

CAU SUMMER 2024 WEEK 1, JULY 7-13

COURSE: Acting/Theater: The Courage to Create: Transforming Personal Narratives into Performance | The A. David & Nancy Tobin Seminar in the Arts

FACULTY: Bruce Levitt, Professor of Performing & Media Arts

LOCATION: Schwartz Center for Performing Arts, Black Box Theater, 430 College Ave., Ithaca, NY

TECHNIQUES

We will look at various techniques that can assist in the creation of solo performances. Each technique listed below can be applied to each mode of solo performance. Although they can be explored in isolation, the techniques listed below are not mutually exclusive. They can be used in any number of ways to act with each other in any number of combinations. Since the list below is by no means exhaustive, we may want to define others as the semester progresses:

Environment: The organization of the physical space for solo performance is essential to focusing the audience's attention and in assisting with the creation of character, story telling, or performer presence. The **Environment** can create a context for the piece by providing the solo performer with objects to assist the performance or obstacles to create conflict within the performance. The environment can compliment or contrast the content of the piece to create atmosphere, surprise, emotional identification, humor, tension, and dramatic action. The use of the **Environment** can reveal character. The environment can also reject any emotion or illusion, including that of character.

Exteriorization: Expressing an internal process through observable behavior. *
Exteriorization can include the use of props, costume or set pieces.

Imitation: This technique has a variety of levels including transformation and mimicry. Simply put, this technique involves observing another person and incorporating that observation into the solo piece. This can be as simple as singing a song in the "style of," satirizing another individual or some personal trait of another person, or, as accurately as possible, re-creating another living human being within the piece.

Personal Habit: some solo work, particularly that which falls into the mode of Performance Art, is often personal and autobiographical. Performers can frequently make use of personal quirks, ticks, or habits to aid in the creation of the piece. **Personal Habits** can, among other things, be used to draw the audience to the performer, to push the audience away from the performer, or,

through the use of exaggeration, to create humor, pathos, or to build dramatic moments.

Primary Activity: A Primary Activity functions much like the environment in that it can provide a frame or a context for the performance. It can underscore or contrast the content of the piece or do both alternately. Usually, however, the Primary Activity is referred to in the piece and becomes part of its method—in other words, it is somehow tied to the theme of the piece and may be used quite self consciously.

Secondary Activity: This is an activity carried out by the solo performer without necessarily referencing it in the text of the performance. It can be used as an **Exteriorization**. Secondary activity can be used to contrast, and thereby shed light on, the primary direction of a piece.*

Second Voice: While **Second Voice** can incorporate **Imitation** it can be independent of it. Adding another voice or other voices to the solo performance often occurs in storytelling. It can lead to the creation of “dialogue” and can contribute humor, dramatic tension, variety, and/or surprise to the solo piece.

Media: The use of **Media** in solo performance is a well used technique. Media includes slides, video, tape, microphone, or CD. Video may be live or recorded. The content of slides, video, tape and CD varies widely in solo performance.

Extension: is the continuing of a single, not-so-vivid impulse to an extreme. * For example, a solo performer, using cooking as a **Primary Activity**, drops an egg on the floor and becomes upset. The performer begins to purposely drop other food objects, perhaps beginning with another egg, then two, then ten, until the stage is covered with dropped or thrown food.

Opposite: Playing **Opposite** is finding a way to contrast the exterior life of the performer with that of the interior moment. The contrast created usually creates a moment of revelation for the audience.

Against: Playing **Against** is an attempt to hide the interior moment from the audience. The effort usually heightens the audience’s investment in the interior moment.

Silence: This technique can be used to heighten the tension, undercut the rhythm of the piece, frustrate the audience, precede an explosion of activity, or allow the immediate past moment to dwell in the mind of the audience. **Silence**, when earned, and used precisely, can be an effective technique.

Audience Interaction: All solo performance involves an interaction with the audience. This can range from simple direct address to moving among the audience, to bringing members of the audience into the piece to interact with the artist.

*These terms and parts of the definitions are taken from David Feldshuh's Directing I Class