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## Almost Mirror Image: Exploring The Similarities And Dissimilarities Of Identical Twins In Theatrical Solo Performance

Elizabeth Mignacca  
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ALMOST MIRROR IMAGE: EXPLORING THE SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES  
OF IDENTICAL TWINS IN THEATRICAL SOLO PERFORMANCE

by  
LIZ MIGNACCA  
B.A. University of Florida, 2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2015

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## ABSTRACT

*Almost Mirror Image: Exploring the Similarities and Dissimilarities of Identical Twins in Theatrical Solo Performance* Is an exploration of the psyche of identical twins within the context of devised solo performance. The author, an identical twin herself, has long been interested in twins' ability to cultivate both highly independent personalities as well as intensely co-dependent tendencies during development. What can twins tell us about the way we create close relationships and how is their upbringing radically different from the majority of the world that is born alone? Equally intrigued by society's growing technological dependence, the author would like to delve into how the science and development of twins appears counterintuitive to the intra-personal technological world they grow up in by using personal, autobiographic solo performance as her research platform.

The data collected from research sources such as Jo Bonney's *Extreme Exposure* and Michael Kearns' *The Solo Performer's Journey*, will provide fodder for the thesis document and the author's devised solo piece, entitled *Teach me how to be Lonely*. While devising her own solo performance, the author will compare and contrast her process with that of a few select solo performers such as Anna Deavere Smith and Rachel Rosenthal. The author will delve into various styles of solo work creation, including the testimony plays of Smith and the autobiographical style of Rosenthal, in order to view her own work with a self-reflective and identity-driven lens.

Overall, the author hopes to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of her own experience as an identical twin through the facilitation of her solo work as well as explore how

the creation of solo performance can offer artists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century more freedom of expression and identity than the performance of a standard play.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you Be Boyd for all of your guidance for the past few months. Writing and performing my own solo show was a daunting task, but, more than anything else, it was an extremely rewarding task. All of your notes helped me construct a well written show and perform an even better version of what was written.

Thank you Kate Ingram and Holly McDonald for the hours you spent watching my work. Your detailed comments made me focus on how to color every character I created with specific physicality and vocal qualities. If it weren't for my wonderful thesis chair and committee, I would have not been able to put up my show for an audience of my peers. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to workshop my solo piece with you guys; to have the chance to perform my own work for professors and colleagues I admire was the greatest gift I could have been given this year.

Thank you to my family, my fantastic husband, and my stage manager Catherine Klemke, for their endless help with the technical portion of my show. Donnell Johnson, my husband, has supported me in several ways and the strength he has given me has allowed me to continue working towards my Master's degree.

Finally, this thesis, including my solo show itself, is dedicated to my sister, Caroline Mignacca. She is my other half in every sense of the word. As my identical twin, Caroline has lived all the memories in my show with me, and to have been able to perform it with her watching in the audience was the most intimate experience for me as an actor and as a human being. To bare my soul for someone I care so much about, is indescribable, utterly terrifying, and

extremely gratifying all at once. Thank you Caroline for the compassion, strength, and unconditional love you give me. This is for you.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATING VARIETY

### Introduction

Those who perform solo shows must tell a story that takes their audience on a journey, engaging them at every point, usually with nothing more than words creatively fashioned by the artist producing the material. Enchanting performers with its characteristic intimacy and powerful platform, solo performance asks each actor who takes on its challenge for endless energy and a driving devotion to their story, and it is no wonder, with so many stories to tell, that solo work appears in a myriad of forms. From impersonations to recitals, anthologies to adaptations, and autobiographical monologues to pure narrative fiction, solo work exists in all these mediums and as, Jordan Young, the author of *The Art of Acting Solo*, states, some solo work even defines being “conveniently labeled;...[they] defy easy categorization or description due to the very nature of theatre” (23). By attempting a solo piece, the artist is seeking to convey a message about someone, perhaps themselves or someone else, to the largest confidante of their life- their audience. The artist is choosing to reveal publicly, that which otherwise would remain private, and their vehicle or lens in which they choose to view and display their work is as varied as the material of the work itself.

What allows solo work to evolve from light entertainment to a full play, complete with plot, conflict, and characters in which we become invested in? In my opinion, it is the way the solo work is packaged. Not every solo piece is a success, and everyone measures their monodramas’ victories in various ways. If the artist has a defined lens in which they want to approach their story and if they can communicate their characters’ idiosyncrasies with refined

specificity, I feel as if they are on their way to total audience engagement. Beginning with a story, whether their own personal narrative or someone else's journey, the actor must find their own identity within the work in order for it to ring true rather than be read as artifice and they must be able to deliver that identity in the sharing of their words. For me, the story I wanted to share was given to me from the moment I was conceived.

Life is full of variety when we look around us and that variety serves to make things interesting, exciting, bold, and new. Could you imagine waking up and eating breakfast in a room full of people who look exactly like you, and what's more, who are eating the same thing as you the same exact way as you do? Or how about going to work a day in the office only to see that your co-workers are carbon copies of yourself, typing away like you do while humming your favorite tune? To the average person, this might sound like a great pitch for a science fiction novel, but to me, this sounds pretty normal. But then again, I'm an identical twin, a fact that most people cannot brag about. I had to learn that the world was made up of a lot more variety than similarity, the latter being a concept in which I was way more familiar with since birth. In order to investigate the journey my "identical twin" similarities and dissimilarities has taken me on, I decided to construct a solo piece that would delve into the heart of my twinship.

### On Being a Twin

What exactly are twins anyway? Many people know that if somebody usually looks like the person next to them, they could be their twin. But, surprisingly, that's not always the case with twins. Twins can look extremely alike and they can also look as far apart as me and you. There are two main types of twins: identical and fraternal. Most people recognize identical twins as the main group only because they are much easier to pick out as twins in a crowd to the naked

eye, but they are much less frequently occurring than fraternal twins. I have been friends with fraternal twins in my life, but have never managed to meet and befriend other identical twins. So my knowledge of being an identical twin stands singularly upon my personal experiences and what I have absorbed from books, but from what I glean through my fraternal twin buddies, though they have “twin stories” as well, their experiences of being a twin have been quite different than mine.

I have always been a sleuth at heart. Naturally drawn to life’s many mysteries and the causes of curiously unexpected events, I was intrigued when I read that “No one knows what causes a fertilized egg (or zygote) to split within the first two weeks after conception” in Nancy Segal’s book *Indivisible by Two* (2). What’s more is that this *inexplicable* event is actually something that happens *regularly*: 1 out of every 250 births. It has a statistic to let us know when it could happen, yet no one can explain *why* it does! To me, and apparently to the director of the Twin Studies Center at California State University, Nancy Segal, this phenomena is mind boggling and completely riveting. With as many questions that surround the event of “twinning” (the term coined by the scientific world for the event of twins), it is no wonder that people can devote their entire life to studying twins. It doesn’t surprise me that Nancy is a twin herself (fraternal) as well as a distinguished professor in humanities and social sciences, a field that I would presume would go hand in hand with studying twins. To be armed with the knowledge that you are one of a few sets of people that occur in some of the most mysterious sets of circumstances, is thrilling and makes me want to study twins relentlessly through my own work.

Unlike identical twins who share one hundred percent of their genes with each other and are perfect genetic matches for one another, fraternal twins share only half of their genes. On average they share the same amount of genes that ordinary brothers and sisters share (Segal,

*Indivisible by Two* 2). “Fraternal twins result when a woman simultaneously releases two eggs that are both fertilized” rather than one egg simply splitting as it does with identical twins (Segal, *Indivisible by Two* 2). Even though the word “fraternal” indicates male (even scientific terms have not shed their patriarchal heritage yet), fraternal twins could be male/male, female/female, or even male/female. Nancy Segal even writes that it is even possible for “fraternal twins to have the same mothers but different fathers...if the woman releasing the two eggs has had intercourse with different men in a short space of time” (*Indivisible by Two* 2).

The bond that twins have is unmatched in my humble opinion. I have yet to experience a relationship that can touch the one I have with my sister- even the one I have with my husband is different. It is not to say my husband and I do not share a close bond, but there truly is nothing more intimate than sharing a womb with someone. To develop life, take your first breath, feel your first heartbeat, say your first word, tell your first lie, share your first secret with someone...these are powerful experiences; experiences that can truly separate you into your own class of relationship entirely. “Twins are born into this intimate relationship” from day one and “most people [either] envy it”, or are simply intimidated by the intensely close bond (Segal, *Indivisible by Two* 3). My life has been no exception to Segal’s keen analysis, and people, whether familiar or stranger, have been fascinated with the idea of me being a twin, especially when my sister and I are in close proximity. The simple fact that we were born to appear so similar dazzles the onlooker and always has them revealing to me that they, too, wish they had a twin- someone with whom they could travel through life, sharing each other’s most private thoughts. The very idea of “matching bodies” and “matching minds” both fascinates and terrifies people because of how much it defies the science of variation and individuality- no two snowflakes alike. Identical twins clearly break that rule.

Despite the many similarities twins share, especially identical twins, they are not exact duplicates of each other. The idea that two people who, despite sharing one hundred percent of their genes, begin to develop dissimilar likes and personality traits like everyone else enthralled researchers. In 1875, twin studies became more popular, and researchers reasoned that if “identical twins show greater resemblance in verbal reasoning, heart rate, or running speed than pairs of fraternal twins, then genes probably influence those traits” (Segal, *Indivisible by Two* 2). This prospect excited those studying twins because it gave almost irrefutable evidence that genes play more of a factor in our behaviors than environment. Clearly environment does play *a factor*, but there are so many cases of twins reared apart that meet each other later in life only to discover how similar they are despite being apart for years and unaware of the other’s existence! The first recorded case of twins separated at birth in the United States did not appear until 1922, when Paul Popenoe uncovered the story of identical twins Bessie & Jessie. Upon meeting each other, these two girls realized many personality traits and skills they shared, one of them being their love for avid reading, and they became inseparable despite the years spent apart, unaware the other existed (Segal, *Indivisible by Two* 7). The amount of information twins can tell us about human behavior is limitless. The various studies done on twins separated at birth along with twins who have grown up by each other’s side from birth, have yielded facts about the way we form relationships and how our genes play an undeniable part in those unions. Intriguingly enough, these similarities do not define everything that a twin is or will be, and often times it is the small differences in personality, health, or skill set in a twin that can divulge critical information on how genes play a role in the cultivation of our identities.

Though my twin sister, Caroline, and I are identical- we are different people. The dissimilarities cannot be denied, such as our little health hiccups with me being more prone to

psoriasis (taking after my dad) and my sister being prone to more steady weight gain (taking after my mom); or even Caroline's disposition to being lactose intolerant, whereas I could eat ice cream all day and not feel a thing. In similar stead, our personalities have unique facets to them as well, though I would categorize them as various branches grown from the same foundational tree. Though we are caring, compassionate, good listeners, and highly entrepreneurial, Caroline solves problems emotionally whereas I tend to be an extremely rational thinker. This usually makes her hard to deal with when upset because she feels things intensely, and I am so stubborn about my reasons that arguments can usually last for hours. At the end of the day though, we are always best friends again. This bond is something that has gotten me through life and has shaped my decisions in it- with or without her help.

The strong bond we have is something that is comforting and familiar to me therefore it is extremely difficult for me to separate from the idea of being a person with duality- or a twin. It was and is so infatuating to cultivate my identity based around being a twin, because that's how I grew up. I would always introduce myself with Caroline (my sister) as identical twins and that was the first thing anyone ever knew about me; it *was* who I was. So to grow up having to accept my individuality and even come to *love* my individuality was something that was craved for unconsciously, but embraced reticently. I didn't quite know how to navigate things like making friends or even making decisions without her near me, and the idea of accomplishing those feats without her by my side made me feel powerful, but disloyal. I always asked her opinion and advice for everything before I did it...but now I didn't have to. Having an automatic best friend around me is something I would never give up for the world; it made all those tough times during adolescence much more bearable and all of the wonderful times of becoming a young adult even more beautiful because I had my trustee confidant to partake in those events with me. Having a

twin is like being married the day you are born and knowing it is for life; a relationship in which you often times don't need to say a word to the other person in order to communicate how you are feeling. To think that people view being a twin, something so normal to me, as something wondrous and rare, continuously astounds me. Strangers endlessly covet twins and random people are awed-by the concept even though they don't know you from their neighbor across the street. The addiction to that slight feeling of fame and attraction never really goes away, but it also makes me wary, especially knowing that there are people who, at one point, studied twins in a torturous fashion at Auschwitz because of their anomalous existence. But I cannot fault scientists for taking an interest in researching doppelgangers, especially when being a twin interests *me* so greatly!

### On Being a Theatrical Performer

Caroline and I both journeyed into the arts together. We took piano, guitar, vocal lessons, and even began acting in shows together and absolutely loved it! Being each other's study buddies, we were also high achievers academically, constantly challenging each other to do better than the other simply because we could; we always wanted to outdo the other, in *every* subject. Being a twin made us lovers of learning, constantly curious about life, and always hungry to experience everything life had to offer. Naturally, this curiosity and hunger especially developed in high school and college with the element of puberty and boys. As we matured, our likes developed into something more refined as we held up our personalities next to the men we liked (or didn't like). Most times, if she liked somebody I was not particularly interested in, that told me more about myself than I originally realized. Choosing our specific and diverse fields of study also made me realize a lot about my own character. Though I loved math and science, I started recognizing a certain drive when I was doing something artistic that I didn't necessarily

receive when studying for a chemistry test. Thus, my sister went further into medicine while I veered off to do more theatre. Though one may argue rational thinking would point me towards the medical path because of financial reasons, I have never been without my rational thought even through my more passionate choices in life, such as sticking with theatre.

I have always loved teaching and, only later in life, realized I also love working independently, both which can easily be explained by my childhood as a twin. As each other's mentors and tutors (though we were unaware of that title), my sister and I taught each other things the other could not grasp. We were each other's life coaches and permanent Socrates. I grew up knowing how to approach a difficult situation and explain it five different ways so my sister could understand it along with me. I also learned when I was being condescending or vague in my teaching style, because she would bluntly tell me. This really shaped my edification route as well as love and knack for teaching. Similarly, I grew up with the expectation of having a learning partner who was on the same level as me, just like my sister was, and was chronically disappointed when that was not the case. My sister and I work at such a high level of competency, because we pushed each other to be that way, that when I am working with someone not on my level of intensity, I tend to accomplish the work much better on my own. I take leadership really easily and usually do not mind taking control of the helm because of my Type A need to get the task done efficiently and effectively. It certainly can be read as a bossy and overwhelming personality, and I am completely aware of that, but it is who I am and trying to tame that trait is not always a successful feat. That is why when I discovered theatrical solo work, I instantly took to it!

Here was an opportunity for me to explore the aspects of theatre I wanted to explore, to produce work that I had written, and to be the master of my own piece. My introduction into solo

work in graduate school came as a fluke, because I had never really thought of challenging myself to do something like solo work before. My classmates were interested, and thus, we ended up having an entire course on the idea and creation of solo work for a semester. It was *life changing*. I discovered that I had a voice! To ascertain that I had so much to say, and had so many ways to say it was beyond exciting that I can barely put it into words now. I was *enamored* with the idea of being able to tell *my* stories to other people in *my* very own way, unfettered by having to pass my words through a series of channels of approval first. I could tell stories that no one else would even *think* of sharing because they did not know how to tell them! In a world where originality is hard to cultivate, here is a medium in which thrives. Solo theatrical work was the muse for the artist in me, and suddenly I craved writing. After I wrote a show that integrated technology into my work and shared what it was like to become a first-time bride with my audience, I knew I wanted to do this type of work for my graduate thesis.

A challenge arises from the very core of solo work, daring the artist who embarks on telling a story of their own to ask difficult questions and portray themes that can have their audience questioning what humanity means and what their place is in various social scenes. Uta Hagen states that we, as actors, rebel in our own way by “holding a mirror up to society” and she tasks artists with the goal of using the conditions of theatre to make a statement about the time and place in which we live. By creating this intimate one-on-one relationship with the audience and the performer of the solo work, I feel the actor performing their work can readily attain the goal of speaking genuinely and directly to the audience in an impactful manner, and hopefully in a way that will get their audience buzzing about the types of relationships they witnessed on stage. Louis E. Catron calls the power of the solitary performer “*the power of one*” in his novel of the same name (1). Catron states that “solo performances are often labors of love, stimulated

by a hunger to use talents for which there are few outlets” and even goes on to mention the benefits of writing solo shows, saying that:

[writing] makes them better actors because it improves their understanding of theatre as a story-telling art, and creating solo pieces designed for themselves to play forces them to evaluate their performance strengths and weaknesses. (4-5)

I have no doubt that Catron would agree with me when I say that solo work represents one of the many options performers can explore, and, without a doubt, enhances theatre’s power to express the sense of what it is to be a human being.

After doing my first solo piece and loving the adrenaline rush I got by being the only performer onstage, I realized I needed to do this again, but with a story that was even more personal than the first. It hit me. I have always thought that it would be incredibly eye-opening if someone could live a day in the life of me in order to find out what it is like to be an identical twin, so why not write a piece that could encapsulate that feeling for people? I had all these stories that I wanted to share with an audience, that writing the piece was as easy as watching a river flow. I knew this was it; this would be a piece that would capture my heart, open it up, and allow my voice and body to take everyone on the journey of my childhood, in hopes that they could begin to understand what makes me, *me*.

Who can say why Caroline went into medicine and why I went into theatre? I remember asking my sister that very same question and she said something that surprised me: “at the end of the day, they are very similar fields. You need compassion and a great understanding for human behavior in order to do both medicine and theatre”. Floored, I realized she is absolutely right. The psychology of human behavior is the life blood for any actor, no matter the show, and truly behavior as well as genetics and the way a person functions is a key part of medicine. I just recently finished watching Mark St. Germain’s new play *Dancing Lessons* in which the two

characters learn inordinate amounts of information about themselves that they never knew just from interacting with each other; the simple plot being an autistic man asks for dancing lessons from an ex-Broadway dancer who feels she has nothing to live for because of her hip injury. Stories like this play are being shared everyday through art and help to remind people that there is a human side to medicine and science. Nancy Segal writes that interdisciplinary combinations of art and science “restore the human subject at the center of clinical studies” (*Indivisible by Two* 6). I believe in that principle greatly too. Doctors are learning how to be more empathetically connected to their patients, and actors are learning how to become more analytical of the world around them. Being able to put the two elements of art and science together, conjures up a world that offers so many possibilities to me that I cannot help but embrace it in the theatrical work I love to do.

My impetus for solo theatrical work and my excitement for the story I am about to share was certainly enough alone to start me on the path towards thesis completion, but it also opened up a “Pandora’s Box” of knowledge and questions for me. The majority of this general inquiry has been both an inspiration to me along my journey as well as fuel, galvanizing me to think creatively about arts that are devised, the integration of technology with theatre and how it makes arts more accessible to the public, and what one relationship can tell us about the relationships of many. I intend to explore what it means to be a “theatre maker” versus calling myself simply “an actor” by observing my multi-functional role in my thesis project as the writer, producer, semi-director, and performer of the project. By creating a piece that seeks to excavate some of the more intimate moments in my life as well as present my most coveted relationship to an audience, I hope to unlock various aspects of my own identity through my writing and ignite a curiosity in my audience about what twins can tell us about how we form bonds with other

people in our lives. How is it that twins can be so individually different from each other while growing up in an environment and set of circumstances that yields itself to intense co-dependency? What does this intimate and seemingly unmatchable relationship tell us about the intrapersonal society we grow up in? And finally, can I use my own self-identity driven lens to write a story about my most personal connection, and in turn, share it with an audience? Some of this general inquiry comes from inspirational sources who have served to increase my passion for solo and devised theatrical work with their own pieces, such as Anna Deavere Smith and Rachel Rosenthal. Seeing their accomplishments and unraveling their statements from their art makes me question why all artists do not practice solo theatrical work. I would go as far as to say that this burgeoning art form offers the most freedom of expression for our identities; identities that artists crave so ardently to portray in their work. If there is anything I hope people can take away from my work it is the thought that solo work can enhance the discovery of what is beneath the surface of a human being in an honest fashion rather than emphasize the image of a person through large casts and heavy spectacle. I seek for an enriching and insightful experience for both audience and performer alike and strive to create work that appeals to an audience both on aesthetic and intellectual level. And, as Jerzy Grotowski would say, I hope to have a theatrical encounter and extreme confrontation with every audience member by reaching them through the sincerity of my story.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DUAL

#### The Science of Identical Twins

Nancy Segal, in her book *Entwined Lives*, describes twins as the “rosetta stone” of behavioral genetics, referring to the idea that the study of twins can gift society immensely with a wealth of knowledge about individuality creation and relationship forming. Segal states that these “great experiments of nature [can allow] insights into the genetic and environmental influences underlying behavioral development” (*Entwined Lives* location 94). By studying the scientific process of twinning and the looking at the effects twins have on those around them, researchers have a chance to investigate the lives of two people who are as close to clones as you can get. But how exactly are these “experiments”, or twins, created, and what light can they shed on what genes can tell us, physically and socially about the human race?

Twins are formed when a fertilized egg splits in two inside a mother’s womb. Because one egg is splitting, rather than two eggs being fertilized at once as is the case with fraternal twins, this split of a single egg imparts the same genetic material to both halves of the egg- thus creating identical twins (Segal, *Entwined Lives* location 212). The fact that identical twins already start out with much more shared DNA than fraternal twins, nearly double the amount because the babies both come from one egg, stands as a testament that human beings are a huge product of nature as well as nurture; regardless of their environment, these two individuals already start out in the world with someone extremely similar to them that will share 100% of their DNA. The assertion that “nature trumps nurture” challenges many scientists’ theories that it is environment alone that shapes an individual into who they are, and it even brings up the

troubling possibility that genetic inheritance could possibly limit our free will. The many ambiguities that pepper the “nature versus nurture” debate call into question how much each individual is the author of their own actions, thereby pushing scientists to delve into more possible conclusions as to what exactly forms a person and makes them who they are in the world. Segal writes about “*interactionism*” in her book *Entwined Lives*, and states that she prefers to think that human beings and their resultant behaviors derive from an inseparable influence of both genes and environments (location 226). And though twins appear to have an uncanny ability to make similar decisions whether aware of each other’s existence or not, Segal hypothesizes that that phenomena can be explained easily if the genes they were predisposed to caused them to seek out similar environments and experiences during their development, easily showing that *interactionism* explains the significance of both the role of genes *and* environment in the creation of an individual.

Identical twinning holds a fascination for even the most learned scientist, as it is still an extremely mysterious process to us today. Though some scientists speculate as to the causes of identical twins’ appearance, the catalyst that makes a fertilized egg divide still remains unknown to us (Segal, *Entwined Lives* location 323). Segal offers several theories in attempts to explain twinning, including the delayed implantation of the fertilized egg in the uterus causing the egg to split or maybe even the detection of the early developing mass of the baby as an abnormality in the body, thus causing the egg to split as the body’s effort to reject it, but neither assertion remains the definitive cause. There is also mystery in the exact time in which the egg splits, scientists estimating that the dividing of the egg occurs anywhere between the first and the fourteenth day after conception. Even the probability of a mother being pregnant with twins is as mysterious as the birth of twins itself and has incredibly little to do with genetics. Segal, in her

book *Entwined Lives*, writes that identical twins happen one in every two hundred and fifty births (location 220). Though less mysterious, the identical twins counterpart, fraternal twins, are none the less miraculous in their development, the distinct difference between identical twins and fraternal twins being the actual twinning process. Fraternal twins occur when two eggs are fertilized by two different sperm cells (and not one as the egg is with identical twins) (Segal, *Entwined Lives* location 210). Fraternal twins are *dizygotic* (two-egg) instead of *monozygotic* and there is more evidence to support that they run genetically in families who have had fraternal twins before, opposed to identical twins and their lack of hereditary occurrence. Despite people's perceptions that identical twins are more frequent because they are easy to spot, fraternal twins are much more prevalent than identical twins, though they might be hard to pick out in a crowd because of the wide appearance difference they can have in relation to each other.

So who exactly is interested in the study of twins, and for what purpose? What can the study of these individuals who defy variation, the very hallmark of human behavior, tell us about the world we live in? To begin with, twins can illuminate scientists' quests to learn how intelligence works, they can answer some questions in relation to how we cultivate our personalities, and they can ascertain what roles our genes play in the development of our behavior. Twins offer easy comparisons of study, especially since identical twins share 100% of their DNA. If one is having a hard time understanding a subject in comparison to the other, they are each other's perfect control subject- meaning that they are suitable to do tests on and view the findings as conclusive as they are each other's perfect match genetically. Someone cannot dispute the findings by saying they grew up in different environments or assert that one of them is predisposed to higher brain cell activity indicating a proclivity for a specific subject matter over the other, as they share all their genetic material. Twins can also open a gateway into many

medical mysteries and diseases that scientists and doctors have been unable to find cures for or even start to medicate. Perhaps the study of twins can help us receive more information on diseases such as schizophrenia or multiple sclerosis, thereby helping us mitigate their effects if we can better understand how they work. The study of twins can even ameliorate the studies of psychologists', as they can provide a window into how people achieve happiness, marital satisfaction, and lasting relationships.

The idea that twins could tell us so much about genes, and those genes, in turn, could determine so much of who we are, not only on a superficial level, but on an extremely personal level as well, made me consider the science behind genetic influence and how psychology and genetics are correlated. From day one, human beings have had to evolve a certain way in order to survive in the constantly changing world around them. This evolution not only occurred physically for human beings, but had to occur psychologically as well. When considering that males are predisposed to aggressive traits, a fact which is widely accepted scientifically and supported by many studies that observe the hormone testosterone and the effects that that hormone has on the male psyche, it allows us to associate the origins of a human behavior to its function, thus allowing us to realize that male aggression acted as a survival mechanism for males to protect themselves and their families from threats. Similar to this example, evolution can easily make a gender or race more predisposed to a particular behavioral trait if they needed it to survive, and twins are no exception to this rule. Because twins had to share a womb together, they had to learn to form a bond that transcended the normal individual's level to bond in order to survive and ensure each twin a safe journey into the world waiting for them outside the womb. Judith Rich Harris in her book *No Two Alike*, describes the event of twins helping each other to survive as "inclusive fitness", pointing out that the reason twins may go to great,

altruistic lengths to ensure the other's survival is because they are trying to protect the survival of their own genes (9). Just like a mother will protect her helpless baby, a twin will go to even greater lengths to protect their absolute genetic match, forming a relationship like no other. This early formation of relationship that twins cultivate, this building of trust and dependence for survival, clearly plays a crucial role in the genetic growth of those particular personality traits in each identical twin pair. This example fits Segal's *interactionism* model displaying that genes will undoubtedly affect each twin's behavior but not at the expense of the function their environment plays in that behavior, or genetic, cultivation. Similar to the "chicken or the egg?" argument, our genes would have not developed had their not been a reason for them to develop that way- a function in which we needed a particular behavior for, such as the trait of aggression in males- and our environments were probably selected due to our evolving genes and what they instructed us to conform to, most likely persuading us to do what we can to exist in comfortable environments familiar to us.

Along with allowing scientists an intimate way to access knowledge about genetics, twins provide a lens for environmental behaviorists into the world of language development. My bond with my sister, Caroline, is a deep one that cannot be touched by any other relationship. One day when I have children, my sister, Caroline, will in effect become a "genetic mother" to my child because of our completely shared DNA. No one else can say this unless they have an identical twin. She is the very first one I came into the world with, and from then on we learned everything together, including some of our very first functions such as how to communicate. As a mother, I have to imagine that it must be both exciting to see the intense communication of her children, as well as daunting to understand that her communicational bond will never transcend that bond in which her children have with each other. Segal described her observation of the

closeness of twins by saying that they “seem held together by invisible glue that enables effortless communication and understanding...[the] prototype of cooperation at its finest (*Entwined Lives* location 688).” Segal goes on to say that by observing the way twins interact with each other, we can begin to understand why some relationships can form quite effortlessly between people, and why others seem to find strain at every juncture. One of the easiest relationships in my life was the one I had with my sister, and despite our intermittent arguments, we always go back to being each other’s confidant once the argument is over. I have very few friendships I can say that about...perhaps enough to count them on one hand. The language we were able to develop transcended one we have with any other person in the world. It is a language that could almost be described as otherworldly, and, as my dad would often say, it seemed as if our conversations were had through the exchange of brain waves opposed to sound waves.

Humans were gifted with the ability of complex language, a skill in which countless other species on Earth were not gifted with. Judith Harris in her book *No Two Alike*, explains language as a:

Complex, specialized skill, which develops in the child spontaneously, without conscious effort or formal instruction, is deployed without awareness of its underlying logic, is qualitatively the same in every individual, and is distinct from more general abilities to process information or behave intelligently. (12)

Strangely enough, we are born with the want to develop that complex, specialized skill known as language; we seek to figure out what sounds and words mean. We, as babies, do not have to be coaxed into developing language and do not have to be given a reason to communicate; we simply try to ardently puzzle out human speech because we are predisposed to it from day one. Just like our incessant need to figure out how to tell people apart from staring avidly into the

faces of those around us, our need to understand what a voice is telling us is innate. As a matter of fact, Judith Harris proposes that a large function of language is to provide a means for us to gossip, something in which our capability for language allowed us to create (17). Humans acquire pleasure from gaining information about people, and that pleasure is matched when we get to share that information with other people. Harris even proposes that gossip may have had “important survival and reproductive benefits for our ancestors” (18). Like all other human beings, twins are no exception when it comes to the need for language development. Their love for and creation of language extends beyond what can be comprehended by science, as their conversations and “gossip” started as early as conception. Twins offer the science world nuggets of information that perhaps can unlock secrets to language that go beyond the spoken word.

The universal questions of “who am I” and “what makes me *me*” are questions we will be asking for eternity. Will my genes determine if I am an inherently good or bad person? Am I genetically predisposed to learn language fast and soak up knowledge, or will I live a life struggling to learn no matter how hard I try because of my hereditary inheritance? We will seek to find these answers in science, in art, and in any other study available to our species. Even Shakespeare asked these very same questions when he stated “there’s no art to find the mind’s construction in the face” in his play *Macbeth*. He was asserting that you cannot simply read someone’s mind by looking into their face; you cannot know a person by their appearance alone. How can we truly judge a man’s character? How do we get an edge into the way a person will act or what type of relationship we may be able to have with them, and is there even a way to do that? Aside from the fact that a person’s past actions can offer a good indication as to what their future actions will be, twins can offer us a lens into those queries by allowing us to understand what lies at our core genetically, and what those genetic truths can tell us about people’s

behaviors. More importantly, twins and their mesmerizing personality differences, despite being identical genetic matches, can let us know what genetics *cannot* inform us about behavioral, physical, or intellectual condition- offering a huge valuable pool of knowledge to scholars of all kind.

### Perception of Self in Types of Performance

All of these questions about genetics and what being a twin *means*, had my mind buzzing with the opportunity of exploring science in art through performance. How could I explore me and my sister's similarities as well as our differences in one piece, and how could I do it alone? I didn't want to cast someone else as my twin because it wouldn't feel right to me; I felt so close to our personal experiences that we shared that I knew I was the one who knew my sister best. I would have to play her; therefore solo performance was a perfect choice!

Solo performance has always intrigued me from the very first experience I had with it in my second year of graduate school. The ritualistic power I felt imbued with when I performed alone had me seeking more about what solo performance truly entailed and where its theatrical roots lay. I began researching solo performance and stumbled upon Michael Kearns' book *The Solo Performer's Journey*, where he immediately caught my attention by starting out with a thought provoking quote from one of his other books, *Getting Your Solo Act Together*. Kearns' quote read: "It has been said that we enter this world and exit this world alone. And many of us spend much our lives alone on stage, attempting to make sense of what happens to us in between that entrance and exit, between birth and death (vii)." I had not experienced a "lonely entrance" as he discussed many other people do in their lives, and it had me thinking about the few times in my life where I was forced into lonely situations whether by other people or by a set of

circumstances. Already his first page caused my creative gears to turn, allowing me to lay a foundation upon which to write my solo work on. Rather than attempt to puzzle out my *lonely* existence, I would seek to study my *companion-filled* existence and compare it to the times in which loneliness was an inevitability placed onto me by the events that filled my world. I had my goal, my story, my through-line, but how would I accomplish this in a show performed by one person? Could I accomplish this with only me? What type of performance would I have to do, and what did it mean for me to be the only one doing it?

In efforts to answer these questions I dove into what solo performance meant to the theatre makers before me, even back to that which would go beyond predated history. Solo performance can easily be traced all the way back to primitive society with prehistoric tribes gathering around their fires in order to watch their shaman bring stories to life. These stories would incorporate magic, spirituality, pantomime, chants, and costume, and would reveal tales of the unknown world that lay beyond the light of the fire they danced around. West African griots were that nation's bard long before Shakespeare wrote his verse, and they were the solo performers of their time. Repositories of stories that told of tradition and folklore, the griots were the historians of their towns simply by spoken word alone. Skipping forward in time and traversing to Europe, Louis Catron, author of *The Power of One*, discusses the existence of the *rhapsodists*, or oral readers of Greece. Before the birth of classical theatre, these rhapsodists would inspire the interests of the classical greats like Aristophanes, Sophocles, and Euripides, with their ritual of theatre (Catron 5). Echoing Greece, Rome too had their solo performers called *histriones*, who would embody a wide range of characters and would later inspire their own greats, such as Seneca and Plautus (Catron 5). These solo entertainers would give voice to the populous by sardonically impersonating a political leader or reenacting a specific historical event

in order to impart their view about it to the audience. They would begin to captivate the attention of the people, aspiring writers and theatre makers, and begin to help people view theatre as an important force in their society.

When political leaders began viewing theatrical satires as personal attacks and began to ban theatre, the monologue, or solo voice, gave performers a way out of that restriction. Religion posed serious limitations on what theatre could be performed, if any at all, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century did not yield much in the way of theatrical artistic contributions to society. Leaders, often embarrassed by censure or fearful of societal revolt, did not want to allow theatre to be performed lest it incite the former. But enterprising performers, such as George Alexander Stevens, managed to circumvent the heavily confining Licensing Act, imposed by the English political leader Walpole, by presenting his productions and plays as “lectures” (Catron 6). America followed suit in the 1800s with the advent of tent shows, where clergy would travel to major cities giving educational and moral speeches to the masses, and platform readings, where solo actors would read a book aloud to an audience and embody all the various characters in the book (Catron 6). These influences of solo theatre encouraged audiences to understand that theatre had a purpose beyond what the church decreed, and that theatre could educate, give out moral messages, and entertain. Breaking the disreputable view that society had on theatre, monodramas (or better known as monologues) allowed theatres to start popping up around towns, and drama began to flourish as it became a more respectable art amongst the masses.

What is it that is so powerful about a monologue though? How could one person, even hundreds of years ago, hold the attention of so many people? How could one voice entertain a crowd so easily and change the state of the population’s attitude toward the entire craft known as

theatre? W. David Shaw, author of *Origins of the Monologue: The Hidden God*, writes that theatrical studies trace the origins of the monologue:

To a subversive tradition within a literature and culture that is too often assumed to endorse mainly conservative values in ethics, politics, and religion...[rather they are] master subverters of the social discourse they borrow: as in Socrates' dialogues, there are few customs- moral, political, or religious- that their best monologues do not interrogate, turn inside out, or blaspheme. (4)

Shaw describes the main purpose of the solo voice, harking all the way back from Socrates' dialogues (and even further back), was to challenge the belief systems of the era, not endorse them; monologues could offer a vehicle to democracy and give a way for people to be heard. Historical solo performance or monologue usually questioned a leader or that specific leader's actions and helped to awaken those same questions in the conscience of the people. Shaw states that the dramatic monologue "fragments rather than consolidates cultural authority: it speaks, not through a spokesman for the status quo, but through a Socratic interrogator of it (4)." These monodramas gave eyes and ears to printed voice and started to put an even finer lens on society as they grew more complex in form.

Shaw states that the dramatic monologue has three key defining features to it that help it engage successfully, those being the one-sidedness of the conversation, the unconscious self-revelations in what is not spoken, and the speaker's/actor's unpredictable apostrophes or changes in their voice (12). In a monologue, the speaker solely talks, yet that does not mean they are alone. There is always the idea of the "silent other" or the person who is being addressed by the speaker. This audience, be they person, thing, or place, receives the words of the speaker, and communicates to them in the "two-way syntax, hesitations, and double meanings" that occur in the piece, all created by the speaker themselves. Another powerful aspect, uncovered by Shaw, is the ability of the speaker to reveal much more about themselves in the unspoken opposed to the

spoken and he writes that it is “only in the course of an unconscious liar’s monologue may a repressed self begin to swim into focus for the speaker” (8). And finally, the speaker must be able to discover where the idiosyncrasies are in their speech patterns in order to invite the audience into the monologue. That contrast, or disequilibrium as we so often learned about in graduate school especially in regards to our Movement studies, provides the basis of attraction to the form, as it opens up the audience’s eyes to the conflicts of the self-divided mind of the speaker.

The beauty of a monologue resounds when it gives expression to a still image and imbues life into something that was once extremely stagnant. Shaw remarks that during the Victorian era, monologues, often times, injected life into the obsolete convention of lyrically addressing imaginary, natural objects- asserting that these monologues would revitalize and humanize Romantic poetry (6). Often times this humanization would allow the speaker’s words to oppose the dogmas of the secular age much better than a static piece of poetry. As the dramatic monologue began to expand because of its beauty and poignancy, so would the performer’s platform to bring that piece to life. With the advent of technology and the accessibility of information, modern solo performance really displays the growth of power and fortitude a monologue has by displaying the impact one voice can have in comparison to many, and artists like John Leguizamo, Lily Tomlin, Rachel Rosenthal, Anna Deavere Smith, and countless others, contemporary griots in their own regard, began to bring Shaw’s word to life by moving people with their monologues.

Inspired by contemporary solo performance and excited by all the possibilities solo work seemed to offer me, I delved into Michael Kearns’ book *The Solo Performer’s Journey*. I was extremely encouraged by his belief that as long as you have a point of view, you can create a

show from it. Once you figure out what it is you want to say, you have accomplished half the battle already! The most difficult thing about solo work, Kearns states, is the amount of trust the performer must have in their ability to write and bring their words to life after it is written down, and he states that “without trust, creative energy is blocked and the possibility for a viable piece is doomed” (10). I have certainly reached blocks in my own writing and have felt the power of them halt my process, and it is helpful to find ways to get those creative juices flowing again when that happens. Whether that be finding someone to simply watch a piece of your work, getting feedback from various observers, finding a quiet spot for some stream of consciousness writing, or simply watching videos of solo performance online in order to get bursts of inspiration, not giving up on yourself and your work is vital, and if you continue to work through the challenge spots, the reward of the creation of your *own* solo piece will be immensely satisfying!

To perform your own words any way you want to an audience may sound like a deceptively easy task, but nothing holds greater theatrical risks, in my opinion, than performing a solo piece. Michael Kearns writes that solo performance:

Is not traditional acting (many highly trained actors struggle valiantly with solo performing). It is not stand-up. It's intended to look easy, relaxed, personal, and improvisational. It requires learning new skills and abandoning certain 'rules' of acting...In traditional theatre we watch a story unfold. In solo performance we are taken on a ride by a storyteller, the story unfolds, not in front of us but within our own imaginations. (12)

It is a hard task to ask one actor alone to tear down the fourth wall that exists between the performer and the audience member, especially when acting training and methodology teaches us so ardently to keep that fourth wall intact for the majority of our performances. Unlike those performances that can rely on heavy spectacle or a large numbered cast to get the audience

through the night, the most vital part of the solo performance journey is the connection that is established between the solitary performer and the audience. This baring of your soul can make you feel naked onstage, as all eyes are on you, with no one else to distract in case something goes awry. You feel the ultimate drop in your stomach when your audience fails to connect with you, but you also feel the ultimate reward when that connection has been achieved. The solo performer must also have endless energy. Not only does Kearns state that fact in his book *The Solo Performer's Journey*, but I have learned that first hand from my own solo show experiences! Kearns says that “the energy necessary to revise material is obvious” (19), and perhaps that is true, but nothing could prepare me for the sleepless nights that lay ahead with the many revisions of my work both on paper and onstage before my performances. It was always my job as the performer to make sure I matched my theatrics with my text and colored each character appropriately; I needed to serve *my* text.

One of the largest traps for any solo performance artist is the ability to self-indulge. Kearns writes that the solo performer can come to self-love, self-accept, self-respect, and self-control, but they should never come to self-obsess; when working with words that are your own, this is an extremely easy trap to fall into (22). A lot of times with a script written by a playwright, the playwright has their own intentions layered into the work, and your job as the actor becomes to try to reveal their intentions to the audience through the actions and intentions of your specific character. In that example, you usually have a cast of other actors, or characters, all working to achieve that goal with you, but in solo performance, it is only you who is working to bring the intention of your words to life for an audience. This can really lead the actor down the path of over emphasizing themes that deserve more subtlety or heavily sentimentalizing moments that would gain more poignancy from a lighter touch. I have personally found that the

cure to avoid coating my work in my own ego is being able to collaborate every moment I got. Anytime I could show my work to another eye, I would, and I appreciated all feedback knowing that it would give me a chance to better tailor my own personal intentions in my piece; that collaboration would help me supplement sentimentality with honesty in order to effectively communicate my stories to an audience.

The ability to bring my words to life in such an intimate setting and space taught me so much about myself and the strength I have as a performer. I don't allow myself to see that side of me in my work very often, and in writing my own show and performing it for an audience, it gave me the power to bare my soul and share my experiences with my friends and colleagues. Often times I feel like a pawn on a chessboard when I'm in a larger production, still representing a piece of the game, but only playing a small role in the big, overall picture. With my solo work, I was the *entire* game, and the ability to gain emotional checkmate rested on my capability to relate my experiences with the right amount of intimacy and honesty that that particular moment called for. I learned that I am a strong enough performer to get constructive criticism and be able to incorporate that criticism in a way that would both honor my intentions as well as make the necessary amendments, and I also learned that I could turn my poetic voice into something completely adaptable for the stage. I discovered that I have very few limits to what I can accomplish creatively, and I have learned how resilient I am at problem-solving if a scene isn't working. And finally, I learned how courageous I am, not only as a performer, but as an individual. There is always a flutter of nervous excitement when I go to perform in any show, but the amount of bravery that solo performance asks of an actor is immense and many theatrical events do not dare ask performers to ever reach that place. I have faith in my acting abilities and

solo performance has augmented my own belief in my craft and it is an experience I hope every actor or performer can have at least once in their life.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE INDIVIDUAL

#### Twins' Creation of Individuality

The curiosity surrounding what it is like to have your own doppelganger appears to be a timeless inquisitiveness, as people constantly ask both my sister and I what makes us alike and what makes us different. Most of the time I find an ease in describing what having an identical twin is like, finding it effortless to describe our similarities. When I am challenged to expound upon our differences though, I am always quick to say that we have them, but find myself unable to explain what they are to those curious individuals; It's simply a fundamental fact to me that both my sister and I have those differences that we have cultivated along the way within our "double-ness". As I wrote my thesis, I became more entrenched in those questions myself ("what makes us the same and what makes us different?"), and I have enjoyed reading other twin's novels about their 'twin experience' in order to examine my own "twinship" with a finer eye.

To be a twin is to encompass every twin cliché you could imagine, as they are all true.

Abigail Pogrebin, in her book *One and the Same*, writes that:

Being an identical twin is intense. [It includes feeling like] you have an unwavering partner in life, knowing exactly what the other person feels, wanting to tell her a story before anyone else, confiding with unrestrained-sometimes shocking- candor, valuing her opinion above anyone else's, taking on someone else's pain to the point of vicarious depression, and being incapacitated by any minor dispute. (1)

I absolutely agree with Pogrebin's assessment of the twin relationship as I have felt all of these distinct feelings growing up with my own twin. Life roles were immediately adopted by each of us, as is the case with most twins, because our intense intimacy called for them to be developed; these roles we fell into included accomplice/sidekick, confidante, advocate, teacher/mentor,

undying fan, perpetual playmate, blunt critic, and compassionate therapist. We became all of these things to each other and more because our close relationship called for it, and without even realizing it, our duality shaped who we would become individually. Before we knew it, both Caroline and I were developing into caring people who could not only listen to others but also speak our minds when necessary. When I examine both me and my sister as an individual, it is apparent how all of those “life roles” fed into our similar personality development, but I can also see where we began to branch off into our own versions of that personality subset. Various elements like competition fueled the need for Caroline and I to create our own stamp on the world, and I started to realize that both my sister and I held different strengths in those varied life roles we developed so early on in life.

In several of the books about twins that I have read, including Segal’s *Indivisible by Two* and *Entwined Lives*, Pogrebin’s *One and the Same*, and Harris’s *No Two Alike*, they all mention the dangerous, claustrophobic closeness twin’s relationships can foster. They talk about the idea that twins can have an extremely tough time figuring out their own way in the world because of their deep dependence on their other. Pogrebin, an identical twin herself, writes in her book that her sister grew up resenting their twinship because “a lifetime with a double made her feel less singular in the world” (19). In her book she continues to describe how twins can have a hard time socializing and making friends on their own, simply because they don’t feel that there is any emptiness to fill; there is no need to form a friendship when they already have the ultimate friend. Observing the near smothering duality of twins, Pogrebin encourages parents to spend time alone with each twin, urging them to reconsider the child-rearing ideology that everything should be done equally amongst children (22). In order to galvanize the development of each twin’s individuality, Pogrebin asserts that the time spent alone with each twin would make them

feel the separate influence their presence had in their family's lives, thereby giving them the impetus to stand alone on occasion (78). Pogrebin discusses extreme twin dependency in great length and states that twins can develop:

A degree of anxiety associated with functioning as separate, autonomous individuals...twins are socialized from infancy to need each other, partly because they're pushed together by two major forces: their parents and their twin. When parents are overwhelmed with exhaustion, they feel relieved when their twins can occupy and entertain each other. They often plop the twins together to give themselves a break because they think it's good for the twin...and the twins gravitate to each other because of an instinctual familiarity and comfort...maturation becomes inherently stressful and in some ways anxiety-provoking, so they turn to each other to ease that stress. (Pogrebin 60)

Consequently, twins grow up needing to lean on each other when they feel unable to deal with situations on their own; they look for that hand of guidance from their closest ally. In a way, this duality has stunted my own personal growth as an individual, as it wasn't until college, when my sister and I went our own ways, living on different sides of town and pursuing two dissimilar degrees that we began to make our *own* friends. Before college, I can't list any grade school companion that I really would consider a close best friend of mine, mainly because I never felt the need to have one since I had Caroline.

When I started off in college, I began to realize the near-universal struggle to stand out and to be unique. I had never felt this before! I had never known what it was like to have to compete to be seen, because there wasn't a moment when Caroline and I went unnoticed when together. Beginning to understand what it meant to be singular, I started making friends, albeit in a trepidatious manner. My twinship helped to make me bold when I was insecure in social situations, yet I always felt a tinge of sadness that no one, not even my husband, would come to understand me quite as deeply as my sister understood me. Yet, I continued to forge my own identity, subtracting my other half in efforts to adopt a whole persona on my own. I became

extroverted, friendly, compassionate, a great listener, an avid learner, a competent artist, and always remained enthusiastic about life; most of these traits already present when constantly with my sister, yet revealing themselves in deeper and more prominent shades when I was alone. Reflecting on everything I worked to become, it is such a refreshing challenge to try and deconstruct my own identity cultivation while using my twinship as a prism in which to do so.

It would be easy to say that this individuality of mine was all my own invention, but I know that would be a lie. At the core of things, our competitive spirit allowed us to carve out a place for ourselves that would be distinct from each other's spot in the world. We were each other's built-in infinite comparison, and we always held each other to the highest standard imaginable. While we sought to reach those standards that we set for one another, always being each other's taskmaster, we wanted to achieve as well as see our twin attain success. Pogrebin, when considering twins and competition, says "they've always driven each other to excel, but they've never felt an ounce of schadenfreude"; meaning that, though twins want to do better than the other, they never take pleasure out of the other's pain (81). Likewise, I always wanted to do better than my sister, but never at the expense of seeing her do badly.

Twins are born in conflict, and from the minute they are conceived, they are attempting to survive against the other by getting the nourishment they need from their mother. My parents fostered competition between us, whether knowingly or not, by putting us in the same activities and keeping us in the same schools (and the same classes most of the time). I remember being mad if my sister got even a few points higher than me in anything. It was always hard to accept being second best to my sister in something, but even harder sometimes, was accepting winning over her and making her feel second best to me. Similarly Pogrebin, in reflection of her own relationship says that, "the first thing non-twins assume about twins is that we collide or try to

outdo each other...but we saw each other's triumphs as reflective, and our stumbles were suffered vicariously" (84). Most of the time I wanted *both* Caroline and myself to do well, wanting us to be the best out of everybody else in the room, and if she beat me in something, it only served to motivate me to do that much better the next time.

In this world where competition and collaboration went hand in hand, the pressure to measure up to that height of achievement was undeniably intense, and I believe it is that very same competition that began to push me and my sister into different areas of study. I had a big realization about my own individuality when I read Pogrebin's hypothesis that:

Twins compete to stake out their own personas...[they] instinctively hone separate skills so that they might be able to avoid going head-to-head in the same sphere. They carve out different interests or areas of expertise, which could mean avoiding competing directly with each other. (96-97)

Contemplating Pogrebin's thoughts on twin competition, I clearly realize the overwhelming evidence of competition's impact on my own life, especially when I examine the subjects we would compete in. Both Caroline and I would enter into artistic competitions, whether they focused on acting, singing, piano playing, and we would also enter into more academically oriented competitions, including math teams, and brain bowls. Consequently, I would surpass her in the artistic competitions and she would outshine me when our intellectual skills were held up side by side; when considering this, it is no wonder I chose theatre and she chose medicine.

Despite our different field choices, our admiration of each other's studies always led us to incorporate each other's training into our own personal pursuits, displaying our unshakeable similarities in distinguishing ways. Caroline is a doctor at heart; She has always loved science and the human body fascinates her, yet participation in music and the arts has also taught her to observe the human condition, perhaps, in a more aesthetic light. While in medical school she still

carves out time for artistic endeavors by putting on musicals for terminally ill patients while completing her degree. Similarly, performance is my passion, but the extreme care and compassion proficient medical professionals seemed to exude always entranced me. Within my art, I frequently find ways to tie in science, technology, or medicine into my work- whether it is simply pursuing the psychological background of my character or incorporating actual scientific material into my work, such as my thesis show on identical twins.

To be a multiple of any kind is to be born similar, yet as we grow, we undoubtedly begin to distinguish ourselves within that similarity. Nancy Segal in her book *Indivisible by Two* writes that:

Despite the fact that identical twins look and act so much alike, people will always look for their differences, even exaggerate them, because it's unnerving to be unable to tell two individuals apart. (79)

The more challenging question when observing those manifesting differences in twins seems to be whether that difference is *genetically* or *environmentally* influenced. Segal writes about two twin girls, Melanie and Mira, who were born with selective mutism, and though both have it and are unable to talk to most people save for each other, one twin has it worse than the other- which could indicate that the gene is influenced by environmental factors. She also writes about a triplet set who share many observable traits, yet one of the triplets revealed he was homosexual, and his two brothers were not (Segal, *Indivisible by Two* 80). So is our sexuality determined by a gene within us? All of the questions that can come from studying twins like these are astounding and it never ceases to amaze me how my very own life is considered a petri dish full of insight to most scientists. But most surprising of all is that amongst all of the similarities, each twin can still have astonishing differences that allow them to carve out their own singular presence in the world despite their incredible duality.

### Creation of Self-Identity in Solo Performance

During writing and rehearsing my own material, I experienced several revelations of my own personality and identity through reliving my own narrative, and found that being able to communicate those stories to an audience was enabling in both defining my own reality and perhaps shedding light on others' realities. I focused on exploring who I am as an individual unit, what being an identical twin means in the scope of my world, and how I am allowing the dual part of my identity to propel me into a stronger individual in the future. By using my stories in the form of a series of monologues recounted from various characters' points of view, I wanted to share my thoughts about needing people, support, and love even in situations which called for individual progress; I wanted to empower my audience with the longing for a close relationship and the deep cherishing of an inseparable bond, similar to a bond I had cultivated in my life- similar to that of identical twins. My message developed after massaging my written work and my physically rehearsed piece, and it probably did not hit me fully until talking to my audience after the first night of my show and gaging what they felt. It was an arduous, but heavily rewarding process, and I sought to know if other performers went through similar quests when attempting to find their voice in their work.

Solo work can be anything- there is no formula. There is no limit to what a solo performance can be, yet the demands for each performance are the same- it must captivate! From Ruth Rosenthal shaving her head bald onstage to Anna Deaverre Smith's testimonial monologues, solo work can make a political statement, it can reawaken the public's interest in a long forgotten historical figure, it can examine a cultural stereotype, or it can make the audience laugh to tears. Dierdre Heddon, in her book *Autobiography and Performance*, explains that those who feel like marginalized subjects are drawn to solo work because they can break free from the

restraints of denied presence within Western conceptions (2). Heddon continues by stating that “oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subject, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, [and] telling their story” (3). By choosing autobiography as a vehicle for their piece, they can make their invisible lives visible by sharing the stories no one has bothered to ask them about. The platform of the stage becomes a forum of discussion often times leading to provocative “talk backs” after the performance of the solo piece, because the artist’s identity has challenged a belief about themselves, the audience, or society in general. Heddon writes that while exploring their own lives, performers of solo work can usually illuminate some deeper, universal truths along the way (5).

The very nature of solo performance lies within the individual performer, hence the term “solo”. The call to be onstage alone, to communicate your story by yourself, and to achieve an audience-performer connection purely based on your stories is a daunting task that requires you to be able to manufacture material that turns your identity into a shareable, tangible object. Every day we have experiences that total up the sum of our autobiography, and it is our duty as the performer to be able to portray those honestly to our audience. Heddon discusses this rather metaphysical concept of everything being a biographical moment of sorts, by stating that we have divided selves in which allows us, as the performer, to accurately create a representation of our self for those viewing our work (9). We can never *truly* recreate a specific moment that happened to us, or someone else, but we can give our interpretation of what that moment was like to our audience, thus give them our genuine representation of self. And within all this “solo” work, even Heddon acknowledges that solo work does not denote the absence of collaboration (10). She advises the actor to have several eyes on their material in order to revise and get

feedback as necessary for the piece's development, and I agree wholeheartedly. The performance may be "solo" in nature, but the act of getting the material ready for that "solo" stage is not!

Simply because we have our own stories to tell does not limit us in the realm of solo work to sharing only our own specific experiences. Many artists have found success in solo work by reciting already written works in their own unique way or by creating a literary adaptation of a work and their own spin on another author's creation. A great example listed in Young's book, *The Art of Acting Solo*, includes *Tea With Lady Bracknell* performed by Charles Marowitz, in which Marowitz devises a whole show around what Oscar Wilde's *Lady Bracknell* might have been like outside the confines of the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Young 24). Whether the artist chooses to delve into the women of Ibsen's play in an anthology-like manner, such as Gale Sondergaard, or whether they elect to portray a prominent historical figure, like Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight!*, Young writes that "the most engaging solos on the current scene are the contemporary shows that present a satiric look at life...it has an immediacy and an energy that many more traditional programs lack" (25). Jordan Young lists examples of artists who champion the more contemporary solo works and includes artists such as Lily Tomlin, Eric Bogosian, and a handful of other artists. Each piece performed by these specific artists displays a search for their own identity through a creative confessional, and often times the artist lights upon self-discovery by mixing their own personal experience and some fictionalized story telling in the process.

Ultimately, solo performance, whether autobiographical or not, means creating a work in which intimately shares a discourse with your audience in order to open a dialogue about your subject matter of choice. By revealing your identity and some lesser known truths about who you are or who the world has tried to say you are, Heddon says you have the ability to break down

some assumptions audience members might have about their immediate worlds. As long as the performer can distance themselves enough to reflect on their own experiences, than solo work has the power to stimulate critical analysis of our social environments and question the impact these environments have in our everyday lives (Heddon 17). Young uncovers that in a world where you usually feel categorized as a number, the freedom of singular self-expression and self-discovery with solo work is revolutionary to those who have forgotten the power that one voice can have. The fact that solo work can facilitate inquisitiveness and curiosity where only silence once lay is a fact that completely engulfs me with excitement, and it is my overarching goal with my own solo work to shake the consciousness of the world by using my performance as the tool in which to do so.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HUMAN NATURE

#### What Twins tell us about “Nature vs. Nurture?”

Evolutionary psychologists, developmental psychologists, and behavioral geneticists have all made countless contributions to their respective fields of study, yet amidst the multitude of accepted theories and significant findings, none of them have been able to explain why identical twins, despite growing up together, have different personalities. What is it about twins’ genetics or their environment that distinguishes them as two distinct personalities? We have observed that identical twins are literal DNA matches for each other and that it is obvious that their genetic palette offers a similar foundation upon which they can develop from, but what causes those shifts in personality that appear throughout their maturation? Can we say for certainty that genes matter more than environment, and what does that say about the importance in the way parents raise their children? How can two people, who are so seemingly alike at first glance, contain so many inexplicable idiosyncrasies?

As an identical twin, I know firsthand how immutably different my sister and I are. Though our appearance is undeniably uncanny, and though few people can tell us apart when turned around, our closest friends and family will all chime in when asked about our differences; “she is more outgoing”, “she is the shy one”, “she has a stubborn streak”, “she would definitely instigate the trouble making”, and the list of differences go on. While writing my solo show, I began to capitalize on the idea of how two people could be mistakenly identified as one and the same, and how frustrating it could be for those individuals to make a place for themselves as separate people in the world because of this fallacious belief. It intrigued me, as I read more

about twins and the study of twins, that no one had been able to really account for those differences that twins have, yet every scientist could, without a doubt, say that those differences clearly existed. Most of these authors I read spoke at great lengths about how much nature (genes) or nurture (environment) played their parts, but for all the unexplained personality variance in twins, they could only hazard guesses and hypotheses as to what caused the inconsistencies. Nonetheless, the mystery of varying personality intrigues me because it proposes the fact that personality development for everyone is a complex puzzle that cannot be easily defined by one factor or another.

Throughout time scientists' brains have been piqued by what creates human variation and what causes the range of colors in an individual's personality, especially when it comes to intelligence. Segal, in *Entwined Lives*, writes that:

There are probably more twin studies of IQ, the intelligence quotient representing general mental ability, than any other behavioral method. This is partly due to the tremendous value placed upon intellectual performance in modern society. (location 1429)

This particular study, the variation in intelligence, has proved itself a hotbed of contention, as many scientists became angered when correlations between genetics and intelligence began appearing. What did that mean for human development? Were some people simply destined to be not as smart as their neighbors because of genetic predisposition and heritability? Despite the negative reactions to these research findings, without these distinctions in dispositions, our world would be pretty blasé, or as Judith Harris, author of *No Two Alike* writes, "If every child gave the same response to a question on an IQ test, that question would be useless. The point of IQ or personality tests is that individuals answer the questions differently." (29). My differences, both my weaknesses and strengths, make me the individual I am in my dual (twin) relationship.

Harris, one of the authors I have been reading more frequently, asserts that the wide berth of unexplainable personality difference in twins is no different than the span that accounts for siblings or even two random strangers (29). Meaning, my sister and I have just as many differences as my teacher has from my mailman. Basing this declaration of “similar dissimilarities” upon the findings of various research reports, Harris essentially states that whatever accounts for these so-called “personality differences” must be able to explain the phenomena of varying developmental traits while accepting that environment plays little to no part in those developments. If two random strangers could be as varied as my identical twin sister and I, then it stands to reason that environment plays a very small part, if any at all, in giving me my unique personality. So what is it then that *does* define who I am over my identical counterpart? Can we truly state that it has nothing to do with the home I live in or the way my parents treat my sister and I?

Journals in the 1970s were already explaining the effect of genes on personality and it was widely accepted by psychology scholars that individuals differed because they had different genes; these findings are not considered new today in the scientific community. The novelty remains in the way environment plays a factor in our personality development. As behavioral geneticists’ completed more twin studies, they realized that 30-50% of personality variance was explained by heritability- or “the effect of genes”- which began to clue scientists’ in on the fact that they could be wrong about their original premise that environment was incontrovertibly important to a child’s development (Harris 31). Study after study came back yielding similar data that an “only child’s household” did not contribute to any vast differences in social behaviors within the only child when compared to children who grew up with siblings; there were no daunting psychological adjustments having to be made by the solo child. Even twins separated

during infancy and reared in two different home environments seemed to yield very small effects on personality difference, all of this pointing to the conclusion that “home environment and the parents’ style of child-rearing are found to be ineffective in shaping children’s personalities” (Harris 32). So if the cause cannot be defined by a mix of nature and nurture, what explains the variance that cannot be attributed to genetic influence?

Behavioral geneticists are determined to hit upon what makes a person diverse from the next person. From standard personality quizzes to observation by researchers, close family, or friends of the individuals, behavioral geneticists seek to unravel the mysteries of human variation. Harris states that many scientists are quick to call behavioral geneticists “determinists” (33), flustered by the idea that genes can say so much about who we are and who we have the potential to be, but our personalities have many dimensions, and cannot simply be defined by genes alone. The environment may play a negligible role in our personality creation, but it is a role nonetheless, and how we react to that environment can also explain our unique personalities. Harris hypothesizes that some of the unexplained variance in human behavior can be explained by chance or randomness (45). For instance one twin can be born with a genetic mutation that the other one wasn’t born with because a specific neuron zigged instead of zagged at the last moment before conception. Nancy Segal describes this phenomenon as “*genomic imprinting*”, saying that:

This occurs when the same stretch of genetic material is expressed differently in a child, depending upon which parent it came from. Imprinting activates a gene on one chromosome, but silences the same gene on the corresponding chromosome. (*Entwined Lives* location 1016)

Though “it is possible that biological perturbations...random biological events-developmental noise- could explain some of the unexplained variance in personality” (Harris 47), chance

remains an imperfect solution in the equation because psychology cannot study random things in order to look for trends; the explanation of randomness cannot account for all unexplained variation. If it did, Harris says that that would mean every personality block in a person would be pre-built and would not be able to change at all. Like Harris, I tend towards the idea that we are flexible human beings when it comes to change in personality, otherwise I think our society would look more like a scene from out of the movie *Terminator*.

Harris goes on to propose a more exciting hypothesis that may account for the rest of the unexplained personality variance. Not only can “children modify their behavior in response to their experiences” (Harris 47), but Harris states that there are “opportunities for random events to occur in people’s lives” (47) which can subsequently shape who they become in the future by how they react to that event. Though unproven by hard data, Harris wagers to make a hypothesis created through a Darwinian lens and states that:

Evolution made personality plastic so that children can profit from their experiences- so that they can learn ways of behaving that will serve them well in adulthood...an adaptability that will give some children an advantage, or ameliorate a disadvantage, in the competition to survive and reproduce. (48)

Rather than leaving unexplained variance a product of pure chance, Harris gives hope that our personalities are not something that are set in stone. Nancy Segal offers hypotheses that are very similar in nature in her book *Entwined Lives*, by stating that there could be two possible explanations for personality variance including *active gene-environment correlation* and *reactive gene-environment correlation* (location 1920). Mirroring the thoughts of Harris, *active gene-environment correlation* suggests that individuals seek experiences that are congruent with their genetically influenced personality traits, and *reactive gene-environment correlation* intimates that children’s genetically influenced personalities shape the way parents treat them, not the

other way around (Segal, *Enwined Lives* location 1924). Both of these authors essentially assert the same thing by conceding that though genes lay the foundation of our character, personality is something that can be changed by individual circumstances and unpredictable events, accounting for the personality variance we see in every individual.

### Using the Stage as a Platform into Human Nature

Since performing my first solo piece in my graduate acting class, I fell in love with the medium, and was completely enraptured with the idea that my voice could be so powerful. I immediately thought that I had stumbled upon some new avenue of theatre or that I had discovered some contemporary art form that had yet to be explored too much by artists of the twenty-first century. Falling in love with solo performance inspired me to begin reading about it, and I couldn't help but laugh at my naiveté about the form! Alas, something that felt so new to me, had existed for years before I was around, and had even catapulted theatre into greater popularity when it all but died because of religious and royal restriction. As Jordan Young says in his book *Acting Solo*:

What we're really doing [with solo work] is going back to a very primitive form of the theatre, the genesis of theatre. Theatre started with someone saying to a group of people, 'I'm going to tell you a story.' (187)

I found myself enchanted by the form because it stripped away most of the elements of spectacle and superfluity that bigger productions tend to incorporate; I had found the very essence of what it is to perform theatre and at the core of it all was the power of words to transport the audience into a world purely created by the actor. Young writes that the actor presents a "personal odyssey" to the audience, and whether real or not, that actor has the ability to stimulate the audience's imagination tenfold by words alone (188), and this is what I discovered when performing my first solo piece.

My first performance of a solo piece was a piece written and originally performed by a woman named Ruth Draper and it was entitled *Three Breakfasts*. The piece was composed of three acts that chronicled the history of marriage, starting out with a young woman in the honeymoon phase of love, shifting into a bored and sour matronly woman eroded by the effects of marriage over time, and finally graduating into a frail yet happily-married old woman. I was fascinated by the complexities each of Draper's sketches held, and the fact that they were the same woman, yet living in a different time and emotional place, excited the malleable actor in me. Not only did I have to work on creating the "invisible others" clearly for the audience to see, but I had to work on the specific physiognomy of each character to accurately communicate their age and emotional state to my observers. Finally, the biggest appeal this piece had to me, above everything else, was how life-like these characters were on the page. They were not completely fictitious beings far removed from my own world, but rather, people I saw everyday around me; the *young woman* that I felt within myself with having been recently engaged, the bored *middle-aged woman* I saw in my lethargic and embittered Aunt, and the joyful *elderly woman* invigorated by her renewed sense of love I saw in my next door neighbor. Having to communicate a message as universal as the different stages of love, I felt this goal to be both attainable, yet still fairly challenging for me to try to achieve in my first solo performance.

People seek to be talked to on a level they can understand, and when met with bombastic spectacle or heavy pomp and circumstance they immediately identify the event as something false or out of this world; though spectacle can enthrall, it also has the capability to alienate the audience completely from the performance because of being so over the top. One of my favorite things about solo performance is the intimacy that is created between performer and audience member when simplicity is employed well by the performing actor. Some of my most treasured

memories go back to times where I shared juicy secrets with my sister or my best friends in the protective quarters of our bedrooms, and similar to that experience, Young states that “it is really important to not put anything “over”, but to bring the audience up onto the stage and into the scene with you. It is they who must give you even more than you give them in the way of imagination and creative power” (Young 38). You are telling a juicy secret to the audience in a simple and genuine fashion, and it is your job as the actor to keep them hooked the whole time.

Whether we realize or not, all the experiences and moments we have in life are *whole body* involvements; even if it defies description, when I am happy- my whole body experiences that joy. Mirroring the notion that living life should be a total body experience, theatre should be a whole body experience as well, and solo performance forces the actor to learn to perform that way, otherwise audiences would be bored instantly listening to nothing but speeches for an hour or more. Michael Luger, author of *The Expressive Actor*, writes that countless contemporary actors focus so much on the intellectual endeavors of the acting that they tend to neglect the incorporation of the body into their material. Luger writes that:

They attempt to *believe* in everything their characters say and do. [but] believing is devoid of any reference to the body; there is no assertion that believing needs to be embodied. The contemporary actor often creates emotion and character through an act of sheer mental determination and willpower...but a knee can think, a finger can laugh, a belly can cry, a brain can walk, and a buttock can listen. (viii-ix)

This quote sums up everything great actors, in my mind, do- they incorporate their whole body into their craft; they tell their story, not only with words, but with their body, voice, and imagination. When performing Draper’s piece, *Three Breakfasts*, I noticed that the piece became increasingly more interesting the minute I was able to define how each woman moved comparatively to the other woman. How did the old woman laugh differently than the young woman and how did the disgruntled wife sit at the table and look at her husband compared to the

other two ladies? These intricacies were what made the whole piece an exciting slice of theatre to perform, and hopefully it made it exciting to watch as well.

When putting together my thesis solo piece, *Teach me how to be Lonely*, it was extremely easy to get carried away and load it full of business and props to get lost in. I figured if my menagerie of characters had something to do, it would keep the audience interested throughout my work, but little did I realize how daunting it would be to have all those props and frills! Young writes that “the temptation with a one-person show is to load it up, make it look gorgeous. But the production can get too big- it makes the one person on stage look small, and takes the focus away from them” (32). Even Ruth Draper was caught saying “can’t we just put the lights on, do the show, and turn them off?” to her manager one night before one of her Broadway performances (Young 32). Sometimes adding too many trappings can turn your performance into an overcomplicated mess, not to mention the added hassle of having to tote all of those props to every venue you perform your show in.

So if solo performance can literally be one person on a nearly bare stage telling a story, what makes it so difficult and what is it about acting that is so challenging? If it is simply defined by expressing that which is human nature, why do we pay people to go see that happen on stage? Why can’t everyone act out moments themselves in the privacy of their own living room or with their friends? Michael Lugering gives an eloquent answer to that very question by discussing the difference between *having/experiencing* a thought and *expressing* a thought by saying:

*Expression* is the process of revealing in movement, sound, and words what one thinks and feels. There is an important distinction between *experiencing* a thought or feeling and *expressing* that thought or feeling. Everyone experiences thoughts and feelings that are deeply moving and to which he or she is fully committed. However, not everyone is able to reveal in movements, sounds, and words the rich content of his or her mental and emotional life. (xiii)

The lack of ability to fully relive that moment again sounds like something that is endlessly frustrating in my mind, and I feel like that is the very reason why people come to the theatre. They can find solace and comfort in the fact that they are living through a character's emotions- emotions that they too have lived through at some point in their life. Perhaps the audience couldn't explain it before they got to the theatre, but the communal sense that something special, maybe even something sacred, about the human condition was shared with them through the journey of that play remains.

With all the beauty that solo performance can offer, there are countless critics who will denounce the form and assert that it has no place in the theatre. Young writes that detractors tend to view solo performance in a negative light because they are intimidated by the art form, and he continues to share his feelings about these naysayers by stating that "people who say this is not theatre feel so threatened by what we're doing that I get concerned for them. I don't know why it makes them so uneasy...[but one reason could be] that it is highly confrontational" (188). Solo performance literally puts the actor under a microscope, and it is not just one person looking into their lens, but it could be hundreds; there is no fourth wall or mass of other actors to hide behind. You are going to push out at the edges into more challenging territory by performing solo performance- it is the nature of the art form and it simply demands it. Solo work takes sacrifice from both the actor that chooses to commit to it and the audience that chooses to watch it: the actor must be brave enough to share with their whole heart, and the audience must be brave enough to listen with their whole body; it is that very sacrifice that makes me love solo performance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SEGAL, ROSETHANAL, AND SMITH

#### The Science of Twinnings

What could be more eye-opening than being able to study something that defines the very essence of you? As mentioned previously, many of the authors I am reading for my thesis are actually twins themselves, who are eager to understand more about the very thing they were born being! For example, Nancy Segal, one of my primary sources of information on twin studies, has been taking an in-depth look into both the genetic and psychological science of twins for years at California State University and in Minnesota. Her findings offer a rich wellspring of knowledge for me to draw from and they enable me to compare my own identical twinship with her fraternal one.

Intrigued by the biological and psychological puzzle twins present, Nancy Segal, author of both *Entwined Lives* and *Indivisible by Two*, pioneered a plethora of twin studies that took place both in Minnesota- dubbed the Minnesota Twin Project- and in Fullerton at the Twin Studies Center at California State University. She is also part of the American Psychological Association, remains one of the main editors of the journal *Twins Research*, has served as the assistant director of the Minnesota Center for Twin and Adoption Research, and has been part of countless other twin-related ventures (Segal, *Entwined Lives* location 41). Segal was eager to gain some insight into the genetic and environmental influence underlying behavioral development as well as pursue some of the more philosophical questions that come to mind when thinking about the twin relationship.

Along with relaying the detailed scientific process that surrounds twin creation, Segal illuminates other ambiguities that the similarity and dissimilarity of identical twins pose, such as the limiting factor of genetic inheritance and the theory of *interactionism*. Nancy Segal suggests that “human behavior derives from *interactionism*: influences stemming from both genes and environment” (*Entwined Lives* location 220), rather than focusing on the argument of nature versus nurture. Instead, she states that scientists are trying to place more emphasis on the idea of “nature via nurture”, intimating that genes predispose certain individuals to gravitate towards specific environments and experiences as they develop (Segal, *Entwined Lives* location 222). Supporting this theory, twins are inclined to interact closely and cultivate interdependence with one another because they are so alike genetically; twins, in a way, are like a married couple, who usually drift towards each other because they are attracted to each other’s similarities. This near duplication of body and mind we see in identical twins constantly fascinates observant onlookers because the very idea and cherished belief of individuality is challenged at that moment; twins are a captivating exception to the general rule of human variation.

Many people are keen at noticing the blatant similarities of identical twins rather than their differences. If you ask any of my close family and friends, they will be the first to recount me and my sister’s many distinguishing features, but I never hear how different we are from first time observers of our twinship. Those looking at our appearance do not understand that my sister is lactose intolerant and I am not, or that I am prone to psoriasis and my sister is not; those first time onlookers are not aware that she needs reading glasses but my vision is 20/20, rather, they see two girls of similar stature, frighteningly comparable facial features, mirroring vocal pitches, and analogous personality traits. Nancy Segal, in *Entwined Lives*, writes that “identical twins who differ in important ways have helped identify the critical environmental keys that can

unlock certain behaviors in one twin, but keep them “closed” in another (location 316). With this statement, Segal is offering that studying twins and, more importantly, the differences of twins can offer clues to why some people are born with certain genetic mutations and others are devoid of them. Study after study and test after test, Segal has found that it is apparent that “human development proceeds according to a plan that is largely guided by our genes” (*Entwined Lives* location 330). Though the benefit to medicine is undeniably extant, these twin studies also bring pause to some scientists. These studies tend to suggest the controversial idea that if someone is shown to have a predilection towards a certain negative activity, such as crime, that they may not be at fault for committing that crime, seeing as it is an unshakeable part of their genetic code. Are we the author of our own actions then and how much of our actions can we take responsibility for if the above is true?

Every unique twin pair gives new insights to Segal, but the collective story between identical twins, reared together and reared apart, still remains surprisingly present and strong. Happening at random at a rate of approximately one in every 250 births, identical twins make up about 2% of the world’s population (Segal, *Entwined Lives* location 42). Though two percent sounds like a tiny number, twins appear much more common to the everyday individual because twins are so easy to spot. From Segal’s many studies, the close appearance of twins is not the only common theme linking most multiple pairs. Other similar threads in the shared collective include having a communal twin language, using competition as a constant source of motivation, and working together to achieve most everything as if stuck together with, what Segal terms as, “invisible glue” (*Entwined Lives* location 687). From a young age, I distinctly remember being able to communicate perfectly with my sister using the tiniest, most nuanced gestures and looks to effectively get the message across to her. My parents used to call our nonverbal conversations

“twinspeak”, and it seemed to them like we had our own language that only we would understand. We were always together, wanting to do what each other was doing, and it was a rare day when we wouldn’t end up finishing each other’s sentences at least a handful of times. Many people tend toward telepathy in efforts to explain this phenomenon, but genes and indisputable inseparableness were probably the culpable suspects for such events.

Though well versed in what it feels like to be an identical twin, before delving into Segal’s book, *Entwined Lives*, I had no idea how many categorizations of twins there were out there. From fraternal twins, to conjoined twins, to identical twins, to mirror image twins, the list of various twin types go on to boggle the mind. One type in particular caught my attention in Segal’s book mainly because it seemed like it explained me and Caroline very well, and that was mirror-image twins. Due to the fact that Caroline and I split later in the womb because we were twins that shared a placenta and a membrane, Segal writes that we would have a high chance of “seeing a reversal of traits [in us] leading to “mirror image” events” (*Entwined Lives* location 887) in our lives. Common mirror-image traits appear in birthmarks, dominant writing hands, and even hair whorls (which is true for me and Caroline). My sister and I also show mirror-image traits in our dental developments as well as fingerprints. Segal even writes that, though extremely rare, some mirror image twins can have their hearts on opposite sides of the body, known as *situs inversus* (*Entwined Lives* location 821).

Amongst the many solid viewpoints Nancy Segal makes in book, one of my favorites is her distinguishing of the terms “difference” and “separation”. She makes an extremely valid point that the two are not mutually exclusive nor are they mutually inclusive; though both difference and separation *can* exist in a twin pair, twins do not *need* to be separated in order to find differences amongst themselves. Caroline and I grew up doing all the same activities to one

degree or another; we both participated in tae-kwon-do, ballet, swimming, theatre, brain bowl, math team, music, and many other activities, yet I am pursuing theatre today as a professional career and she is pursuing medicine. Segal writes that:

Sometimes family dynamics propel identical twins to separate along academic lines, especially during adolescence when questions of identity and individuation become paramount...‘different’ interests or occupations may simply be variations on a theme. (*Entwined Lived* location 1483)

Both Caroline and I volunteered many years at the hospital where my mother worked as a nurse, fulfilling our hours of community service and learning what it was to be involved in the medical field. We both loved it. At the same time, we were both passionate about music and theatre. In the end, I believe we found slight differences in the level of our passion for each field, and found that we had a proclivity for a certain area over the other. Whether this was an unacknowledged agreement formed between the two of us in efforts to make sure we weren’t stepping on each other’s toes moving forward in life, or whether this was a completely unplanned development of our skills, the fact remains that we love each other’s passions deeply along with the ones we chose to pursue and we didn’t have to alienate our worlds in efforts to develop ourselves as unique individuals.

#### Rosenthal & Smith’s Solo Work: Using an Identity Driven Lens

Two artists that I drew a lot of inspiration from when it came to solo performance and telling a story in a mesmerizing way were Rachel Rosenthal and Anna Deavere Smith. The two women could not be more different from each other in regards to the type of work they produce, but similarities in their philosophies do exist. Both of these women challenge the ideal type of linear narrative, Rosenthal by incorporating the use of gesture, light, puppets, and dance into her solo performance, and Smith by creating a vista of characters who share their emotions and

thoughts about a specific event or topic. Learning about these two women in Contemporary Theatre Theory and American Theatre, I avidly soaked up their performance history and sought to apply the wisdom they had to offer to my own script-writing, character creation, and, ultimately, performance.

Drawn to the otherworldly, ancient look Rachel Rosenthal had, I became engrossed in her avant-garde and envelope-pushing type of performances. When you think of solo performance, I tend to conjure up an image of a man or woman on a stage, sharing a story in a stand-up comic fashion, but Rosenthal defies all sense of the standard. Though a woman, she has masculine features about her, and though a solo performer, she configures her stage in the oddest ways in efforts to challenge the typical sense of what it is to produce a piece of theatre. I began to understand the impetus of her philosophy even more when I discovered she felt connected to the principles Antonin Artaud championed, such as his fascination with visual spectacle, experiments with sound and acting, and a denial of the supremacy of the text in theatrical works (Roth 12). Moira Roth, author of the book *Rachel Rosenthal*, recites the following Artaud theory, one of his principles that Rosenthal seemed to love the most:

The spectator who comes to our theatre knows that he is to undergo a real operation in which not only his mind but his senses and his flesh are at stake. Henceforth he will go to the theatre the way he goes to the surgeon or the dentist...He must be totally convinced that we are capable of making him scream. (15)

Rosenthal affectionately nicknamed Artaud's book, *The Theatre and its Double*, "her bible" from which she birthed her many innovative theatrical notions from such as Instant Theatre. Roth describes Rosenthal as a woman who is a culmination of passion tempered by wit. Roth compares Rosenthal to Artaud noting their similar androgynous beauty and obsessive gazes and

finally she sums up Rosenthal by saying she has “a face imprinted by a life of deliberate intensity” (16).

Eager for liberation in every sense of the word, Rosenthal not only fled from her family’s lavish and controlling lifestyle, but she removed the thing that made her feel the most restricted out of everything; she removed the thing that made her most feminine- her hair. Only starting acting later on in life, around her 40-50s, Rosenthal pioneered what she termed Instant Theatre in the 1950s and 1960s (Roth 23). Roth quotes that Rosenthal described her form of theatre by describing it as an “assemblage of sensibility...a collision of totally disparate things put together as two ideas that created a resultant” (23). Actors never used props in a realistic way, Rosenthal engineered the first “colored” or “gel” light, and she peppered her works, whether solo or company based, with found sounds. A critic responded to several of her instant theatre works by labeling it as: “one of the most exciting experiments in theatre poetry...instant theatre possess some surrealism, dadaism, puppet theatre, and the opera to approach its meaning, which is poetry itself” (Roth 25). For years she would perform her creative works with a company inside tiny, found spaces in which she would litter with masks and costumes of her own device. It was not until a few years later, after attending a conference for women artists, where she would gain the inspiration to branch out into solo work.

Galvanized by the feminist movement and the revolutionary installations of Womanhouse at the West Coast Conference of Women Artists, Rosenthal was dumbfounded with the paucity of female artists that seemed to exist in America. By participating in these convention conversations, Rosenthal grasped a bigger sense of what it is to make the personal political, and after her mother died, the gateway to explore her childhood and her relationship with her parents through a feminine lens opened up in ways she couldn’t do while her mother was still alive.

Moira Roth describes this moment in Rosenthal's life by saying "she could reveal and disclose all this garbage, reveal all the dark secrets, and turn it into art: redemption and exorcism" (27). Though her audience would view her work as visceral, stunning, poignant, painful, theatrical, and sensual, Rosenthal would view it as cathartic above everything else.

Many of Rosenthal's solo shows in the 1970s and 1980s explored themes that revolved around aging, self-image, body image, gender roles, her childhood, and her place in the world's growth. She concocts a show around her own battle with arthritis with her production of *Replays* in 1975 and combines it with her childhood growing up in Paris, expertly using the lens of aging and memory to explore body decay, both mentally and physically, through time (Roth 36). She explores the nightmarish tendencies her governess had in her show *Charm*, using the lens of youth in efforts to convey how she viewed this horrendous figure. In order to emphasize the gross, sickly opulence that pervaded her childhood and her struggle with anorexia and body image, Rosenthal eats pastries and cakes throughout the entire piece. Finally, one of the most visually stunning and on-the-edge time for Rosenthal, in my opinion, is when she transforms herself into the Crone (Roth 40). She embodies the protector of Gaia and the animals, and delivers cautionary, often times frightening, messages to her audiences about the impending destruction of the Earth. Over the course of the 1980s, Rosenthal shaves her head in order to turn herself into a more non-gender defined person, she develops a series of solo shows that redefine her identity and authenticity, and she creates a "shamanistic" side to her performing self.

Driven by her own shifts in identity in connection with science, Rosenthal creates most of her Earth-centric later pieces based on an infusion of biography and biology. She coins the term "autobiology" and Roth says that Rosenthal defined it as "the face of the Earth becomes a metaphor for her own physiognomy" (47). For example, in her piece *Pangaeon Dreams*, she tied

the idea of body's degradation, such as the breaking of bones, with the idea of the shifting landscapes and tectonic plates of the Earth (Roth 48). Rosenthal was desperate for her audiences to gain a consciousness to science and she felt confident that her "autobiological" work would help the audience identify more with the planet they inhabited. One of my favorite things Rosenthal was quoted to have said by Roth is "[I] use my own experiences and try to affect the audience by reaching the universal through the personal" (65). Here is a performance artist who was eager to explain the human condition to audiences in a theatrical way, using her own personal experience of life as a palette from which to work from. Rosenthal was imaginative, inventive, and definitely non-linear in her theatrical approach. Her work, defined as Performance Art by many critics, is highly conceptual, deeply ritualistic, and incorporates metaphorical material on many levels. Despite Rosenthal's solo work being categorized as over the top theatrically, I admire how she never removed the element of her experiences and her identity, whatever it may have been for her at the moment, from her performance.

Along with Rachel Rosenthal, Anna Deavere Smith, another pioneer of innovative solo performance, inspired my own solo piece creation. Focused on the political temperature of America in the 1980s and 1990s, Smith fashioned a genre called "testimony plays" in order to "make up for the deficits of journalism, especially regarding race" ("Women in Theatre"). In response to the riots in Los Angeles and police brutality in connection with Rodney King, Anna Deavere Smith stated, in a *Newsday* interview, that "no one wanted to talk about race relations in the late 80s, so she wanted to put a tough topic in a jewel box" ("Women in Theatre"). Smith would interview people's reactions to specific events and would attempt to recreate their personas by imitating their vocal patterns and mannerisms- using those voices to create her form of docudrama; Fueled by the idea of speaking truth to power, Smith became interested in

presenting real people's stories to her audiences, and even to her students. Once an interview is set up, Smith focuses on helping her subjects to open up in communication so she can learn all of their vocal idiosyncrasies. On *Newsday* Smith states that she asks four main questions in order to achieve trust with her interviewee, including: "Have you ever been accused of something that you didn't do? Did they tell you about your birth? Have you ever come close to death? Do you remember the first day of school?" ("Women in Theatre"). Smith draws a comparison between how she would analyze Shakespearean characters and what she does with her interview subjects, pointing out that it is the irregular speech patterns and rhythms that tell you more about a character than their normal cadences.

By using all of these created characters based on real, recorded testimonies, Anna Deavere Smith wants her audiences to be able to question their own ignorance and ask themselves what they plan to do about it. She hopes to create expanded language for topics that have become too taboo over time or too convoluted due to limiting blanket of political correctness, and Smith blatantly declares that it is the artist's job to help these conversations occur by including these topics in their work ("Women in Theatre"). Similar to Rosenthal, she takes subjects in which she feels a personal connection with, and instead of directly tying in her own personal experiences to them, she uses the lens of other people's perspectives in order to communicate the overall topography of the historical moment to her observers. Smith seeks to broaden people's stereotypes by connecting the language of various people to their identities; she states that "identity lives in the in-the-present-moment sound the person is making and how they are making that sound is what identify is defined as" ("Women in Theatre"). Someone can have an odd moment of musicality to their speech or maybe a slight upward inflection in the way they say a certain phrase and that can tell you a great deal about them in a small amount of time.

Both Anna Deavere Smith and Rachel Rosenthal came from places where they felt like they didn't fit in the normal status quo. Rachel Rosenthal felt constricted in a mainly male-dominated occupation and set out to be more androgynous in efforts for her performance to stand out and Anna Deavere Smith, because of her mixed ethnicity, was told she could not be viewed as black or white, so she became determined to become anyone she wanted in her testimony plays. Both women sought to increase their audiences' consciousness and awareness about the historical and environmental topography of the world. Feeling connected to the political climate and using their experiences in innovative ways to highlight that climate, these women developed unique lenses in which to perform their solo work through, allowing their audiences to step into someone else's shoes for a little while. Following their suit, I wanted to do the same thing with my own solo work; I wanted my audience to be able to step into the shoes of what it's like to be an identical twin for a day.

## CHAPTER SIX

### INDEPENDENCE

#### Being One in a Set of Two

Comparing the size of each cookie and the line of milk in each glass was the norm for me and my sister; our way of life, as identical twins, consisted of sharing each other's clothes, secrets, faults, and perfections. From the moment we were born, Caroline and I were glued to each other, always wanting to be present in each other's moments of great achievement and of utter rebellion. As the second one out of the womb, I grew up frequently looking up to my sister and learning from her mistakes and successes; I depended upon her to a high degree whenever I was in need of advice or a supportive shoulder. Considering herself the "first-born", something that Caroline always reminds me of even though the difference in time is fairly negligible, Caroline usually attempts a project first before I jump in and she never misses a moment to offer constructive criticism in order to help me progress faster. Whether it was competing for attention or wanting fair and equal treatment from my parents, Caroline and I still managed to develop our own unique stamps to place on two very similar sets of personality. Despite wanting to spend every waking minute together doing practically the same activity, we both wanted, perhaps unconsciously more so than consciously, to be seen as different people.

It seems an objectively practical assertion to say that human beings begin to define and shape their personality based on the experiences they go through as they mature. Judith Harris, author of *No Two Alike* says that "in order to figure out how personality is shaped by experience, it is necessary to have a clear idea of how people learn" (115). We may be made up of genes that tend to direct us down a particular path of personality development at the forefront of our

growth, but as we experience life's ups and downs, it only makes sense to intuit that we adjust our personalities accordingly to those hiccups. For example, in my youth I, unlike my sister, was prone to hiding behind my father's legs in order to avoid conversation with unfamiliar faces, but I began to realize that being shy didn't help me gain any close friends; this experience encouraged me to shift towards a more social and outgoing personality, a personality subset I never knew existed in me until I discovered the lonely experience of not having a wide friend base due to my shyness. Caroline and I were always so close to one another that I never really knew I needed to develop more of an extroverted personality in order to socialize until we went through our first monumental moments of separation in college. Before that, Caroline and I were figuratively joined by the hip, learning how to read, write, spell, and communicate our feelings together!

From the moment we are born, we are discriminating babies; we do not accept everyone as our mother because we learn to recognize her face, her sounds, her smells, and her touch. This discrimination process allows us to mentally associate this woman with our survival- our number one need as a baby; we know to cry for something when it is necessary and we are aware of the moments we need to be cute in order to win the affection of the person who is continuing to ensure our survival in the world. Not only did I begin to discriminate all others from my mother, but I did the same for my sister; she was my ally in survival as well, and I knew her touch, her cry, and her smell. My very first learning experience in this world was to figure out how to exist together with my sister, and it would be an experience that would persist for many years to come. If I wanted to be praised or recognized for my achievements I would have to keep up if not surpass my identical cohort, if I wanted to recover from a bad day I would have to experience an

emotional catharsis through sharing my feelings with her, and if I wanted to be seen as unique and individual I would have to start making decisions for myself.

Unaware of it in the moment, I understand now that subtle nuances in my mom and dad's parenting towards me and Caroline probably played huge factors in our unique personality development over the years. Judith Harris states that:

Environmental differences within the family exist. They are real and they matter. Two children can grow up in the same home and yet have very different experiences there. One might get more of their parents' affection; the other, more of their parents' anger. One might be labeled 'the thinker'; the other might be the athlete of the family. (84)

Like subliminal messages sprinkled throughout a movie, my parents' small comments here or there made huge differences in what my sister and I thought about our status and rank within the family dynamic. I can remember seemingly trivial comments made to our family members about how "Caroline is better at math" or how "Liz is the follower", these phrases still sticking out vividly in my mind today. Though smart and well above the academic norm- sitting comfortably in the 90% of the school population's test scores- I always felt like I needed to catch up to Caroline academically because of these tiny remarks my parents would make. Of course they were unaware that they were questioning my ability to achieve as much as Caroline was achieving, but I didn't want to be viewed as second best for everything in their eyes. I still remember the day I discovered I was better at something than her, and being able to observe that moment in retrospect makes it fundamentally clear that this was an *enormous* moment for my individual personality growth. It all began when my piano teacher noted that the difference between my piano playing and my sister's piano playing was that Caroline was the more technical artist- always focused on playing the piece right- and I was the more musical artist- always using emotion to evoke meaning more than the actual rhythm or notes themselves. In that

moment, whether she knew it or not, my piano teacher told me I had more artistry in me than my sister had in her, not because of *what* I did, but because of the *way* I did it. That moment was the progenitor of all my artistic endeavors to follow and I owe my current passions to that particular moment of validation from my piano teacher.

I knew my parents, my friends, and my immediate family never had intentions of being mean or trying to create animosity between me and my sister, but their observational input about what my sister and I were capable of undeniably shaped who we would become once adolescence set in. Caroline began to pursue more academically oriented pursuits in middle and high school, where perfection and “getting things right” become a normative situation, and I began to pursue music, singing, dancing, and theatre, where being creative and emotionally invested took the forefront of technique. Both fields, science and theatre, demand an emotional connection and an observance of specific technique, but each field requires their own amount of sentiment and method that seemed particularly suited to what each of us needed in order to feel adept enough to attain success. For me and Caroline, the idea of competing with each other in a field in which we knew we were not as good at, became less and less appealing to our egos. Both of us had experienced what Judith Harris terms as “dethronement” and the feeling of being subpar to the other in something fueled a turning point for us in our personalities and fancies (91).

It was about midway through high school when I began to notice my mom loved my sister more and my dad loved me more. When I say this, I am not at all insinuating that my parents did not love us both very much, because it is clear they do. My parents are probably not even aware of my conclusion on this subject, but it is obvious that the differences in our personality development that have occurred thus far in our adolescence tended to connect more

towards one parent than the other- my dad's personality with my disposition, and my mom's personality with my sister's nature. Being more irrational and prone to emotional outbursts, my sister tended to win over my mom's compassionate sympathy, and being more blunt and entrepreneurial-minded, I won my dad over. Interestingly enough, I understand that my hardened shell came from the constant rejection I experienced as an artist, and the emotionally turbulent and sensitive shell my sister had cultivated probably sprung from her being invested in books and study for long periods of time. Caroline's constant studying led her to rebellious periods with her boyfriend, experiences I learned to stay away from as they did not sit well with my dad, while being always told I wasn't good enough by somebody forced me to create my own opportunities in the arts, actions that deemed unfamiliar territory for my mom. I would describe my dad as risky and business-oriented, like myself, and I would describe my mom as medically-inclined and patient, like my sister; over time it was apparent that both Caroline and I tended to follow a specific psychology that spoke to one parent over the other.

The most prominent relationships in our lives, aside from our parents and each other, became the boys in our lives. My sister began dating first, an experience that *definitely* changed my personality above everything else, even above the elements of what competition demanded. I had to quickly learn to deal with the strongest jealousy I have had in my life. Here was this guy, unfamiliar to me and Caroline for all intents and purposes, who had the gall to come into me and my sister's tightly knit world and pull her away from me. Suddenly, Caroline began spending more and more time with him, and I began to spend more and more time despising him for it; it would take me years to get over that hurt. This experience was like a falling domino that caused other dominos to fall because of the instigating domino, or experience. I am pretty sure, upon retrospect, that my parents saw the disconnect starting to happen not only with me and my sister

because of this guy, but with them as well. In efforts to stop the familial divide, my parents imposed dating rules (which appeared fair in my mind), and my sister and her beau became increasingly recalcitrant towards my parents in response. This prompted her boyfriend to be repetitively rude to my father, and subsequently made me realize how detrimental a disrespectful boyfriend could be to my potential to date, thus ensuring that I would pick out someone extremely courteous towards family later on. Though time has healed some of the past's hiccups, the fact remained that I had to deal with the world alone for the first time, and even though it hurt me immeasurably, I also became a lot more independent through the pain. The next year or so would include me dating a man that would become my husband a few years later, going to my first internship alone, starting college before my sister in a totally different field than she was pursuing, and making a lot of friends that would have no association at all with my sister.

### Writing a Solo Show

From the moment I saw my first theatrical production, *Phantom of the Opera*, in New York, I was mesmerized by the way a show could captivate the attention of so many different types of people. How was it that this one show could move both a twelve year-old school girl and a fifty year-old Wall Street business man in the same capacity? I was hooked as soon as the lights went down and the music swelled, suddenly imagining I was the only one in this massive theatre that the actors were performing for. Once the lights came back up after the last number, there was almost this sense of time returning again and something being lost; I didn't want to give up the magic of the moment that watching the show had created for me.

Perhaps I didn't go away from that New York theatre prepared for social reform, but there was a new feeling inside of me after seeing *Phantom of the Opera*, something that told me I

must find this beauty in my own life and perhaps be able to recreate it with the same brilliancy as these actors had just done. In love with the idea of becoming visible to people by being on stage, I also loved the dual notion of being slightly masked to the audience by being another character. This binary relationship of being free yet constrained enthralled me- I could be looked at, yet not scrutinized as Liz because I *was* another character. For me, it offered me a moment of relief from my twinship without feeling like I was figuratively “cheating” on the relationship of being a twin; performance seemed like it would give me an avenue to be myself while being someone else. Since seeing *Phantom of the Opera*, I have had the privilege of seeing and being in many shows, not all of them leaving me with that same sense of being changed or of *feeling* something profound, but a few have and many of those moments have been from either watching or doing solo shows in particular.

Since its conception, theatre has been used as a tool for social change, raising conscious awareness, public discourse, and, of course, a platform for teaching. There is something inherently transformative about watching and being in a piece of theatre. Jill Dolan, author of *Utopia in Performance*, quotes Richard Bauman saying that:

The consideration of the power inherent in performance to transform social structures opens the way to a range of additional considerations concerning the role of the performer in society. Perhaps there is a key here to the persistently documented tendency for performers to be both admired and feared- admired for their artistic skill and power and for the enhancement of experience they provide, feared because of the potential they represent for subverting and transforming the status quo. (1)

Many institutions banned theatre due to its contentious material or the ability this material had in provoking a subversive atmosphere amongst its observers. Theatre has incontrovertible power to change a person’s views or, at the very least, make them reevaluate their views, and during the duration of the performance, the show has the observer *feeling* with others around them. In a

world where we close ourselves off and pride ourselves on our self-sufficiency and independence, there is something lovely about being able to rekindle a common sense of the collective, a feeling of community, when we sit down together with a group of strangers to watch a performance. Dolan says that “performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (2). She intimates that theatre’s greatest power is the ability to reawaken the audience’s hope in the human potential.

The phrase “there is nothing to fear but fear itself” first spoken by Franklin D. Roosevelt in his inaugural address still resonates with the American population today. Fear rules individuals and often times it places people into inertia of action because they are too afraid to fight for change. In a world that is constantly defined by racial profiling, wiretaps, and warrantless search and seizures, it is nice to cling to the idea that theatre can bring the essence of hope to a seemingly hopeless society daunted by the cynicism of negative actions like terrorism. Though events like September 11<sup>th</sup> and the Boston Bombing can be described as none other than overwhelmingly hateful, there must be a way to articulate that there is, as Jill Dolan puts it, “a possibility for something better in the world...a hope for a collective future”(4) . I believe that by theatricalizing these odious world/human experiences and sharing those narratives in a communal way, we can articulate hope for civilization.

My commitment to theatre began mostly in college. I loved being on stage and performing for people because of the feelings of hope and joy I associated with the act of performance, but I had always done it in a group. I was part of spectacle shows like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *Streetcar Named Desire* to name a few. When I saw Anna Deavere Smith’s *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight, LA*, I was floored that one person could do a

show and embody so many different personalities, effectively communicating all their various points of views in one performance. I was also dumbfounded that I could feel so moved by a performance that revolved around an event I was not part of; I suddenly felt connected to an event that was not part of my historical memory. Jill Dolan describes Anne Deavere Smith's work as "performance ethnography" saying that:

Smith uses the forum of theatre and the vehicle of [her] body to bring together multiplicitous communities together for polemical discussion. She uses her own brand of ethnography to stage conversations among people too suspicious of, or hostile to, each other to talk in the same room. By bringing them together, for dialogic contemplation with the audience, Smith offers new, multiple perspectives that open up the meanings of historical events and material lives. (28)

In short, Smith gives the opportunity for her audience members, and herself, to walk in someone else's shoes for a little bit. I knew I wanted to be able to do that; perhaps I wouldn't change the world with my work, but if I could ignite come conversation between the me as the performer and the audience with my piece, then that would be victory enough for me.

I knew I wanted to write a show based on something deeply personal for me, something that I felt like not too many other people could write a solo show about. One day the idea of writing about being an identical twin came to me while I was in a devised theatre workshop. We were asked to write, in stream-of-consciousness fashion, about moments in our life that made the largest impact on us and I found that more than 75% of my moments ended up involving Caroline to some degree. It hit me that I should write a solo show about our relationship. More than anything, being an identical twin has defined me, and it would be wonderful to explore sharing that part of my identity with my school's faculty and peers through a solo piece. While creating it, the piece went through several edits, and ended up culminating in a performance that spoke volumes about staying connected to the people that mean the most to you and learning

how to cope with the obstacle of loneliness and separation. Finally, the most profound nugget that I took away from my piece was that there is a huge difference between being alone and being lonely.

Both being in and watching various performances gave me moments in which I felt lifted out of the detachment of my everyday life. There was something simply breathtaking about the idea of a performance's ability to bring out a moment of happiness or intense pain for someone to share with an audience, and I found that fact supported by the evidence of exploring my own life through the various relationships and characters that manifested in my work. From a parental scolding, to several sister "double trouble" moments, to fights about boyfriends, to revelations of deep secrets kept undisclosed by the confidences of sisterhood, to retelling blissful proposal moments, and reliving horrifying car crashes, my piece brought to life so many moments of life's intensities on both ends of the emotional spectrum for both me and Caroline.

There is almost this feeling, as an actor, of being possessed by the moment of the performance, and at the end you are free- but it's not always a joyful feeling; often times there is an emptiness associated with the finishing of a performance. Dolan says that performance moments like that can "make spectators ache with desire to capture, somehow, the stunning, nearly prearticulate insights they illuminate, if only to let them fill us for a second longer with a flash of something tinged with sadness but akin to joy" (8). We are always aware of the temporality of theatre and the ephemeral quality it has, unlike film which can be re-watched at the viewer's pleasure, and similar to theatre's inevitable end, the same could be said about all of our experiences in life no matter how hard we try to chronicle a moment by journaling, photographing, or attempting to immortalize through social media. Dolan asserts that:

At the base of theatre is the inevitability of its disappearance; its efficacy is premised on its evanescence. Performance's poignant ephemerality grounds all of our experiences at the theatre. The fleetingness of performance leaves us melancholy yet cheered, because for however brief a moment, we felt something of what redemption might be like, of what humanism could really mean, of how powerful the world might be in which our commonalities would hail over our differences. (8)

There is beauty in art, and perhaps that art doesn't have the power to change the world, but I believe the people that *see* that art *do* have that power! Art gives us the opportunity to glimpse something that might be, to visualize the "what if", and to view an impossible world as a probable and attainable one. Theatre has the remarkable power of allowing people live vicariously in another person's experiences for a brief time, and that was what I hoped to bring, if only for a moment, to the audiences that saw my solo piece *Teach me how to be Lonely*.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ROUTINE

#### Alone & Lonely

When compiling stories for my solo piece, I came up with anecdotes by the dozen, and though I had plenty enough to pen a novel if I so desired, I still wasn't sure the direction I wanted to head with my piece. What exactly was the message I wanted to communicate to my audience and what was so important about me growing up as an identical twin? How did I want to go about displaying the intense relationship of identical twins? While collecting these stories I began to realize that a lot of my impactful "twin" moments had to do with some sort of major life change that forced us to separate in a way, either physically, mentally, emotionally, or any combination of the three. Remembering an acting tip given to me by one of my undergraduate teachers: "Act the opposite of what you want the audience to feel; try the choice to be strong if you want the audience to cry", I started to understand that I could effectively relay the deep interwoven relationship Caroline and I had by creatingactable moments that showed us dealing with times of separation, isolation, and conflict.

During the search for my identity through the duality of my twin-ship, I began to realize I was discovering just as much, if not more, about my individuality during the process of creating my solo piece. I started to see a common through-line appear in the anecdotes I collected about me and Caroline that began to divulge our individual moments where we branched off into new territories of life without each other because certain situations, either created by ourselves or

others, demanded it. No doubt these leaping off points for both of us created slight alterations in the foundation of our “mirror” personalities, and as Nancy Segal says in her book *Indivisible By Two*, “Our genetic backgrounds [were like] ‘faithful squires’ leading us toward people, places, and events that brought us pleasure and steering us away from things that didn’t” (16). Though I would have been the first person to say that Caroline and I had our differences if someone asked me about them, I found great relief when reading back my chronicled stories of me and my sister; the differences were clearly there and the reasons for those particular shifts in attitudes, likes and dislikes, and interests became something understandable and tangible. It was almost like my narrated memories became evidence for me, giving me the ability to say I am my own person- an individual who can stand on her own without her sister.

Not only did this newfound, or perhaps more aptly titled “rediscovered”, individuality empower me, it intrigued me by how good it made me feel. All my life I had been inseparable from my sister, and not simply in the figurative sense; I wanted to do everything she did, be everywhere she went, and get everything she got. Nancy Segal studied a pair of twins that remarked that their relationship made them feel invincible and she quoted one of the twins saying “there is *nothing* we cannot do. When we are together, it’s like looking at someone who is seven feet tall” (*Indivisible by Two* 108). For someone who grew up with a sister developing secret languages and concocting rebellious schemes that required two partners in crime to achieve, feeling like we are indomitable when we are together is an extremely familiar feeling; so if the following is true, why was I so happy and relieved to come to terms with my own unique and *separate* individuality? Could there be a downside to constantly being “two peas in a pod”? Segal writes that:

Twins need to develop their own personalities. Twins should have different classrooms, friends, and experiences. But most twins I know relished their time together and do not feel that it hurt their individuality in any way. Of course, periods of separation could be helpful if one twin feels controlled or intimidated by the other. (*Indivisible by Two* 153)

In a way, I felt intimidated by how intelligent my sister was. Despite feeling secure in my own academic capabilities, I could not help but envy her mental acumen and prowess for science and math, two subjects that always had me struggling. Perhaps that pushed me to study something completely on the other end of the academic spectrum in college, like theatre, or maybe I simply felt encouraged to pursue the arts because of the words of my piano teacher. My parents always supported my desire to follow an artistic path, and though I still feel they connect with my sister and her field of study over me and my own occupation, I love them for the space they give me to be myself. Their approval, whether they are aware or not, gave me permission to explore being “Liz” without having to stay glued to my sister every hour of every day, and it probably has helped us stay as close as we are now.

My parents used to affectionately call me and Caroline a “package deal”. From recounting stories of our birth to tales about us starting new activities or hobbies, my dad used to say that we either both did something, or neither one of us did the activity. I vividly remember the day my parents had both my sister and I tested for gifted, and when one of us made the cut and the other was a few points shy, my parents forced the school to retest us both- on the next test we had similar high marks. My dad was beyond furious when the school had propositioned that one of us was smarter than the other and that we should be separated in our classes, and he made sure that we kept our “package deal” component intact by ensuring that we participated in gifted classes together. Though my parents were constant enforcers when it came to us doing things together, they could not always prevent the inevitable separation that Caroline and I would be met with over time. The first day I had to experience being in a different class than my sister I

felt beyond lonely. I thought to myself that there was something off, or what Segal calls “a little empty feeling in the back of my mind” (*Indivisible by Two* 19). It took me quite a few weeks to make friends of my own, separate from my sister, but I managed to do it, and more than that I felt accomplished for making those friends. I started to see that being alone did not have to be synonymous with being lonely- a powerful tool of growth when it came to developing my *true* identity as Liz.

When thinking of the word lonely, there is this sense of emotional death that I associate with that word; when I’m truly lonely, I feel a hollow sensation incomparable to anything I’ve ever felt before. Reading Segal’s book *Indivisible by Two*, she has a section discussing the tragedy of a twin losing their twin and the loneliness associated with that loss. Segal states that:

If someone just cut your leg off suddenly you would be in pain for a very long time, [but] eventually you would learn to how to walk but it wouldn’t be the same. And some days you may look down and say, ‘What happened to my leg?’ And that’s how I see it. You’ll eventually learn how to function, but it still will never, ever be the same. (*Indivisible by Two* 160)

Wrapping my brain around the idea of being a “twinless twin” terrifies me and I hope I have many years to worry about going through the inordinate amount of pain losing my sister would bring me. I cannot begin to imagine how birthdays would feel or the hurt that I would cause my family simply because I am a constant living reminder of her. Though I have been lucky enough to escape agony that extreme, several incidents that had me praying for my sister’s life brought me close to the edge of that pain, especially when she was in a car accident a year and half ago. Fortunately, she was okay, and that experience has brought us even closer; it’s as if we now understand that our expectations of being together forever will eventually, one day (and hopefully in the far future), will not be met. That experience has also put other moments of loss that I have experienced with Caroline in perspective for myself. Though I have known pain by

being separated from her in classes or distant from her because of other close relationships she developed, I knew the pain of being *alone* rather than *lonely*- two very distinct things. I could never understand the people that would tell me I should learn how to be lonely, or that being lonely was good for me in order to grow as an individual. Loneliness sounded like a cruel joke to me, and it was only due to the writing of my solo piece that I began to recognize that my strength came from dealing with situations when alone, rather than giving in to the idea that I was lonely because Caroline wasn't there; I knew the latter was wrong because as long as she was a phone call or a visit away, I knew I would never be lonely.

### Structure of Writing Successful Solo Work

Having had years of cultivating my vast imagination in rehearsals and on the stage, I was eager to start compiling stories based on my many childhood memories. In her book *For the Love of the World: A Harangue with Practical Guidance on Writing & Performing Solo Dramas that Matter*, Deborah Lubar quotes Pablo Neruda to have said that:

It's the words that sing. They have shadow, transparence, weight, feathers, hair and everything they gathered from so much rolling down the river, from so much wandering from country to country, from being roots for so long. (121)

The anecdotes of my life simply flowed at the start; there were countless moments of my sister and I sharing secrets, getting into trouble, attempting to resolve fights between the two of us, and celebrating times of unmitigated joyfulness. Though there were more stories than I could count, something felt missing. I wasn't sure if it was the need for another voice, the necessity for a thread or theme to connect the narratives I had, or both of these ideas, but something still felt hollow. Why would people truly come to hear my words shared through a performance? What did I want the audience to leave with? Why was my story significant, or *more* importantly, how

could my writing and performance transcend the idea of sharing “my” story and reach a place where I could share a “collective” story about humanity.

While there may be no one “right” answer to any of the questions above, Lubar discusses the idea of locating the pulse of all the stories you create as an actor when compiling a solo drama. Lubar mentions several quests an actor often finds themselves on when pursuing solo work including “finding the heartbeat [of their] stories, gathering and transmuting them into drama, enriching and enlivening the spirit of the characters who speak them, and thinking about why the audience needs to hear [those stories] in the first place” (3). Her book is centered on healing through the arts and Lubar asserts that the actor’s responsibility is to reveal a connection to the “Larger Human Story” with their work in order to heal the world’s fractured society (3). With every tumultuous moment the 20<sup>th</sup> century has brought to our nation and to nation’s around the world, I believe this essence of healing through art is essential for humanity as whole in order to avoid turning into an apathetic nation devoid of compassion. Lubar illustrates a beautiful African story in which I resonated with when working on and completing my piece; the story recounted the following:

A bright lantern which brought the first light to all the world is dropped, smashing that clarity into thousands of small glimmers after which, as each person finds one tiny bit of light in the darkness, he believes- as many always have and many still do- that he possesses the whole. (4)

We are all searching for our little piece of light in this world, and if we can find a bit of it and share that bit with someone else, whether it is through theatre or another means, then that can get us even closer to achieving the whole lantern.

Sometimes ego can associate itself with performance, whether it is the actors that cannot let it go, or the audience/critics who cannot see anything but self-indulgence in the artist’s

performance. One of my fears in writing a solo piece, along with a few other challenges to tackle, was getting trapped by my ego while attempting to find myself within the work. How could I, as Lubar puts it, “probe the depths of the human soul” (7), without coming across as patronizing, self-imposed, or haughty in my work? Jo Bonney, author of *Extreme Exposure*, asserts that though the actor pursuing solo performance has both “great power and great vulnerability” because solo performance has a “phenomenal quality due to the raw energy of spontaneous storytelling” (xiii), she warns current and prospective artists that this is the “me decade”, otherwise known as the “era of self” (xiv). Though I desire self-expression through my own storytelling, I want to give the gift of connection to my audience, not just flaunt my autobiography in front of them in a self-centered manner. I wanted to empower them with my stories of conquering pain and finding unconditional love, and hopefully my audience would acknowledge a truth in Lubar’s statement that “the story of one (or one’s culture) life cannot be told separately from the story of others” (11). We put up boundaries and walls around our hearts every day in order to protect ourselves from pain or emotional vulnerability and I sought to bring those boundaries down, if only for a little while, by sharing about the things I know best- myself and my sister.

So what is my intention with my work then, egos aside? What does an audience achieve or get from sitting down and watching my work and why is my project valuable? Peter Brook said that “theatre has the power to speak to the unmet needs of its time and place, and to answer a society’s hunger for what is lacking.” What could it be that my audience needs? Everyone collectively experiences pain, love, grief, loss, happiness, and vulnerability, so why then, is it important for me to share my own experiences that encompass all of those feelings? Lubar states that “one of the most pressing tasks and possibilities of our craft is to make bitter, sharp-edged

parts of the human story literally palatable and digestible [for our audience]” (22). By embracing tension in my work and displaying both the grief and beauty in my life through solo work, I can encourage those walls we build around our hearts to come down and encourage my audience to be moved and touched by another’s experiences. These stories in which actors lay themselves out on the line to tell, have the power to bind the audience to the performer; despite the actor being completely alone on stage, they can gradually develop a deeply intimate bond with the audience because something sitting at the core of our being has been discovered through the unfolding of their solo work, connecting the artist to everyone in the room.

Though my intentions of reaching a bond with my audience are present, and though I have pages of personal anecdotes laying around on every surface in my apartment, how could I connect the hodge-podge of narratives I had penned into a framework for a show? Did I have the potential to knot together all these disparate stories into a veritable work of drama, and where could I start? Lubar suggests that the actor studies their words and “reexamines their material, looking at the text, images, sounds, and ideas, [in order to] ponder their nature and content to look for what connects them at the core” (105). My quest became searching for the message at the heart of my work and the spine that would connect all of the pieces together in order to convey a predominate message. By examining the essence of each monologue, I started to understand that the times I remembered the most in my adolescence were moments in which Caroline and I were attempting to solve a conflict between each other or moments in which I was separated from her. Suddenly I understood the vehicle in which I would use in order to convey how strong my relationship to my twin was; in order to express the strength of our bond and what that felt like to an audience of non-twins, I would have to explore, in front of them, what it was like to be apart from her.

After several edits, I began to understand that one voice simply wasn't enough to carry my message. I began playing with the idea of speaking as both my sister and myself, and shortly after that I began doing stream-of-consciousness journal writing in efforts to complete my piece and locate the voices of other characters I shared relationships with such as teachers, parents, and (boy) friends; my challenge was to explore the theme of our individuality while revealing the voices and rhythms of the people that composed both of our lives. I ended up traveling chronologically through the years of me and Caroline growing up, and hit upon every major moment of isolation (whether good and sought after separation or unwarranted and hard to deal with separation) through both my sister's voice, my own voice, and the voices of those around us; whether it was someone commenting on our differences, an actual reliving of an experience in which I found myself drifting from Caroline, or a moment in which I had no control over our imminent alienation, the theme of developing my *own* self while staying true to my twin relationship remained.

One of my biggest challenges in locating the physical rhythms and vocal musicality to each character, most of them based on reality perhaps with a touch of fiction added in to boost their theatrical qualities, was to avoid sinking into patronizing pockets of sentimentality in my acting. Sweetness is a fine quality to have, but I wanted my piece to have more substance; I wanted my work to contain gravitas as much as it held love, because, similar to the idea of contentment, how can you be sure you are truly happy until you have felt some moments of pain in your life? My director, Belinda Boyd, worked with me tirelessly to go beyond the veneer of fluffy sentimentalism, in efforts to locate my own *true* voice when points of narration came up in my work. I wanted the audience to know that it was me, Liz, who was speaking to them, and not

some devised narrator character; funny enough I had to practice being the *real* and *natural* me for my own show! Lubar calls it your “true voice” stating that:

Your true voice is the voice that has spark in it, connecting to and reflecting on something bigger than itself. That does not imply that all other [voices] are false, they’re just not all connected to our mysterious core. That voice in us through which we speak closest to the bone is by no means a reflection of one’s whole story; all our voices express in one way or another the diverse threads of our experience and being. But there is something of courage, wisdom, and fierce love which appears to live uninhibited and unashamed inside that sparked voice. For a hundred and one reasons we mask it most of the time, mostly forgetting, or fearing, that it’s there. (98)

This beautiful quote speaks to the heart of my goal, to discover how to show *me* to an audience while still using the vehicle of multiple characters (along with myself) to tell my full story.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### REFLECTION, INSPIRATION, AND CONCLUSION

#### My Best Friend is a Mirror of Myself

One of the elements that made writing my solo show *Teach Me How to be Lonely* easier, was the fact that it was going to be a piece centered on the deepest friendship I have ever known in my life. To say that Caroline and I are best friends, would be understating how intensely close we are to each other. There are moments in which I receive inexplicable sparks in my brain and for no reason at all, I will have a compulsory need to call her and make sure everything is okay; more often than not, the call will have come at the most opportune time when she needed to hear from me because something was amiss. Our relationship goes beyond tight-knit, and I would even dare to say our bond is something that crosses over into the realm of supernatural; there is indescribable electricity that emanates between me and my sister when we are together. If it weren't for her, I know I would not be as motivated, as professional, or as creative as I am today.

Being a twin, there were challenges I had to face when growing up that certainly brought up self-demons and highlighted my knack for self-criticism and deprecation. I had to understand, over time, that competition was not something to shy away from and avoid; the very nature of comparing myself to my sister was something literally impossible to evade. Whether by my own self, Caroline, my parents, friends, or strangers, I would be compared to my sister on looks, on personality, on abilities, and on everything else that a superlative could be placed on. Both my sister and I constantly lived in a microscope of observation because of being identical twins; our every move was analyzed to some degree. There were times where being put under this pressure cooker of scrutiny seemed as if it would just tear me to pieces, and all I wanted to do was run

away from it all so I could simply be myself. I didn't want to be judgmental when I looked into the mirror in the morning to see who looked better going to school, I didn't want to make assumptions that Caroline was destined for great things because she received a higher score than me on a test in class, and I didn't want to be seen as the same person as my sister thereby scaring everybody off from being *my* friend. Though I loved being around my sister, I was afraid that because I had no one else that even came close to the role she filled in my life, I would need to always be around her.

The stress of competition and having to hold my own against her in every facet of life nearly paralyzed me, but it also saved me. There were days where I would not be able to get out of bed because I was convinced that I couldn't do what she was doing to the ability she was doing it. Every year without fail though, both my sister and I would end up being top of the class, and even more, top of the school. We encouraged each other to get better grades, ask challenging questions in class, soak up every bit of knowledge we could from those around us, and never take being second best lying down. I honestly don't know if I could have gone into acting without the hardened shell my sister helped me develop. Without the constant need to pick myself up off the ground when I did worse than my sister, or the ability to accept doing better than her with a gracious heart, I would have been an emotional mess trying to pursue acting. I feel as if her words of encouragement and motivation helped me through times where people told me I wasn't good enough to pursue performance; she was the one I would call in hopes that she would lift my spirit up when I was knocked down an emotional peg. Similarly, I was the continual resource for my sister's emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual renewal, and she still contacts me frequently to this day to talk through problems and conflicts she experiences in medical school.

Most of the important moments in our lives were things that didn't need to be spoken aloud between my sister and I- we simply felt them. When she was hurt, surprised, elated, or holding out on a secret, I would always be able to tell from simply looking at her. If my parents made an insensitive remark or if someone else compared us in a negative way, we were right there next to each other consoling the other out of their despondency. The compassion and empathy we learned from being together and having that electric bond with each other appeared to surpass the empathy most of the human race had for each other; I had never met anyone else in my life that could read my emotions or respond to my feelings better than my sister. Somewhere down the road, Caroline and I must have come to the conclusion that being a pair, though daunting in some respect, was better than being lonely. It was as if we innately knew that in order to be happy, we would end up being in different fields, but always respect the other's field equally if not more than our own. Caroline has told me on several occasions that she felt the same way as I did about competition and about having to keep up with me, and though she didn't have to say it bluntly to me when we were going through middle and high school, I kind of realized her feeling, acknowledged that I felt the same way, and did something to establish myself as a different person so she could have her space.

When a baby is conceived, they have this idea of their own space, albeit a small confined space, but a space of their own nonetheless. They can kick, move, and explore the world of the womb at leisure for nine months, and then when they arrive into the world, their space multiplies infinitely; their space continues to grow as they develop and become cognizant of the enormity of the world around them. Twins don't have those same luxuries. Twins have to share a room from day one, and more often than not, they have to share a room when they get out into the bigger world around them for several years to come. They are taught to share by nature, because

they wouldn't survive in the womb otherwise, and they are taught to share by their parents and friends, because clothes can be worn by two and a cake can have two names on it. In a way, the development of single personalities can actually be stunted through the demanded need to share. Everyone tells you to accept the same things for economic, convenience, or equitability reasons, and suddenly you find them telling you to like pink when blue is your favorite color, or to wear skirts when you like jeans. There were certainly moments in which I felt like I was an extension of my sister, and vice versa, rather than us being viewed as our own entity. Something felt comforting about the idea of being able to share anything, but I wanted to be given that choice, I didn't want it to be obligatory. In some respects, my tomboy nature probably sprung from a rebellious streak in efforts to move away from my sister's princess phase, and my creativeness and impulsiveness probably grew out of a defiant moment in response to my sister's bookworm phase. I had shared enough in life and I knew my sister felt the same way I did, both of us acknowledging that we no longer needed to always *share* personalities and likes in order to survive. In fact, there was a clear shift in our ideas to the thought that we would need to *not share* things in order to survive one another or maintain a good relationship between the two of us!

#### How Multiple Identities inform me as an Artist

Though it may seem counterintuitive to say, one voice was not enough for my solo piece. I began writing my piece from my perspective, all of Liz's stories chronicled for my audience to see; the stories began from when I was in diapers (thanks to my parents' anecdotes) laddering all the way into my college experience. Something was obviously missing though as I read what I had written out loud to my thesis chair, Be Boyd. I started thinking about the idea of how I was never alone in all of these stories, as my sister was always there with me, and I understood that I

should include her voice in my work as well. I felt like it would be a disservice to our relationship if I didn't portray how she felt about certain moments, and I felt it would negate the idea that we both have unique identities and stamps on the world if I didn't have her in my work as a character that could stand on her own.

It was easy to think of moments in which Caroline authored specific events or situations in which she was going through something completely different than me. I talked to her so often that nothing seemed secret about her life, but then I thought, am I being fair? Can I simply assume that she tells me all her feelings and craft her monologues from those feelings instead of some other method? Again, the idea of my own values and beliefs came up which, in turn, challenged my principles. If I believe and value my own identity and personality as something different than my sister's personality, then I need to assume that I don't know everything about her. Suddenly I got the idea to get to know her (or know her again) the way every reporter gets to know their subject, I would interview her similar to the way Anna Deavere Smith interviews her potential characters. I decided that I would come up with a list of questions that asked how she felt about certain moments in our lives and I would record her responses, and that would be the vehicle to get me from one section to the next. It was scary how well those recorded responses ended up fitting those monologues that I came up with, and though I have known my sister for my entire life, I learned (or relearned) how funny, genuine, poetic, and candid she is in a few short moments. There were some things she said that relieved me, made me contemplate, and touched my soul in a reinvigorated way. It was lovely to be able to use her voice as chapter marks to the book of my solo piece, and those various recordings enabled my "twin" monologues to flow from one to the next.

After creating several stories narrated by a specific twin telling the event, I noticed that something still felt a little lackluster about my piece. It was almost like I was hitting people over the head with the idea that I'm a twin. Be Boyd, my thesis chair and director on the project, gave me the idea of adding in some new voices into the mix; she told me to write and see what "stuck to the wall". Following her advice, I had a few sessions of stream-of-consciousness journaling in which I embodied the thoughts of my mom, my dad, my teachers, my friends, my brother, and my boyfriend. I wrote about different circumstances they had to deal with or different questions they might have had to answer in their lives, such as "how did it feel to be pregnant with twins?", "do you get lonely being the little brother?", "what makes Caroline different from Liz?", "what were some trying moments you had when raising twins?", etc. These instigating questions really inspired some funny moments, and of course, each moment began to develop subtle nuances the more detail I gave it, the more specific I got, and the more particular the voice became. Sometimes some fictionalization of characters and situations needed to occur in order for the mini-monologue to become richer in characterization, but it seemed the right path to take because it helped define one character clearly from the next character. Overall, there were a few passages I penned that ended up staying in my notebook, but many monologues ended up "sticking to the wall" and worked themselves into my script *Teach me how to be Lonely*.

In order to truly understand a concept or an event, it's pertinent to look at it from several perspectives in order to gain a wider understanding of the moment. Anna Deavere Smith embodies that idea by peppering her works with many various characters, displaying their individual outlooks about the situation to the viewing audience. Her work places the circumstance in a lens that is looked at by people of different cultures, race, ethnicity, ethical

beliefs, and environmental backgrounds. In *Utopia in Performance*, Jill Dolan quotes Anna Deavere Smith saying:

The spirit of acting is the *travel* from the self to the other...If we were to inhabit the speech pattern of another, and walk in the speech of another, we could find the individuality of the other and experience that individuality viscerally...Learning about the other by being the other requires the use of all aspects of memory, the memory of the body, mind and heart, as well as the words. (63)

By investigating the minds of the people that grew up having to raise, instruct, and befriend us, I could reveal very telling moments to my audience through the perspectives of the characters outside my twinship; these outside perspectives could inform my observers about the intricacies of being a twin without being patronizingly blunt about the fact that I am, indeed, an identical twin. Jill Dolan writes that she is interested in several things when she observes what she calls “monopolylogues” in solo work- or the embodying of various characters to tell story. The aspects of the performance that intrigue Dolan being:

[the] address of the audience- how [the performers] locate the *act* of listening in different spheres with different inflections, how [the performers] create the transformation of characters, and how [the performers] tell stories that criticize conventional political assumptions and work to reorder a world out of joint. (67)

The performer must establish clear identities for each of their characters and must not be afraid to adopt that character’s point of view in their work even if it challenges their own. Those differing standpoints are critical for the audience to get a more expansive view of the event being discussed.

How do I form these characters in my show and authenticate their identities, even the ones that I’m not fond of? Though I may not necessarily like all my characters personally, they are still integral to conveying my story of how I became me. Dolan brings up a fascinating point in her book that Anna Deavere Smith did not need to love each character she devised and put on

the stage in order to create her world of “what ifs” (87). They exist for the main reason of trying to challenge the audience to have discussions that they wouldn’t have had the courage to have if those characters’ perspectives weren’t revealed to them. Dolan continues to state that Anna Deavere Smith isn’t an artist who beams out love into her audience, but is rather an artist who puts forth a question about the possibility of love between two seemingly disjointed and dissonant groups (Dolan 83). Channeling those thoughts, I didn’t love the scolding side to my father or that my teacher wanted to separate my sister from me in class, but if I could step into the shoes of these characters and really become them, they could offer my audience perspective on how *Liz* might have felt in that moment; Only by being true to that specific character could I give that authentic observer some insight into my world.

In order to finish my piece, which was well on its way to its final stages, I would have to detail the monologues I selected that upheld the theme of me conquering being by myself either physically, mentally, emotionally, or all three. My writing was there, but how could I, as *Liz*, portray all of these various characters, making them each very different from one another. Michael Luger, in his book *The Expressive Actor*, describes how actors use expressive actions to detail a character for their audience. Luger describes expressive action by saying that “expressive action is any physical action that simultaneously contains and reveals thought and feeling. The physical life of a thought or feeling is revealed through the voice and body with expressive action. It can be as small as the shrug of the shoulders or a disapproving look” (1). These small expressive actions, the intonation and inflection of the voice, or minute but telling physical gestures, communicate the life of the character to the audience that is watching them. During my rehearsals, Kate Ingram, Holly McDonald, and Be Boyd, all members on my thesis committee, observed my piece and gave me notes on how to detail and make each character

specific. They would tell me to pay attention to the range of each character's voice, perhaps add in a certain vocal-ism to color that character's personality, and they would challenge me to locate each character's physical center so I articulate where the character thinks and moves from for the audience. Before I knew it, each character could stand on their own, they contributed to the overall message of the piece by augmenting the themes surrounding them, and my piece began to shape into a beautiful retelling of who I am and how the most important people in my world shaped me into that person.

### Conclusion

I set out to write a solo show and along the way I discovered elements about my identity that I never even knew existed within me! I was aware of my core values- hard-work, dedication, creativity, and professionalism; I was not aware the depth that my passions, my sorrows, and my thoughts held. While setting out to write a piece about being a twin, my solo show, *Teach Me How to be Lonely*, turned into a work that challenged the idea of basking in loneliness, nurtured the idea of loving through our differences, and championed the idea of surviving while being apart. I doubted myself several times when writing and rehearsing, wondering if I could do justice to the characters I had put on paper. I had never attempted to be a grandpa, or a four year old little boy, or even a pregnant mother, and now I had to be all of those characters, and they had to ring true to my audience! There was such a feeling of liberation that came from writing a piece that was totally my own only to be performed by me; even if no one would ever give me the chance to perform on a stage again, I was armed with the knowledge that *I* could give *myself* that chance. Here was a way for me to tell the stories that mattered to me and here was a way I could open my heart right down to its core and share what lay inside. I have never known anything as frightening or as exhilarating as solo performance, and though I have been onstage

many times portraying several characters, the amount of courage that I needed to complete my project and put it up for people to view seemed an inordinate amount to me.

Solo work is a form that truly reminds me that acting, above all else, takes immense skill. Lugering says that “In moments of great passion, we are often at a total loss; rarely does the caliber of our daily discourse possess the grace, skill, power, sensitivity, and ease characteristic of artful expression” (xiii). We are not actors in our ever day life- we are simply living our moments, affected by the people around us and the situations that we are placed in, in an authentic and genuine way. Actors are called upon to recreate those moments with truth and honesty, and above all, with poignancy; they are given the charge to be society’s best models for life’s complex thoughts and feelings. As a theatre artist, I wore many hats to complete my project: writer, co-director, actor, solo performer, producer, and sound/light director, and various people, like my amazing stage manager and wonderful committee enabled me to keep my stamina up. Every hat was very different, though they came from the same source, much like identical twins themselves, and I found myself learning how versatile I could be when I pushed to the limits of my creativity.

I was so encouraged by the response I received from my solo show that I plan to continue working on it and remounting it for different venues after the completion of my degree. I plan to continue writing works of my own and I sincerely encourage other artists to do the same. If nothing else, you will find the importance of your voice, and you will be able to discover the stories that speak to your very being, and if not storytellers at our core, what are we as artists? My solo show allowed me to find my creative heartbeat, empowered me to understand the depth my acting can have, and finally, it made me realize that although I have learned a great deal from being apart from my sister, I don’t think I will ever have to learn what being lonely feels like.

## CHAPTER NINE

### JOURNALS

01-15-14: Today I started writing my solo piece. I have no idea what to call it, so I'll leave the name for another day. I do know that I want to write it about being an identical twin. Being a twin has always fascinated me. I used to do a lot of my middle and high school science projects around twins because it felt neat to consider something about myself as rare. All my life I would hear stories of crazy things my sister and I used to do from my parents, and I know that some of my strongest memories, both good and bad, deal with my sister. I would have lots of stories to share, so why not give it a go and see where I end up? I started writing down some of my strongest memories and several big ones popped up: 1) The day I left for home on a bus for the first time and my sister wasn't on there with me. 2) When my sister and I ended up in the hospital because of drinking cough medicine. 3) Sharing clothes and fighting over them. 4) Getting boyfriends. 5) Leaving for college...and the list went on. I just started to riff, listing memory after memory on paper. I remember reading a tip in Michael Kearns' book *The Solo Performer's Journey*, that when doing "stream-of-consciousness" writing about a memory, you should aim to be as descriptive as you can when recounting the details of that specific memory. He advised that it would make for richer acting material later on down the road when you start putting your script on its feet. I was able to muster up about four pages of typing- which came out to about seven different monologues. I didn't even realize it at first, but the monologues ended up flowing in chronological order, starting from when I was a toddler, continuing on until about my late teens/early twenties. The fact that I wrote naturally in chronological order probably tells me something about my personality... I'm not sure if I'll stick to that form, but let's keep it for now and see what it informs about my piece. It took me about an hour or two of

typing to get out those four pages, which seems a good start, but I know it's really rough. I'll read it to Be when I can and see what she says about the direction I'm going in. I want to make sure I get lots of advice from her about composing a well put together solo piece. Aside from the smaller piece I did last semester, I have never really worked on creating and performing my own solo piece before. I want to make sure it has enough substance for me to sustain the entire work by myself. But I'm sure that'll develop along the way.

01-25-14: I finally got a chance to meet up with my thesis chair, Belinda Boyd, to read her what I have so far for my solo piece. Grad school is pretty busy! My goal is to be done editing my script by the beginning of next school year so I can start putting the show on its feet. I read her what I had written, and Be gave me great compliments about my writing as well as much needed constructive criticism. She is extremely encouraging! She said my writing has flow and that I should consider keeping up with writing my own work after college, and I have every intention to do so. There are not too many other mediums where I feel quite as free as when I creatively write- it might even surpass the feeling I get when I act. Sure I love being onstage, but I am developing a character that has already been composed into existence by a playwright. When I write from my heart, I am putting words down onto pages that have never been said before in that order; I am telling stories that no one else can tell- or at least not in the same way as I would tell them. The only thing that comes close to the freedom I feel when I creatively write is when I compose my own music and lyrics. I really appreciated her compliments and feedback, as they will push me to keep up with adding more material to my solo piece. She liked my stories so far, but told me that something felt missing. Some things she asked me to think about included: 1) Adding my sister's voice to my solo work. 2) If I wanted to play both myself and my sister and how could I differentiate between the two of us in my writing. Did she say things differently than

I did? Catch phrases? Jokes? Pauses? 3) What was the timeline I wanted to work with as far as my solo piece went? 4) What did I want my thesis to focus on? Did I want to focus on simply writing my own solo piece? Did I want to perform it?

I knew that I definitely wanted to perform my show if I took the time to write it. Perhaps that decision was fueled by pride, but I know myself. I never like to do things halfway. If I put the work into creating a show meant to be performed by myself, then I was going to make sure, come hell or high water, that I would perform this piece. I really wanted to create these words for the purpose of sharing them and having the knowledge of what it would be like to see the reactions of those I share my piece with. I loved the questions that Be asked me to chew on, and I figured I would contemplate the majority of these questions over the next few weeks.

01-30-14: I added some new material to my solo piece today. I included stories from my sister's point of view. It seems like she is appearing to be the trouble maker in our young age, while I am the one who has to overcome shyness. I began to alternate monologues in the flow of my script: one would be done as me, and then one would be done as my sister. I like the alteration of characters because I feel like I could distinguish the difference between the two of us for the audience to see by a simple costume piece perhaps...maybe I would consider using slides and incorporating tech into my piece like my last solo work where I was a bride hosting a youtube channel. I also added in bookend moments to my script where I introduced the idea of being a twin and what it feels like to have someone that looks identical to you. The beginning and end of my show seemed to flow, but I wasn't really sure who I was saying it as. Was I a character? I guess I was Liz saying the beginning and the end narration, but it was more of an "audience address" type moment rather than a monologue where I was talking to an *invisible other* like my sister or my parents. I would have to clarify those moments with Be Boyd in order to clearly

articulate who I was going to embody for my audience. I just knew that the opening narrator would have a different quality and feel to them opposed to the specific character monologues I created, and I wanted to honor the feeling I had about those narrated portions.

02-15-14: After several more pages of material, I ended up seeing Be and showing her what I had today. She loved the addition of my sister! I started finding phrases that she used to say and a vocal pitch that she would normally fall into- which was slightly deeper than mine. As we grew older, she also started coming from a much more grounded, intellectual place than me. I wanted to find this vocal quality in her monologues as we traversed from toddler years to college age. Though the material seemed to be going down the right path, Be Boyd told me to see if I could locate any other characters that influenced the world of both me and my sister. She asked me if I wanted to include those voices into my work in order to break up the stories told from my point of view and from my sister's perspective. I thought that was a great idea! Though Be didn't say this too me, I kind of felt that I might have been beating my prospective audience over the head with the idea that I'm an identical twin. My piece *is* about that, but I don't have to make it *just* about that. To be honest, I'm not really sure the message of the piece yet. Or the name. But I think those things will come to me after a little more writing. I don't want to rush my thoughts.

03-01-14: I did a little more writing today and I included some stories from my parents' perspective. It made so much sense to add in a monologue about my mom describing what it felt like to be told she was having twins. She always tells me how blessed she felt and how she had this sense that her pregnancy was special even before the ultrasound made her aware that she was having two babies instead of one...it made sense to start off the stream of monologues with her voice since she brought us into this world. If there was any other way to pay homage to my mother, I couldn't think of a better one than this one at the moment! I added in stories of my dad

changing diapers, giving us cookies and milk, and scolding us about dressing our little brother as a princess. After several sessions of listening to music and doing stream-of-consciousness writing, something Be Boyd said to me at Panera stuck out the week before and I began to write like crazy. I ended up chatting to her about how my sister and I had to deal with being split up from each other in regards to our classes because our teachers were convinced we were cheating. I also told Be that my piano teacher said something that resonated with me for years- a seemingly harmless statement, but it made a big impact nonetheless. I recounted how my piano teacher said that it was interesting that Caroline and I were trying to be different from each other (this was when we were about seventeen). I told my piano teacher what I planned to do in college and her reaction was one of astonishment that I would want to do something that my sister wasn't doing. It really bothered *me* that it bothered *her* so much! We were different people after all! Be Boyd lit up at my revelations and she told me I should find a way to incorporate all of this into my solo work, and so it inspired me to try to find ways to do that. I ended up writing in two teacher characters into my piece: one teacher who would speak the fate of Caroline and I being in separate classrooms into existence, and the other teacher being our piano teacher who would cause me to have some sort of snap (perhaps this would be the halfway point or climax in my piece?). I wrote and wrote and eventually came up with monologues for my teachers, my dad, my mom, and even my boyfriend. I loved the fact that these voices really split up the monologues that my sister had. I ended up trying to arrange them in such a way that they still went along with the chronological fashion of the previous monologues. My mom would be first, a few young monologues would follow spilt up by the teachers' voices and my dad's voice, and then my boyfriend's voice would come in, and a few monologues as older versions of myself and my sister would end the piece. The piece looked like it was starting to shape up. Maybe I would

need some moments of narration in the middle to offer a vehicle for helping me get into small costume pieces that would help distinguish the different characters? Not sure yet, I will have to decide on that later on.

03-21-14: Reading my piece to Be was another success! The other voices really help to give some more points of view and perspectives into the mix. It helps the piece not remain stagnant. Finally she asked me the question I had been dreading...she asked me if I've thought about *why* I'm telling this story. I don't know if any author really *likes* that question. Perhaps this is egotistical, but I wrote my story because I think I am the only one who can write it, and I would like people to really *know* me. I wanted to also discover what it was about myself being a twin that made me feel so special about it. I thought that writing and sharing my piece could help me locate that part of my identity for myself and for the audience. After sharing that with Be, she encouraged me by saying that I was on the right path with those thoughts. Now I just had to find a way to attain those wants through the message of my story. How could I get that without blatantly saying "this is who I am!". What really defines me? What were my monologues saying about what defines me? Was there something I overlooked? How could I find a subtler message to deliver the finer strokes of my heart's story and what form would I use to discover the panache of my story? I felt a little perplexed that day when I left her office because I definitely left with more questions than I came in with. I'm not down now, but my brain hurts from thinking so deeply. I'm going to let this stew for a bit.

04-07-14: I've got it! I know what I'm trying to say...or at least I know what I'm sort of trying to say! About a day or two ago I realized I didn't have any monologues from my brother's point of view...and that started to bug me. Why didn't I *immediately* think of adding his voice in? What did that say about me? Was I a bad big sister? It seemed awfully selfish not to include him in my

work anywhere. And then it hit me like a ton of bricks. That was his story; all his life he was the only boy, the only younger sibling, the only “singleton”...while my sister and I got to be a constant pair. We were born with a companion and a best friend, and though we loved my brother, I know he constantly felt left out of things because of being twin-less. We never purposefully left him out, but the feeling must have been hard to avoid. I used to hear him ask my mom why she didn't have another boy all the time when he was younger, not understanding that pregnancy was a pretty complicated thing. When my brother got older, he ended up being somewhat of a loner, he developed social anxiety, and even to this day, he has an extremely hard time dealing with new people, new situations, and he finds it tough to make friends and keep up old connections. How could it take me this long to realize that though this fact really hurts to bring up, it's something that undoubtedly shapes my identity? I started to write about it and I honestly believe that one of my most heartfelt monologues ended coming from those thoughts. I ended up writing a monologue from my four year-old brother's perspective. He addresses the audience and tells them how he would ask mommy for a baby brother so he could have a twin too. The monologue sounded honest, sweet, and genuine to me when I read it back to myself and it simply broke my heart to read the piece. Suddenly I also had a glimpse of a more painful effect that my twin relationship had on my family and the depth that came out of that seemed endless. That particular monologue made me understand that painful moments were okay to include in my work too. In fact, they probably helped illustrate the good moments more because of the contrast they gave to the piece. The idea that my brother's loneliness could strengthen the communication of what my identity is to the audience was an extremely powerful revelation to me. My gears started working; maybe that was the way to go with the piece. By focusing on moments of loneliness or separation it would help to define those moments of being together a

bit more...as I sat there and riffed on that idea, I began to think I was onto something. I need to process it a bit more.

04-29-14: Running with the idea of complications and hardship, I asked myself what were some more moments that were difficult for me to handle while growing up. Moments started to pop up like: seeing my mom cry for the first time, realizing that I had truly done something wrong, feeling like I wasn't good enough in school because my sister got better grades, feeling like I wasn't recognized for being an individual by people who had known me my whole life, fighting about boys with my sister, experiencing new things like college without her, and having to deal with my sister's car crash. The list was more extensive, but I pared it down to a few choice moments. I began writing monologues for these moments, some coming from my perspective, some coming from my sister's perspective, and some coming from my teacher's/parent's/friend's perspectives. My piece was suddenly gaining a gravitas to it where before there only lay sentimentality. These monologues began adding depth to my work in a way that the other monologues hadn't before. I loved being able to tell these moments...and each time I read them out loud, they pulled at my heartstrings- writing these moments down was beyond cathartic for me. And then my questions were answered. No pain, no aggravation, no balled up pieces of paper, no crazy hair-pulling moments, no nameless piece until two days before show time...I knew what I wanted to call my show. All my life people or situations were trying to teach me how to be lonely- something that I never wanted to learn. Sure I wanted to be different, sure I wanted to be viewed as an individual, and sure I wanted to make my own mark in the world...but I never wanted to be lonely. There were many times in my monologues that the concept of being *alone* was brought up, and I wanted to illustrate that that thought was an entirely different thought than being *lonely*. I sought to be alone in my relationship with Caroline

every now and then, for my own sanity mostly, and for the ability to define myself without using how she defined herself as a foundation. But just because I wanted to be alone, didn't mean that I had to feel or *wanted* to feel lonely. Thus, I would call my piece *Teach Me How to be Lonely*. The title would stand for all those times and situations that encouraged me and my sister to be apart and it would also stand for the idea that I was searching for some separation in my life without causing a feeling of alienation. For now, I have my title. Maybe it will change later, but something in my heart tells me I've got it.

05-01-14: I managed to meet Be one last time before we break for the summer. Though I want the summer to be productive, something is telling me that I will be taking a break from writing for a while. I read her what I have, and she loved it. She loved the addition of my brother's voice. She advised me that I should cut another monologue I added from his perspective when he was older because it served the same purpose as his younger monologue...which made complete sense! The title was a go and so was the idea of communicating what our identical twin relationship was like to the audience through stories dealing with distance, overcome challenges, and definitions of what *alone* and *lonely* meant throughout my work. I was in a good place. She told me to keep writing over the summer and to consider what I would do in order to create all of these different characters onstage. She also asked me if I wanted to incorporate some technical elements into my show. This was something I was considering earlier. I even ended up bouncing an idea off of Be that consisted of having my sister interviewed and using those interviewed questions as filler for me to get into my next character. She liked the idea. I'll think about it some more. I've got time.

08-15-14: Oh my god. I barely touched my work since several months ago! I have been working like crazy over the summer and my internship at the Orlando Shakespeare Theatre has just

started. We have already jumped into rehearsal for *Les Miserable*. Talk about being way too busy! Today I looked at my piece again, for the first time in forever. I started to tweak a few things, tidying up a few moments, and adding in some little things here and there. I also interviewed my sister and asked her about twenty different questions while recording all of her responses. Have I said how great my sister is? Not only did she have no problem doing that for me but she is so funny and genuine! I always knew that about her, but the tapings just solidified that for me again. Now I need to reconnect with Be Boyd.

08-17-14: Okay. Just met with Be and I feel much calmer. I came up with a timeline which included me meeting with her every Monday until the performance date of my solo show. I set the dates before the beginning of summer so I wouldn't chicken out and not perform my show. You also have to book space very early in the theatre building. I booked October 19<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup> as my dates. Be told me I could walk and talk my piece until I felt comfortable enough to put the paper down and work my piece with her sans a script. I felt much better now that my timeline was complete. I didn't even want to think about the paper portion of my thesis until my solo show was performed and over with. Needless to say, this day was much needed, but I still felt very apprehensive towards the end of it. I wanted to be able to accomplish what I set out to do!

09-19-14: Ahhhhh! I can't even breathe! I will be performing this show a month from now. It seems too unreal. I am both excited and nervous...*very* nervous! I have met with Be about three times now in the course of the last few weeks. I have tidied up my script, added in some technical elements with the voice overs from my sister in order to help with small costume/character transitions, and I think I have a final draft of my script finally complete. I know things will probably change here or there, but I'm promising myself right now that they

will only be small things! My script is done- no more changes for all intents and purposes. I have been acting while reading from my script with Be in order to figure out the space of my stage and where my characters will live while saying their material. I have learned lots while working with her in the past few weeks, including: I write more eloquently than some of my characters should speak (difficult to adjust); I need to change the physicality and vocal quality of each character more so they don't all sound like Liz; and it is really hard to "block" a show on your own.

10-01-14: Be, Holly, and Kate have all looked at my piece. I have it fairly memorized at this point. Wow...the last few hours have felt like several days. Performing (or I should say rehearsing) a solo piece is *exhausting*. The amount of energy that a solo piece requires is enormous. I cannot imagine performing this solo piece on a Broadway platform for several weeks and maybe years in a row. I think if that happened, massage therapy would be a must for me. I'm in a good place, but their notes always leave me with this weird feeling of extreme stress and gratefulness. I am grateful that I have their eyes to catch all the things that need tweaking, but stressed out because it seems like every time I take a tiny step, I have eighty more steps to go! Things that I learned include: grandpa needs a gruffer voice and he needs to find a stiffer, slower pace to his movements (I need to explore the idea of limited mobility); dad needs a more masculine presence in his walk and overall physicality; I need to commit to those scary, hurtful moments a bit more- if Dad is scolding, I really need to go there; I can't devise a narrator character who isn't me because that will take the audience out of the moment- the narrator character should be Liz...no frills, just speaking to the audience with honesty and in the moment as myself; I need to pare down the amount of costume pieces I have, some are unnecessary and seem to be getting in the way of smooth transitions; I need to see my entire show with tech to get

a good feeling of the show flow; I need to meet with my stage manager; and I need to inform every one of the performance dates so I can start accruing an audience!

10-12-14: Crunch week! I got flyers out last week, sent emails, and have let people know about my performances. Hopefully I bring in at least a few people each night. I'm at the place where I really need new eyes on the piece and I would love to see what the energy of the audience would bring to this piece for me. I'm nervous, but meeting with my stage manager and have my husband's help to devise the tech portions for my show have been immeasurably supportive. I have added in slide shows of pictures of my sister and I along with the rest of my family, designed some musical cues to play intermittently during my show, talked over light cues with Catherine Klemke (my SM), and ordered all of the voiceovers in conjunction with the rest of my tech. I ended up having about twenty sound cues and about fifty light cues- not a terrible amount for a show that appears to be running about an hour long, but it felt like a lot to me! I had never done something of this magnitude before. I know running the entire tech with the show will take hours, perhaps even a whole day or two. I'm glad I saved whole chunks of studio time for myself before the show. I have a feeling I am going to need every bit of time I can get.

10-17-14: The show is in two days and I nearly had a heart attack today. Everything seems to be going wrong. Catherine was supposed to be able to tech through the whole show with me today but there was some sort of football event going on during the evening which caused the theatre building parking to be blocked off completely by cops. I had to walk out to the cops and convince them that I was performing a thesis show in a few days and that I *needed* Catherine's help to prepare for it. Then the awful fluorescent lights in the room (Studio 1) wouldn't shut off, which made it impossible to go through all the light cues, and Catherine's light board did something funky which prevented her from being able to save the show's light cues...everything

seemed to be coming apart slowly at the seams. I was such a ball of stress that day. I felt like the littlest thing could have set me off. Thank god Catherine was so grounded and calm, and thank god my husband was there (I made sure he took the next three or four days off assuming I would probably need his help for last minute things). We eventually ended up being able to program the light board to save my light cues- my relief was immense! We would have to run the whole shebang tomorrow and hopefully I can get the large fluorescent lights to shut off then. I am going to take a long hot shower when I get home and probably collapse in my bed.

10-18-14: Breathe. I got to the studio and the lights were still on. I got there earlier than my stage manager to run through my lines before our full tech of my show. The review was needed and I felt more comfortable with my words after running through them. Though I wanted the whole extra two hours before Catherine Klemke showed up to tidy material, I spent thirty of those precious minutes banging on the light switches in the studio like a madwoman. Finally, by some grace of God, those awful fluorescent lights decided to cooperate and shut off. I could have cried from happiness. Though I could perform my piece with the lights in the room on, I wanted to feel like I was truly performing a show, with stage lights, my own set, and the whole deal. I felt like I had worked too hard not to get that privilege! I had enough time to run my lines once, walk through the spacing of my show, and then it was time to do a full tech. We managed to get through the piece (timed out at about an hour and fifteen minute- not bad), with little to no mistakes. There were a little tweaks that I wanted to make to some sound cues to tidy them up and it helped that Be was able to watch my run through. She told me to work on speaking to my audience as myself, no frills attached while I was narrating, and to make sure I always knew who I was talking to (whether an invisible other or the audience) when I was speaking as a different character. I realized that it made more sense during the tech-through if I stayed onstage while the

voice overs were playing rather than going back behind the wings of the propped up mats. I had better flow if I was onstage and reacting to the voiceovers; the energy of the whole piece seemed to become chunky if I walked offstage for a minute or two every monologue. Something about leaving the stage space seemed to sever the energy of the solo piece and I definitely didn't want that. I wanted to keep the energy ball up in the air the entire time!

10-19-14: It was hard to listen to my husband, but I did. I didn't work on my piece at all today before my performance, and though I almost didn't listen to him, I'm so glad I did. I was a bundle of nerves as I got to the theatre to set up. It was our job to set up risers and chairs as well as make sure everyone knew where my piece was being performed. It was a pretty tough job, especially since we had to take down the set up after each performance as well, but I'm so grateful that I was able to recruit several wonderful people to help me with that each night. Finally! I had a chance to perform my piece. I remember the few minutes before my stage manager nodded to me that it was go time for my show...I suddenly thought "oh god, what if there is no one in the audience?". That worry seems pretty funny in retrospect. For months I was scared of performing this beast of a show for people and sharing my words with them, and now, at the brink of performing it, I was worried I wouldn't have *enough* people to share it with. I really learned something new about myself that day. Perhaps I do still get a little performance anxiety before shows, but deep down, I can't wait to share the words that are on my heart with others. I wasn't really afraid of forgetting any lines, because they were fairly easy to memorize as they were my own words, and if I flubbed something up, I could recover pretty easily. I was more nervous about the ability to do my words justice and if my audience would like my script and the stories I was telling. I wanted them to feel engaged. From start to finish, the whole performance seemed like a haze. I absolutely loved the feeling my first show brought. I felt

engaged, free even, and after the first narrations or so, I felt like the energy kept coming. I also felt this warmth and radiation of energy from the audience (which turned out to be about fifteen people or so), which really helped my characters find a life and breath to them that they didn't have before; I learned when my characters had permission to comment on a reaction of the audience or if a moment was truly funny or poignant that night. By the end of it, I took a bow, and when I saw my sister as well as my committee with tears in their eyes...it moved me beyond words. I cannot believe I was able to accomplish all of this. To have written my own show, to have work shopped it with vigor, and then to have performed it for people I care about...it feels like I climbed Mount Everest. Anne Hering, my internship coordinator and boss at the Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, came up to me and told me how touching my words were, my sister could not stop saying how spot on I was about every moment I told, and my friends told me that they wanted to call their brothers and sisters now to tell them how much they loved them. It moved me to know that my piece could make someone feel like that. I felt super humbled tonight.

10-20-14: Tonight's performance was so different. I felt *so* incredibly tired from last night's performance I cannot even put into words the effect that it had on my body. I have never *ever* felt anything like this tiredness before; my whole being and soul ached. Solo performance takes so much out of a performer because it demands such a high quality of constant energy from them. It makes complete sense that the toll it would take on your body the next day would be gigantic. I didn't feel in the same place emotionally, physically, or mentally as the night before and I was worried about what it would do to my performance. This was also the night that my friend was recording my work, so that added pressure to perform well was there. I really wished that the night before was recorded because it went so smoothly! My advice to all performers: record your show on several days and have the one filming come on various nights, set up, and not tell you

when they're there. If I had my druthers, that's what I would have done. Either way, I wanted tonight to go well. As soon as I started my show, something felt weird. The atmosphere was more...judgmental. I can't think of any other way to describe the ambience of the studio and the audience. Last night the audience was composed of people who mainly support me, like my teachers, my family, and very close friends and tonight the crowd was filled with my peers, making the atmosphere very different. I felt there was an air of "impress me" permeating the environment. It definitely didn't feel nearly as supportive and I immediately felt the need to prove myself. I realized about ten minutes into my show that I was completely rushing, I wasn't sitting in my moments, and I had even started to flub a little on my lines. I consciously took a big breath, forced myself to slow down and settle into my next few monologues, and things started to get back on track. I really learned a lot tonight. I learned that you need to be aware that audiences will give you a wide array of atmospheres that you respond differently to; from the moment you walk out to say your first word, the solo performer will be judged on their presence and performance in a more total way than if they were sharing the stage with a cast of multiple people. All in all, I was proud of the work I did that night and I discovered that crowds can definitely find new funny moments. Though my monologue for Donnell (my husband) got some laughs the night before, my classmates- who mostly know Donnell through my descriptions of him- found his characterization *hilarious*. I almost broke character because they were laughing so hard. Though I feel like my performance the night before rang a bit more honest and genuine, tonight's performance wasn't bad. I fell into the rhythm of this particular night's show and I felt so relieved by the end of it to say that I was done with the performance portion of my thesis. I had done it! I had written my own show, rehearsed my show, and put it up for audiences to see on two nights. I'm going to put everything for my thesis away for several weeks and return to it

in a bit. I deserve some rest and a good break from things for now. I am happy with where I am, and I can't wait to revamp this show later on after this year and maybe take it to conventions and different venues around the United States.

**APPENDIX**  
**TEACH ME HOW TO BE LONELY SCRIPT**

## Teach Me How to be Lonely

### **Character List:**

*Liz narrator- black base: tank top and pants, or nice black tights with black utilitarian blouse*

*French Doctor- Lab Coat, thick glasses?, wig?, file folder, charts etc. A Laser pen pointer*

*Mom- hospital gown (close to), robe, mom wig, papers from teacher*

*Dad- thick glasses, dad wig, mustache, two cups, milk (small amount), cookies (set up for table and chairs)*

*Chris- blanket, flashlight, harry potteresque glasses, batman mask or spiderman cap*

*Donnell- sonic cap, big jacket or sports jersey*

*Grandpa- glasses, grey haired wig, polo shirt*

*Young Liz- Tomboy gear, orange and black stuff, side ponytail*

*Young Caroline- girly girl stuff, side ponytail opposite direction, beauty and the beast or lisa frank stuff*

*Middle school Liz- Tin foil in teeth (pretend braces), heavy eye liner, black clothes, black jewelry, hair straight*

*Middle school Caroline- preppy clothes, hair straight*

*High School Liz- side part hair, jeans and novel tee shirt*

*High school Caroline- side part hair, flowy clothes (renaissance type clothing)*

*Piano Teacher & School Teacher- heavy costume jewelry, with cardigan sweater*

*College Liz- trendy dresses, summery look, hair wavy and long*

*College Caroline- more modern blouses and pants, wavy and long hair*

**Teach Me How to be Lonely- Final Draft of Solo Show**

*(Voice Over SOUND: SLIDE 1 )*

[We are born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Orson Welles said that. Ohh Orson Welles... for most part, he's right. His metaphysical philosophy illuminating the endless sadness and perpetual solitary state of man...is right...for most people. But if Orson Welles, famous American actor, director, producer & writer were still alive today...I would tell him...after I've pitched him a few movie ideas of course... that he forgot to consider one very important thing. Maybe most people are born alone, I would say that's a fair assumption. But I was different. I *am* different. I'm a twin.]

(CUE: End of slide)

*(LIGHTS UP)*

***Caroline:*** *\*real or me playing her\** Hi! How are you guys doing tonight? Thank you so much for being here. So, as you know, I'm an identical twin and if I had to explain what that's like, well...imagine you and your best friend. Now imagine that they are wearing the same thing as you and they're starting to look like you. After you get over the shock that they look like you, you have to accept them into your world *forever* even when your pissed because they stole the outfit *you* were dying to wear all weekend. And they talk like you...as a matter of fact....they talk *over* you because they can practically read your mind, so you say the same thing and think the same thing so often that you barely need to speak with them to communicate. And they act like you...but not. Because, even though the similarities can't be denied...you're different. you feel

and you think differently. But the bond, is...well it's like explaining how when you jump into the ocean there's not a part on your body that water won't eventually touch. Sometimes it's an annoying feeling, but most of the time....it's wonderful. That's what it is to be an identical twin.

Oh!.....you probably think I'm Liz. Sorry...I'm Caroline, Liz's twin sister....Awkward. Um, don't feel bad. This is certainly not the first time this has happened. Let me get her for you. (*Goes behind divider and comes out as Liz*)

**Liz:** Hey guys! Thank you so much for being here tonight! So that's Caroline, my twin sister, and she's awesome. Being a twin is by far the coolest thing about me, and I figured I could share a little bit of that coolness with you this evening. And what better place to start than by discussing some of those super provocative twin questions that people ask? I know you guys must have some, so go ahead, don't be shy, lay em' on me! (*answers a few questions*)

Thanks! Keep the rest of your questions and I'll answer them after the show. So people tell me that it must be irritating to have to answer all of these silly questions...you know, I never really minded being asked them. I just feel cool, for the most part. It's like someone asking you about a special talent...of course you want to share about it! I just happened to be born 'double trouble', I didn't have to learn it or practice it (though my sister and I did..plenty of times). Despite that togetherness, the world has really worked to make sure Caroline and I prepare for the possibility of loneliness. It tells us that growing up and accepting the fact that moving away from something so stable in our lives is a natural part of the process of becoming a self-sufficient adult.

But I had a really hard time accepting that. For me, my space has always been shared with someone else. When you look into the mirror morning, most times you are conscious of two elements, yourself and your reflection....well there were four elements, myself and my reflection, and my sister and hers. ( *"So my sister is here tonight, but I wanna let her just sit back and enjoy the show so I need a..."*, *"My sister couldn't come tonight so I will actually need a..."* call up *Twunderstudy from audience*) So there were four elements for me: myself, my reflection, my sister, and her reflection. That was my normal. Comparing the line of milk in each cup and the size of each cookie to see if it was fairly divided up when we were small was normal. Switching our clothes in the bathroom during school lunch and going to my sister's class while I pretended to be her and she pretended to be was normal. Hating each other really really really bad...and loving each other so much, was our normal. (*have person sit down. They had to mimic all my movements up to then!*) Thank you!

That was *my* normal. And so, when the world taught me to be lonely...it was *really* hard for me to learn. I had never been lonely. (CUE) And I never wanted to be.

*(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 2)*

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(CUE: End of slide)

*(LIGHTS UP)*

**Mom:** Twins...(Rubs belly and laughs) I'm shocked. I'm happy. Two babies...*two babies*. Oh no, Robert is going to freak out. How am I going to tell him? There's going to be a lot of diapers to

change. I'll have to break that to him gently. I hope I can be a good mother. I have to make sure they both feel loved. They are going to be *so* spoiled. *(sigh)* Some may call me crazy, but I'm going to make sure these girls have everything I didn't have. I'm going to take so many photos. My two petite lapins. *(rubs belly)* Don't make mommy too fat now. And please come out soon. Nurse, can I see the picture of the babies? *(Looks at it for a bit)* What are they doing? Oh God, are they strangling each other?! Oh...hugging....*(sigh and laugh of relief)* they're hugging.

*(Get up, out of gown, and change into doctor's coat, have clipboard)*

**Dr. Laroux:** Hallo. Bonjour. I am Dr. Laroux. I was Linda Lalonde's maternity doctor. I had the pleasure of telling her that she had two little babies instead of one. What a great honor! She is such a nice woman, *tres jolie*. She laughs at my accent because I am from France. They are much more, how do you say, Quebecois here. They have deeper more guttural accents. Twin babies are a miracle. That is a fact. There are so many things that can go medically wrong, that it is amazing when the egg, how do you say, splits in two to create the two babies. I was telling Linda that the most children born to one woman is, *soixante neuf* - 69. Eh?! So perhaps two isn't that bad. Though there are some things that do need to be considered. The average baby deprives a parents of 350-400 hours of sleep. The average person can eat 1500 pounds of food a year and the average newborn baby can, how do you say, peepee every 20 minutes. Multiply that by two. That's a lot of no sleep, food, and peepee. But, eh... Human babies are the only , how do you say, monkeys...primates *oui*, who smile at their parents. (CUE) You get to multiply that by two as well.

*(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 3)*

*(Costume change into Grandpa.)*

(CUE: End of slide)

*(LIGHTS UP)*

**Grandpa:** Boy, would you look at that?! Look at that! Look at them go! Do they do that all the time Robert? They crawl around the floor like that together? Boy, I don't believe it! It's like they have their own language. There they go. They want to play with the ball at the same time so they told each other that. There you go! They're geniuses already! I knew my little girls would be geniuses! Son, Linda, you have beautiful, beautiful girls. Watch out for boys now, eh? Tell them that that can wait. *(gruff laugh)* Look at them go....That's incredible. They understand each other, eh? I think they do.

*(Become Liz utilitarian)*

**Liz:** It's more than just code. It's communication. She could babble something to me and I would babble something incoherent right back to her. And though any outsider would stare at this and view it as gobbledeegook, my sister and I knew we what we were doing. *(Babble, then beeline towards the mirror to stare at reflections. Figure out why there's two. Baffled. Look at self, back to her, back to self and wonder how I creating another me on the glassy surface. Squint eyes, scrunch face up, point at the chubby cheeks in the mirror, and then glance over to see if the other reflected me was doing the same thing. Laugh, and then surprise when it wasn't. Scream at other reflection. Whisper new babble and calm down. High pitch scream of Da da da GAH! Move*

*towards pile of blocks in the middle of the floor. Series of 'dadagas' while we stack brick after brick until we built a complex tower of multicolored plastic legos. Celebrate it's completion by shouting 'unGAH'* I don't really know what 'unGAH' means, but if I had to guess, I would say we called it the Tower of Babble.

*(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 4)*

*(CUE: End of slide)*

*(LIGHTS UP)*

I need my twunderstudy again for this next part, another round of applause for them! *(calls them up)* Thank you\_\_\_\_\_. So, real simple. My sister and I would play a game called the Yes/No Game and you're about to play a round with me. We will be testing our twin bond here. Easy rules, you'll see an image, and I'll count down from three. After one you say Yes if you liked it, or No if you didn't, and we'll see how many of our answers line up. Okay! *(CUE) Hit it Cat!* *(SOUND: SLIDE 5 Yes/No Game)* Pretty good, not bad. *(twunderstudy sits down)* Now, we just need spend the next 18 or so years of our lives together to get better at it. *(CUE )Thanks hun!*

*(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 6)*

*(Costume change into Dad)*

*(CUE: End of slide)*

*(LIGHTS UP)*

**Dad:** Girls! What in the hell...Come on! What did I tell you about dressing your brother in princess gowns? Chris, go take that off. Oh lovely....and make up too? Linda! Can you wash your son's face off? The girls put lipstick on him again! At this rate he's going to ask me to be Cinderella this October... (*sits down, blocks table*) Oh no you don't! You girls do not deserve cookies and milk right now. No puppy dog faces! (*Takes a moment*) Fine...but just two cookies. Go ahead. (*Listens to question*) she got more *milk* than you? Looks even to me. She got bigger *cookies* than you? Look like the same size to me. What? More chocolate chips in her cookies than yours? You wanna count the chips...okay let's count the chips, but let's count together okay? 1, 2, 3....(*fades off counting chocolate chips in cookie*)

(*Change into teacher costume and continue counting*)

**Teacher:** ..3,4,5, etc. questions the same. I don't understand this. Look George, we're going to have to split them up. I know their parents won't like it. But there's no other way. Believe me, I have tried everything! I've passed out tests with differently arranged questions, I've made them take tests at different times in the day, I've put them on opposite sides of the classroom. None of it works! Their tests are always come back to me perfectly identical...down to the very wrong question...down to the very wrong answer for that wrong question! Are you understanding what I'm saying? I know as the principal of the school their parents will be mad at you, first and foremost, but I can't have them cheating their way through school. Oh, don't start talking to me about mind reading. They have to be separated George. End of story.

(*Change into young Liz*)

**Elizabeth:** Hi, I'm Liz. My full name is Elizabeth, uh...what comes after? (*look at the teacher*) Oh....ummmm. I'm in second grade...and something special about me is...(looking around) well....it's not just about me....ummm I mean it is about me, but somebody else too, I mean....I mean umm.... I'm a twin. But they made her be in a different class. So she's not here right now, but she's in the class next door...and she looks like me. So you'll know it's her. Umm...okay, so now I take two questions? (*chooses with a point*) No (*giggle*), we don't have rhyming names. Her name is Caroline. (*chooses with a point*) Sometimes we dress alike. Sometimes we dress so alike it's hard to tell who is who. Today we're dressed alike. Maybe I'm really Caroline. No Ms. Camero, I'm Elizabeth. But I could pretend to be her if I wanted to, *that's* what's special about me.

(*Change into young Caroline*)

**Caroline:** Liz....psst....come here. I had an idea. Wouldn't it be funny if we...got paper towels, filled them up with soap and rubbed the toilet seats with them so they get all gunky? And we can hide in our own stalls, and wait for people to come in...and then they'll sit on the seats....and (*make squishing noises*) *come on!* It'll be so funny. No duh Liz...it's Sonny's...people are going to be coming in to use the bathroom, okay? Let's just do it! Ok! (*mimes causing the trouble*) Shhhh, someone's coming...*hide...stop it!* No, you can't wait in the same stall as me, No...No!...fine. But shh. (*look at each other...wait for it*, (CUE: CAT's VOCAL) *yessss*. (CUE: girls laughing)

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND:SLIDE 8*)

(*Costume change into Mom*)

(CUE: End of slide)

*(LIGHTS UP)*

**Mom:** *(Comes in frustrated and puts a piece of paper down on the table)* Girls!!! Do you know what I had to hear from your teachers today? I heard that you guys were fighting during recess. That someone pulled someones hair and somebody bit somebody...sit down, the both of you. *NOW.* Do I need to get your father? *(sits)* I don't want to hear whose fault it was. I need you guys to do something for me, okay. I need you guys to be there for each other. Be each other's best friend, okay? when you're having a good day, *and* when you're having a bad day. You guys are so lucky that you have each other, and you don't even know it...not yet at least, but one day I hope you will. Now go and play, but please...be kind to each other, okay? I love you guys both, very much. Go. *(Sees them to go off, cries)* *(Change into young Liz move to sit on the piano.)*

**Liz:** When I'm sad, I play the piano. Sometimes I make up songs to cheer me up. *(Plays a little)* *I'm really sad. I think I did something really bad. Something I shouldn't have. That's why I'm really sad...* My mom was mad because we got sent home from school because of fighting. *(stand up)* But some of my friends thought my sister was cooler than me, and Caroline took the purple sparkly shirt that I wanted to wear, and I told her I was going to wear it all day! *(sit down)* But when I saw my mom crying, my sister and I didn't know what to do. We just stopped. I remember it all. I don't know why but, I made a promise to try to be a better sister. A pinky promise! So when I fight with Caroline... because I'm not really good at not fighting...I try to remember the pinky promise. It helps me forgive a little bit easier. *But she's so mean...she bites*

me, hits me, slaps me, calls me names, steals my stuff, read my diaries, blames me, annoys me, takes all the attention, teases me... (*holds pinky out*) (CUE) But at least she doesn't forget me.

(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 9)

(*Costume change into middle school Liz.*)

(CUE: End of slide)

(LIGHTS UP)

**Liz:** I tried really hard on that test! I can't believe I got a 92 and you got a 95. It's not fair, you're smarter than me! UGH, I hate long division. Dad is going to be all proud of your score. I don't even want to show my paper to Mom and Dad. How happy can they be about a 92 after they see a 95? It's like going to someone and saying....I can give you \$100, but would you take \$50 instead? Divide that and you get disappointment. Math sucks. Whatever! Yeah I know it's good grade! I don't care that OTHER people failed. IT FEELS LIKE I FAILED!

(*Change into middle school Caroline.*)

**Caroline:** What the heck...you see what I have to deal with? I mean...I know she doesn't feel like she's good at math...but she is. I'm just a bit better. But she's better at writing than me, and she knows it. It's just that we want to be better than each other in everything. No one told us to be, we just do. So we try really hard at everything, because we're always trying *beat* each other. *Nothing* drives me more in my life than thinking about doing something before Liz or getting at

least one point higher than her in something, anything! I mean, I'm happy for her when she does well, but I can't explain how cool it feels to know I am better than her at something! The sucky part is when she is better at something than me. When other people say I'm 'smart' or 'perfect' or 'nerd' or 'robot', it doesn't phase me. I don't measure myself or my smartness when I'm held up next to other people. (CUE) I measure it when I'm help up next to my sister.

(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 10)

*(Change into middle school Liz.)*

(CUE: End of slide)

(LIGHTS UP)

**Liz:** 1-10...what do you think?...No way! He's definitely got to be at least an 8. I think he's really cute. He does not do weird things! Plus, he's smart...and smart...and he's really good at theatre....*(gasp)*..do you think he's gay?

**Caroline:** Hey Liz, what if we never get boyfriends? I thought I would have a boyfriend by this year. I really don't want to be the only girl in high school who doesn't have one. That would just blow...

**Liz:** He can't be gay...he can't! He went out with Shannon for a bit. He can't. Do you think his last name would sound good with my name. Rozzelle? There's a lot of 'z's.....I don't know. What would we name our babies? I do not like juniors. I think they sound pretentious. I think everyone

should have their own unique name. And everyone should get married to guys with cool names. Torin Rozzelle... I don't know, I think that's an 8 to me. Even if he *is* gay.

**Caroline:** Okay, mom. Sheesh, yeah I know school comes first. I'm just saying it'd be nice if someone thought I was pretty. Don't you feel the same way? How are you so confident?! And can I have some of that confidence please? You know what? We should make a pact! By this time next year, we will both have boyfriends! Hey! That is not a stupid pact. I just want a guy to like me, okay? I don't want him to be intimidated by how close we are. Sometimes the idea of sharing my feelings with a guy instead of you, scares me. Just make the pact with me, okay?

**Liz:** Oh my God! I could just kill you! Why the fuck do you have to like the same guy as me? Jesus Car, there's only about a billion people that go to this fucking high school. Don't you fucking curse at me! Oh my GOD you are so annoying! Can you stop saying 'you're the bomb', that's not even a thing anymore! Fine... Fine! (*breathe*) Of all the people car..why him? He likes *me*...I know it, the way that he looked at me yesterday...never mind...go, give him the damn bear. Look car, I don't want you to be upset at me. It's just a guy. Go, ask him out. Yeah, yes, it's fine. I think you're going to have a good Valentine's day. (*Watches her walk away*) (CUE) I hope he ends up being gay.

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND: SLIDE 11*)

(*Costume change into Donnell.*)

(CUE: End of slide)

*(LIGHTS UP)*

**Donnell:** Nahhhhh, nah, I never thought they looked alike ever. Never. *(Shakes head slowly)* Except there was this time the sun was shining really brightly in my eyes...and I might have hugged the wrong person for like two second... she'll never let me forget that. "Donnell I swear, how could you think Caroline looks like me?". But...nah...I mean, yeah they're close but, they're just different. Their voices, the way they act, their personalities. I like Liz because, she lights up the room when she walks in. And her smile is cute. And I would have never guessed she was Canadian looking at her backside...Don't tell nobody....but I'm gunna ask her out tomorrow. Check this out: "You know they say thunder is loud...but nah that's just my heart beating when I saw you". Alright, I got a better one. Check this out. *"It's not windy outside....it's just me being your biggest fan"*. Yeah man, I got this. *(CUE: victory dance) I got this, I got this.*

*(SOUND: SLIDE 12)*

*(Costume change to piano teacher)*

**Piano Teacher:** *(claps)* Well done Liz! Brilliant! I can tell you've been practicing piano a lot. UF is lucky to have you. Both of you guys. I can't believe you're going off to college so soon. I remember when you guys were this tall. *(makes height with hands)* So your sister said she's going into medicine. What about you? Let me guess, medicine as well, right? *(Pause)* Oh...Theatre? That's different. Interesting, what made you decide that? Did you just want to 'do your own thing' in college? You know, explore being opposite? That must be so hard since you guys are so similar. I bet it'll be a nice change for you though.

*(change into Liz)*

**Liz:** AHHHHHH! I AMMMM a different person! I did not just wake up one morning and say "huh, you know what, let's try being me today!". Why it's so rebellious in the eyes of people that I want to do something different than my sister? Is it rebellious if you choose to eat different things for lunch as your brother, or your sister, or your friend? Then why should it be any different for me? How could this person who has known me for so long not understand this? Did she just view me as a carbon copy of Caroline? Something she said that day just made me snap on the inside. I am my own person. I like different things. And yes, we happen to like some similar things. Product of sharing a genetic code and an environment. But that does not mean that we are the same people. I am not a facsimile. I am me. I am Liz. (CUE) I am lucky.

*(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 13)*

*(Change for High School Caroline)*

(CUE: End of slide)

*(LIGHTS UP)*

**Caroline:** *(jumps up behind Liz and scares her with a Halloween mask)* Boo! *(laughs)* Sorry, couldn't resist! Especially if you're leaving this weekend for your internship! And then who knows when I'll see you at UF? Had to get in one last good scare. Are you seriously crying from being scared?! You should stop...you do not look pretty when you cry. Oh come onnnnn....that movie was not scary. Pleaseee....so fake. *Seven Days*ssss. So help me God, if you put something disgusting in the shower tomorrow I will kill you. I'm serious. I am. Hey Liz, what do you think

happens when people die? No really, I've been thinking about it lately...Like, do you believe in heaven? Yeah, I guess I do too...it's kind of scary to think about being under all of this dirt...with worms and shit. Or cremated. You know...when I was little I thought cremation was the process of liquifying your body into coffee creamer or something. How bout you, buried...or cremated? You want your ashes sprinkled over the ocean?...hrm....nice, that is so titanic. I think I'd rather cremated too, being buried sounds lonely. I'd rather belong to some creepy old lady with too many cats or something. Hey....Liz...do you think Grandpa's going to be okay? Okay...(gets up to go) hey... Can I sleep in your bed tonight?

*(Change to Chris)*

**Chris:** It's not fair. I want a twin. I want a brother that I can play war with and climb the walls like spider-mans together and play legos. I'd be the best brother ever. All Caroline and Liz do is talk about boys and clothes and they love each other more than they love me. Why didn't mommy make me a brother? I know babies come from mommies belly. I whisper to her belly when she falls asleep on the couch. I say "Baby! Wake up! Are you in there? It's your big brother Chris! You better be a boy. No girls allowed." I also tell him that when he comes I'll give him my favorite crayons and my favorite book, Hop on Pop, and chess, because Dad wants me to play it but I don't like it. It's boring. I'll teach him video games and he can play drums like me and jump on the sofas because the floors are lava. *(sighs a deep sigh and puts head down)* Ughhhh... (CUE) I'm so tired.

*(SOUND: SLIDE 14)*

*(Costume change into Mom)*

(CUE: End of slide)

**Mom:** (*singing tail end of frere jacques*) Goodnight girls, goodnight Chris. Robert, don't think we should at least talk about it? Christopher is always telling me he wishes he had someone like the girls do. I say I can't have anymore babies and he asks why. What do I say? Ecouter. Que devons-nous faire? Robert, he's not making friends in his class...Je suis inquiet pour lui. I think the girls are more social because they have each other. They go over to friends houses, they invite people over...I'm worried that Christopher will feel this way for awhile if we don't do something. Obtenez un chien? (*sigh*) Je suppose. (CUE) I guess we'll get a dog.

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND: SLIDE 15*)

(*Change to Caroline*)

(CUE: End of slide)

(*LIGHTS UP*)

**Caroline:** You're all packed already? Sheesh, that was fast. "I work at Disney and I'm friends with the mice"...that's so adorable. So, tell me... are Minnies Mickeys as well? Trade secret, really? You may be cool...but you're not *that* cool. You get to be '*friends*' with Stitch too? Sweeeet! (*stitch voice*) "Ohana means family...and family means no one gets left behind or forgotten"... Are you laughing at my Stitch voice?! Cut me some slack, you know I'm terrible with accents. Someone once told me my 'Chinese' accent sounds it was born in Jamaica, but

grew up in Puerto Rico. (*in Cockney*) Though, I think I can do Cockney pretty well- thank you Dick van Dyke! Wish I could go with you. I'm proud of you. (CUE) I'm going to miss you Liz.

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND: SLIDE 16*)

(CUE: End of slide)

(*LIGHTS UP*)

**Liz:** (*Cell phone talk*) 'Sup Car? Nothing much, kinda lonely in this dorm without you. It's kind of like a prison in here. But hey, classes are going well, I'm in choir... you should play for them when you get up here! I can't wait for you to be here. We can decorate our room together, and we can ride our bikes to classes together, and we can go to clubs together...(*stop, interrupted*) What? ...I thought you were going to stay in the dorms the first year... But don't you think you should try it because, you know, the experience or whatever? Okay, no I don't mean to be like Dad and Mom...I'm just saying don't you think that you and Sean should take some time before you decide to live together, and I thought we would be roommates...No. Donnell is staying in the dorms this year. I wanted us to take some time before we made a decision like that. Plus, it's really not all that bad. A little like prison....(CUE) but it's really not that bad...

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND: SLIDE 17*)

(CUE: End of slide)

(*LIGHTS UP*)

**Caroline:** Ahhhhhh.... (*feels face*) Oh god.... My face....my face....my face...I can't feel my face. Got to get out, get up, ahhhh....I can't.....ahhh, my seat belt....ahhh my face oh god...the car....where is the front of the car....Fuck...Sean, where are you....are you okay?....My face.... I can't feel it, my face, do I have a face...I need....I need... (CUE) I need Liz.

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND: SLIDE 18*)

(CUE: End of slide)

(*LIGHTS UP*)

**Liz:** I'm sorry I still get so emotional thinking about it. I wish you could have been there. Donnell was so sexy when he proposed to me!!! I have never felt my breath get taken away so fast. I can't explain it...but you just know that it's right...in that moment. Anyway, I kind of have something big to ask you, speaking of marriage. Caroline....will you be my maid of honor? Of course I was going to ask you. Who else would I ask stupid! Nothing too weird at the batchelorette party though, okay? Firemen I understand...but sexy plumbers? No. (CUE) I love you.

(*LIGHTS DOWN*) (*SOUND: SLIDE 19*)

(CUE: End of slide)

(*LIGHTS UP*)

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(*Liz*)

We're born, most of us, alone. But I was born with someone. I just expect my shadow to have another one following behind it. People would split us up thinking we would become individuals like that...what they didn't understand though, was that I already was an individual. The luckiest individual in the world, because I could still be individual, while being dual....I guess you could call it indivi-dual. You know, they would separate us thinking we wouldn't come home with the same scores on tests, or the same experiences in class...but if I didn't understand fractions, then she probably didn't as well, and if I lost a tooth while biting into an apple in the middle of lunch, guess who did as well. It's like they wanted to run their own experiment on us...but I don't think they understood that our lives are an experiment already...being that fact: we are born together, study: we live together, & hypothesis: I'm willing to bet we will not die alone.

Are we better off because society teaches us to distance ourselves through LOLs & BRBs & GTFOs? We are born to need people, to need touch, to want to be loved, to feel like we fit in...so why then are we taught how to be lonely? If it were up to me, I'd hop in my time machine, find Orson Welles, and argue with him that he's wrong. I believe we are born prepared to live together, in hopes, that one day, we will die with people we love around us. Some things can't be learned in a lifetime. (CUE) And as for me, I'll never know how to be lonely.

*(LIGHTS DOWN) (SOUND: SLIDE 20)*

*(CUE: 30 seconds in)*

*(LIGHTS UP for bow- slide 20 is still playing until the end)*

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