K.O.A./D.O.A.

written and performed by

Jonathan Putnam

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Concept Statement

My intention with K.O.A./D.O.A. was to create an original one-person show. I wanted all of the material to be my own so that I could perform it in years to come without concern for royalties. I wanted the show to be a test of not only my acting ability but also of my sense of theatre and my ability to write dramatic literature.

I hoped that the show would be comedic and would contain social criticism. Hypocrisy, greed, bigotry, addiction, escapism, underachievement and love were themes I hoped to weave into my script.

I wanted the show to include four or five characters of varying ages and backgrounds which would allow me to incorporate different dialects, physicalizations, and motivations. I wanted the fact that all of the characters were to be played by the same actor to have significance to the plot.

In terms of plot, I wanted the show to have one beyond theme. Given all of the above, I settled on a one-man murder mystery with a killing, suspects, motives and the eventual revelation of the killer. The climax would reveal that all of the characters were actually different aspects of one personality. I am still hoping to write such a piece.
K.O.A. / D.O.A.

by

Jonathan Putnam
Good evening. Many thanks for coming. I've got about forty-five minutes and I'd like to share with you a few characters I've wanted to perform for some time. Some are me, some are sort of me, some aren't even close.

The show is called K.O.A./D.O.A., which stands for Kampgrounds Of America/Dead On Arrival, which used to mean a lot more than it does now. This piece was originally conceived as a one man murder mystery that took place in a campground. For various reasons that didn't work out. The main problem was that I didn't have a protagonist. A minor problem. Then it became the story of a man who dropped out and moved to a campground. That version had a protagonist but I didn't care for him. It seemed he was getting in the way of the story. Strange, I know. I liked the rest of it, I just didn't fancy the protagonist. So I dumped him. Fired him. It's a cruel business, show.

I decided to do it myself. What remains is a bunch of monologues and some cheap theatrics which still express my concerns for the way things are done. Most of the monologues were written for K.O.A./D.O.A., some have been extracted from other stuff I wrote in the past, and some I wrote after I fired the protagonist; pieces I had wanted to use in the original but couldn't squish them in logically. So, thank God, I got rid of the logic.

If, at any point, you have a question or comment, feel free. Also, just because I wrote this stuff doesn't mean I believe it all. You decide.
Also, if you happen to pick up on a theme or statement or common thread or anything, you might want to drop by the dressing room afterward and let me know. I have to write a thesis later....
Actually, there seems to be a lot of references to throwing up during the show. Maybe that could be my thesis topic.
In a way, this is a story of a WASP, not that WASPS throw up a lot, but that's what I am. My ancestors were actually the prosecutors at the Salem witch trials. But, please, that's in my past. We haven't done any of that stuff for, what, ten years, at least. Anyway, one thing WASPS are not known for is there cooking. We all know Italian or French, even Cajun cooking. But you never hear about WASP cooking. For instance, my mother's specialty was breakfast cereal. Her Fruit Loops were dynamite. Cocoa Krispies? Couldn't miss. Consequently, I was never that much into food when I was a kid. Dinner for me was just something that interrupted my game of Army. I'd have a German patrol pinned down behind the garage, and my mother would yell, "Dinner, Jon, right now!" "All right, you krauts, I have to go in and eat now, but you just keep your hands up and don't move. I'll be back."

On this particular night, my mother hit an all time culinary low. My least two favorite foods together for the first time on one plate: hamloaf and lima beans, ladies and gentlemen. I was horrified. I mean, my mother had concocted some nasty dinners in the past: she had a raisin and mayo casserole that I believe was finally outlawed by Congress. But this! Hamloaf and lima beans. I looked around the table and my siblings didn't seem to be having any trouble with it. But they were oblivious. My oldest brother used to read the encyclopedia at the dinner table, so that tells you something. They weren't paying attention like I was.
My father? He'd been eating the shit for twenty years. When I was three my father had a taste-bud-ectomy. Had them all removed. And my mother would become very indignant if you didn't eat her food. "I told you you'd spoil your dinner if you ate those Pop Tarts." "Mom, I don't think I'm the one who spoiled the dinner. I'm so hungry right now I could eat a horse. In fact, you don't happen to have any horse in the fridge, do you?"

Naturally, I couldn't leave the table until I cleaned my plate. The rest of my family went to watch television.

Two hours later I'm still there, in the dark. I knew there was no way the German patrol was still waiting for me with their hands up. In fact, I even pretended that the German patrol had captured me and was forcing me to eat the hamloaf in order to get information out of me. I told them everything they wanted to know.

Finally, finally, what I had been praying for two hours would happen, happened. Our dog, Ernie, came prancing into the kitchen. Now, I am convinced that Ernie's mother was a pig. An actual sow. Somewhere a beagle had gotten into the sty and Ernie was spawned. He had short, bristly hair, his feet looked like hooves, and he always walked with his nose to the ground. Ugliest dog in the tri-county area. But the great thing was, he would eat anything. The only thing I ever saw him refuse to eat: grapes. Something weird about the texture, I think. He'd push them around the floor with his nose, put them in his mouth, then spit them out without chewing them. Only thing I ever saw him turn down, until now.
"Ernie, shhh, come here bud. A little hamloaf?" He looked at it eagerly, sniffed it, licked it, looked at me, "Jon, you gotta be kidding. Got any grapes?" I pointed out the lima beans which he did manage to snarf in a bite and a half. Without chewing, I'm certain. Then he trotted away. So now, not only am I stuck with a hamloaf, I'm stuck with a hamloaf that the dog has licked.

What happened next I could not have foreseen. The dog trotted happily into the living room and threw up the lima beans right in front of the T.V. And they must have looked exactly like my lima beans because he hadn't chewed them and they'd only been in there for a few moments.

My family had this kit called the Vomit Emergency Action Pack. We had two dogs, two cats and wall-to-wall carpeting. So you had to have the kit. And whenever one of the pets, or one of the kids for that matter, would throw up everyone would spring into action. There were different powders and liquids and brushes, and everyone had a specialized function in the process. And I was the captain of the vomit team and I was dying to get in there and help but I was benched, you know? I heard my brother go, "BWOO, BWOO, we got puke in front of the T.V.!! BWOO!"

My mother walked slowly into the kitchen, "You gave Ernie the lima beans, didn't you?" "Yes, mother, I'm sorry."

"I don't care if you miss school for the rest of the year, you are not leaving that table until you finish that hamloaf. And if the dog licked it, tough." I had visions of myself as a fifty-year old man, it's the twenty-first
century, we've colonized Mars, "I wish I could have made more of my life", I'm still sitting there, the hamloaf is still sitting there. My parents sold the house years ago. Some strange family is living around me.

Finally, at about two o'clock in the morning, I put the hamloaf down the front of my pants, which is where years later I would hide my cigarettes. My mother came down in her bathrobe. I prepared for a strip search. But she had softened. "Did you finish your hamloaf?" "Yes, Mom, it was great." "Goodnight, sweetheart." I couldn't tell her that it was sitting where, in a few years, my pubic hair would hatch. But I think she knew. I still haven't had the heart to tell her. In fact, twenty-five years later, ladies and gentlemen, my mother's hamloaf.
RUSTY

[ He rises, regards the "commercial copy".]

What have we got here?

ENGINEER

Pukemeister. Take one.

RUSTY

"Freshhhhh. Come to the plateau. The second plateau in beer drinking. You've been partying, and you've reached Plateau One. Fourteen beers and you're grabbing other people's genitalia. You've loudly revealed three secrets you weren't even supposed to know. You've drop-kicked the Balinese vase through the beveled glass doors of the antique buffet. Now's the time to purge yourself and go for Plateau Two. You throw up all over the bathroom and parts of the laundry room and pop open a freshhhhh twelve pack...of Pukemeister Beer. Now, make a lunge for the host's cat and take two or three guests down with you. Pukemeister. If that doesn't get you thrown out of the party, you aren't really trying. Come to the Plateau. Come up to Pukemeister. Belushi Brewing Company, Chicago, Illinois."

How was that?

ENGINEER

It's a keeper.

[ THE SCENE CHANGES TO THE A.O.A. ]

RUSTY

Anybody got a cold one? [ We draw a beer out of one of the twelve packs. ] Those are all warm. Room temperature beer. Only as a warm room. [ He picks up the can opener, punctures
Wooh! Hey! Do I love life, or what? I see a flower and I ask it, "Yo, brother, what be happenin'?". I see a homeless person and I ask him, "Sir, do you really need that flask?". I believe
that you can be whatever you want to be. Look at me. I grew up in a loving, God-fearing, upper-middle-class, T.V.-oriented, "we'll buy you a new Plymouth if you keep your grades up" kind of family, and I end up performing with the group, "Up With Matching Sweaters". Go figure. Anything is possible in this beautiful, barely post-Reagan America.

My goal is to be the "center" dancer behind Gloria Estefan at next year's Grammy Awards, provided that she doesn't wear a blouse where her bra shows through. I don't think I could go for that. I realize that's a little prudish. And I'm trying to change. Soften. Because I'd really like to be an actor. And when you're an actor, you have to be prepared to do all sorts of things. [with great effort, he musters the strength to say...] Fuck. I'm getting better. It's a tough business, show...business. I could stay in "Up With Matching Sweaters" but I want more. I want it all. So I'm going to play the game. [Jasten auditions.]

Hi! My name is Jasten B. Williams, and my first piece is from "Fuck The Dripping Cunt, The Fucking Cunt":

Fuck the dripping cunt, the fucking cunt!
I mean, she can lick me. What am I, Pooch?
Some kinda voodoo butter? She treats me like I'm some kind of yellow secretion that collects in the crotch of her underwear!
What is this? You know what I'm sayin' here? 'the fuck! I gotta life. Pooch? Am I right? I mean, stick a serrated bread knife up my ass if I'm lyin' here. Am I a vaginal blood fart or am I a human being?

Thank you. My second piece is from "Romeo And Juliet":

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
But soft! What light through yonder...
Window breaks? Tis the yeast and Juliet Is the bun. O,
Insert:

JASTEN B. WILLIAMS

America is special! America wins! America makes sense!

America makes me sing!

[He sings a disco, Orange Bowl halftime type song.]

C'mon we're dancin' to America!
America is makin' me a star!
My only talent's knowin' what you really want!
And that's a smilin' face and swingin' rhythmic arms!
We're dancin' to the rhythm of America!
We're sellin' gas and money and a better life!
Your neighbor's gettin' better sex and has a bigger T.V.
But if you swing your arms everything will be all right!
America! America! Come swing your arms! Whooop!

Sometimes late at night, say around 8:30, I get so overcome with joy for my citizenship I don't know whether to sing or watch T.V., sing or clean guns. I love this country so much. Where else on God's green earth can you blow leaves off your lawn instead of rake them? Or pretend like you're making a phone call from your car? Opportunity, I say.
[He is up on his lines.]
O, to be a wart on that hand.
Tis thy dost doth mak'st me
Removéd from thine bosoms.
Lo, ay, prithee, stand to, thou
wrench and woo my pretty. What?
Mute and fudge, too? Take me, anon
thou jerkin with God's eye lash
Harboring below thy apple cherries.

Thank you. Jasten B. Williams. [The audition is over.]
Oh, brother. I went up on the Shakespeare, could you tell?
I think I'd better study at The Studio. I mean, I don't
know if I can be an actor or not. I've never won a gold
medal in the Olympics, or slept with a televangelist,
or anything. So I don't know. If I study at The Studio
for a couple years, learn to smoke, wear black, and claim
to hate all Brat Pack movies, then maybe. [He lies on the
floor and jiggles.] I'm bacon frying. [He activates the
"boom box" and takes a seat in the audience. From the box
we hear: "...and the winner for Best Actor, for 'Fuck The
Dripping Cunt, The Fucking Cunt', Jasten B. Williams."
He squeals and runs on stage.]
Thank you so very much. I'm Jasten B. Williams. Thank you
all. This is so unbelievable. I'd like to congratulate the
other fine, fine nominees. A talented bunch, indeed. We all
know the real honor is being nominated. They are all an
honor to the profession. But...none of them is nearly as
talented as I am. In fact, I would have been mightily
offended if I hadn't won. Let's face it: a talent, no, a
gift like mine only comes along every millennium or so.
And frankly, I'm a little embarrassed for all of you that
you didn't recognize it much earlier. Because of your
short-sightedness, nay, your complete blindness, I have suffered. I have eaten dirt, Alpo, lima beans. And all because you moles have chosen to award the condom-thin talents of my competition. Well, now I'm going to fuck your wife, and your girlfriend, and if I feel like it, your boyfriend. And I'm going to sit at your table at your favorite restaurant, and I'll take the phone calls that you've grown so accustomed to. You know why? Because you're all whores. You're all pud divers. Well, you can just dive on this pud for a while. And while you're down there, you can offer thanks that I allow you to wrap your unworthy hard and soft palates around my...generosity. I'd like to thank my parents, and my sister, Doris, and all the people at The Studio. Thank you again and God bless. Party at the Hard Rock!
I like to shake my head very fast. [SHE DOES.] I don't go outside of the house if it is wet, chilly, gray, noisy, crowded, or if those two dogs are around. Isah tries to put his mouth around my head. Jonah quizzes me about the inside of the house. Lucky, whose human is Dotty from down the road, does not offend me as much. But she is, in the end, a dog. Do you know why we do not like the dogs? It is not because they chase us, for they could never catch us. It is not because they are crude, loud, clumsy and stupid. It is not because they lose all dignity when encountering the humans. It is their breath. Poisonous gas. I have seen it kill plants. Discolor water. Melt glass. I believe that Isah prides himself on it. He eats garbage daily. He'll put anything into the inside of his mouth. They both take a fiendish delight in breathing into the humans' face on a hot summer day. I have suggested that they both chew mint leaves. There is a whole patch of mint leaves on the sunny side of the house. Apparently, it is the only thing they will not put into the inside of their mouths. [SHE JERKS HER HEAD SHARPLY TO THE LEFT] Movement? Dust. Spider? Dust. Spider! [SHE DASHES OFF LEFT AND RETURNS AN INSTANT LATER.] Dust. [SHE BATHES.] Cats are the superior species. Humans exist to serve cats. I have proof. In my third life, my human was Abraham Lincoln. I lived inside the White House. I was opposed to slavery. The rest is history. Humans say, "We can use tools. We can reason." So what? We do not do those things because we do not have to. Humans do them for us. [SHE SPITS UP A HAIRBALL.] Time for my nap.
RUSTY

[ He blows a few notes on the beefhorn. ] Donald Trump has, by conservative estimates, $1.7 billion. I can't even assimilate a figure like that. Well, in my terms, that's a single with lettuce and cheese, a regular fry, and a large Pepsi everyday for the next six and a half million years. The man has all that money and he goes ga-ga over this.

[ He presents a magazine picture of Marla Maples. ] A woman who poses for those "I'm Vanessa, call me for dirty talk" ads. Maybe that's how he met her. He's paying $100 million for this. Can his marriage possibly be that bad?
RUSTY

What have we got here?

ENGINEER

We need a dynamic sound here, Rusty. Dramatic. Something along the lines of the hair clog thing we did a couple of weeks ago. Full Metal Pipes here, Rusty. All right, Chem-Load's Big Once-A-Year Urinal Deodorant Patty Clearance Sale, take one.

RUSTY

[ dynamically ] Attention all merchants! Attention all merchants! Whether you own a mom 'n pop diner or the biggest twelve screen movieplex in town, you can't afford to miss ChemLoad's biggest Once-A-Year Urinal Deodorant Patty Clearance
Attention all merchants! Attention all merchants!

whether you own a mom 'n' pop diner or the biggest

12 screen movieplex in town, you can't afford to miss

Cheyenne's Biggest Once-A-Year Urinal Deodorant Patty Clearance

Sale EVER! Choose from Evergreen, Tulip, Frankincense or

Myrrh! Why run the risk of having your public restroom

offend or discomfit a valued customer...this is ridiculous.

ENGINEER

Rusty, please.

RUSTY

I'm sorry...this is...discomfit?...urinal deodorant patty?

ENGINEER

Again from the top. Number two.

RUSTY

Christ. Attention all merchants! Attention all merchants!

Whether you own...this is shit, I'm sorry, this is shit.

But why not? I mean, you're selling a "shit-smell-disguise-
unit" so why not make the copy sound like shit! You guys are

brilliant.

ENGINEER

Rusty? Rusty, thank you. I have the client, and the copy-
writer, and the copywriter's mother here in the booth with me.

RUSTY

Well, [hand to ear, dynamic voice]. . . This is shit, I'm sorry.

ENGINEER

Rusty, these people won two Golden Microphones last year.

Can we just do it the way it's written? The clock's running.

RUSTY

I would rather take a bite out of a urinal deodorant patty
than read this as it's...

ENGINEER

Rusty? Thank you, Rusty. We've got someone else to do the
spot. And, Rusty, the union will hear about this.
A FABLE

Once upon a time, in the tiny town of Drinkland, there were two young boys: Goofus and Gallant. Every year around this time, the Drinkland Elementary School held its Oral Interpretation Contest. This year the first prize was a Lincoln Continental. Goofus wanted more than anything to win that Lincoln. But poor Goofus was plagued with hyponasality. Gallant, whose father was an F.M. disc jockey, had a beautiful voice.

Now, the day before the contest, shifty Goofus came up with an evil plan. He asked Gallant to come with him down to the shore of Veronica Lake. Goofus said, "Gallant, I was down here earlier today walking my pet fish Buster when he suddenly broke his leash and ran into the water. I tried to call him but my voice just wouldn't carry. I want him back so badly. Would you try calling him for me?"

Well, of course, he didn't have a pet fish named Buster, but the unsuspecting Gallant said, "Sure, Goofus, I'll call your pet fish Buster."

Gallant planted his feet firmly, breathed diaphragmatically, and bellowed, "Buster! Buster!"

"Louder", Goofus said.

"Buster! Buster! Please come home!"

"Louder! Louder!"

"Buster! It's 2:25 in Drinkland, continued cloudiness expecting this afternoon with a high in the low fifties. Won't you please come home?" All of a sudden, Gallant's magnificent voice gave out on him. "Uxfj! Uxfj!"

"Whoopie!", Goofus squeaked, "I'm going to win the
Lincoln!" He skipped triumphantly home.

Gallant was shocked. "I've been tricked", he tried to say. That night, Gallant's father worked and sprayed, sprayed and worked using all the voice remedies he could think of to restore Gallant's melifluous voice.

The next day, all the excited Drinks were gathered at the Drinkland Elementary School for the Oral Interpretation Contest. Goofus finished his recitation of the Gettysburg Address, "Of the people, by the people and for the people.", and strutted confidently back to his seat with an anxious eye on the Lincoln parked outside on the playground. But imagine his surprise when Gallant stepped to the podium and boomed, "To be or not to be..." Needless to say, Gallant won the Lincoln and Goofus' plan had backfired.

The moral of our story is, "You can lead a Drink to water, but you can't make him hoarse."
Try this:
You have 168 hours in your week/life.
You sleep 56 of those away.
7:30-8:00 At least one hour of some blonde morning news.
You manage to exist for the next several hours.
Late afternoon: Women who kill and the men who love them.
5:30-7:00 Fake news.
7:00-9:00 Wheel of Fortune: I could do that. Jeopardy:
I could do that.
8:00-11:00 ALF, Growing Pains, or Wonder Years, Murphy
Brown, because they told us it was funny, Newhart,
Cosby, other reincarnated 60's comedians, Cheers, $0 Minutes
And before you know it, you're watching 50 hours of TV
per week, which means you're watching 20 hours of commercials per week. 20 hours! Out of 168. That's what...
8.4% of your life is spent watching COMMERCIALS!
So, keep a bucket of ping pong balls near the chair in
which you do most of your viewing. Next to that bucket,
keep a brick. Every time something on T.V. disgusts you,
heave a ping pong ball at the screen. It will bounce
harmlessly off the tube, you've vented, and you'll be
working up to the day when you've finally had enough and
you reach down and impulsively grab the brick instead of
a ping pong ball. You'll have to compensate for the added
weight, but, I think you'll find that the brick will
find its mark. Don't be afraid. There will be some sparks,
some poisonous gas, but it will only cost you about $75.00.
If you're T.V. costs more than that, get another T.V.
RUFUS

Fuck that. Fuck me. Fuck you. Take my T.V. What the fuck do I care? Excuse me, you got twenty one cents so that I can get a sandwich? You got a cigarette? You got an attitude? You got my fist up your ass, asshole?

This is for you, Moon. [HE BLOWS INTO THE BEEFHORN.]

   Orb now round, orb now flat
   Orb frown, orb like a hat
   Orb smile, orb wink
   Tomorrow orb, orb sink
   Cool me orb, warm me orb
   Orb else.

What? Oh, fuck you, so I'm no Richard Bach. No McKuen.

   My serenity depends on your serendipity
   My heaviness depends on your lightness
   My happiness depends on your sadness
   My Depends depends on your grocery list.

I'm a Jonathan. No, I'm a Livinston. No, I'm a sea gull.

No, I'm a day job. No, I'm an actress. No, I'm twenty-one cents for a fucking hamburger, asshole!

   There's a big ass ugly buzzard
   Circlin' round my soul tonight.
   If birds had lips he'd be lickin' his
   For he thinks my time is nigh.
   Well, buzz off, you ol' buzzard
   This soul I am to keep.
   There's too much love in that starry sky
   So away you feathered creep.
RUFUS

Fuck! Fuck you, man! Fuck the fuck off, man! Get off my street! Get the fuck off my street! I shoot you, man, I will. Look down yer chin at me, I get my fuckin' AK 97 and blow yer faggot ass into next Wednesday. I will. Been eatin' yer shit for years. I have. Well, I'm comin'. I am. I'm comin' in the night. Kill you in yer fuckin' sleep. Splatter yer frightened guts all over yer Laura fuckin' Ashley boo-dwars.

And they so fuckin' stupid, they don't even see it comin'. Huge wad of shit comin' straight at they faces a hundred miles an hour and they don't even see it. Think they so fuckin' smart. Take away our lives. Think the less we have the weaker we'll be. They take away our homes. They take away our money. They take away our food. Our schools, our families, our drugs, our cars. They take away our hope, our dignity, our refrigerators. And they think that's gonna make us weak? They don't think that eventually we're not gonna get a tad pissed off? That we're not gonna say, "Hey, stop! Put that back?" So fuckin' smart, huh? They stupid. They so fucking stupid, so duck-fucking stupid. They take all those things away from us, and what's the only thing they don't take away? Our fucking guns! Our fucking guns! Explain that one to me. It'd be a lot harder for me to kill you with my refrigerator than with my gun. I can't hurt them with my hope. My happiness is no threat to them. So what's the deal here? Why? Why? Why? All I have left is my gun and my hate. And they gonna be sorry about that.
One moment, young degenerate.

I am They.  

THEY

Kneel. [HE EXTENDS HIS PINKIE] Kiss. Stay kneeling. You've come for your rewards. First off, allow me to point out to you that that was a very half-hearted kiss you just planted on my pinkie. Lesson number one: kiss whatever you are told to kiss and with all your heart. If I present my bum, you kiss my cheek. [HE LAUGHS] I notice you did not laugh at my pun. Lesson number two: always laugh at the jokes of those greater than you. I've read some of your so called poetry. Pathetic. Atrocious. There is not one reference to a currently running primetime television show. Nor is there any thinly-veiled sexual innuendo. A reward, sir? I think an eternity in hell's fire perhaps. Lesson number three: buy a car phone. Sing the national anthem loudly before baseball games, even if you are watching at home. Take extreme interest in the color of your tie. Buy a tie. Model your behavior after the men in AT&T commercials. See all Oscar nominated movies. Read all of Iaccoca. Find ways to fit the phrase, "I don't recall" into your vocabulary. Always play to the lowest common denominator. Sneer when I tell you to. Eat what I put in front of you. Do as I say not as I do. Fag bash. Applaud when those of color reinforce their stereotypes. Thwart upward social moves by those below you unless you can profit by them which is highly unlikely. Give lip service to artists but support only those that draw pictures of cute little girls with big, sad eyes. Continue to find leverage over women. Drive drunk with a red ribbon on your antenna. Lie about the truth.
Validate the lies. Park in the handicap spaces, but only for a few minutes. Give to the charity that will benefit you. Go for it. Look out for number one, for to be number two is to fail.  

Visit your fitness center during peak hours, for if there is no one there it is a tree falling in an empty forest. In fact, make sure all acts of righteousness are witnessed. Demand light rock. Patronize but never patronize the theatre. Network. Give Quayle a chance. Clip "Hi and Lois" cartoons. Complain to your bartender about the scourge of drugs. Add daily to the Reagan shrine in your den. Back off Noriega, he knows more than you think. Work out a cool signature for yourself. Take! Conceal! Pander! Kiss! My! Ass!...and the rewards will come to you. Now, get out of my sight.
You know, some people have gotten the impression that I'm not dedicated to the program here, or that I'm lazy, or that I'm not motivated. Well, I'd like to read you a letter that I received just yesterday.

(He reads) "Dear Mr. Putnam.

As someone who has chosen to pursue a graduate education, you demonstrate a dedication and commitment to your goals not seen in the average student. Discipline and a single-mindedness for success are the characteristics that attract us to students like you. Here at American Express, we believe that kind of determination indicates a strong potential for success. That is why we are offering you this opportunity to apply for the benefits of cardmembership now."

And this is signed by the Vice-President of American Express. So let's just lay to rest all that crap right now.
Suspected missing
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RUSTY

When I realized that "They" were the ones making the rules, "They" were the ones who determined whether I succeeded or failed, the same "They" that said, "Yes, Wink Martindale does have talent", the same "They" that declared that greed was "in", the same "They" that won't take away crazy people's guns, that's when I packed it in and moved down here to the K.O.A. I admit it. "They" got me. I give. Uncle. Down here, my poetry is genius. Down here, nobody expects anything from me, I expect nothing from anyone. Down here.... Where are you? Where are you? I know you're out there. I can feel you movin'. I've known you my whole life, I just haven't met you yet. Please come here. Please don't make me leave this place. You're going to make me leave this place, aren't you? I must leave this place.

You've got two clear, blue eyes that I just float into. Visit. Take in your mind. Camp for a while. Lips and cheeks created by Disney. Hair that invites nestling. Demands it. And your body. (He indicates the space between her breasts) May I build a summer home right here? Would you like to tell me a joke? Would you like me to sing Misty for you? Would you let me stare at you for the next three hours? Would you let me make your toast for the rest of your life? Would you like to go with me to a utopia visited only by Zen buddhists and D.H. Lawrence? Would you like twenty-two empty twelve packs of beer?
RUSTY

Somewhere on the Moon there is an oasis. There must be. And I'm saving my pennies for a one-way ticket. You can have my frequent flyer miles. There will be other people up there. I don't mind that. We'll stay out of each other's way. The only time we'll get together is to view the nuclear destruction of the earth.

Hi. How have you been? It's great up here, isn't it? My name is Rusty. I've got some cheese puffs and a few warm beers. Help yourself. This should be really something, don't you think? Hi, how are you? Rusty. Pull up a chair. It should be starting any minute now. Look at that, how nice, we've got the Western Hemisphere. Here we go: Whoa! What was that, New York? By the way, whatever we do, we do not let Donald Trump onto this moon, is that clear? You know he's on his way. Casino blueprints in his pocket, his wife, Charo at his side. Oooo, Texas? Bit of a dud, wasn't it? A whimper. I would have thought a bang. Washington? Where do you suppose President Eastwood is right now? Oh man! Was that L.A. or was that brown cloud always there? Wait a minute, if that was L.A. that probably means that Kirk Cameron is dead. The waste, the waste. Oh my, that was beautiful! What? That was just the nightly fireworks at DisneyWorld? They'll still open when this is all over, don't you think? Oh now, why would either one of them want to hit Anartica? What was that, the middle of the Atlantic? $500 million down the drain. Detroit. Another $500 million down the drain. Pass the corn puffs please.
I don't see S.D.I. working, do you? What caused all this, anyway? The drug cartel got pissed? Kaddafi had a hangnail? HitlerIII? Michael Millken said, "I can take it with me"? Some Communist poisoned Michael Jackson's llama? Gorbachav decided,"Now everyone will have a birthmark."? Cleveland got the bomb and said, "Enough with the jokes!"? Merv Griffin said,"If Wheel Of Fortune is cancelled, we're all cancelled."? Nancy Reagan's astrologer said, "It's time."? Oh dear, that must have been Columbus. Gonna hurt our chances for a major league franchise. Is it possible that, eventually, that burnt piece of charcoal could lose its gravitational pull and we'll begin to coast through the solar system and beyond? Buckle up! Into the sun? Toward Saturn? Cast your fate to the solar winds! Could I have one of those Slim Jims?


Kim, warning, light cue for the Big Finish And Jasten B. Williams.
Kim, standby, light cue. Big Finish.
Adios, Earth. I wish I could say you didn't deserve it.
Big Finish, Go.

[BLACKOUT]
RUSTY

He works as a radio voice-over artist in a medium sized market. He manages to scrape together a living doing it, but he is not satisfied with the work. He finds it very uncreative and unchallenging. His ambition has waned. Alcohol addiction has been a major cause of this. It has also been a factor in the decline in the number of commercial bookings he receives.

He is troubled by Reagan's America. He sees greed, hubris, excessive financial success, bigotry, discrimination, and inequity in the way life's rewards are doled out. He feels defeated.

In a fit of social alienation, he abandons his career and moves to a campground. He drinks to excess and daydreams about a life he will probably never live. He is frustrated and bitter.

He wants love, companionship, escape, relief, respect, and social and financial equality. He also wants artistic inspiration.

His obstacles are mostly internal: Alcoholism, ennui, bitterness, cynicism, and defeatism.

JASTEN B. WILLIAMS

He was born in Flint, Michigan. He has always wanted
to be in show business but has never taken the time to
develop any real skills. He sang and danced well enough
to get a job with Up With Matching Sweaters. He is rather
prudish and is working to overcome it. He has a very
unrealistic idea about what it takes to make it in the
entertainment industry. He is optimistic, patriotic, moral,
honest and naive. He was an enthusiastic Boy Scout until
it conflicted with his tap dancing lessons. He worries
about what success will do to him morally. He is satisfied
with his looks, except for his teeth. He is saving up two
thousand dollars to get them all replaced.

He wants to be a famous and rich actor. He wants
artistic respect. He wants to put together a dynamite
audition package. He wants to win an award.

The fact that he has very little talent stands in
his way. Deep down he doubts his abilities.

PRINCESS

She is a cat. She is selfish and expects to be
pampered. She is easily annoyed. She is motivated by
hunger, discomfort, and of course, curiosity. She exerts
herself only when necessary; to chase a dustball, to eat,
to eliminate discomforts. She has no concept of a god except
perhaps herself. She is very agile but rarely demonstrates
it. Her internal rhythm is very slow but can intensify
in an instant. She sleeps sixteen hours a day.

Her domain is inside the house. The couch, the heating
duct and the top of the television are her prime spots.
She rarely goes outside of the house. The dogs annoy her. Her possessions are a cat nip mouse, a few twist-ties off of bread bags and an old throw pillow.

She wants to dominate her domain. She wants to impress her audience. She wants cleanliness, comfort, order and quiet. Dogs, humans and other inferior species stand in her way.

**RUFUS**

He is homeless, or rather, the street is his home. He distrusts shelters, so he usually sleeps against the back door of a church. This does not mean that he is religious. He lost his home and his property one year ago. Eighteen months ago, he was laid off from his job as a flux bed dipper. He has no other marketable skills. He almost graduated from high school. He writes poetry.

He was patriotic, fairly honest and unselfish until he lost his way of life. Now, he despises the government, steals when he can, and lives for himself. A dormant violent streak in him has surfaced in the last year. He would probably use a gun if he still had one. He doesn't drink but does do drugs when he can get his hands on them. His environment is dirty, loud and dangerous and so is he. He was beaten up six months ago and still limps from a bruised hip.

He wants revenge, justice, cigarettes, money, food, drugs, and someone to talk to. However, he is rude, loud, at times incoherent, and he frightens people.
Rehearsal Log

Tuesday March 6, 1990  8:00PM  Room 107

I performed four of the pieces out loud for the first time tonight:

The Rufus monologue, which is from the original script, sounded good. It has force, a nice rhythm, and it's a nice contrast to most of the other pieces. It is my favorite monologue from the original script. For some reason, it keeps coming out in a New York dialect when what I really want is a generic Mountain American sound. It will be fixed. I decided this will be the only piece in which I will play the beefhorn.

The Marriage Merchant is going to be cut. It's too long, too bitter, not funny, and it brings the show to a halt. It's a one-joke bit and becomes tiresome after about fifteen seconds. I thought about trimming it but decided the show has plenty of material without it. Maybe someday.... My lighting designer, LJ Houdyshell has already designed a nice cue for it but I'm going to cut it anyway.

They works best when I don't move. I will remain seated with legs crossed throughout. Keeping a clear focus on the person being addressed is important. Be careful not to play "to be despicable". This piece needs to be memorized.

Jasten B. Williams is probably my best piece. I love the character. I've found a very nice physicalization for him. I've got to be careful not to send it up. Play him honestly. I'm trying to incorporate as many of Rex McGraw's audition
"don'ts" into the piece as I can. It should be a big hit with the theatre folks in the audience.

The "wax paper over the end of the empty can cheap theatrical" sounds a lot like a voice coming over a speaker. I hope it works in Stadium.

Wednesday March 7, 1990 9:00PM  Stadium II Theatre

In attendance tonight were Marc Powers, Rex McGraw, Megan Freeman, her mother Kathie, and LJ Houdyshell. I have received many very valuable notes. Half of the material performed tonight was done so for the first time. The opening, all of the transitions, the Fable, Princess, and Moon all had their Christening tonight.

As usual, I have to keep my projection up and my eyes off the floor.

I mustn't apologize for the lameness of the Fable. It's meant to be lame. Punch it up. Don't rush the moral. Along that line, I mustn't throw away my tag lines. I think it has something to do with a lack of confidence in some of the material.

Rex and Marc both suggested I find a place late in the piece to come back to "Jon". It's a great idea and I think the "American Express Form Letter" will serve nicely.

I must clean up the transitions between pieces. Don't rush things! It's funny. Have confidence in the text. Give the audience time to come with me. Don't unconsciously apologize.
In the transitions between pieces, take the time to find the heartbeat of the next character; especially Princess and They.

The Moon monologue is a mess. It's a compilation of three different monologues and I haven't taken the time to finalize it. It's a priority before tomorrow night.

I feel much better about the show after having a small audience. Marc and Rex assured me that it is legitimate. Trust it. With a few adjustments in blocking, commitment to objectives, and some slight editing, I feel ready to open tomorrow night.
Post Performance Evaluation

The quality of the performance and the positive audience response to K.O.A./D.O.A. exceeded my expectations. I knew going into performance that the piece was under-rehearsed. In the end, that may have helped the feeling of spontaneity in the performance. Although both performances were very similar, many people told me that they thought I was improvising much of the show. I take that as a compliment.

I thought I did a good job of incorporating the notes I received in rehearsal. It was very valuable to have other eyes and ears. I was very pleased with the response to the comedy. I wasn't even sure it was comedy until I got it in front of an audience. The audience response from the larger, second night crowd was thrilling. Despite the fact that it was a "friendly" audience, my confidence in my writing has increased.

Using myself as the "host" for the show really helped. It put the audience at ease and gave the show the casual feel that I was after. My unthreatening persona balanced some of the nastiness of some of the pieces. I wanted very much to avoid creating the impression that my show was a serious recital, an exercise in academic theatre. I think my seemingly improvised introduction and transitions helped to that end.
After the first performance, I edited two short pieces (the Trump and ping pong ball pieces). I think I over reacted. I cut them because I thought they were dead spots in the show. I believe now that I was wrong.

I was not happy with my final monologue in either performance. I was very tentative in my attack and shied away from the vulnerability of his appeal to his imaginary lover. In the future, I will be brave in my approach to that moment.

I look forward to editing and polishing K.O.A./ D.O.A. The format lends itself to tinkering and substituting. I would like to keep it politically current. As I write new pieces I will plug them into the show. It is possible that the show could be different every time I perform it.
The One-Person Show:
A Comparison Of The Predominant Forms;
and The Evolution Of K.O.A./D.O.A.

This paper is presented in two parts. The first will recount the process I went through while conceiving and re-writing K.O.A./D.O.A. The second will compare and contrast five styles of one-person shows, or, monodramas.

My play incorporates several of the styles which will be discussed. It was conceived as a one-person murder mystery. I have long been a fan of mysteries and considered it a challenge to create one for the stage. With the use of lighting, sound effects, music and quick changes, I envisioned a scary, funny theatrical piece with a truly surprising ending. I also wanted to create a genuinely frightening moment live on stage.

In May 1989, I began writing a mystery that took place in a campground. A campground setting would facilitate the use of several characters of various backgrounds who did not know each other. I also wanted a dimly lit stage, a creepy, "haunted forest" feeling, and a location for the protagonist's "escape from society" which I also envisioned as part of the plot.

The protagonist was a character named Corky, who later became Rusty. He was a disenchanted voice-over artist who was distressed by the banality of his life's work: recording radio commercials. He was also addicted to alcohol.
After a string of unprofessional recording sessions, he finally decides to escape to a campground in an unspecified location.

Once at the campground, he encounters Rufus, Israel and Gabby. Rufus is a violent, gun-loving, angry young fellow who has a powerful complaint against "They". "They" are responsible for repossessing most of his belongings and disrupting his lifestyle. He takes it personally. The character of Rufus survives the subsequent re-writings and appears in the final version of the play. The character of They also appears in the final version.

Israel was Rufus' father. He was a gentle artist of minimal talent, but much pride in his work. He regretted the way Rufus turned out and feared his temper. Some of his ideas, but not his character, appear in the final draft. The original story involved a battle for Corky's soul between the "good" Israel and the "bad" Rufus.

Gabby, Israel's daughter, was an unseen character and love interest of Corky. I discussed with my advisors the idea of appearing as Gabby, but rejected it. I could not imagine how the characterization could be taken seriously. There was much I liked about Gabby and Corky's relationship and I may yet restore it to the play.

Rufus became the obstacle to Gabby and Corky's relationship. Due to the fact that Gabby was an unseen character, that relationship was never adequately developed. Hence, the
climax was neither convincing nor motivated. Also, the
distinction between the protagonist and the antagonist
became fuzzy. The more I tinkered with it, the more Rufus
became the protagonist, which left Corky out in the cold.
I realized I did not know whose story I was telling. This
would become the major reason for the restructuring of
the play.

The "frightening" climax went through three changes.
In the first version, Corky kills Gabby, Rufus kills Israel,
and Corky kills Rufus. It is then revealed that all of the
characters were Corky and he was ridding himself of his
"demons".

The second version had Rufus killing everyone and,
as the symbol of addiction and despair, being the sole
survivor of Corky's psychological purge. I found this ending
to be the most disturbing and the most satisfying. However,
I could not bring the story to a logical climax.

The third version found Rufus on the verge of killing
Corky and Gabby but then being symbolically killed by Israel.
The good, artistic personality triumphs and Corky leaves the
campground exorcised.

By this time, it was clear that what I had on my hands
was a mud pie of dubious plot, fuzzy intentions, and with
no protagonist. Reluctantly, the murder mystery was
abandoned.

At this point, Corky became Rusty, but changed in name
only. Rufus remained intact. Israel was eliminated. Jasten B. Williams became a camper in a neighboring site. The story became the embittered vision of America as seen through the eyes of a man, Rusty, who felt betrayed by the post-Reagan society. Gabby becomes the woman who would eventually soften this misanthrope.

A major problem still existed. The protagonist was such an unlikeable character, I could not anyone caring whether he was redeemed or not. I did not care whether he was redeemed or not. I had become so concerned about making my script a properly constructed play that I had lost sight of any sense of entertainment. With three weeks to go before performance, it was suggested to me that I eliminate the plot, replace the protagonist with myself as a character, and make the show an evening of my writings. Eureka!

In the next two weeks, I added "Wasp Cuisine" (a monologue I had written in 1985), "Princess" (from my play Dogs Do), "The Fable" (1976), "They", "Trump", "Try This", and "American Express". The "Marriage Merchant" was added and then subsequently cut. "Moon" was pieced together from previous drafts. "Jasten B. Williams", "Rufus", and the voice-over pieces survived intact.

I cut all costume changes and sound cues. The set was reduced to a chair and a box of props. K.O.A./D.O.A. finally had a voice, my voice, and it became an entertaining, flexible, spontaneous evening of monologues and cheap theatrics.
While preparing my play, I studied several other one-person shows and found that they can be separated into five distinct styles. I have chosen the following plays to represent each style: Swimming To Cambodia by Spaulding Gray, The Search For Signs Of Intelligent Life In The Universe by Jane Wagner, Shirley Valentine by Willy Russell, The Belle Of Amherst by William Luce, and Drinking In America by Eric Bogosian. However, my analysis will not be limited to those five plays.

The style of Spaulding Gray consists of a narrative, storytelling format. The story is primarily told from the past tense. It is a mixture of fact and fiction blended to create an autobiographical feeling.

Gray uses the recounting of a specific story as a base from which to depart on thematic, political, or philosophical diversions. In Swimming To Cambodia, the story is his embellished memory of his participation in the film, The Killing Fields. From that premise, he manages to discuss oppression, morality, and genocide.

In his early pieces, his set consisted of a wooden desk and a chair behind it. As he sits behind the desk and lays out his story, it is as if he is a reporter delivering the evening news. Gray himself has referred to his role as that of a "poetic reporter". In his most recent pieces, he has abandoned the desk and chair in favor of an empty stage. He feels he now has the confidence to face his audience without hiding behind a set.
Gray has said he sees no problem with his working in the past tense. He questions whether his pieces are "theatrical", and therefore does not feel bound to tell his stories in the present tense. He claims that Gray, the storyteller, is in the "present tense", alive on stage, which makes the story "of the moment". For monologuists who feel restricted by the belief that dramatic literature must be in the present tense, this comes as a great liberation.

In *K.O.A./D.O.A.*, the monologue "Wasp Cuisine" comes closest to the Gray style. The story is in the past tense, it is a memory, and it is embellished. Without the requirement of using more than one character to restrict me, I would like to develop an entire show in that style. "Wasp Cuisine" served to introduce myself as the host for the evening and I returned to that character several times during the show for the transitions.

Lily Tomlin's most recent one-person show, *The Search...*, is an example of one actor playing multiple roles weaved into a divergent storyline. The characters recur, they are affected by each other, and they are all contributing to the conveyance of a common theme and story. Lily herself appears near the beginning of the show to welcome the audience.

Music and sound and lighting effects are heavily relied on to create the world of the play. Although most of them are not essential to the telling of the story,
they are a delightful touch. For example, when Agnus Angst, the rebellious teenager, is donning a leather jacket, we hear zippers being zipped. With effects such as that, costume pieces are not necessary.

As I stated earlier, it was my intention to create a multi-character, one plot theatrical piece. I wanted to use not only musical transitions and realistic sound effects, but also stylized sound punctuations for certain moments. As originally conceived, my show would have utilized complete costume changes for each character. As an actor, and not just a storyteller, I believe that someday I will be able to create a respectable play in this style.

The Search... is, of course, a collaboration. It was written by Jane Wagner. It is nearly impossible to imagine a credible performance of the play without Lily Tomlin. On the other hand, Shirley Valentine is a collaboration which has survived with several different actresses in the only role. Written by Willy Russell, this play also involves a search; a woman's search for an identity independent of her husband. Other characters are referred to but only Shirley appears on stage.

The play calls for two realistic sets. The dialogue and the acting style could also be considered realistic. Shirley Valentine is more a play with one character than it is a one-person show; the distinction being one character moving through one plot in the present tense as opposed to one actor moving through several characters.
Sex, Drugs, And Rock N' Roll. His plays are typified by a series of monologues satirizing pop culture in America. His characters range from drug addicts to insurance salesmen and tend to be hip, urban, ethnic and deranged. He uses a wide array of dialects and physicalizations. If Bogosian wrote jokes, his act would be well-suited to a stand-up comedy routine. However, his material is character oriented, theatrical and, in some cases, experimental. Therefore, he believes his shows belong in theatres and not comedy clubs.5

Bogosian's shows feature monologues loosely linked to a very broad theme. His titles are nebulous enough to include just about any topic. (His recent attempt at plot, Talk Radio, was anxiously awaited but tepidly received.) His characters are strongly influenced by the actor-writer's energetic personality and Greenwich Village background. Thus, despite the rainbow of dialects, his characters, at their core, appear to be very similar. Their differences are mostly exterior.

The beauty of the one-person show is the many forms it can take. In addition to the five presented here, one could also include stand-up comedians, Ian McKellan and his evening of Shakespeare, Marcel Marceau, and new vaudevillians Avner the Eccentric and Bill Irwin. K.O.A./D.O.A. was influenced but some, if not all of them, and
perhaps, as a result of that melting pot, I may someday
stumble upon my own style which might be analyzed in
future papers of this nature.
Endnotes


2 Spaulding Gray. Workshop: *The One-Person Show.* The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. February 23, 1990.

3 Ibid.


Bibliography


Gray, Spaulding. Workshop: *The One-Person Show*. The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio February 23, 1990.


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K.O.A./D.O.A.

written and performed by Jonathan Putnam

In partial fulfillment of the requirements zzzzzzzzzzzz

The Lighting Designer
LJ Houdyshell

The Stage Manager
Kim Ryan

The Thanks

Many of them to: my committee: Marc, Rex, Alan and Ikra; my mates: Monique, Kristin and Charles; Mark, Barry, Cindy, LJ, Kim, Ellen, and Bo.

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A thousand and seven of them to Megan.

The Quote

"Having rejected grandiose ambitions at thirty-three, I saw myself narrowly as a man with one suit of clothes, two thousand dollars life insurance, and four hundred bucks in his pocket, as one who had to go away from this place, this room, and find a way to live in the world. The thought of leaving disturbed me greatly."

-from A Fan's Notes
by Frederick Exley

The End