Female comic

Rhonda Gonne from *Gonne, Strange, Charity* by Sally Rodwell (with Alan Brunton). Used with kind permission of Bumper Books.

**Time:** day or night

**Location:** varied

Sally Rodwell describes Rhonda Gonne as:

A former actor fallen on hard times, some say she’s all washed up. Unstoppable, a bundle of indignation, a nosy-parker and opponent of the new privatised business world, Rhonda represents the underclass. She prowls about in baggy trousers and spongy tennis shoes … she op-shops. She is the godmother of Grunge … back is worn front, inside comes out, checks and florals assault the eye, the intimate garment is made public.

Here are a few survival tips, from Rhonda Gonne’s *Great guide to making the most out of late capitalism before late capitalism makes a late great out of you*.

**RHONDA:**

1. Walk around supermarkets looking for one of those jolly blondes in a little white pinafore, giving away stuff on a cracker. What they’re actually doing is testing for food additives. If you turn into a toad they put you out on the shelf. If you fall over dead, they recall the product.

2. Visit the yuppie photocopy shops in Lambton Quay for coffee. Take the complimentary cup for
customers. At 20 cents a copy it’s the cheapest short black in town.

3. Go to opening nights at the City Art Gallery. Don’t worry if you don’t have an invitation, Nobody else does. They’ve all got elbows bigger than their stomachs. Just shove your way in. Look important. Look at the art. Make comments like: Brilliant, I can see how acidosis results in the peripheral vasodilation of his individual vision! If they ask who you are, say: I’m on the consultative panel, and now I’m about to pig into the paté and then I’ll pig into the pastries! Sid was there one night. Rhonda, he said, you look like … Sssh Sid, I said.

4. Drink plenty of water. While it’s still free. But test it first. There’s a simple test I saw in the Civil Defence Manual. It’s called the Ear Wax Test. I quote: “To test for contamination, collect some water in a clean container. Using one of your fingers, not a stick or anything dangerous to the eardrums, remove some of the wax from your ear. Like this. (Demonstrates) Now place your finger in the water and let the wax float there. If the water is pure, the glob of wax will sink down to the bottom of the vessel and settle. On the other hand, if the water has chemical contamination, the wax will immediately break down and the colour spectrum will appear on the surface.”

In this instance you would be foolish to drink the water, and should exercise restraint. Otherwise you might catch something biologically nasty like

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
Chlamydia or Anthrax and you could never live with yourself after that.

This is a simple test. It will give you a rough idea of what NOT to drink.

If you’ve got any tips, I’d love to hear from you. I always appreciate a tip. Someone gave me a good one on the bus today. What to do if you’re completely lost. Which most of us frequently are. What you need is a needle. Rub it through your hair 12 times in the same direction. Hang it from a piece of string. The needle will point due North. Did you know that? An excellent tip. It will be in the book.

Yes, I’m printing a book. One page at a time. If you never see it on the shelves, you’ll know I died from drinking too much cheap coffee.

Thank you.

You’re wonderful.

But you already know that!

Commentary

Sally Rodwell is a founding member of Red Mole, the company she set up with Alan Brunton in 1974. Controversial and outrageous, the company combined physical theatre, satirical cabaret, street theatre, and music to create performances that earned them a place in New Zealand theatre history.

http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/drama/nzmonologues/index_e.php
In 1978 the company moved to New York and remained on the road touring for 12 years before returning to New Zealand in the early 80s.

Rhonda Gonne is one of several comic characters Rodwell developed in the late 80s and early 90s as a reaction to what she calls the “selfish 90s”. To create the characters Rodwell observed people, made lists, kept files of “daily craziness” and bizarre stories from the newspaper.

She then invented her characters’ physicality “from the feet up”, physically exploring their carriage (the way they held themselves), their energy, their weight and particularly their voice: “its rhythm, its pitch, the very particular way [they] speak[s]”.

Rodwell’s characters address the audience directly. She writes that the most difficult aspect of creating these characters was finding an authentic vocabulary for each one: “At this point the character is an assemblage of gestures, costume and sound effects. … Sooner or later I have to put this together, to write it down if I’m going to remember it.”

Rodwell collaborated in the creation of Rhonda Gonne with writer Alan Brunton. As editor and temporary director he helped shape the material. Finally Rodwell herself edited the script for performance.

Each character is portable, and the costume, script and make-up for each are stored in a small suitcase between performances.

- Devise your own suitcase character and monologue following the Drama activity instructions.