over Troubled Water," one chorus. I mean, that's the difference....See, when I did the [Paul] Robeson play, I didn't have a good actor. I had James Earl Jones. He's not the right actor....He makes a fake voice. He had diction lessons every morning. I said, 'Why is the play getting lost in your palate? Can't you just talk?'...He wants to talk like Richard Burton and you can't. Noel Taylor, who did the costumes, said to me, 'Do you want buckles or not on the evening shoes?' I said, 'It doesn't matter. I need a heart and soul. I don't need a fake phonetic lesson.'...I mean, it's interesting today what actors think they are. It's very interesting what's happening. It's just becoming awful.²²⁰

____ Charles Nelson Reilly

Because of its autobiographical nature, Silvia Miles' one-woman show, It's Me, Silvia, demanded that the actress reveal and relive a number of painful episodes from her life. She discusses this unique experience:

...and there I was on the phone, always on hold...with my agent, which was very funny, you see, and then, of course, it took me into every experience, very much like Tru....Mine also took place on New Year's Eve, or Christmas Eve, the same as Tru. And there I was, all dressed up with nowhere to go, with my date being broken, cleaning the apartment and drinking champagne, calling for the maid and forgetting that I was the maid....I mean I've done Virginia Woolf, all those heavy-duty roles [and] I've always been able to use the emotion and the experience of my life for another role, but I didn't have to go through my own agony for the entire [show]. Every night, I had to really relive everything. As it happened, I relived it. It was the most peculiar experience I'd ever had as an actress. It was very painful, very exhausting, very painful. And the more painful it was to me, the funnier it was to the audience....It didn't involve any self-pity or asking for any sympathy....I'm such a volatile human being that what happened was, I mean, it was like hysterical, you know, because the things that went on in the play were things that were hysterically funny. The whole idea was, I was always being humiliated or put upon, but I wasn't asking for pity. It was like I was ignoring it and just going ahead like nothing had happened to me. And the audience was hysterical. It was like a Chaplin comedy.²²¹

____Silvia Miles

During the course of the interviews, a number of respondents discussed concerns which, on the basis of the general comments in this study, may be termed idiosyncratic. The difficulty of presenting bits and pieces of plays, or shifting rapidly from one character or scene to the next was mentioned. The matter of imitation versus suggestion in

historically-based one-person shows was considered, and the need to assess one's talents objectively, as well as to fully realize the requirements of a one-person show, emphasized. Finally, reliving and recreating one's personal agonies on stage was viewed as a difficulty in autobiographical presentations.

The investigation of the specific Focus Areas is now complete. The dissertation concludes in the ensuing chapter with a comprehensive summary and recommendations for further research.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

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⁴Julie Harris, telephone interview, 16 July 1990.

⁵Arthur French, telephone interview, 12 July 1990.

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¹¹Pat Carroll, telephone interview, 19 June 1990.

¹²Brian Bedford, telephone interview, 2 July 1990.

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- ¹⁴Carroll, telephone interview, '90.
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- ¹⁶William Luce, telephone interview, 24 August 1990.
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- ¹⁸Carroll, telephone interview, '90.
- ¹⁹Colleen Dewhurst, telephone interview, 28 June 1990.
- ²⁰Luce, telephone interview, '90.
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- ²⁸Kahn, telephone interview, '90.
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³⁰Reilly, telephone interview, '90.

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- 170 Reilly, telephone interview, '90.
- 171 Reilly, telephone interview, '90.
- 172 Harris, telephone interview, '90.
- 173 Miles, telephone interview, '90.
- 174 Waxberg, telephone interview, '90/
- 175 Bedford, telephone interview, '90.
- 176 Dewhurst, telephone interview, '90.
- 177 Sherwood, telephone interview, '90.
- 178 Holbrook, telephone interview, '90.
- 179 Epstein, telephone interview, '90.
- 180 Holbrook, telephone interview, '90.
- 181 Reilly, telephone interview, '90.
- 182 Dewhurst, telephone interview, '90.

183 Sherwood, telephone interview, '90.

184 Carroll, telephone interview, '90.

185 Bedford, telephone interview, '90.

186 Holbrook, telephone interview, '90.

187 Miles, telephone interview, 90.

188 Sherwood, telephone interview, '90.

189 Vaughn, telephone interview, '90.

190 Holbrook, telephone interview, '90.

191 Carroll, telephone interview, '90.

192 French, telephone interview, '90.

193 Benedetti, telephone interview, '90.

194 Benedetti, telephone interview, '90.

195 Benedetti, telephone interview, '90.

196 Benedetti, telephone interview, '90.

197 Carroll, telephone interview, '90.

198 Carroll, telephone interview, '90.

¹⁹⁹Quoted in Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, eds., Actors on Acting (New York: Crown, 1970) 198-99.

²⁰⁰Reilly, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰¹Cohen, telephone interview, 90.

²⁰²Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre, 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1987) 584-85.

²⁰³Dewhurst, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰⁴Sherwood, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰⁵Miles, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰⁶Harris, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰⁷Epstein, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰⁸Kahn, telephone interview, '90.

²⁰⁹Vaughn, telephone interview, '90.

²¹⁰Holbrook, telephone interview, '90.

²¹¹Bedford, telephone interview, '90.

²¹²Miller, personal interview, '90.

²¹³Miller, personal interview, '90.

214Reilly, telephone interview, '90.

215Bedford, telephone interview, '90.

216Dewhurst, telephone interview, '90.

217Eunice Ruth Eifert, "The Fourth Wall Shattered: A Study of the Performer-Audience Relationship in Selected Full-Length Monodramas." diss., U of Minnesota, 1984, 123.

218Kahn, telephone interview, '90.

219Vaughn, telephone interview, '90.

220Reilly, telephone interview, '90.

221Miles, telephone interview, '90.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Solo performance has, in various guises, enjoyed an unbroken history since antiquity. Because of the lure of added financial security and the promise of unparalleled creative control, the one-person show has been attracting actors in ever-increasing numbers. Yet, limited research has been conducted in the attempt to either determine generic acting considerations, concerns and problems inherent to the one-person show or to recommend techniques to address them. It has been the purpose of this dissertation to examine, from the perspective of successful and respected artists and acting/communication theorists, performance methodology of one-person shows. In a series of lengthy, highly focused interviews, these professionals offered insights into what they believe to be the unique experience of acting alone on stage. Close examination of the interview responses revealed that there exist performance considerations, concerns and problems which are common to the experience of solo performers. For the purposes of this study these were

combined and categorized into Focus Areas, the analysis of which constituted the core of the investigation.

Acting is, above all, a process of communication. On stage, as in life, one seeks to be in communion, in relation, to connect with others. Actions, done to attain objectives, are largely other-directed. The performer, responding to stimuli provided, in most instances, by fellow actors, becomes a link in an ongoing communication chain or transactional loop. Such interaction does not exist in the monodrama. The actor stands alone. And this simple, inescapable fact serves as the wellspring for the considerations, concerns, problems and techniques discussed in this investigation.

The first Focus Area of the study dealt with the actor's efforts to establish relationships in the absence of other characters with whom to interact. How does one find communion with no one else on stage? The respondents indicated that connections must be made in other ways. Many felt an increased commitment to one's material was essential. To these performers and theorists, it is critical that the actor be excited by, intrigued with, and completely immersed in the text. To insure this passionate bonding between artist and material, the actor must be a direct participant in the research and development of the show. Hal Holbrook would have the performer alone make all the creative decisions. Others indicated that a close, collaborative

relationship with a writer would yield a similar connection to one's material. All were in accord, however, that such direct participation was central to the success of a one-person show and would, in addition, provide greater assurance that the content is suited to the performer's capabilities. Several of the interviewees were of the opinion that in selecting material, it is to the actor's advantage to include, whenever possible, the subject's actual written or spoken words.

Breaking the fourth-wall and directly addressing the audience--making the spectator the other actor, the missing link in the communication chain--is the most common way performers seek relationships when acting solo. According to those interviewed, casting the audience as the other character is both natural and theatrically effective. Whether the 'role' assigned to the spectators is in fact that of listeners gathered, in another place or time, to hear a noted personality speak or read, as in Hal Holbrook's Mark Twain Tonight!, or the 'visitor' persona used in shows such as The Belle of Amherst or Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein, the actor's performance is enhanced through such identification. One must know to whom he or she is speaking and why. There must be a fervent desire, a passion on the part of the performer to share the material, if it is to be enthusiastically embraced. Therefore, concrete objectives must be established. A number of the respondents

compared the techniques of direct address to those of story telling, public speaking or stand-up comedy in terms of the moment-to-moment responsiveness required and one-to-one interaction which must be approximated. The need to distribute focus throughout the house was emphasized, and, above all, the importance of talking to rather than at the audience was highly stressed.

Direct address is used in the majority of one-person shows. However, interacting with unseen characters is another approach taken by solo performers in an attempt to establish relationships. The interviewees indicated that the efficacy of this approach is wholly dependent upon the vividness and specificity with which these characters are imagined by the actor. Techniques to facilitate imaging include careful and consistent 'placement' of the characters, the use of paintings and photographs to increase specificity, rehearsing with other actors to help visualize responses, and drawing from one's personal life and past experiences for unseen images.

Another way in which the solo performer increases his/her sense of connection, according to the respondents, is through the use of props, music, sound effects, lighting and the physical environment. How one relates to props provides the audience with an insight into the character, as well as giving the performer something to do on stage. These external elements help keep the actor 'on track' during

performance and often prove to be powerful and evacuative sources of emotional stimulation and involvement. Hal Holbrook's skillful use of his cigar is a clear example of the way in which a prop can actually become a centerpiece or play a major role in one's performance, in addition to aiding in character delineation.

Generating and maintaining energy and concentration was the the subject of the second Focus Area of the study. The consensus among the professionals consulted was that the one-person show differed dramatically from ensemble productions with respect to energy, stamina, and concentration. In multi-character plays, the thrust of the action is often distributed among various cast members, with different actors carrying the principle weight at different times, thus affording the others an opportunity to gather themselves, to recharge and prepare for the next time when they will be needed to provide the momentum for the action. During solo performance, this opportunity does not exist. The responsibility for the production is borne by one actor. Energy must be unflagging, concentration ceaseless. Everything is self-generated. The respondents stressed the need to maintain a high degree of physical conditioning, the value of a healthy diet and sufficient rest. They also felt that one's program must be carefully planned to include sections of lower intensity. Thinking of the show in terms of individual segments rather than in its entirety was

frequently suggested. Several of the interviewees, most notably Pat Carroll, highly stressed the importance of proper breath control as a fountain of needed energy. Pacing, the distribution of energy, was also considered crucial and further illustrates the value of carefully planning the emotional levels in one's production. Lastly, it was felt that having a commitment to the material and a strong desire to share it would help adequately energize the performer.

A third Focus Area centered on the respondents' concern for achieving variety in one-person shows. Many stated an early fear in their experience with solo performing was whether or not they would be able to interest an audience for an entire evening. Consequently, variety, both vocal and visual, was a central consideration. Several of those interviewed warned against the danger of becoming overly technical or purely mechanical in one's approach to solo performance. To these actors and theorists, variety must come from an organic, emotional response to a well-written, structured text. Variety is therefore the by-product of emotion. Others, however, are of the opinion that a solo actor must actively strive, and meticulously plan to infuse diversity into a one-person show whenever possible and appropriate. Many felt a well-trained, expressive voice was vital. Since all the notes are to be played on one instrument, that instrument must be finely tuned and possess a remarkable range. Pat Carroll, in fact, used a technique

in which she color coded her script to help facilitate a varied vocal delivery. Other suggestions included having the predominant character imitate other characters during the course of the show. In other words, the actor portrays a character portraying other characters. The use of humor was strongly emphasized as a way of injecting variety into one's performance. And movement was considered valuable in providing the audience with visual changes in what otherwise might be a presentation that is theatrically static.

The experience of being alone on stage, of 'aloneness,' was the topic of discussion in the fourth Focus Area of the study. The multiplicity of solo performance was revealed in the comments of the interviewees. Several indicated that acting in a one-person show gave them an exhilarating feeling of power, freedom and control. Others, however, described a darker side to acting alone. The feeling of being 'naked' on stage, or of having no one with whom to share the responsibility for the success or failure of the show, was described as being quite intimidating. Many solo performers experience a longing for the contact, the interplay, the give and take that exists in ensemble productions. This sense of isolation frequently extends beyond the theatre itself. Hal Holbrook and Madeleine Sherwood vividly recounted the loneliness that so often pervades the life-style of the solo actor. And beyond the loneliness, there are the fears. Fear of forgetting one's lines haunts many actors who venture onto

the stage alone. The reason is obvious: there is no one to be of aid if the performer suddenly is unable to remember the text. The terror in such a situation can be paralyzing, as Pat Carroll indicated. According to Charles Nelson Reilly, jumping entire sections in a one-person show is quite common. Techniques to counter this anxiety include bringing a copy of the script on stage, simply not dwelling on the fear, or seeking the help of a hypnotist, as in Ms. Carroll's case, should all else fail and apprehension persist. Concentration was also mentioned as a key in preventing the loss of one's memory. Another fear, indicated in the earlier discussion of variety, is that of being boring.

Beyond the need to recognize and overcome one's fears, being alone on stage can present the actor with additional challenges. According to Robert Benedetti, these include the elimination of self-consciousness, the retention of vulnerability, and the maintenance of spontaneity.

The fifth Focus Area was devoted to exploring the level of emotional detachment or 'third eye' monitoring required in a one-person show. Because most monodramas are presentational in style, there is a greater awareness of and interaction with the audience than one would expect in a fourth-wall, naturalistic production. Therefore, it was the opinion of many of the respondents that the performer is more aware of the theatricalism in the event, and of the process of acting as it is happening, than in a conventional drama.

The one-person show, in their view, necessitates a higher level of conscious artistry. It demands the actor assume the role of instrumentalist, carefully and continually monitoring the performance. Charles Nelson Reilly offered a dissenting view, stating that the performer must never 'watch' him/herself when acting. Others, such as Colleen Dewhurst and Madeleine Sherwood, indicated that many of the residual, negative feelings they harbor toward solo performing result from the fact that they found the high level of self-awareness in a one-person show inconsistent with their acting instincts and, therefore, unpleasant and uncomfortable. Julie Harris, on the other hand, believes emotional involvement and control are not mutually exclusive. Several theorists, among them Sabin Epstein and Robert Cohen, are of the opinion total engagement is simply not possible. They argue the actor is always monitoring his or her performance to various degrees. Michael Kahn believes the audience, in fact, attends a one-person show in the anticipation of seeing a highly skilled performer consciously display virtuosity. The spectator enjoys watching an actor at the controls of the performance. Finally, such orchestration, according to Dr. Gerald Miller, is a necessity during direct address due to the unpredictability of audience responses.

In the sixth and last Focus Area of the study, those concerns which were deemed idiosyncratic--unique to one or two of the interviewees, were examined. Brian Bedford and

Colleen Dewhurst discussed the difficulty of working on bits and pieces of material, 'patchwork quilt' performing. Bedford was concerned that several of the characters he selected to portray were ones he had previously never played. For Dewhurst, the quick cuts from character to character proved extremely disconcerting and induced anxiety. The subject of imitation versus suggestion in historical one-person shows was discussed. Michael Kahn and Robert Vaughn indicated a preference for approximation. Both felt when mimicry is the aim an audience can become unduly conscious of one's ability or inability to imitate effectively, thus missing much of the content and subtleties of the performance. Charles Nelson Reilly called for the contemporary actor who anticipates performing a solo production to first assess his or her talents, and to fully realize the heart, the soul, the imagination needed to stand alone on stage. And Silvia Miles described her autobiographical presentation, It's Me, Silvia, as demanding that she recount many painful experiences from her life.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are aspects to acting alone and to the performance genre known as the one-person show which lie beyond the scope of the current investigation, and, therefore, warrant future research. While Silvia Miles' observations were a valued addition to this study, the methodology employed in personal reflection and/or cultural commentary, as well as performance

art, has been the subject of limited significant inquiry. An investigation into the techniques of such artists as New York City writer and solo performer, Reno; New Orleans-based actor and playwright, John O'Neal; New York City playwright and performance artist, Alvin Eng; poet, playwright and performer, Jo Carson; Mexico City performance artist, Guillermo Gómez-Peña; New York City comedian, Jackie Mason, as well as Spalding Gray, Eric Bogosian, Paul Linke and Shane McCabe would be of substantial benefit.

Several respondents in this study drew parallels between performing in a one-person show and doing stand-up comedy. This connection could prove to be an interesting and informative investigation. What can be learned, with respect to the techniques of direct address, from the manner in which a comedian 'works the crowd'?

As John S. Gentile recommends in his dissertation, "The One-Person Show in America: From the Victorian Platform to the Contemporary Stage"¹, the role played by the director in the preparation of a one-person show is worthy of further exploration. It was revealed in this study that Hal Holbrook, for example, felt one, and only one, artistic consciousness was required, that of the actor. Julie Harris and others, however, rely heavily on the vision and input of a trusted director. The relationship between solo performer and director warrants additional research.

The one-person show in schools, as an educational tool, is another area worthy of future study. Many solo actors present programs in elementary and high schools, as well as colleges and universities. An investigation into the performers and subject matter of these shows, sponsoring and booking organizations, and the views of educators concerning the efficacy of such productions is justified.

Research into the use of one-person shows as a tool in actor training would seem a valid subject for future study. How do university theatre departments and conservatory and workshop programs incorporate solo performance into their instruction?

Further inquiry into the parallels between performing in a one-person show and other situations in which the actor works alone is merited. How, for example, can an awareness of and proficiency in the acting techniques required in a monodrama benefit the performer when auditioning or improve one's ability to deliver a monologue during conventional, ensemble productions?

The artists interviewed in the current investigation have found substantial success in the arena of solo performance. There is, however, benefit to be gleaned from additional study of one-person shows which were ineffective and the possible reasons for such failure.

Watching an actor work alone on stage can be a source of wonder and inspiration. One cannot help but admire the

talent, imagination, preparation and courage required of the solo performer. His is a situation not unlike that of a tightrope walker, one which demands the utmost dexterity and balance, one with peril but a slip away. And yet, actors eagerly leap to this challenge. Why? Perhaps, beyond financial considerations or even the question of creative autonomy, people stand in this arena for the same reason they climb mountains or run marathons. The risk of failure is great, but the opportunity to explore one's potential, to expand one's limits, to confront one's private demons, is undeniable. In the words of Janice Paran, writing in American Theatre magazine, "...at it's best, solo performance combines the welcome company of a charismatic personality with text that transcends the merely personal, giving voice and presence to truths we recognize as our own..."² Such is the one-person show.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

¹John S. Gentile, "The One-Person Show in America: From the Victorian Platform to the Contemporary Stage." diss., Northwestern U, 1984, 176.

²Janice Paran, ed., "Taking It Personally," American Theatre October 1991: 63.

APPENDIX

REGIONAL THEATRE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE and HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

Questions Concerning the One-Person Show

Name: _____

Theatre: _____

1. Do you present, or have you presented in the past, one-person shows* at your theatre? ☐ YES ☐ NO

2. If you have presented one-person shows, in the past ten years approximately how many have you presented?

3. Do you regularly consider one-person shows in selecting your season's schedule? ☐ YES ☐ NO

4. Do any of your actors perform or have they performed one-person shows? ☐ YES ☐ NO

5. Are you presenting more one-person shows at your theatre now than ten years ago? ☐ YES ☐ NO
More than five years ago? ☐ YES ☐ NO

6. In your estimation is the one-person show an increasingly popular form of theatre? ☐ YES ☐ NO
If yes, can you explain this increase? (Please feel free to use the back of this form.)

***One-Person Show:** A theatrical presentation performed by one person that is scripted, spoken and that has character, form and a unifying theme or subject. I exclude stand-up comedy, variety acts and strictly musical performances.

Please return this form to: James Ryan, Owen Hall, E709, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48825.

Ryan Hypothesis Testing Results:

The Problem:

One of the most important questions from the nation-wide survey concerns the perception of the artistic directors of LORT theatres regarding whether or not the one-person show is an increasingly popular form of theatre.

Of the seventy responses to this question, twenty-eight were in the affirmative. This is a proportion of forty percent ($= 0.40$). In order to show that this is a truly representative result, several statistical tests were performed to assess statistical reliability. There are two classical methods used to test for the statistical significance of a proportion.

Method 1:

The first method is to specify a claim or what is technically called a null hypothesis. Such a claim would be that the true proportion (symbol = π) of LORT artistic directors (which we never know unless we were to poll the entire population) is equal to zero. This is written: $H_0: \pi = 0$. Next the sample statistic (symbol = p) in our case 0.40, is compared with the proportion of zero. For a sample size of $n = 90$, it would be extremely unlikely to find a sample proportion as large as 0.40. The probability of this occurrence may be calculated using the following formula:

[note: the null hypothesis $H_0: \pi = 0.10$ is used instead of $H_0: \pi = 0.00$ in order to satisfy the statistical assumption that $n\pi > 5.0$. In this case $n\pi = 90(.10) = 9.0$. This correction allows us to use normal curve techniques in this statistical test. In practice what this means is that if the proportion of 0.40 is shown to be significantly greater than 0.10, then de facto it is greater than 0.00].

Inferences for the Proportion, π

Hypothesis test: $H_0: \pi = 0.100$
 $H_a: \pi > 0.100$

$$Z = \frac{\text{sample proportion } (=p) - \text{hypothesized value of } \pi}{\text{standard error}}$$

$$Z = \frac{0.400 - 0.100}{\sqrt{(0.100 * (1 - 0.100)) / 90}} = 9.487$$

The p-value for this test is 0.000000000001

The p-value of 0.000000000001 is the probability that our proportion of 0.40 is not statistically significant. For all practical purposes this means that there is a statistically significant percentage of LORT artistic directors who believe that the one-person performance is becoming more important. This fact is formalized by rejecting the null hypothesis H_0 and accepting in its place the alternative hypothesis, H_a that the true proportion π is in fact greater than 0.10 (and by design therefore, greater than zero).

Method 2:

The second statistical test performed to assess the reliability of the proportion of 0.40 consists of calculating a confidence interval for the proportion. A confidence interval takes on the following form:

$$\text{point estimate (= p)} \pm Z * (\text{standard error})$$

where point estimate is the proportion of 0.40, the Z number is determined by the investigator, depending on the level of confidence desired in the result, and standard error is a statistic needed to assess the error factor.

For example:

$$\begin{aligned} \Rightarrow & \text{for 80.0\% confidence, the interval is:} \\ & = 0.400 \pm Z * \sqrt{(0.400 * (1 - 0.400)) / n} \\ & = 0.400 \pm 1.280 * \sqrt{(0.240 / 90)} \\ & = 0.400 \pm 0.066 \end{aligned}$$

The lower limit of the confidence interval is 0.334

The upper limit of the confidence interval is 0.466

This means that we are 80.0 % confidence that the true proportion of artistic directors who believe that the one-person performance is increasing in popularity is between 33.4% and 46.6%.

--> For 90.0% confidence, the interval is

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= 0.400 \pm Z * \sqrt{(0.400 * (1 - 0.400)) / n} \\
 &= 0.400 \pm 1.645 * \sqrt{(0.240 / 90)} \\
 &= 0.400 \pm 0.085
 \end{aligned}$$

The lower limit of the confidence interval is 0.315

The upper limit of the confidence interval is 0.485

Again we are more confident (90.0 %) that the proportion is between 31.5 % and 48.5 %.

--> Finally, for 95.0% confidence, the interval is

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= 0.400 \pm Z * \sqrt{(0.400 * (1 - 0.400)) / n} \\
 &= 0.400 \pm 1.960 * \sqrt{(0.240 / 90)} \\
 &= 0.400 \pm 0.101
 \end{aligned}$$

The lower limit of the confidence interval is 0.299

The upper limit of the confidence interval is 0.501

We are 95% confident that the true proportion is between 29.9 % and 50.1 %. We should note that as the level of confidence increases, the limits of the confidence interval increase. This makes intuitive as well as statistical sense.

The fact that a proportion of 0.00 is not within the confidence bands is the second method for showing statistical significance.

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