

TITLE

Open Mic: A Lifetime Trilogy

Synopsis

Three poetic-monologues document the stages of an African-American Lesbian. Beginning with her awkward youth, just coming out, uncertain and scared; moving into her maturing years, where she learns to claim her voice; to the time when, despite her battle scars, she has made peace with life's journey. This is, perhaps, her one last stand to be heard, to share and to declare her status, in spirit and compassion, as forever being, invincible.

The Character

An African-American Lesbian: she ages with each poetic-monologue; think twenty, forty and sixty—a spry sixty, that is.

Staging

The conception of this work is to be part of other short pieces, where the three poetic-monologues can be performed at intervals throughout the night, instead of being done all at once. The premise being the passing of time happens throughout the course of the other performances.

However, it could be performed as one collected piece with the actor aging in front of the audience via simple physical and costume changes. If performed in this manner, obviously, the first two exits would then become blackouts.

Production Note

Despite its poetry format, the 3rd monologue should not be said with false emotional emphasis, highlighting certain words; rather, it should be said as one would read prose, with a matter-of-fact tone. These are the words of a strong woman, reconciled with life's injustices and prepared to move onward, challenging those around her to answer her parting question, "and you?"

Running Time

Approximately 8 – 13 minutes, depending on the method chosen to perform it.

Poetic-Monologue #1: *Prelude to Sleep*

Performed as a woman in her twenties. She enters slowly and awkwardly, hesitant. Her nervousness is obvious, though subdued. She gathers herself and begins. More accurately, she tries to. She becomes more engrossed as she goes, feeling her words.

AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN LESBIAN

Uhhmm. Before I start, I just want to say this is a *love* poem. It isn't about sex. A lot of people think that, but it's not.

A shout from the wings.

MC

Louder! And get on with it. We ain't got all night.

AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN LESBIAN

Oh, okay. All right. This is my *love* poem. It's called, *Prelude to Sleep*.

Long, very nervous pause.

i await you. (beat, starts over) i await you.
lips quivering, bust bulging, thighs clenching.
i anticipate your arrival,
trembling at the thought,
rising to meet the image that is you,
knowing soon,
you will be here with me.
flesh and bone and beating heart.

i can taste you now.
dripping wet, sweaty hints
of what is to come.
taunting me to surrender,
though my body wants to fight,
to make the moment last longer,
to extend the anticipation of my defeat.

i can smell your rich aroma.
the thick, goeey scent sticks to my nose,
lingering.
like my thoughts about you,
my memories of you,
my desires for you.

i can feel your weight.
heavy, massive, erratic.
it forces the air out of me,
but you offer it back
with gentle kisses and caresses.

i grab hold of your flesh
clutching with Amazon strength
pulling you downward
trying to fill the empty spaces between us
then pushing you away
to find room to breathe
only to pull you back again
to fill the empty spaces.

i am in hell,
at the threshold of heaven.
prepared to go with you
down that sinful path
where I will be seduced,
by your touch--
on top of me, inside of me, all around me.

don't stop now.
don't stop.
this is what i seek that only you can give.

release.
relief.

thanks honey.

i think,
i can,

sleep now.

(Awkward exit. || Fadeout.)

Poetic-Monologue #2: *A Scary Conversation*

Performed as a woman in her forties. She enters and stands. This time she is more confident, evident by her entrance and eye contact with the audience. Her movement and stature are bold in nature, but she is *not* an “angry black dyke”. She starts off with both arms by her side. As she performs, she uses her hands as puppets, being very expressive in their own way, in conjunct with the words, of course. The colors indicate who is speaking.

This is a scary conversation between a (raises left hand, open palm) black lesbian feminist (beat) and a (raises right hand, open palm) white homogenous woman.

we are women loving women.

that’s nice, but we can shorten that a bit to, “we are loving women”.

who love women.

no, no. just “we are loving women”. it’s not that hard. fewer words, short and sweet. people will get it.

will get *what*, exactly?

what you’re saying.

no. they’ll get what *you’re* saying.

aren’t we all saying the same thing?

apparently not. because i’m saying, i am a woman loving women.

which is basically the same thing that i’m saying. i am a loving woman. i love women too--well, not in the same way that you do, naturally.

so you agree. my loving women is natural.

i was referring to myself, not you.

i don’t see the difference.

my point is, i don't need to say that i love women. it's simply implied by the fact that I am fighting for women's rights. so they'll get it. trust me, they will.

no. not if i say what you *think* I should say. there's a big difference between what *you* want me to say, and what i am *going* to say.

The hands faceoff with each other.

what you're talking about is semantics.

and what you're talking about is bullshit. (gives her the finger)

there's no need to become hostile over two little words that won't be missed at all.

two *little* words that won't be missed? loving (beat) women? those two little words?

yes.

and this is why you can never speak *for me*. because in my world, loving and women would be missed. big time.

Arms drop.

the end of *this* scary conversation.

now on to the next...

and the next, and the next, and the others to come.

I get lost in words sometimes,
because there is *always*,
another scary conversation.

(Defiant exit. || Fadeout.)

Poetic-Monologue #3: *Those Were the Days*

Performed as a woman in her sixties. She enters with a quicken pace and takes a stance. She has a subtle smile on her face as she scans the audience. This is a woman who has found peace with life by taking control of it. This is her time to declare she has survived all the shit thrown at her; and yet, remains determined to endure all future atrocities that will surely come her way.

this is a poem for *me*, entitled, *those were the days*

those were the days,
some people might say.

not the good old days for everyone,
but they were the days.
full of restless energy,
seeking purpose and action,
to turn an injured nation into a haven for all.
they were the days of fear turned to courage.
discord, transformed into harmonious voices.
calamity, being muscled into a peaceful resolution.

those were the days of the sixties and seventies.
when government turned spy on its own,
degrading, discrediting, mocking,
innocent harmless citizens.
exposing them to the inferno of hate.
making them easy prey to scorn, to hang, to oppress.
when the injustice actions of j. edger hoover, was justified,
in the name of God and Country.

those were the days,
when nooses dangled in the wind, waiting.
when massive mobs, sweltering in anger,
cursed and spat and hosed and legislated their resistance to change.

those were the days when “others”,
refusing to continue in silence,
took to the streets,
announcing their intent to reject the status qua.

the days when brave, simple folks,
became soldiers combating monsters,
disguised as men of honor, heroes, protectors, patriotists,
who at night took their true form,
as blood-thirsty creatures hiding behind their cloth of hatred.

those were the days,
when determination was the backbone of hope.
shackles were the inspiration for freedom.
and the spiritual voices of loved-ones taken,
were sirens demanding justice.

those were the days,
that freedom fighters had hoped never to fight again.
had hoped,
the evil wall of the belligerent,
would fall to expose a new world,
where the sun would be respect and the moon kindness.
a dream for us all someday.
someday,
we continue to dream.

those were the days,
and i have seen them all
through the eyes of
Rosa Parks and Shirley Chisholm and Barbara Smith.
the passing of time has worn its mark on me,
leaving false impressions of weariness and remorse.

these are my truths.
it is hard enough to be black.
it is hard enough to be a female.
it is hard enough to be a woman-loving-women.
it is hardest to be all three as one.
but i remain standing, through it all.
through the racism, the misogyny, the homophobia.
i remain standing,
with no other purpose than to persist,
at being invincible.

and i shall remain standing,
as the pompous behavior of forefathers,
resurface in their descendants.

galvanized by an ogre,
posing as a man of great deeds.
as the chosen one,
by God Almighty.
revered by reincarnated thugs,
seeking a past that should have died long ago.
bullies, who no longer hide,
but march in daylight, armed, prepared to kill,
to eliminate,
“those people”.

in the face of all this,
the me who has withstood anger, hatred, attacks, scorn, abuse, ridicule;
who has been belittled, vilified, unappreciated, my body contaminated with lies;
who has suffered admonishment, disparagement, punishment, damnation;
everything but what I am due;
the me who has *not been defeated*,
is determined to stay standing,
invincible.

and you?
what will *your* poem be?

She scans the audience, still smiling. Then
exits.

THE END,
of one moment in time.