As mentioned in the first part of the book, there are several ways to monitor the success or failings of collaboration. Those modes of examination hold the true test of a successful production. The answers are sometimes painful to hear, but offer the theatrical artist a true guide to better work in the future.

In this chapter we will

- examine reactions of the authors;
- examine reaction of peers;
- examine the reaction of the reviewer; and
- provide an unexpurgated conversation among the key players of the production team.

Reflections

The following is a transcript of a conversation that occurred immediately following the closing of the production of *The Life*:

R: We've never worked together as designer and director. What has been the biggest problem with that? Biggest challenge?

K: Well, I don't think that at any time we really lost our focus—because neither of us wanted to allow the other to do that. But at the same time, we made our already ridiculous schedule more difficult.

R: You've talked many times about my micro-management of things. Was that issue evident?

K: Yes and no. Did I feel challenged? Yes. But I felt like this was a true test of my collaborative abilities because of your very specific needs and visions. What ended up on that stage was my version of your ideas, not just a facilitation.

R: Agreed. I think corralling so many different ways in which people work with so many members on the production team made for a difficult process throughout. A challenge.

K: You were always asking the right questions, although there was some compromise in the design due to educational and time limitations. I had to cut some of my favorite elements of the set (the buildings at
forty-five-degree angles, which would jut into the stage, just hanging but not positioned) due to time.

R: Those were my favorites as well, but there just comes a point when other issues become priorities. I think the fact that this is an educational facility really plays a major factor in compromises throughout any project.

K: I still hate that several little details or moments of the show were not solved in my area.

R: I must say that after seeing the final show last night I was excited and moved by things that I was not expecting to be moved by. We’ve been focusing so much on the technical, that I was like, “Oh, there’s a show here.”

K: Biggest surprise for me in the process was the costume design in relation to the look of the overall show. It was a surprise. It came very late in the process in my mind and just sort of fit with all else. It’s responsive collaboration. I don’t think it is ideal, but it worked for me on this production.

R: The biggest surprise for me was believing that I had thought everything through, and then elements arrived and surprised me. One would be the marquee, which is really small. Another would be the dock. We built this whole big thing for Queen to have this great exit, which worked just fine, and then, when it came into the space I had never noticed this two-foot wall that made it impossible for this clean escape.

K: Even the most organized production has surprises when you enter the theatre.

As this conversation occurred immediately following the closing of the production several issues must be factored into the analysis. The immediate rush of euphoria that accompanies even the most cynical of artists must be acknowledged. Also, OUR need to present the best face possible to future readers also affects the analysis of the event. Finally, pride in one’s achievements makes even the most sober judgment somewhat skewed. With all of those factors in mind, Rob and Kirk again discuss their work on this production after a year’s worth of events, experience, and education.

R: I look back on this experience, having directed five productions since The Life, as a very important one for me as collaborator. I have always been confident in my work with actors, but a little lacking in discussion with designers. I feel that my aesthetic always influences each production. I feel that MY taste always somehow ends up onstage. I hate that.

What was unique about this show was that, because of its scope, I was unable to micromanage each element—even though I tried. I see that I was hoping to handle each element of the production as we put this book together. I see the need to make sure that I am more respectful of the designers.