

the girls' conferences that go on each year in this state—a direct response to the garbage going on in schools—at which

I



Abigail Rose Solomon (NYC) in THE THIN LINE

launched one of my early issue-specific plays. One conference led to another, led to groups bringing me in to facilitate collaborative performance pieces, led to more plays...Then other groups started commissioning pieces for their conferences, and a Maine Women's Fund commission in 1998 (premiered in 1999) put it all into a more serious this-is-what-I-do-for-a-living-(!?)-context. Or, at least, I was finally able to decline offers to work with elementary school students (not my forte).

#### So one play made enough money to live on?

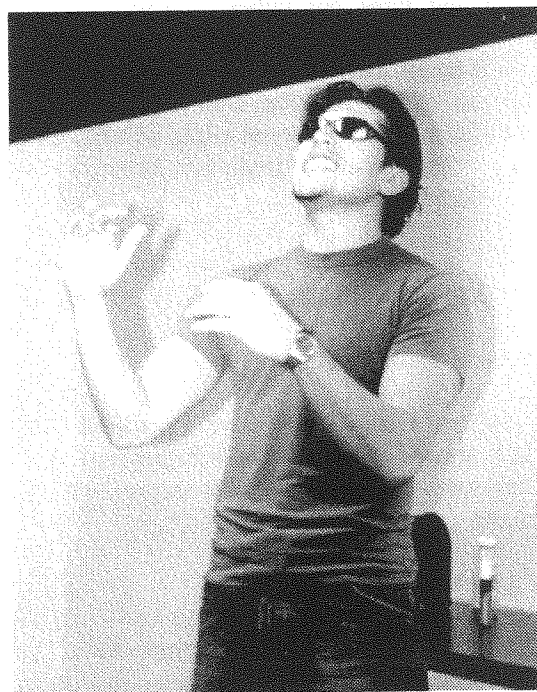
HA. No. Actually, I've been working with the Maine Alliance for Arts Education for several years (in mostly Penobscot and Piscataquis counties) on a high-school anti-violence and arts project called Building Community Through Arts.. And, I've had the good fortune to have a patron. An amazing woman named Bonnie Rukin Miller has twice sent substantial financial gifts that have made the Darkness of Doom and the probability of a conventional Day Job go away. That and other consulting has kept the credit card debt somewhat manageable.

#### What's Add Verb looking like right now?

Right now, I've got an actor in DC (Diane Cooper-Gould), three in NYC (Niurka Lopez, Eddie Martinez, and Abigail Solomon—who will be living in Los Angeles by the

beginning of the year), two, soon to be three, in Maine (Ryan Bass, Guy Durichek and Amanda Huotari). Jessica Peck, the actor who first performed THE THIN LINE, retired after three seasons of touring. Some of the actors also book shows; Dayle Fuller of Freeport acts as an agent; and, if necessary, I do, too—not my favorite task, but sometimes it's unavoidable. Plans for expansion will probably mean three more actors will join up this year, maybe more if I can figure out how and who to manage this. Ryan is helping me with the structure and details of the business. A fun fact about her is that she was one of my students in the mess where I was teaching and happened to be in the first play I wrote for the girls' conference. I love that it all comes around.

To date we've had just under 30,000 people in 167 audiences. To give you a sense of how exponential the growth has been: last fall, which has proven the last few years to be the least busy of the two semesters, we had 15 shows. This fall: 70. Barring natural or unnatural disasters, this spring should clear 80 or 100 shows by June. I'm in negotiation with a group in Australia that wants to produce YOU THE MAN, and similar conversations are in zygote stages in a couple of other countries.



Eddie Martinez (NYC) in YOU THE MAN

Meanwhile, the Maine Women's Fund play, MONEY TALKS (1999), has been touring with a combination of two of these three actors—Donna Gaspar-Jarvis, Amanda Huotari, and Jennywren Sanders. The MWF uses the play as an outreach tool for women and financial literacy. The anti-tobacco play, BUTT OF COURSE (2000), might have a new lease on life in the near future if I can secure some grant money. TOO GIRLS (1997) pops up every now and again; it