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# Preface

This collection of monologs for women is suitable for classroom discussion and performance for mid-teens, teens, young adults, and adults. This does not mean, of course, that the monolog characters need to fall into that age range. You may wish to explore performance opportunities that fall outside that age range. There are a number of principles at work in this collection of monologs. Featured authors include well-established writers who voice traditional views on current women's issues and a host of relatively new, contemporary writers who offer fresh and provocative insights on similar topics. The monologs selected for inclusion represent challenging material you might expect to discuss and perform in acting or literature classes, auditions, festivals, contests, or workshops. Each monolog also includes a brief character analysis and an appropriate age range to help promote authentic character portraits in performance.

For ease of reference, chapters are divided into "thematic" ages rather than standard categories that identify characters simply by chronological age, gender, ethnicity, type, or similar points of view. Chapter I, "Classroom Performance and Audition Etiquette," outlines the basic principles at work in choosing a monolog for performance and offers a number of valuable practices to be aware of when preparing for classroom performance or an audition.

Chapter II, "The Age of Innocence," introduces youthful adolescents engaged in childish role-playing games and some mature and strong-willed adults who still cling to their youthful innocence and childhood memories. Chapter III, "Coming of Age," features monolog characters whose experiences have taught them that human nature can be cruel and callous. Chapter IV, "The Age of Rebellion," highlights monolog characters who are often engaged in the struggle for independence and personal values or the conflict between duty to oneself and duty to others.

Chapter V, "The Gilded Age," offers eccentric, flamboyant, and neurotic characters drawn from the everyday world with a comic flair that masks their outrageous behavior. Chapter VI, "The Golden Age," includes more mature, resolute stage figures whose life experiences and values, principles, or morals set them apart from other monolog characters in the collection. You might want to thumb through the table of contents to get a sense of the roles available and then go directly to the brief introduction

of each monolog of interest for more critical comments or performance suggestions. Remember as well that you may need to edit some of the longer monolog selections to meet classroom or other performance time limits.

One of the special features of this monolog collection is Chapter VII, "New Age Voices," which introduces monolog characters written specifically for auditions, contests, or public readings. Although these characters are independent and not excerpts from longer scripts, they share many of the life experiences, personal opinions, and points of view expressed by monolog characters in other chapters. In addition, there are a number of duologs, or brief scenes for two performers, included at the end of each chapter to help you polish your performance skills with a partner. Each duolog should encourage you and a partner to work collaboratively in sketching contrasting character portraits that spark of imagination and intuition.

Now a final word about using this collection of monologs. Contemporary plays often deal with serious, sometimes controversial, issues that are voiced in strong language or provocative situations. In this collection of monologs, that language and those situations have been kept to a minimum. With the experience and practical knowledge gained in classroom discussion, you should be able to design a consistent performance "blueprint" most appropriate for your own individual skills and personal views on the issues being addressed by the monolog characters.

Begin the exploration with a blueprint that suits your own age, highlights your vocal range and physical type, promotes movement potential, and encourages your imaginative self-expression in performance. Strive to increase the range and depth of your self-expression by playing multiple monologs with varying ages, vocal ranges, and physical types. You should also approach each monolog or duolog with sensitivity, using a conversational tone of delivery and a relaxed, natural sense of movement.

Gerald Lee Ratliff  
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