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A Look behind the Curtains of Stand-Up Comedy:

Psychology in Stand-Up Comedy

Bakalářská diplomová práce

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Acknowledgement

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Introduction

This thesis will examine the psychology phenomena in Stand-Up Comedy. The inspiration for this study came from the researcher's fascination with Stand-Up Comedy and psychology, and the thought of combining the two. The researcher started to get more interested into the topic after a theatre performance which they were a part of. After further observing and research they decided to use this matter as the topic of their bachelor's thesis.

The study will try to identify and describe the various aspects of psychology, which may or may not have an impact on Stand-Up Comedy and which are omnipresent.

Psychology itself is everywhere one can see, Stand-Up Comedy not being an exception. The question is in which spheres specifically is the psychological effect more evident than others.

Stand-Up Comedy is a performance art with history tracing back to ancient rhetoric. It is well established in countries like the United States of America or Japan, but in the Czech Republic, the researcher's home country, Stand-Up Comedy is ranked among up-and-coming theatre styles. This thesis should shed light on certain processes and workings occurring in Stand-Up Comedy. It can be of help for starting Stand-Up comedians not just in the Czech Republic. Ideally, this thesis can be a stepping stone for further research.

The thesis is divided into two parts. First there is the part of theoretical background of the topic at hand, where various previous researches and writings about the said theme are analysed and relevant information is stated including a brief history and origin of Stand-Up Comedy, various conditions a Stand-Up comedian might find themselves in, the relevancy of public speaking strategies and rules in Stand-Up Comedy and a terse insight on what a Stand-Up comedian must take into account when performing. The second part is the practical part of the study. It is a qualitative research, where the data is collected via interviews with Stand-Up comedians and later analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Throughout the thesis, a lot of foreign sources have been used for background information as this theme nor this specific type of art are as popular and researched in the home country of the researcher.

In Theory

1   Theoretical background

Palmer (1994) states that the success of a joke is conditioned by several combined and coexisting factors: the settings and contexts in which a joke is told, the competence of its delivery, the identity of the teller, and the audience of the joke. Throughout this paper, these factor will be taken in account.

1.1 Stand-Up Comedy in Theory

According to Oliver Double, who is a Stand-Up comedian himself, Stand-Up Comedy must meet three conditions – other than being funny – to be eligible to be regarded as Stand-Up Comedy:

"Personality: It puts a person on display in front of an audience, whether that person is an exaggerated comic character or a version of the performer's own self.

Direct Communication: It involves direct communication between performer and audience. It's an intense relationship, with energy flowing back and forth between stage and auditorium. It's like a conversation made up of jokes, laughter and sometimes less pleasant responses.

Present tense: It happens in the present tense, in the here and now. It acknowledges the performance situation. The Stand-Up is duty-bound to incorporate events in the venue into the act. Failure to respond to a heckler, a dropped glass or the ringing of a mobile phone is a sign of weakness which will result in the audience losing faith in the performer's ability." (Double, 2014, p. 19)

Funniness being fundamental, comedians are looking for a range of emotions to work with, be it shock, sympathy or indignation (Quirk, 2011).

Double (2014) further suggests that when taking this definition into account, Stand-Up Comedy has been around substantially longer than the term which describes it. Double states there has been a lot of speculation about the roots of Stand-Up Comedy, but there is little doubt that it is closely related to potential "ancestors" if you will: Commedia dell' Arte refined the improvisatory comic social satire using mask wearing stock characters in everyday situations (Scott, 2004), Shakespearean clowns like Richard Tarleton were used as incisive social critics and observers (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992), English pantomime clowns like Joseph Grimaldi, circus clowns, British music hall comedians, American burlesque and vaudeville entertainers, the stump speeches of American

minstrelsy, nineteenth century humorous lecturers like Mark Twain (Katayama, 2006), and medicine shows (Double, 2014).

Mintz (2005, in Lee, 2012) agrees to some extent with Double by stating that the genre of Stand-Up Comedy encompasses a wide range of live performances – solo, small-group verbal, musical, or physical clowning to a direct joke telling and social commentary. According to Lee (2012), David Marc sees the directness of artist and audience as the ultimate feature of the art. A Stand-Up comedian is out there all by himself, with – typically – a stool, a glass of water and a microphone. There is nothing but the comedian to determine whether the upcoming act is or is not a piece of art.

1.2   Types of humour

According to Stebbins (1990) social scientists have identified four types of humour according to its consequences or the function it serves. First off, there is humour that creates *consensus* among the audience. It generates a warm feeling of empathy and friendliness. The listener can relate to the joke teller. Next, *control* consequences occurs when the joke involves ridicule, satire or sarcasm. The humour acts as a manner to change undesired behaviour identified by the comedian. When a joke involves acts of aggression or insults, mostly likely the humour's consequence is *conflict*. It often has a political theme. Lastly, when humours brings *comic relief*, a tense situation – often interpersonal relations – is solved by humour.

1.3   Conditions of Stand-Up Comedy

This chapter will tackle the different conditions a Stand-Up comedian might find themselves in. At first, the venue and the general setting of the show will be examined, then the matters concerning the audience.

1.3.1   The Venue and the setting

The venue the performance is taking place at has a great deal of factor to contribute with. The comedian has to work with the given venue and the way the space is set up, the size and seating of the audience, and the general nature of the space (Quirk, 2011).

According to Lee (2012) comedy venues – such as night clubs – tend to emphasize the illusion of authentic communication. The venues support the illusion of closeness between

the audience and the comedian since this setting stimulates the feeling of intimacy and one-on-one conversation between the audience and the comedian. Since Stand-Up gigs come in all shapes and sizes (Quirk, 2011), larger venues – like sports arenas – use jumbotrons or other screening devices to capture the comedian's emotions and mimics so even the furthest seats can engage in the feeling of closeness (Lee, 2012). The size does, however, moderately alters the dynamic of interaction (Quirk, 2011).

To this Quirk adds: *"A successful room will usually show some evidence of an attempt to influence the responsiveness - and even the behaviour - of the audience. The space is laid out to direct the audience's attention toward the performer and enhance excitement about the gig. Occasionally, perception of commercial success is also managed by the layout of the space. The dead space in the room is minimised and the audience are prevented from becoming comfortable enough to be sedate, so that energy may flow more easily into laughter. These efforts are usually subtle and audiences are rarely aware of the way that both they and the space have been arranged to encourage responsiveness. These activities are, nonetheless, common practices orchestrated specifically to influence the behaviour of the audience"* (Quirk, 2011, p. 229)

The room will change the attitude and overall act, the comedian must adjust to its conditions (Quirk, 2011).

1.3.2 The Audience

Audiences in general

According to Bennet (1988) audiences in performing arts being theatre, opera or ballet for instance, support and watch the performers, who are mostly on a stage. The audience is regarded as a consumer, having consumed the experience of a performance (Mackellar, 2014).

A typology of audiences

According to Mackellar (2014) there is to be a typology of audience types which can be used for classification. He suggests several forms of classification for further sorting – according to their size, purpose and level of interest. Five types of event audiences have been identified and described by Mackellar (2014): mass event audiences, special interest audiences, community event audiences, incidental audiences and media audiences.

Mass event audiences are a collective of people who often come to large cities during artily broad festivals of some sort. The people forming the audience may be there for totally different reasons. The City of London festival, the Festival of Sydney or the Singapore Festival are among the best known examples. All of these festivals have a broad range of events to attend to, be it live music performances, theatre performances or galleries with art. Possibly the largest festival of this kind is Munich's October Festival which attracts approximately 6 million people a year. Naturally, an audience of this many people is rather difficult to contain and manage. The organizers wish to maintain order and safety for the audience themselves as well as for the surroundings (Mackellar, 2014).

Special interest audiences seek specialised experience of their recreational or leisure interest. This audience attends events often specialized on one theme. Listing a few examples, one can come across fan conventions, jazz festivals, birding festivals, film festivals, motorbike exhibitions and so on. The size can differ from a few dozens to thousands of people. Mackellar (2014) suggests these events are but a part of a bigger passion for the people attending. The audience consists of like-minded people who have a common interest.

According to Mackellar (2014, p.5) Community event audiences: *"are focussed upon celebrating the distinct elements of their community life, which may have a historical or traditional basis."* Basically this encompasses anything that a specific community might celebrate. Parades, dances, feasts, flairs, re-enactments of historical battles are all possibilities of examples a community event audience might attend.

Some audiences have no intentions to attend events, these are called *Incidental audiences*. It may occur during pursuing a primary purpose such as visiting a city and discovering an ongoing city festival. In contrast to the other listed types of audience, the incidental audience does not require any pre-commitment towards organizers, or individual planning and preparation (Mackellar, 2014).

The last item of this typology is the *media audience*. Essentially, this form of audience is not attending the event per se, as it is following the event through a sort of media like television broadcasting or the internet (Mackellar, 2014).

The Theatre Audience

Taking into account Mackellar's (2014) typology of event audiences a theatre audience is a *special interest audience.* To further analyse the theatre audience, Forsyth (2009) states that an audience is a crowd that purposefully gathers in a specific area to observe an event or

activity. It may also be called a conventional crowd, though dissimilarly to a spontaneously assembled crowd during an event that creates shared focus, individuals join audiences deliberately as they are bound more tightly by social conventions that dictate their location and movements (Blumer, 1946, in Forsyth, 2009). An audience will reside an area in an a priori decided fashion, be it seats, or space for standing, or other arrangements. To get there an audience will use certain aisles or pathways also decided on beforehand. During the phase of observing, the audience may engage into doing an array of behaviours such as clapping, cheering, shouting, or questioning. These different behaviours are the determined by how much the particular setting allows them to appear. When the event comes to an end, however, the audience disbands in an organized manner (Forsyth, 2009).

British director Peter Brook (in Downs, Wright, & Ramsey, 2012) states that at its most basic, theatre requires someone to walk across an empty space while someone else watches. The essence of theatre is that it is in fact a group activity. Similarly to the movies, you experience theatre in a sea of strangers but unlike the movies, theatre cannot exist without an audience. Theatre and the likes of it have been around for thousands of years and its protagonists have learned the arts of manipulating the audience in their feelings, reactions or as Downs, Wright & Ramsey (2012) state, even their thoughts. Further, these three authors say that this is made possible by three factors: group dynamics, the suspension of disbelief and aesthetic distance.

Group dynamics in Theatre Audiences

Kurt Lewin, the author of the term *group dynamics* is considered to be the founder of group dynamics as a scientific field for research. His research included organization of group life related to the group's performance, leadership, the structure of the group and group conflicts (Kožnar, 1992).

Cartwright and Zander (1968, in Kožnar, 1992) define *group dynamics* as a scientific area studying the very essence of groups, their rules and their development, and the relationships with individuals and other groups. Thus, the matter of study, when it comes to group dynamics, is the nature of group life.

Regarding therapeutic groups Kratochvíl (1978) on the other hand, defines *group dynamics* as a social psychology concept, concerning the monitoring of the interaction of individuals in small social groups, and the techniques and processes, which take place during basic interaction and can change the structure and behaviour of small groups.

Downs, Wright & Ramsey (2012) argue that *group dynamics* in its most basic form is the functioning of humans when they come together into groups. People tend to become less intellectual and more emotional, less reasonable and more irrational, the likeliness of reacting as a group rather than an individual is greater.

Group dynamics in Stand-Up Comedy

Tracing these ideas back to Stand-Up Comedy, *group dynamics* is one of the factors why people tend to join in and laugh, when the rest of the group laughs. One could argue this is due to a certain degree of conformity the individuals in an audience are prone to. This is presumably the reason why producers put laugh tracks into some TV-shows (Lockyer & Myers, 2011). To be added though: *"However, it is often clear for an attentive viewer that something is amiss - the 'audience' laughs too aggressively or the timing is wrong. This clearly illustrates that audience responses are not just bland, predictable and uniform, but that they are sequentially sensitive and precisely timed to the witnessable performance in progress"* (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992, p. 230).

Theatre will sell their tickets seating all of the audience members next to each other so even if the show is not sold out, the audience is seated as a group and the influence of group dynamics will increase. Theatres might also "paper the house". They will give away free tickets to cast members who will distribute them to friends and family (Downs, Wright, & Ramsey, 2012). Still bearing in mind the simple idea of contagious laughter and that the more people around the individual are enjoying the show, the more likely the individual will join in and enjoy themselves (Provine, 2001).

Bergson (2011, in Quirk, 2011) adds that no one wants to be caught laughing alone as a heartfelt laughter seems to be in need of an echo. The idea again being – the fuller the theatre the better as more uncontrolled laughter will appear.

Dan Atkinson (2008, in Quirk, 2011, p. 228) explains further: *"Low ceilings, hard surfaces, rowed seating - if you're having tables, very, very small tables - very dark, lights only facing the stage. Low stage, so that people feel close to the comic and they know that it's not a theatre performance and that there's going to be interaction. And, basically, what all that does - what you're aiming for - is that you have the audience as one homogenised group (…) You want them all to forget that they are in a group or single, you want them all to be believing they're one lump, enjoying it all together. Which is quite a nice thing, when that does happen."*

In addition, he says it is crucial for the mere sound of the laugh not to escape the room, if however the ceilings are high or the crowd half-empty this will happen and it will be to no benefit. Furthermore, Quirk's study states, that greater comfort makes the crowd more passive which is unwanted.

Suspending the Audiences Disbelief and the Aesthetic distance in Theatre Audiences

When *suspending their disbelief* the audience will put aside the concerns about everyday reality and agree to the concept of a quasi-reality displayed in the particular play. Whether it is theatre, Stand-Up Comedy or even a movie or TV-show, the willing suspension of disbelief is mandatory. If not intact, the audience members would call the police on the actor portraying the criminal, they would try and help the actors if they were about to be killed and et cetera (Downs, Wright, & Ramsey, 2012).

Aesthetic distance is the audience's frame of reference created by the artist regarding the play, or piece of art in general, to be able to separate reality from the aforementioned quasi-reality. The distance itself can be of a greater or smaller scale. If a close aesthetic distance is achieved the audience will almost forget the difference between reality and the play's quasi-reality. Breaking this distance is known as violating the aesthetic distance and it has been made famous by Bertold Brecht (Downs, Wright, & Ramsey, 2012).

The comedian might try and choose their audience by manipulating some aspect of the shows promotion such as the posters, brochures given out or even the ticket prizes. There is a significant difference between the reasons an audience might attend a comedy show. Mainly, there's the comedy show as the main act, or it is the comedy show as a side act as part of a bachelor's party or maybe a part of a music festival. The audience in the latter case, did not particularly come to see the comedian and that can be rather difficult to handle for the comedian (Quirk, 2011).

There also is a dissonance with the best clubs and opportunities to play at usually not corresponding with the best paid jobs (Quirk, 2011).

The role of the Audience in Stand-Up Comedy

"An audience is both shaped by the talk it is attending and helps shape what will be made of that talk" (Goodwin, 1986, p. 311).

Atkinson (2008, in Quirk, 2011) states that *"a successful gig is, first and foremost, one that procures the laughter of its audience."*

Stand-Up is entirely audience-dependent when it comes to the evaluation of funniness. Joking is a social phenomenon because without an audience, there is no joke. The relationship between joke teller and audience do not seem to determine the joke more or less funny, they do determine the joke more or less funny (Limon, 2000). Freud (2005) states that a not transmitted joke is not, technically, a joke. The Particularities of the relationship of joke teller and audience do not make the joke seem more or less funny; they make the joke more or less funny. More so, Limon (2000) states that joking is also a fully embedded phenomenon.

When criticizing a theatre play, a novel or an opera, the audience might be wrong as they can stake claims to seriousness. Essentially, this means that they subject to higher jurisdiction – critics for instance. Stand-Up Comedy induced laughter on the other hand, is *"no process that resembles judging."* (Limon, 2000, p. 12)

What distinguishes Stand-Up Comedy from other forms of performance arts and arts involving any story telling in general, is exactly the point that Stand-Up Comedy does not require to have a story nor a plot, point or closure. For all it's worth, it could consist only of jokes told in succession. Mitch Hedberg is an example of a one-liner comedian. His acts don't tell a story nor do they causally follow each other.

Audience response

Jefferson's (1979 and 1985, in McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992) observations of laughter result into several points: laughter is not chaotic, moreover it is percisely timed to the social context and ongoing situation, a comedian might trigger the audience's laughter by concluding an utterance with a laughting particle.

Possitive audience responses include laughter, applause, cheers, whoops and whistles. Multiple of them often appear simultaneously. There is a rather evident causality – applouse emerges from laughter when a extraordinary joke is told. Negative audience responses, on the other hand, are not as common. They appear mostly when encouraged by the comedian such ass jeers, boos or verbal heckles (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992).

There is an obvious desire to be involved by the audience and it is only natural. They are involved by giving a response to the comedian. Some audience members might want to

become overly involved in the judging, outcome or overall experience. Hecklers, as those type of audience members are called, are unwelcommed (Mackellar, 2014). Although skillfull comedians can work with heckles and reflect them with ease (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992).

According to Atkinson (1984) a normal laughter has a specific trajectory of volume – peaking early and slowly fading out with an accelerated finish – and a duration of eight seconds. On the other hand, Limon (2000) detailing the typical laughter at Stand-Up Comedy shows considers two seconds of laughter respectable, four seconds is examplary for the best joke of a „*Tonight show*" monologue. A six seconds laugh is considerend a rare occasion, usually the joke would have to initiate waves of laughter by being funny when said and even funnier when properly processed.

1.4 The Stand-Up Comedian and their Strategies

1.4.1 Personality traits of Stand-Up Comedians

According to Greengrass and Miller (2009, p. 79) there is a rather limited number of studies on the personalities of Stand-Up comedians and comedians in general. They state that in comparison with other *"performing artists such as musicians, actors, and dancers (Chakravarti & Chattopadhyay, 2006; Fitzgerald, 1999; Kogan, 2002; Nettle, 2006), only a few have looked at comedians as a separate group (Fisher & Fisher, 1981; Janus, 1975; Janus, Bess, & Janus, 1978)"*.

The main focus if it comes to forms of creativity were always mathematicians, architects, scientists, Greengrass and Miller (2009) further state. With the increase of popularity of Stand-Up Comedy through the mainstream media and Stand-Up Comedy being established as intriguingly attractive evening programme option with not only HBO and Showtime broadcasting live Stand-Up shows during the past few decades (Katayama, 2006), psychologists as well have come around and have conducted a great number of research studies into the topic.

Provine (2001) comes to the conclusion in his book Laugther: A Scientific Investigation that for the purpose of studying humour, Stand-Up Comedy performances are not ideal due to their particular setting and given form, it still is a valid way to study humour as it brings light upon other aspects of humour.

Janus and Fisher & Fisher took it upon themselves to conduct psychoanalytical research of comedian's personalities in the late 70's and early 80's. Drawing results of Stand-Up

comedians being sad, angry, and prone to depression, introverted and had a low level of self-esteem compared to actors. The methods used, however, Machover Human Figure Drawing and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) respectively, are of questionable validity for the given subject due to their openness to subjective interpretations (Greengross & Miller, 2009). Both studies are somewhat outdated as during the time they were released the scene of Stand-Up Comedy was incomparably smaller. The industry has grown immensely since then (Greengross & Miller, 2009).

Personality characteristics of Stand-Up comedians may differ in some cases but there are quite a few similarities as well when it comes to other performance artists. Unlike writers or poets, Stand-Up comedians are artists who not only create their own material but perform it as well. Similarly to singer-songwriters, slam poetry performers or academic speakers at conferences. In the five factor dimension scale one could compare the results of writers, poets or actors to Stand-Up comedians as they are bit of both (Greengross & Miller, 2009). Writers and poets tend to be high on the dimensions of neuroticism and openness, and low on conscientiousness, compared to control groups (Nowakowska, Strong, Santosa, Wang, & Ketter, 2005).

According to Nettle (2006) actors, whom comedians resemble to in the way of performing – on stage, in the centre of everyone's attention, in front of crowds – tend to have high scores on extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness compared to control groups.

Greengross' and Miller's (2009, p. 4) study come to the conclusion that *"comedians are more open to experiences than average population. Stand-Up Comedy requires a fresh and innovative look at things around us and staying in tune with popular culture events that interest their audience"*.

Further, comedians tend to be more introverted than other people. These findings contradict with the assumption comedians where similar to actors who score high on extroversion (Nettle, 2006). It seems that comedians are not the people they are when on stage, as on stage they seem very extroverted, which may be just an act, at least Greengross' and Miller's study suggests so. Usually a lot of jokes are based off of the comedian's life which might confuse the audience into thinking they are the person the audience sees on stage (Greengross & Miller, 2009).

More so, comedians scored rather low on agreeableness, which is a bit surprising as well when we see the interactions going on during a show between the comedian and the audience. The pure image of the comedian trying to make the audience laugh is enough to

make us think comedians would be sensitive towards the reaction of the crowd. Again, the case is exactly the opposite. Among others, a reason for this might be, that a comedian work is mainly writing new material and then practicing the performance. All of this is solitary and cagy work and given the competitiveness of the comedy business, comedians might fear their act would be stolen. Moreover, people with high-agreeableness are not exactly people who could mock or diminish other people, let alone indulge in brutal or at least dark humour as comedians often do (Greengross & Miller, 2009).

1.4.2 Public Speaking and Stand-Up Comedy

An important aspect of the analyses of Stand-Up Comedy is its similarity to public speaking. In a way, you could rank Stand-Up Comedy as a form of public speaking. The comedian works with an audience as well as a public speaker and tries to maintain their attention and get a positive audience response. As a matter of fact, there are several methods to become a good public speaker. You can significantly improve your speaking performance by analysing any given performance. You see Stand-Up comedians using the same principles as public speakers in their performances (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992).

"Good public speakers do not only 'speak' but they manipulate the audience in order to elicit affiliative responses" (Atkinson in McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1991, p. 227).

Public speaking is realized in a group of people of a larger scale. It often has an official connotation. The face-to-face contact is lessened to a minimum between the speaker and the audience (an interpersonally mostly unknown crowd), the distance between the speaker and the audience is of a greater scale and feedback is weakened. This leads to a more formal approach by speaker & audience. More often than not there is a need for communication systems and general organization of the audience.

Public speaking is mostly done orally. From the functional perspective, public speaking tends to educate or at least affect the recipient (Šebesta, 1999).

Stand-Up Comedy – same as public speaking – is a person-to-group kind of communication. This is conditioned by a person sending a message to a group of receivers at the same time (King, 1979).

For an insight into public speaking we must go back to the utter beginnings of philosophy to ancient Greece to one of the greatest polyhistor or polymaths, if you will, Aristotle. Many ancient philosophers studied the art of public speaking and oratory transfer of

information - dialogues, sophisms, discussion and rhetoric. Aristotle's script entitled "Rhetoric" is still used today. The elements of Aristotle's rhetoric are the basics for any script written on rhetoric or persuasion, they are the cornerstones of any public speech made.

"Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science. Accordingly all men make use, more or less, of both; for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others" (Aristotle, 1954, p. 19).

The aspects of a rhetoric performance are key information for the psychological analysing of communication (Vybíral, 2005).

1.4.3 Aristotle's rhetoric

According to Aristotle, three requirements must be met by the speaker if they want to deliver a good speech that really gets to the audience. Those are ethos – the credibility, logos – the logic and pathos – the emotion. Getting someone to do something is not the same as getting them to change their belief, behaviour, or attitude. A father-son story is a great example of the problem at hand. The father orders his son to sit down, to which the son sits down somewhat defiantly and replies: *"I might be sitting on the outside, but I am standing up on the inside"*. To really get to someone, to persuade them, to make them passionate about your topic of speech, you need to work with Aristotle's ethos, logos, and pathos (Livingston, 2010).

"Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men" Plato (in Cognetti, 2010).

Ethos

For someone to be persuasive, to be able to motivate, to be able to get to a person, they must have credibility – ethos. For that to happen, the audience must have a legit reason to perceive a speaker as competent, of good character, likeable and charming, that they are pure of heart and interest. If you take salespeople for instance, most of us have a somewhat a priori circumspective approach towards them as the social stigma about them says they are deceptive people. Yet they seem friendly and confident. They build their credibility using immediacy behaviours that enhance likability, they make you feel at ease, you will feel they have a lot of knowledge about the product sold and still you will feel they have your best interests (Livingston, 2010).

Confidence is one of the most important factors to look competent. The delivery of the information has to be understandable and well structured. First off, one should consider the audience and adapt to their style – being understandable, speaking on the level of the audience in means of vocabulary etc. The topic at hand ought to be mastered by the speaker, so they do not have to read the speech. Reading it is a major flaw in means of competence. You will often see cards with notes on them, which is still acceptable, whereas flat out reading the speech is not. Since Aristotle's days, presentations, speeches and other products, are advised to follow the structure of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion (Livingston, 2010).

Livingston (2010) further talks about three different types of credibility: Initial, derived and terminal. A brief look through them tells us, that initial credibility is to be established ideally by an introduction of sorts by a third party. A speaker should not have to explain why he is an expert in the particular field and why the audience should treat him as such. The reasons for this are for one wasting time and a feasible loss of credibility by the speaker talking about himself and his accomplishments and coming off as arrogant. A moderator might make a short introduction of the speaker before they comes on stage. If this is not a possibility, the speaker should avoid listing all their accomplishments and so on – as said above – and ought to introduce themselves by name and title and possibly tell a personal story about how the given topic affected their life. This is also known as an "attention grabber" or an "ice-breaker". Another way is to briefly talk about recent conducted research the speaker was a part of and how long they have been in the field while – avoiding naming all accomplishments.

Lucas (in Livingston, 2010, p.29) describes derived credibility as *"the credibility of the speaker produced by everything she or he says and does during the speech itself"*. It is built during the presentation, maintained or even built out by the quality of the speaker's performance. The speaker might use various delivery techniques or immediacy behaviours.

Lastly, terminal credibility is described as the effect the performance has left on the audience. The end of a speech is crucial. The conclusion ought to leave a lasting and positive impression achieved by a well-constructed and thought out finale. The performance as a whole should be built to have a strong finish. In case of a weak finish, it can harm and lessen the entire presentation (Livingston, 2010).

Logos

Ancient philosophy regarded logic awfully highly. To no surprise did Aristotle list it as one of the requirements to an outstanding speech. Essentially, every claim made during a speech based on logic should be supported by solid evidence. A logical appeal itself might result into a strong argument, though with credible sources backing up the claim, it leads to a natural conclusion. One must be careful to avoid various fallacies, when using logical approaches. Be it an inductive or deductive approach, or causality applied, fallacies might very easily occur. Livingston (2010), in her publication *Advanced Public Speaking: Dynamics and Techniques*, states several forms. Fallacies also known as eristic tactics or sophisms, have been identified and criticized by Plato and others as early as ancient Greece (Lotko, 2009). The *bandwagon* fallacy is a form of group conformity, to put it simply, stating that we should not do what the majority does, just because they are the majority. If you divert the audience's attention of a problem by bringing up a completely different and irrelevant issue you are using the *red herring* fallacy. A slight form of emotional manipulation is rather common in these cases. The case of the *either-or* fallacy is commonly used in politics, but also in an everyday scenario. Putting a complex issue onto a dichotomous black & white scale: *"Either you are with me, or you are against me."* The fallacy known as the *slippery slope* says that one step will lead to an utterly hyperbolized unpreventable ensuing step. As in *"If you don't listen to your mother, you will die"*. The last mentioned in Livingstone's (2010) book is Freud's transference which appears when feelings about one thing are redirected onto something else. Freud spoke about a transference of feelings in regard to people, but it is safe to say it applies for other things – in this case ideas – as well. Livingston (2010, p. 34) gives this example: *"…a group was claiming that condoms being offered to high school students at school was the cause for promiscuous sex among teens. They were transferring an unwanted behaviour, promiscuous sex, by giving away condoms."* Which of course is not the case as sexual relations are absolutely normal in the given age.

Further, Aristotle described an expansion of Logos – the *Five Canons of Rhetoric* – which are detailed in chapter 1.4.4 (Vybíral, 2005).

Pathos

Involving emotions into argumentation and speech is described in Aristotle's *Pathos*. Even though Aristotle regards logic to the highest he does not condemn the use of emotions. However, there is a very thin line between ethical and unethical use of emotions. It is

advised to use emotional appeal when it is due and appropriate, if you light empathy in the audience the point being made will have much more impact. On the other hand, it is very easy to fall into an emotionally manipulative behaviour. Among Aristotle's examples of emotions getting under the skin of the audience Livingston (2010, p. 35) lists: *"anger and calmness, friendship and enmity, fear and confidence, shame and shamelessness, kindness and unkindness, pity, indignation, envy, and emulation or ambition."*

The audience's emotional state should be kept at a positive level, although there are possibilities, where for instance fear can have a strong impact. The use of fear as an emotional appeal tends to be unethical and not of long lasting. Unless the speaker can handle the evoked fear and offer a solution to it, they should avoid using fear as an enhancer of the speech' persuasiveness. One should rather work with positive emotions as they are easier to stir and more powerful when it comes to the audience members' willingness to change their behaviour or values. All emotions can be used to convince the audience of the speaker's ideologies and topic, and their possible link to the believes and values they hold (Livingston, 2010).

The use of pathos is suggested to be within the conclusion as it is advised to finish strong (as mentioned above) and enhancing it with including emotions. Memories are stronger with an emotional link and more lasting.

Summary and applicability of Ethos, Logos and Pathos on Stand-Up Comedy

Although it may seem as of right now, that public speaking and Stand-Up Comedy don't have that much in common after all, it is merely an illusion. *Ethos* for one is perfectly applicable. A comedian must be likable otherwise he is in the wrong industry.

The introduction – the acquisition of initial credibility – of Stand-Up comedians is often done by comperes who act like an anchor for the show. They host the event and provide the audience with information about the upcoming or past act, they secure the continuity between acts, which may completely differ one another. Essentially, they ensure the coherences of the whole show. However, one of the most important tasks the compere is entrusted with is the aforementioned introduction of the acts – comedians. The basic outline, which must not be, but in most cases is included, resembles the following:

- *Contextualisation* in which small details of background are offered about the comedian

- *Framing of response* that directs an audience towards greeting the comedian with a certain attitude
- *Evaluation of comedian* by the compere as he or she passes comment on the performance skills of the comedian
- *Request for action* from the audience by the compere – usually for applause
- *Introduction* of the comedian by the compere
- *Audience applause*

(Rutter, 2000, p. 466)

They might be recommended by a senior comedian, the audience might know them from a clip or two from the internet. For the comedian to establish initial credibility for themselves, it might just be easier than for a public speaker, as comedians tend to start their shows with a strong joke, which works perfectly as an ice-breaker, attention grabber or even mood setter (Seizer, 2011).

There is little chance the comedian will read their act as Stand-Up Comedy is an all-round performance. As to derived credibility, it is the comedians job to entertain the audience, for that they need to keep the audience's attention, which means the comedian would fail at their job if they did not manage to keep the audience entertained. In contrast to a speaker who is mostly presenting their work, the performance on stage is mostly the sole part of the comedian's job. One could argue, that there are public speakers who solely focus on making presentations, though usually they are in the minority if we talk about public speaking. However, in this case, this type of public speaker as well as a Stand-Up comedian will focus most of their time to make the performance effective towards keeping the audience's attention, thus performing well.

The act might be altered by surrounding conditions such as a waitress dropping a glass, or some audience members will be talking. It is of great importance, that the comedian is willing to alter their act accordingly, maybe even drop some of the planned material (Carter, 1989).

Stand-Up comedian will – similarly to public speakers – use methods of delivery working with their body language, eye movement and so on.

Stand-Up comedians are known to take great interest and work hard towards a strong finish, where the last joke more often than not will be the most intense one of the whole show.

The relevance of *Logos* in Stand-Up Comedy is rather weak except for the *Five Canons of Rhetoric* (chapter 1.4.4). There is no real need to make logical claims in Stand-Up Comedy, since there is no need for the things said to be true. However, there are comedians who tend to include real life problems or contemporary world issues into their acts, where it is of considerable importance, that they have their facts right. Other comedians might intentionally falsify the fact for added hilarity (Carter, 1989).

Pathos is as relevant in Stand-Up Comedy as it is in public speaking. The comedian can intensify their act by adding emotion, be it positive form a heart-warming story or negative from a rant or contrarily sad stories. Playing with the audience's emotions is to a certain degree not as applicable in Stand-Up Comedy as it is in public speaking. Nonetheless, a comedian works a lot with the audience's empathy towards them. They might want to get the audience fully empathizing with the comedian during a build up to a joke before releasing the accumulated tension with the punch line (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992).

Again, it depends on the comedian's style really, as some tend to work more with emotions and some less. Be it on the scales of sad and happy, angry and calm, touched and untouched.

1.4.4 The Five Canons of Rhetoric

During the days of Ancient Greece rhetoric was the main concern of many philosophers' and scholars' work. Aristotle is the one who is cited to be responsible for describing the Five Canons of Rhetoric, which have been the pillar in the development of public speaking and presentation for thousands of years. The Canons themselves are up-to-date in more than a few aspects still. Aristotle defined them in his Rhetoric (1999) as *invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery* (Livingston, 2010). Cicero further worked developed the idea of the canons naming them the Five Arts (Coopman & Lull, 2012).

Invention

The first Canon making logistic sense is the invention, the idea, the need, the reason to create and perform a speech, a presentation. It is essential to plan out a structure; consider the audience – as Braun (2009) says: There is no bad audience, there is only an unprepared speech; the aim of the presentation; the emotions, which will be involved; the method of presenting and the given time frame for the presentation to be held within. Only after one has a structure with all the logistic worked out, only then one can begin research. It is crucial to have the topic deeply covered by several sources which can be cited and

developed. The rhetoric approach gives the speaker an effective way to share the knowledge gained during the research. One of the key factors is taking the audience seriously, thinking about what the audience wants and what the speaker can deliver and will give them (Livingston, 2010).

Considering the principle of Invention in Stand-Up Comedy

Invention is as much a factor in Stand-Up Comedy as it is in public speaking. Although a comedian's act must not have just one sole topic – it seldom has – one could boil it down to a single joke. Essentially, a comedian's Stand-Up show is a composition of several jokes, where each and every single one should have a clear structure to properly build up the joke with a precise finish, it should be considerate towards the audience and the comedian should know how much time it will take to perform the joke as often comedians have a time limit to meet.

Arrangement

The structure of the speech should always contain three particular parts: the introduction, the body and the conclusion. During the introduction the speaker ought to use attention grabbers (i.e. telling a dramatic or humorous story, rhetoric questions, leave the audience in awe by using a shocking statistic or fact, relating the topic at hand to the audience members, remind them of an event connected to the topic not so long ago or tell the audience about it if they missed it). During the *introduction* phase the speaker should accomplish the things described in *ethos* – establish their credibility. Essentially, the speaker must make a connection with the audience, so they can move on to giving the audience a preview of what they are about to witness (Livingston, 2010). The introduction defines whether the attendance becomes an audience (Braun, 2009).

The *body* usually starts with expanding the topic into broader context and subsequently specifying the exact points which will be tackled (Hájková, 2011). Stating facts backing up the declared problem and giving the audience credible sources of conducted research, statistics, evidence and real life examples supporting the claim should be the next steps within the body (Livingston, 2010).

The *conclusion* is a summary of the stated information, no new information should be added. Within the conclusion, the speaker should try to incite interest in the audience so they would want to know more and learn more about the topic. One should prepare their closing arguments and conclusion before the start as this allows the speaker to know where they

are heading right from the beginning (Braun, 2009). Again, rhetoric questions and other triggers of audience action can be used. Pathos should be utilized and stimulation of emotions to make the ending truly memorable (Aristotle, 1954).

Considering the principle of Arrangement in Stand-Up Comedy

Similarly to the *Invention, Arrangement* as well could be boiled down to a single joke. The construction of jokes subjects to the general theory of structuring script of whatever type as described above. The comedian should start with an intriguing concept in the introduction, build upon it and further expand it accumulating the tension and expectation and concluding with a satisfying punch line.

As for the whole act, it is routine procedure that the comedian will start with an interesting comment, sometimes even a completely displaced thought to surprise the audience and get their attention right away. On the other hand, the comedian might start with a story about the city where the show takes place for instance or with a story related to the city such as struggles on the road, a relative from the area and so on (Rutter, 2000).

As said above, Stand-Up Comedy's unwritten rule says one should finish the show with a strong joke as the finish is often the part the audience will remember and rate the show by. If the show all in all is great and the finish is weak it will leave the audience somewhat startled and confused into the near future. Not to mention, the memory of the show won't be as good and favourable. Nonetheless, a strong finish can turn the whole show around as it leaves the audience satisfied. They will be leaving animated which can affect their subjective rating of the show positively as well as it can affect their rating negatively in case of a weak ending (Lockyer & Myers, 2011).

Style

"For it is not enough to know what we ought to say; we must also say it as we ought; much help is thus afforded towards producing the right impression of a speech." (Aristotle, 1954, p. 164)

The style of the given presentation is vital to whether it will or will not be a successful one. One must take into consideration the audience for styling the speech properly. The level of vocabulary used must be corresponding with the audiences' composition (Aristotle, 1954). For the image of a professional one should eliminate the use of improper language (offensive such as sexist, heterosexist, ageist, racist or reckless in any other way) and parasite words, and on the contrary broaden it with metaphors, similes, antithesis,

repetition, and parallelism. Formal speeches should avoid profanity as well, for it is unbecoming (Livingston, 2010).

To add a specimen of extraordinary to a speech, the speaker is advised to the usage of vivid language and figurative language for that matter. Metaphors for example, are an effective way of lightening up a dull speech. Aristotle (1954, p. 168) says: *"Metaphor, moreover, gives style clearness, charm, and distinction as nothing else can."* Oxford dictionary defines a metaphor as: *"A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable"*. According to Aristotle (1954) a metaphor supports learning by giving the listener another point of view, another way to look at the problem.

When making a speech or presentation, being creative with metaphors and similes is of great profit as it makes the performance more worthy of listening and it make the audiences' interest peak. This should result into avoiding commonly used phrases replacing them by sophisticated new word plays (Livingston, 2010).

Stating exact opposites (antithesis) may be useful for distinctively contrasting ideas discussed or making the difference between how it looks and how it really is clear (Hájková, 2011). Using the method of repetition, where one brings up a point during the introduction of the speech, provides further detail throughout the body and sums it up and draws results during the conclusion, gets it stuck in the recipients head. If the phrases used are powerful and easy enough to memorize the constant repeating will let them sink in deep. A great example of this is Martin Luther King's *"I have a dream"*. Parallelism on the other hand, though it works with almost identical repeating phrases similarly to repetition, creates more of a rhythmic effect, where it lasts in the audiences' minds (Livingston, 2010).

Considering the principle of Style in Stand-Up Comedy

The style depends heavily on the kind of humour the comedian produces. Some might base their humour on controversy, this is where the use of profanity or offensive language in general might appear (Seizer, 2011). Parasite words, however, are better to be left out as it harms the flow of the performance.

As for metaphors and similes, it certainly improves the act to have a rich repertoire of sophisticated phrases to use, the more extraordinary the better.

Antithesis is not quite as applicable as repetition or parallelism. Both repetition and parallelism might be used through-out the whole show for making a catch-phrase like joke.

In conclusion, the style of speech is deeply dependant on the type of humour the comedian uses and the general style of comedy (Seizer, 2011). Still, most of the above stated applies to Stand-Up Comedy as well.

Memory

Aristotle (1954) as well as other ancient Greek philosophers suggested having a speech memorized. However, Livingston (2010) argues that having a speech memorized hinders a speaker to effectively interact with the audience and adapting to it. Delivering the speech with only a few note cards (if needed), fully performing and simultaneously considering the audience and everything that is going on in the speaker's surroundings is the ideal form. In this case, not having the presentation memorized word by word and having a few notes on the cards, allows the speaker to improvise and interact with the environment where the speech takes place. Livingston (2010) further notes that having the first few sentences of the speech memorized may be of great value for people, who tend to get nervous in the beginnings of performances.

Another great point about speeches regarding memory stated by Livingston (2010) is that one should not include every piece of knowledge they have about the topic into the speech, as having a little bit of extra information which can be elaborated, if the audience is interested, is favourable.

Considering the principle of Memory in Stand-Up Comedy

Stand-Up Comedy is based on the audience's response (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992). It works much more with the crowd attending the show than public speaking does. Mostly, the act will evolve accordingly to the audience's reactions with the comedian adjusting their act. They will have it memorized to a degree, it is not like a theatre play for example, where everything is clearly given in the script the actors are to act out. Stand-Up Comedy allows – demands rather – a great deal of improvisation based on the audience's response to the act.

A comedian will have an outline of the show memorized and flow through it from joke to joke, though again, it heavily depends on the comedian themselves.

Delivery

Cicero argues that delivery is the moment when a speech goes public – when it is resented to an audience (Coopman & Lull, 2012). Aristotle (1954) can be regarded as the initiator of

taking delivery of a speech into consideration his writing *Rhetoric* focuses on non-verbal communication - gestures, mimics and voice play. Today, delivery is more important than ever. To sustain credibility throughout the presentation this is absolutely crucial. Livingston (2010) suggests to keep the gestures as natural as possible. However, if the speaker is not gesturing much by nature, they should consider learning a few simple gestures like holding up the corresponding amount of fingers when saying a number, maybe even trying to acting out some basic movements when talking about them. Nonetheless, Braun (2009) argues that one should make the gesture a little bit earlier than say the corresponding words as it evokes interest in the audience. Further, he states that playing with objects should be averted as it distracts the audience. Having the weight on one foot is recommended as this prevents the speaker from leaning, shaking even and generally moving their upper body.

Eye contact is particularly important. *"When a speaker is talking at their audience, rather than to or with them, the audience will switch off."* (Lloyd-Hughes, 2011, p. 20)

There are several methods to use eye contact for the benefit of the speech. All of them encourage direct eye contact with audience members. Livingston (2010) recommends looking at one person until the thought is completed and then moving on to another. This evokes the feeling of a face-to-face conversation.

Manipulating the pace, tone and volume of their voice is another strong tool for a speaker. Talking about sad things for instance, is expected to be in a lower voice with slower pace. A happy situation can be stirred by a higher pitch and volume of the voice. Braun (2009) says variety is the key as according to his book permanently high volume makes the speaker sound self-conscious like they would be making up for something, if the speaker is too quiet it gets boring rather quickly and the audience stops listening and a Thorough pronunciation is fundamental.

Vocalized pauses are to be avoided as they decrease the level of speech as much as parasite words (see above). Silent pauses on the other hand can be useful. Braun (2009) divides them into interpauses and intrapauses. The earlier are pauses made between sentences which give the audience time to think about the arguments heard. Intrapauses are gentle short breaks between words which can be used to increase tension and anticipation of the rest of the sentence or thought. Also, pauses in general allow the speaker a short break to breathe and possibly to remember, if they forgot, what they wanted to say (Livingston, 2010).

Braun (2009) further states pauses give the speaker time for efficient eye contact, change of tone or pace, a change of poise and so on.

Considering the principle of Delivery in Stand-Up Comedy

Virtually everything of the above stated is relevant in Stand-Up Comedy as well. In a way, Stand-Up Comedy takes it even further. Delivery is an important factor, if not the most important. Essentially, it is the acting out of the script, the written comedy. A comedian writes their material and then performs it.

Comedians mostly will have a microphone but they will not be static. Though depending on the length of a show, one can hardly imagine a comedian's one hour special with the comedian standing on one spot. Many if not most comedians will mime and gesticulate the things they are talking about as it adds to the overall picture. There are types of jokes which are based on acting only. Again we come to the argument that it depends heavily on the comedian's type of humour and the overall act they are portraying.

1.4.5 Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal Communication is a powerful aspect of human communication and thus in public oratory and Stand-Up Comedy as well. In this chapter, the basic outline of non-verbal communication forms will be described.

People non-verbally communicate in a wide range of manners, Argyle (1972) classifies them into ten groups.

Bodily contact

The variety of bodily contact norms is different with every culture. While in western civilization there is very little, in African or Arabic countries the opposite is the norm (Argyle, 1972). Also known as "body idiom" described as such by Erving Goffman (Vybíral, 2005). Mikulaštík (2010) describes three zones of physical contact: the professional and socially acceptable zone – arms and hands; the personal and friendly zone – arms, shoulders, hair, face; the intimate, erotic and sexual zone – not limited.

Proximity

People tend to stand closer to people they feel a certain amount of affiliation to. Interestingly enough, this applies to people with shut eyes as well. Again, cross-cultural variations appear (Mehrabian, 1977). There are four types of distances in which

conversation might occur described: intimate distance (the distance of touching up to half a meter, a comfortable distance for intimate relationships), personal distance (half a meter up to two meters, the distance depends heavily on the theme of the conversation as well as the surrounding conditions), group distance (from one up to ten meters, an individual talking to a group of people in a room – teacher in a classroom, presentation at a work meeting, etc.) and public distance (two to a hundred meters, a speaker talks to a crowd, e.g. public speaking). These line between the particular distances is however rather blurred (Mikuláštík, 2010). Changes in proximity might initiate or terminate an encounter (Argyle, 1972).

Orientation and personal territory

This is the angle at which people sit or stand in relation to each other (Argyle, 1972). The methods humans use to keep their territory and a certain amount of independence in communication (Mikuláštík, 2010). *"The term territoriality is also used frequently in the study of proxemics to denote the human tendency to stake out personal territory, or 'untouchable space,' much as wild animals and birds do"* (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013, p. 11).

Appearance

There aspects of personal appearance an individual can control such as clothes, hair styles, whereas height and physique are controllable only to a certain degree. People tend to put a lot of effort into self-presentation and thus into their appearance (Argyle, 1972). Managing their appearance sends out messages about themselves and allows them to maintain a wished social status. It transmits information about one's personality and mood (Mikuláštík, 2010). The meaningfulness differs according to environment, where sometimes it might not be as important, however, Stand-Up Comedy is not one of them.

The appearance is one of the most important factors when it comes to the "halo" effect, which can further dominate the impression people have of an individual (Vybíral, 2005).

Posture

"Posture is normally studied in conjunction with other nonverbal signals to determine the degree of attention or involvement, the degree of status relative to the other interactive partner, or the degree of liking for the other interactant." (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013, p. 12)

Postures are the standard expressions of a human's body. Similarly to facial expressions, they can convey interpersonal attitudes. To some extent, postures are culturally universal,

although at some instances they could differ (Argyle, 1972). Postures are effected by emotions, and as they are worse controlled then facial or vocal expressions, they are often more reliable in giving these emotions away (Mikuláštík, 2010).

Head-nods

In connection with speech, it is a very important factor. Different signals may be sent during a conversation by a simple head-nod, encouraging the speaker to continue while a rapid series of head-nods might suggest the person wishes to speak (Argyle, 1972).

Facial expressions/Mimics

As said above, facial expressions seem to be universal and independent of learning as they are a corner stone for communication in mammals and other animals (Argyle, 1972). They show the current emotional status of the person. Mimics are a very subtle form of communicating and they are easy to read if one pays attention (Mikuláštík, 2010). Some aspect of facial expressions are almost uncontrollable such as the dilation of pupils during arousal, perspiration during anxiety, and miniscule expression of concealed feelings. A speaker will accompany their speech with appropriate facial expressions to frame and illustrate what is being said (Argyle, 1972). Other functions of facial expressions are regulation, providing feedback and managing the flow of interaction (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013).

Gestures

Hands, head, feet and other parts may be used to gesture. Usually, hands are the body part which is used the most. Gestures are closely coordinated with speech and may illustrate what the speaker is saying (Vybíral, 2005). According to Mikuláštík (2010) gestures can be categorized into these five types: illustrators (used for "drawing" in the air when trying to illustrate what the speaker is saying), gestures as behaviour regulators (pointing at someone who does not pay attention, organizing a conversation etc.), signs (thumbs up and down, a policeman directing traffic, etc.), emotionally expressive gestures (to underline an ongoing emotional state – a closed fist in case of anger etc.), and adaptors (scratching or other self-manipulative movements). Knapp, Hall, & Horgan (2013) argue that there are many different types of gestures mostly classified as speech independent and speech related. Some indicate emotional content, others are used for description where words are not enough. In the case of sign language, gestures can even replace speech (Argyle, 1972).

Kinesics

A range of authors have kinesics as a superior term of gestures. In short, kinesics are the spontaneous movements of body parts other than gestures. Similarly to gestures, these movements can be interpreted in different ways (Mikuláštík, 2010).

Looking

The act of looking signals that the listener is interested in what the speaker has to say, there is a certain amount of interest taken in the speaker, so to say. The form of interest is mostly described with the accompanying facial expression (Argyle, 1972). Gathering information such as feed-back from the listeners while talking is an essential function of looking while talking (Mikuláštík, 2010). Gaze on the other hand, can be used as a sign for a starting encounter - in greetings, or to indicate that a point has been understood (Argyle, 1972).

"A speaker's eye contact with his listener can serve as a measure of his liking of the listener" (Mehrabian, 1977, p. 21)

Allan and Barbara Pease (2008) describe three types of looks in a conversation: the social look (where people look in a triangle area between the eyes and the mouth), the confidential look (where people look at the other person from the eyes down to for one determine the sex of the person they are speaking to and to determine whether or not the person appears interesting to them), and the look of dominance (where the person looks at a triangle right above the eyes concluded by an imaginary third eye).

Non-verbal Aspects of speech

Crystal (1969, in Argyle, 1972) states that linguistics distinguish between prosodic sounds – sounds that affect the meaning of utterances such as pitch patterns, stress patterns, and juncture (pauses and timing) – and paralinguistic sounds – sounds that carry different kinds of information such as emotions expressed by the tone of voice, group membership expressed by accent, personality characteristics expressed by voice quality, speech errors, the pitch of the voice, the speed at which the person talks, the emotional charge of the voice etc. (Mikuláštík, 2010). These signals are, however, not closely linked to a particular language, they do not have a complex structure, and are similar to other expressions of attitudes and emotions (Argyle, 1972).

1.4.6 Strategies in use by Stand-Up Comedians

Among others, Stand-Up comedians use different strategies of delivery or basic handling of their performance. Some of them are heavily related to public speaking and thus have been described above. The strategies in this chapter are exemplary for Stand-Up comedians.

Transition to a new joke sequence

McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio (1992) observed serveral kinds of laugh traps, which are mechanisms that public speakers as well as Stand-Up comedians use to let the audience know when the proper time to respond comes. There are a lot of strategies and devices they can use, for instance a list, where the comedian lists a number of things, a contrast pair or a disclaimer device. They might even use features of intonation, timing, stress, volume, tempo and getures.

Miller (in Hinde, 1972) says that an actor has four aspects of non-verbal communication available:

a) Vocal: overall volume, differential volume within the phrase, pitch and tone variants, use of accents
b) Facial: smiles, sneers, set of jaws, elevation of eyebrows, etc.
c) Posture: set of head on shoulders, spinal posture, stance
d) Manual gestures

Performing in Stand-Up Comedy is not just about presenting memorized material and delivering the lines in a conversational manner. Experienced comedians tend to be more theatrical than amateurs and junior professionals. Using a variety of movements – stage business – such as bending over, gesturing, lighting a cigarette, manipulating the microphone, pace in various directions, even turn with their back to the audience, there really are no boundaries. These actions amplify the humour of corresponding lines. The voice is another strong instrument to make the act more interesting. Just by manipulating the volume one can accomplish extra variety (Stebbins, 1990).

Wilson (1985, p. 58 in Stebbins, 1990, p. 52) stresses the importance of pauses in Stand-Up Comedy: *"All good comedians learn to wait until the laughter has just peaked out and is beginning to fall into rapid decline before delivering their next line. This causes the audience to suppress the*

tail-end of their laugh in order to hear what comes next, though the residual mirth is carried through silently to cumulate with the subsequent 'official' laugh."

Further, Stebbins adds (1990, p. 52) "Pauses build suspense and tension, they keep the audience raptly attuned to the script, they allow laughter to die away sufficiently so that the comic may benefit fully from the humour to follow. Especially important is the pause that enables the middle phase of the joke to sink in before the comic delivers his or her punch line."

Timing, as comedians call it, is one of the most vital techniques of Stand-Up Comedy.

Scarpetta & Spagnolli (2009, p. 10) describe two forms of transitioning, or rather moving from one joke sequence to another. Fillers are „*signature utterances of various lenghts, from exclamations to catchphrases, that are positioned after a punchline, but do not yet introduce the premise of a new joke.*" These fillers vary in words. Every comedian seems to have their own specific one. They work as a mean to progression from the previous joke sequence and the laughter to the next joke sequence. The provide a certain amount of continuity throughout the act so the comedian does not have to stop or overlap the ongoing laughter (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009).

The second described transition is in forms of a survey, the comedian might ask audience a question. At this point, the comedian directly involves the audience in the build up for the joke and ultimately, for the punchline. According to the response – negative, positive – the comedian knows if they have to work on the punchline, or if the audience is familier with the given statement or situation. When exposed to a negative reaction, the comedian might alter the build up and efectively the whole sequence (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009).

If a comedians act is overlapped by an audience response it can result in two things: either stop responding, which is not recommended or to continue and enhance the current response (McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992).

Scarpetta & Spagnolli describe the strategies of *expanding successful jokes* and *referring to the audience in the punch line.* According to their study *The Interactional Context of Humour* the punch line must not necessarily be the end of a joke. One can elaborate on it. An expansion of several additional punch lines – called "tags" – is not uncommon. The audience response tends to increase with every additional punch line. The joke is always stronger if the audience is involved to some degree, thus a joke which is referring to the audience in the punch line is not unusual as well (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009).

A comedian also might be asking the audience questions to encourage participation and to gauge the dispositions and temperament of the audience, or simply use colloquial language (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009).

The monologue is the most popular communication form to express and portray humour in American comic entertainment. The tradition continues through Stand-Up Comedy. It is mainly considered a solo verbal performance, though there are exceptions in form of comedy teams or pairs who perform together (Katayama, 2006).

The use of Profanity in Stand-Up Comedy

The use of profanity and obscenity in Stand-Up Comedy is quite common, though there are performers such as Bill Cosby, Mitch Hedberg or Jerry Seinfeld who deliberately avoid them. The latest condemns the use of profanity or curse words by saying it only spices up a weak joke in a cheap way. Dirty words are mostly used in a non-denotational way to make the whole performance look more informal and feel more colloquially. You could say it is a way of the Stand-Up comedian to "make the audience feel at home", to deformalize the whole event, so that the show will be smoother. More often than not, vulgar expressions are used to intensify and heighten the speaker's point of view, the affect and the experience as well as for the purposes of grabbing the audience's attention (Seizer, 2011).

"I've shown how comics like Huff and Key treat bad words as big words: protean, expansive, and ripe with performative possibility. By using obscenity in this way, they shift audience expectations away from sex and the potty, leaving that proscribed register to the hacks. Instead their non-standard use of these signs opens up less expected discourse topics, and activates other sorts of pleasures." (Seizer, 2011, p. 22).

The study

2 Research problem

Stand-Up Comedy is nowadays a worldwide sensation. It is a very specific type of theatre performance with a lot of room for psychological interactions and phenomena. Yet it has not been an object of psychological research as much as one might expect. The vast majority of researches conducted about Stand-Up Comedy are focused either on the history of Stand-Up, or analysis of the used language and its components. Very little psychological research has been done, just to state a few: Greengross & Miller (2009), Lockyer & Myers (2011), McIlvenny, Mettovaara, & Tapio (1992), Scarpetta & Spagnolli (2009) and Quirk (2011).

2.1 The aim of the research

This research paper intends to describe and further explore the psychological side of Stand-Up Comedy. The main goal is to bring a certain amount of insight into the spectacle that is known as Stand-Up Comedy. By analysing data gathered from interviews with Stand-Up comedians, the research will try to understand the difference between on stage and off stage humour, which external factors might affect the show and how one can deal with them, and what the comedian themselves brings to the show, what can they do to have an impact on the performance.

2.2 Research questions

The research tries to answer these questions which are expected to expand considering their nature:

RQ1: How does performance comedy differ from humour in everyday life?

RQ2: Which external factors have to be taken into account during a Stand-Up Comedy performance?

RQ3: How can a comedian affect their show?

3 Methodological framework of the study

For the description, analysis and interpretation of non-quantifiable characteristics of examined phenomena of our internal and external reality qualitative methods are to be used (Miovský, 2006). A qualitative approach in psychology allows the researcher to get more detailed information and as there was no desire to collect any general data as a quantitative approach would have gathered, the research is designed qualitatively. The method of document analysis has been used, where the document at hand were transcripts of the gathered interviews.

3.1 The logistics and process of the research

The method of a semi-structured interview was chosen for gathering the data. These interviews were held through the online-call provider Skype and they were recorded through a trial version of Evader. Throughout the interviews, the researcher asked the beforehand created questions, but followed up on questions if needed with notes that were not necessarily in the script, as semi-structured interviews allow this type of action. Before the start of the call, the researcher made sure, through the chat-system of the programme, the participants were informed and consent to recording the call for transcription purposes. After the questioning ended, the researcher stopped the recording and proceeded to thank the interviewee, get an additional mean of contacting the respondent in the case of needing additional information, and assured them that they would send them the finalized thesis. Next, the interviews were transcribed using f4[1] software and Microsoft Word. Ensuing the transcription, the transcripts were carefully read through, after that, relevant words, phrases, sentences and sections were labelled – they were openly coded. The next step included the decision of which codes were the most important and relevant categories were created by grouping the connected codes together (selective coding). The following step was about labelling the categories, dropping the not relevant and keeping the important ones.

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[1] A transcription software used in a demo version. Acquired from www.audiotranskription.de (14.3.2014)

The process of gathering data came across a significant difficulty with the difference in time-zones between the researcher and the respondents. Other than that, there were small issues with the internet connection which proved to be difficult only in 2 cases.

The data were transcribed without parasite words which have been left out. In some cases vulgar or grammatically incorrect words and phrases appear, they have been left unaltered to increase authenticity.

3.2 Methods of data analysis used

The concrete method for analysing the data is qualitative content analysis.

In the 60s when the methodological approach found its way into psychology among others, the qualitative approach to content analysis was developed (Mayring, 2000).

The content analysis was applied to transcripts of interviews done on account of the study. Using qualitative content analysis, the researcher can produce a matrix by applying a set of codes to a set of qualitative data. Unlike grounded theory or schema analysis, content analysis assumes that the codes of interest have already been discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

3.3 The research's ethical issues and their solving

The gathered data (transcripts and recordings) is kept in a password protected folder, which only the researcher knows, in a password protected hard-drive, which only the researcher has access to.

The respondents were not harmed in any way during the research, they contented to being part of the study and their data being used. Moreover, the names of the respondents were changed to ensure their anonymity.

Due to the nature of the research, there was no appraisal needed from the ethical committee of the Psychology department of the Palacký University in Olomouc.

4   The sample

The sample consists of 6 male active Stand-Up comedians based in the United States of America. The location was chosen on the account of the USA being the state with one of the largest community of Stand-Up comedians and arguably highest in quality (Katayama, 2006). Another reason for the opting for a foreign study sample was that the concept of Stand-Up Comedy performances is not yet as advanced and the community is noticeably smaller in the researcher's home country - the Czech Republic. In this aspect, the study could support the ongoing development of Stand-Up Comedy in the Czech Republic and be a instrumental for starting Stand-Up comedians.

The age range of the sample's individuals is 24-37. The sample was gathered first by self-selection in form of a post on the website Reddit[2] and its subreddit (subordinate thread) r/standup where a community of Stand-Up comedians share their knowledge and experience, and consult written material. The post informed the individuals about the research's aims and form. The individual details were agreed on through the website's personal message system. The second round of sampling was in form of purposive sampling, where the researcher addressed specific individuals via Reddit's personal message system.

Six respondents have approached the researcher after the post, out of which two became part of the study. There was no logistical agreement reached with the remaining four.

Nine respondents have been approached by the researcher directly via the website's personal message system out of which four were included in the study. Four of the approached have not responded, there was no logistical agreement reached with one individual.

Conditions for inclusion in the study were an experience factor of at least one year active performing and a minimum of 10 different venues performed at, both of which were checked during the interviews.

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[2] The self-proclaimed front-page of the internet www.reddit.com is a type of online community where users vote on content. It has subordinate communities divided into subreddits.

5 The results

At first, the results will be stated descriptively. The last subchapter (5.4) of this chapter holds the answers to the research questions. The following schemes (scheme 1, scheme 2 and scheme 3) show the structure of the results according to each research question.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ 5.1 How does performanc comedy differ from humour in everyday life? │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
              │
      ┌───────┴───────────────┐
┌──────────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────────┐
│ 5.1.1 Everyday life   │ │ 5.1.2 On stage humour │
│ humour                │ │                       │
└──────────────────────┘ └──────────────────────┘
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Scheme 1

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ 5.2 Which external factors have to be taken into account during a │
│              stand-up comedy performance?                          │
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              │
   ┌──────────┼──────────┬──────────────┐
┌────────────┐┌────────────┐┌────────────┐┌────────────┐
│ 5.2.1 The  ││ 5.2.2 The  ││ 5.2.3 The  ││ 5.2.4 The  │
│ distractions││ venue      ││ audience   ││ equipment  │
└────────────┘└────────────┘└────────────┘└────────────┘
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Scheme 2

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│       5.3 How can a comedian affect their show?   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
     │
 ┌───┼─────────┬──────────┬──────────────┐
┌──────────┐┌──────────┐┌──────────┐┌──────────────┐┌──────────────┐
│5.3.1 On  ││5.3.2     ││5.3.3     ││5.3.4         ││5.3.5 The     │
│delivery in││Aspects of││Memory    ││Improvisation ││comedian's    │
│general   ││delivery  ││          ││and spontaneity││attitude      │
└──────────┘└──────────┘└──────────┘└──────────────┘└──────────────┘
               │                                         │
          ┌──────────┐                          ┌──────────────┐
          │ Bodily   │                          │ The willingness│
          │ movements│                          │ to improve   │
          └──────────┘                          └──────────────┘
          ┌──────────┐                          ┌──────────────┐
          │ Posture  │                          │ Confidence   │
          └──────────┘                          └──────────────┘
          ┌──────────┐
          │ Looking  │
          └──────────┘
          ┌──────────┐
          │Appearance│
          └──────────┘
          ┌──────────┐
          │Non-verbal│
          │aspects of│
          │ speech   │
          └──────────┘
          ┌──────────┐
          │ The act  │
          └──────────┘
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Scheme 3

In general, the respondent's statements and point of views were mostly similar, though everyone had their specifics regarding one or more tackled issues. The following basic background information of the respondents arose from the first set of questions regarding personal information and their career to characterize the individual respondents.

Keith, 27 years old, based in Madison, Wisconsin

He has been doing Stand-Up Comedy for almost three years. He started in July 2011 and ever since 2012 he does shows as frequent as $5 - 6$ times a week. Not being a full-time comedian and having two day jobs, he is being booked for paid gigs on weekends. He hopes to make the switch to fulltime and ideally get a writing job as well. During open-mikes he usually does a 5 minute set, when doing a showcase type show it is between 15-20 minutes. He states he had performed at 30-50 venues at least. Among motivation and reasons for doing Stand-Up, Keith states he wants people to notice him, and claims attention and making people laugh is rewarding and it gives him strength.

John, 30 years old, based in Toledo, Ohio

Almost 4 years now has John been doing Stand-Up Comedy. He started in April 2010 after a friend encouraged him to try it. The frequency of his act increased in the past year and a half to 4-5 times a week. He has a day job and has starred in indie films and has done *"a bit of acting as a kid."* A switch to full-time with being a headlining act and travelling across the country is the ideal career path. Open-mike sets have a 5-7 minute duration, whereas feature type shows 10-15. The longest set John has ever done was 25 minutes. Having performed at a minimum of 50 venues, John says he does Stand-Up because *"it's fun and I'm okay at it, I'm decent at it."*

Austin, 28 years old, based in Los Angeles, California

A professional comedian doing Stand-Up for 7 years since January of 2007, when he started doing it every week. He is full time since 2010 with shows almost every day. He first tried it during a competition held in the College he was attending. Commenting on his start he says *"I just got into it as a hobby, and then I started paying bills with this."* Austin hopes to continue his career with the possibility of additional writing jobs. As of now, he also writes screenplays and sketches. In the past, he used to be a musician. For showcase type shows he does 5 - 15 minutes; in the middle spot just about 30 which is his usual position as of now, though he has started to headline, where he does $45 - 60$ minutes. He has performed at thousands of venues with several international shows. As for his motivation, he states:

"I never wanted to be anything normal, when I was a little kid I wanted to be a pro-wrestler growing up and then after that I wanted to be a musician and then I wanted to be a comedian. I maybe am somewhat attention deprived" and that Stand-Up is his first love.

Matthew, 37 years old, based in New Jersey

Being fulltime for 7 years, Matthew has been doing Stand-Up Comedy for a combined time of 12 years. He started when he was 25 in February of 2002. He started after he met a girl who he wanted to impress, she went on to become his wife. Before that, Mathew was an English teacher. When he started he was doing open-mikes which he believed would not lead anywhere so he *"went and basically spoke to every single coffee shop or bar and ask them when their off nights were"*. By June he was doing shows 6 nights a week. Apart from stand up, he is a member of the WGA (Writers Guild of America) and does punch up writing (editing screenplays in terms of comedy) and is himself a screenplay writer. Nowadays he spends on average half a month on the road which incites his wish to scale back on the Stand-Up, ideally become a regional act or get on TV, and focus more on screen writing in the future. Though he says *"I'm never gonna stop doing the Stand-Up, cause I'm addicted to it more than any drug that exists."* When he performs as the headline act he usually does a 45 minute set, at a college it is 60 − 90 minutes, and when opening for a celebrity it is 25 minutes. He estimates to have performed at 500 − 1000 venues during his career. He describes his reasons for doing Stand-Up as follows: *"I enjoy being funny (…) I've always been the funny in my group during school years (…) I'd be the funny guy in the group of nerds that I was hanging out with (…) I wasn't the class clown by the stretch of the imagination, I was friend with the class clown."*

Luke, 24 years old, based in Jersey City, New Jersey

Doing Stand-Up Comedy for one and a half years with a frequency of 7 times per week right from the beginning. Now he had to scale it back to 2 - 3 times a week due to moving from Philadelphia to Jersey. He started rather spontaneously after he attended a Stand-Up show with a friend. He has a day job which he would be willing to quit provided that he could make a living out of Stand-Up Comedy and related jobs such as comedy writing which he also does and would like to continue on in the future. He does open-mikes in the range of 5 − 10 minutes and feature shows in the range of 15 − 20 minutes. Luke guesses he performed at 20 − 30 venues. His answer to why he is doing Stand-Up Comedy mentioned validation and the wish to create something, corresponding with his past as a musician.

Mark, 24 years old, based in Dallas, Texas

Mark went full-time after his third open-mike in the age of 21. He has been doing Stand-Up for 3,5 years now. A co-worker suggested Mark should try it and so in the fall of 2010 Mark did try and *"wasn't awful so* (he) *kept doing it."* He was doing 5 − 7 nights a week right from the beginning, nowadays he still tries to attend open-mikes a few times a night if he does not have a paid show. He has worked in a sketch comedy group and hopes his career will continue with more Stand-Up gigs as he does not care for acting or other comedy related jobs. When he started he was doing 5 minute sets at open-mikes or 5 − 10 minute sets as the host of the evening and nowadays usually does acts in between of 15 − 45 minutes. No specific number could be recalled regarding how many venues he performed at, but he believes it is in the hundreds. His appeal towards doing Stand-Up Comedy is that: *"I feel like it's the one thing I am decent at without very much effort which is nice"* and that *"it is very freeing to be able to say whatever you want and call that a job. Have your opinions be well received by strangers, that's nice."*

5.1 How does performance comedy differ from humour in everyday life?

5.1.1 Everyday life humour

The respondents argued that humour in everyday life is more spontaneous as opposed to on stage humour. *"Humour in everyday life I imagine is like very much spontaneous, you know, you see something, you comment on it, your friend says something and you comment on it"* (Austin). Luke compares humour in an everyday situation to the basic joke formula of set-up and punch line:

"I think being funny in a conversation it's like, you can comment on what's happening in a funny way, (…) just throw in your punch line if you will, and the conversation itself is the set-up, whereas you can't go on a stage and do that, you need to set up the joke." Matthew argues that there is no need for the set-up part in everyday life humour: *"When you are with your friends, there is in jokes and there is trust, you know how your friend is and he can build his jokes from that relationship."*

According to the responses, humour in everyday life is also more context related and it would be difficult to get some of the points across on stage even though they might be funny in everyday life: *"In everyday life there is just so many little details that you would need to know about a particular event to be able to find whatever that's supposed to be funny about it funny"* John says and adds an example: *"At my job there are things that are funny in my job but they are only to me and the people in my job because it's something that we deal with every day."* In his response, Luke adds to the previous point: *"If you're just a funny guy in the office, everybody already knows you, everybody knows what's going on, nothing needs to be set up."*

5.1.2 On stage humour

The comedians unknowingly agreed on several points, the first of which being, that on stage, the comedian is in charge of the night and constructs humorous moments. *"You need to get everybody on the same page"* (Luke). Austin adds: *"You have to sort of acknowledge what is happening in the room, but it is also very prepared."* Keith provides a method of controlling and managing the night: *"When you know when those traps are going off, you know when the laughs are supposed to happen."*

Although the comedian is the one directing the show, the audience's attitude towards the comedian is of immense importance*: "When you're performing Stand-Up on a stage I think that people either like you or they don't like you. (…) There's not really indifference"* (Keith). Matthew describes what a comedian must do as soon as they get on stage which you do not have to do in everyday life humour situations: *"When you get up on stage in front of a group of strangers, they don't know who you are and they need to trust you very quickly. So one of the things that you need to do as a Stand-Up that you don't need to do with your friends and in your personal relationships is build rapport very quickly."* Keith points out another important matter regarding the audience: in Stand-Up Comedy *"the crowd knows they are the crowd and they know that you're the comic"* which adds leverage to the comedians authority figure.

The comedian must build this *"friendship or (…) trust"* (Matthew), according to Matthew this skill is the main difference. He states that developing this skill was a corner stone in him becoming a Stand-Up comedian: *"I figured out how to crossover and be funny for the normal, (…) cause I had an interesting weird sense of humour that didn't crossover. So as I've gotten older I've learned how to make regular people laugh along with the nerds that I used to hang out with."* John explains why the use of generalities might be a relevant method, because through the

use of generalities *"(he) can get people to relate to something or get people to understand in a few seconds rather than having to explain 50 million things."*

Lastly, the act itself being structured and constructed beforehand makes a significant difference. Though the well-known formula of setting up the joke and paying off through the punch line is regulated: *"You don't want to do too much set up before you get to the punch line, cause then you lose people and you don't want to do the punch line too early because then you haven't done enough set up. So, it's basically a balancing act"* (John). Mark rather vehemently explains his perspective on the advantage of deliberately constructing the joke opposed to a random story someone might tell: *"I think performance comedy is kind of cutting all the fat from around everyday situations. (…) It's like somebody telling you something funny that happened when they went to the store, they fill it up with so much useless garbage, in between the beginning of the story and the point of the story. In performance comedy it kinda takes out a lotta that. So it's just like, this is what happened, this is what's funny, now we can move on with our day and it doesn't take 45 minutes to get there."*

Matthew shares his metaphoric point of view on Stand-Up Comedy: *"I compare my job to prostitution and pornography. And people laugh, but it is, it's a funny visual but not in the way you think. This is the way I describe it: sexuality is a normal human thing that people do to bond to feel good. (…) There's all sorts of reasons why they use sexuality, but the main difference between a sex worker and a regular person is that they have commoditized this human interaction and by commoditizing it you could argue that they have devalued it to some degree. There's an irony there, that because of monetary value to something it lowers the emotional value of it. And I feel that I've done the same thing in my job, laughter is normal human interaction, but because I've commoditized it that gives something that used give me a lot pleasure which was being the funny guy in the group a sort of devaluation meaning my friend who are comedians might go 'Hey Matthew save it for the stage' because I'm going against comedy culture. My friends that I've grew up with might be I don't know if jealous would be the word but like 'hey you're a funny guy on stage, why do you have to be the funny guy off stage' and you go 'well I've always been the funny why can't I still be the funny guy?' but they kind of roll their eyes."*

5.2 Which external factors have to be taken into account during a Stand-Up Comedy performance?

The information gathered here was assembled using a set of questions focused on different conditions a Stand-Up comedian might find themselves in. Throughout the responses there were several reoccurring factors mentioned. They have been categorized as the venue, the equipment, the audience and distractions.

As for the general thoughts on the importance of the given conditions, the interviewees outlined a series of inadequate conditions: *"I've done shows where there wasn't even a stage nor a microphone and at that point it's not even a performance so much as you're just like the funny guy at a party"* (Austin). Austin further shares an experience where the issue was the time of the show: *"I once performed at a pizza shop in the middle of the day, which by the way middle of the day is not the best time for comedy for whatever reason it always works better at night"*. Mark has a similar experience *"This one time where we had to do comedy in this restaurant (…) a really chain restaurant at 2 in the afternoon for a radio contest. (…) doing comedy in two in the afternoon is weird."*

After being asked if comedians should be able to perform in any given conditions even if they were as bad as performing at a funeral with a crying widow in the front row: *"the circumstances where so against comedy, you know"* (Keith), the interviewees agreed upon the fact that the comedian should be able to perform his act: *"That would be like asking, do you think that you should be able to do your job in any given conditions. I mean really it's a job like any other job"* (John), *"if I get hired to perform on an aircraft carrier while the planes are taking on and off, yeah, I'm not gonna enjoy that but if you're paying me 12000 dollars to do it, I'll figure out how to do it"* (Matthew), *"ideally, you should be able to adapt to whatever the situation is, that's your job to make people laugh, and if you can't do it, well you didn't do your job well,"* (Luke). Austin clarifies it as follows: *"They shouldn't have to want to, but they should be able to."* Although Mark warns: *"There are just certain shows that comedy does not match well with, (…)I think there are a lot more times where it is appropriate than where it isn't, but there are definitely times where it is not appropriate."*

5.2.1 Regarding the venue

The venue is regarded as a significant factor when it comes to Stand-Up Comedy. The set-up of the room alone can be a determinant of whether the show is going to go well or not.

The interviewees were asked about the most unusual setting they have ever performed at and the basic gist of it is, that Stand-Up is performed virtually anywhere with the results considerably varying in quality. The numerous experiences list bars, pizza places, house parties, bowling alleys, race tracks, restaurants, basements, outdoors, all-purpose rooms in colleges among the worse, and comedy clubs and theatres among the better. Keith rates the factor of the venue as high as stating: *"I have performed in places where it's hard to do bad because of how great the venue is."* Luke states: *"Any sort of setting has a different kind of mood to go along with it."* All respondents agree that one can learn from doing shows in bad venues substantially. *"People who've done shows where they should not be able to succeed and have a great show - I feel that this is a mark of a truly great comic"* Austin shares his point of view.

Three sub-codes arose throughout the analysis of the answers to questions regarding the venue as an external condition: the set-up of the room in general, the supporting role of the set-up and the respondents' ideal venue.

Matthew points out right from the start that: *"There's a reason why there is rules to setting up a room"* and that *"(he) will overcome the obstacles that you put up, but every obstacle makes it harder for the audience to enjoy themself."* Further he states: *"Big circular banquet tables, (…) that is absolutely horrible for a comedian, because it means that the people are further apart which lowers the laughter because laughter is contagious, and it means that half of the audience can have their back to you if they want."* As long as there are no obstacles in the way, the respondents want to have the audience as close as possible, even if the size of the audience does not allow this close set-up: *"There's ways to make it seem like everyone's close to the stage but there are a lot of people. That's good, the closer the people are to the stage is good"* (Keith). Stages are obviously an important part: *"You prefer stages but you don't get a lot of stages at times"* (Mark).

Why they are so important this next paragraph should enlighten. *"Basically it is all a matter of authority from what I can say. When you are on a stage you have a certain level of gravitas. It's 'he has something to say, he is on a stage'. You know it's that psychological component of we see that, we understand what this means."* (Austin), *"if you're on stage you're up, you're above everybody looking down and people are looking up. You're the centre of attention."* (John), *"I try to utilize the fact that I am higher than everybody else to sort of establish dominance over the room. (…) Male height especially, being taller than other people gives you a certain degree of power over them. The stage gives you an added artificial layer of height, you know, sometimes you're coming off as 10 ft. taller if you're on a big enough stage, and the fact that they are seated, these are all necessary pieces to keep a crowd under control."* (Matthew). John further suggests that it is similar to the level

of authority and attention of a college professor, he says that if the professor would be somehow more segregated from the class it would help the students to pay attention easier. On the other hand, when there is no stage available or it is inadequate: *"You're just standing there on the ground and level with everybody else"* (John), *"You don't get that sense of superiority that you get on stage. (…) You get a little claustrophobic because people just form a wall right there and you look at them directly into the eyes"* (Mark), *"I just basically stood while they sat around me like I was telling campfire stories or something"* (Austin), and finally John concludes: *"When you're not on the stage, it feels like you have to really try to keep their attention more, because you're level with them, (…) and you gotta fight to keep their attention."*

When asked about their ideal set-up a few stated they really had not thought about this matter, however of those, who had thought about it, the ideal room resembled. Essentially, the room ought to be for a smaller crowd of 100 to 200 people, the ceilings ought to be low so that the laughter and sound is trapped and echoes – and for generally better acoustics, the audience ought to be packed together as close as possible so that there is a better connection between the audience members as well as between the comedian and the audience, the light ought to be dimmed as *"because men especially are afraid to laugh in front of other men"* (Matthew), and the bar ought to be outside. Matthew adds he would have it a no-microphone room as the acoustics would be worked out so the comedian would be heard without a microphone. Mark on the other hand would keep the microphone though his ideal room would be of a smaller scale as well because: *"You don't have to play to a big theatre full of people who are struggling to hear you, everybody can see. It feels a lot more special than having say 5000 people in a stadium."*

5.2.2 Regarding the equipment

Stand-Up Comedy does not require any special equipment or props. John states: *"All you need is a stool, a microphone and that's it."* The microphone can be used for sound effects or simple manipulation of the microphone's stand or cord. Though issues might occur when the microphone does not work or is not available: *"When you don't get a microphone and they leave TVs on and the audio on from the basketball game, that can all add up to be kind of tough"* (Keith), it can directly affect the comedian's material if they have jokes involving aforementioned sound effects: *"Whenever you practice doing your jokes, whenever you think about it and all that stuff, you imagine having that microphone"* (John). On the other hand, Matthew says: *"I actually prefer to go without a microphone. (…) And in the places where you're in front of 13 – 15 people, you know, you're in a small venue, a microphone can overwhelm them, because you're*

far louder than anybody else in the room. (…) I'm not saying it shouldn't be used. What I'm saying is that 'use the microphone when it's necessary'", Mark's experience brings light on the ups as well as the downs: *"The place didn't have a mike or the mike was all screwed up. There has been times where I just kind of yelled for 15-20 minutes. Just had to scream my jokes at the audience. (…) It's a lot more fun I guess. It feels a lot more impromptu, and it's nice to see how long you can scream at the audience before you get tired of it. The audience is going to get tired of it pretty early, I mean you can bring them back around if you don't get tired of it fast enough."* Austin argues it can add to the authority of the comedian: *"If you have a microphone, even if you are not on a stage, you have a certain level of authority just because 'Oh he has something I don't have'".*

5.2.3 Regarding the audience

The attending audience is one of the most important things about Stand-Up Comedy: *"Stand-Up Comedy is hugely audience dependent"* (John). Austin adds*: "They're basically the entire component, because I could stand in my bathroom and tell jokes in the mirror but without that response you literally have nothing. It's not a show."* Keith discusses the workings in an audience: *"When they are altogether it's like a monster, (…) sometimes some people will laugh and then other people will laugh because the other people are laughing even though they might not even understand the joke, it's just so contagious."* Mark extends the importance of the audience with his comment: *"If they don't like (the show), even if it's really funny because you find it hilarious, because of the gestures and the humour, it's not funny because they aren't enjoying it and they are gonna say it's not funny. It is whatever they say it is."*

Moreover, the demographic of the audience is a great factor as well: *"I think college students, they like wit, they like intelligence from a comedian, maybe non-college students they want silliness, they want funny faces and puppets"* (Keith). The diversity of the crowd can be a crucial point in a successful show as John illustrates: *"I'll do a set I'll do a 5 minute set in front of audience A, and I'll do the same 5 minute set with the same inflections, with the same delivery in front of audience B. Audience A will laugh their asses of and audience B will look at me like 'What the fuck are you doing there?'"* Mark furthers the point of uncontrollable diversity: *"You never gonna win 100% of the audience, some nights you're not gonna win 90% of the audience".* The interviewed comedians agree it is not venue conditioned: *"I mean I've done shows in professional clubs, even theatre in which the audience for whatever reason is just very rowdy and disrespectful. I've done shows in horrible little coffee shops just in the middle of the day but they were super invested and they wanted it"* (Austin).

As indicated above, probably the most vital element about the audience is their attitude towards the show. The respondents could not stress enough the importance of the sole intention behind the audience attending the show: *"It really is a huge difference in terms like wanting to see a show and not caring about it"* (Austin). Difficulties arise when the comedy show takes place in a venue where the show is not the sole mean of entertainment. The comedians mentioned performing in various places (see above, chapter "5.2.1 Regarding the venue") where some audience members might not respect the show as they are not there for the purpose of attending a comedy show. Separating the potential comedy show audience from the rest of the crowd might be an effective method. Working with a crowd who has no interest into the show might prove rather difficult: *"Whenever people are not getting involved, whenever they are not laughing it just kind of drains you, it's like a slippery slope. If one thing goes bad, everything goes bad"* John says. Though Austin argues: *"You can (…) blame the audience for it being good or bad, but the mark of a truly great comic is to be able to take any audience and make them into a good audience."* By "good audience" he refers to an audience best described by John: *"An audience that is there for comedy, they wanna laugh"*, Austin elucidates the feasible thought process of an attendee: *"If you go to a professional comedy club where you pay money just to get in it's a two item minimum, there is that thought of process of 'Okay, I spent money to be here, I wanna have fun. I invested in the show.'"* And if the audience is well receptive the show might be easier to do: *"If you have a good audience and even if you have a mediocre comedian, you are still gonna have a good night. (…) I think it's easy to manipulate an audience especially one that is willing to be there for comedy"* (John), *"in a way you don't have to work to win them over quite as much. (…) You can expect them to be listening to you, you don't have to fight for their attention as much. You can lose their attention, no doubt, but you probably have it in the beginning, they'll give you the benefit of the doubt"* (Luke).

When adjusting to a specific audience accordingly the first and foremost question a comedian will be dealing with is the use of profanity. Will the set be dirty or should it be clean. There might be limitations given from the organizers, but in the end it depends on the audience. With some clean sets are better, whereas sometimes dirty sets get a better reception: *"So yeah you adjust cause you kind of get the feel for how the audience is, especially if you're up on stage and doing your jokes"* (John). Matthew shares a piece of advice he got from a friend: *"He only does improv with audience members that interest him. By following that guide it has made my improv (…) much better but also a lot easier to do. That gets the audience (…) invested because chances are if you're interested they are as well"* meaning that if he does crowd work, he will only focus on people that stand out in some way.

According to the responses gained during the interviews, when a comedian adjusts to the audience's behaviour or engages with them, they are *"working the room"*. It is a powerful tool not used by all comedians, as some try to focus on their material. Used methods include *"crowd work"* where the comedian engages with individual audience members in a dialogue like fashion, even reacting to their reactions – e.g. making fun of the different types of laughter, or handling their weak response: *"And even if the crowd doesn't laugh, it's because they didn't get it, they didn't see how this is funny and you still have the confidence to be able (…) to make fun of the crowd for not laughing at a funny joke"* (Keith). John gives an example of one of his methods: *"There will be jokes where I ask a general question (…) trying to get an audience involved."* The rule seems to be to engage with the audience more, if they are not that well responsive, if on the other hand everything works well, some state there is no need for crowd work, as it can distract the comedian from their act. Matthew insist on working with the crowd at least once or more during an act even if everything goes as planned. John warns: *"You have to be careful who you pick out to say something to and engage, and you also have to make sure that they understand at the end of that exchange – that's done. 'Your time is done.' It's hard, it's a really fine line, because you engage one person and maybe they might even want to engage with you and they want to answer your question and then you move on to somebody else, and then they think that's opened the door for them to go ahead to say whatever they want, whenever they want and however they want."* Matthew summarizes the topic: *"It's a matter of reading the audience and knowing which direction to go and how to prompt them. (…) The idea that it's going to be safe over the course of the next 45 to 60 minutes, and I don't mean safe necessarily that you're not gonna say anything that will offend them cause you might, but safe that you know what you're doing, you're funny and were gonna have a good time".*

5.2.4 Regarding distractions

There is a lot of potential distractions possibly interfering and significantly affecting the course of the show: *"There's a lot of distractions that could happen in the show and the more that you can lessen those distractions the better"* (John). The distractions vary by origin as it can be the venue: *"You'll do a show sometimes at a bar and (…) apparently we can't go to the bar without there being 50 televisions. (…) In some bars they will be nice enough to turn them all of, but in some bars they won't"* (John), Keith contributes with his experience: *"A big problem that I have with comedy shows is that they leave their TVs on and there might be a basketball game or football, and I'm trying to talk over a sporting event. Meanwhile I kinda just wanna watch the game too, I'll*

almost be like 'Oh, wow, that was a nice shot' you know, and I'm just like 'What am I even doing here, we have entertainment already. I don't need to be here, you are all here to watch this.'"

The set-up of the stage might be distracting as well if one finds himself in a situation similar to John's: *"I've done shows were there was literally a barrier between me and the audience. I've done a show where the audience was about 10 feet away from the stage but there was a huge wall between me and the audience."*

The second possible origin of distractions is the people in the room, whether it is the staff maybe dropping glasses or audience members talking loudly, or even taking phone calls during a show. A characteristic Stand-Up Comedy related distraction are so called hecklers, people who will interrupt the show by shouting out comments towards the comedian: *"Especially females to a male comedian, they will heckle, but usually out of anger or being drunk. Men will heckle (…), I don't wanna say old fashion machismo but sort of 'Well who's that guy to be making my wife laugh so hard'"* (Matthew). Reactions towards hecklers will differ from comedian to comedian: *"A lot of people will let them talk over them, but really, what I do I don't even give them the opportunity, I roll right over them like I didn't even hear them. And then they feel so embarrassed that they talked out loud that they just shut up for the rest of the show. (…) If you never give them attention they will go right back to not mattering. I feel like I am an entertainer, they came out here to be entertained, if they came out here to be involved in the jokes they can go to an improv show or something where they can scream at the stage. I am not gonna be screamed at. I am here to entertain you. So sit back, shut up and let me entertain you. (…) I like people to just be quiet and pay attention to the jokes. (…)"* (Mark), opposed to *"when someone for example shouts something out and it is very loud and obvious and everyone heard it, then I will comment on it"* (Austin).

5.3 How can a comedian affect their show?

The data analysed in this chapter was collected through the use of questions focused on how the comedian might influence the act. Be it through non-verbal communication, manipulation of verbal aspects of their show, specific delivery methods, improvisation or their own on stage persona sometimes referred to as their act.

The interviewees claimed to be aware of most of their behaviour on stage and the different signals they might give away on stage, although most acknowledged possible shortcomings, which they constantly work on. A huge facet in this area according to the responses is the first impression an audience develops about the comedian. Albeit not being

solely up to the comedian, they must at least try and enhance it. *"First impressions are super important in comedy. (…) When you walk on stage, they will judge you instantly. They will just sort of look at you and have an idea in their head of whether or not they think you're funny before you even say a word. And then when you start talking you literally have a window of about 10 - 15 seconds to prove that you're funny"* (Austin).

5.3.1 On delivery in general

A joke has two dimensions – the material and the delivery. They are mostly rated on par, some say the delivery is more important, if not the most important thing. The delivery is essential, but it is generally not self-sufficient in terms of a joke's success, albeit sometimes the audience will laugh only at the delivery. Mark states: *"Eye contact, facial expression, hand gestures help sell a joke a little bit more than the joke itself. You have to put them in the moment of the joke. You have to be able to express that with more than with the joke itself. (…) If you don't properly convey that, proper timing, the best joke in the world is just gonna sound horrible and flat."* Keith agrees: *"A look, a gesture, a pout, things like that you know, it's very important and it helps a lot."* Austin recalls his beginnings: *"When I first started out, (…) I was a writer first, I had terrible delivery and terrible timing. I had people come up to me and say 'Listen you are a great writer but your delivery sucks.' (…) I was either telling them too fast or I wasn't pausing in the right moment. Or I wasn't delivering with my body, and the longer that I have been in this the more I know about this stuff and knowing how to slow down, knowing how to pause before the punch line and get the timing, cause delivery, even though I like writing, delivery is more important. Cause you can literally have a terrible joke delivered the right way and get a huge great response but you can also have the best joke delivered in a poor way and get no response."*

Responses showed that comics will act on their jokes when appropriate, some will move more and walk around, others like Mark have a different approach: *"I like to make eye-contact with the audience. A lot of people travel the stage so that they can reach the whole audience. I feel like I can do that with very limited movement so that's what I really go for."* Matthew says polishing the joke includes improving the delivery and so he *"*(tries*) to do as much manipulation as possible to figure out the ideal way to deliver a joke and a set and a full act every time."* John says it is very important to put your whole body and passion into the delivery, he further talks about Larry the Cable guy who is a well-known Stand-Up comedian who developed one of his jokes to the point where it became a signature line: *"Whenever it comes to having that joke that people will remember the next day, when it comes to the joke that people will remember a week later, or that becomes a part of who you are."* In John's mind, Larry the Cable

guy worked his *"Get ir done"* joke to perfection where it truly became a part of his act, his catchphrase. The reason being that he built it up with impeccable delivery.

Some of the respondents explained concrete delivery methods they use. These are techniques which the comedians use to manipulate with the audience and boost the joke: *"Being a good Stand-Up comedian is a lot like mind control in a weird way, cause there is all those little different techniques you can do to just control the audience"* (Austin), *"I've been toying with timing, with cadence, with going on mice and off mike and how subtle can I make a facial response, is silence a better way to get a laugh? Recently I've been speeding my show up, to the point where it goes against traditional Stand-Up philosophy. Meaning that, if you were to look at an average joke and the response as a sign wave (…) where the peak of the sign wave is the peak laughter, and as you continue moving right along the axis that's the laughter dying off. The average, the traditional Stand-Up approach would be to wait until just about all the laughter is done not flat line, but about 7/8 away along the sign wave to start the next joke. I've been experimenting how much can I cut off the right half of the sign wave and start the next joke right as the first joke is peaking. So that I can get more peaks per minute"* Matthew shares and adds another one of his repertoire: *"This is a bit of advice I got from the comedian Chris Titus, but it's very good advice – You set up to an individual and you punch to the audience.* (When doing the set-up) *I try to look one person in the eye and then when I do the punch line I try to look out at sort of the amorphous blob that is the audience. So by doing that I tend to make eye contact with every person at some point or another. If I'm doing improv I'm usually speaking to just the one person I'm speaking to, except if I'm going to make a joke in which case I turn to the audience and treat the audience like my friend going "Hey, can you believe this guy?"*Keith explains a method he knows about, which is considered cheap: *"Sometimes it's funny, when you say something funny and then you say 'This guy knows'. It's a very old trick in the book, but it works most of the time. You say something that would be embarrassing and you say 'Do you ever do that with your wife sir?' It's kind of a cheap trick, but it works."* John explains a method of his, which builds the suspense in the set-up for an overly long time, with an exemplifying joke: *"Being in love is a wonderful thing, it is. It makes things easier and you know I was in love with this girl and we were just all the time, you know, we would just talk all the time, we texted back and forth, email all the time, we were just together all the time and you know I thought it was time to take that next step to, you know, go that extra mile in our relationship and (pause) meet in person."* The whole set-up is slow and implies the fact that he could be asking her to marry him. Adding to this, the audience is hit with the punch line earlier than they expected, as for the audience it still seems like a set-up for a later punch line. The swerve comes after the pause which can be used to amplify the joke with corresponding non-verbal

communication. Mark describes his stand on things: *"Timing and word choice has always been important to me, even in normal conversation. So I try to apply that to the stage. I know I am putting certain words in a certain order to build up a certain point where the punch will be that much more potent. There is only so many different ideas but it all comes down to word choice and word order. And timing of those words."* Luke describes what he does to make sure the audience will pay attention: *"If it seems like they're not paying attention, say something to grab them, say something that's more shocking or even just to be louder. Or do something unexpected."* Matthew remembers a quote from the great Bill Hicks: *"If you can't be funny, be interesting, it's almost as good."*

Maintaining a certain amount of order and control over the show proves to be difficult but extremely beneficial at the same time. Matthew says one of the possibilities how to maintain control is to show and maintain dominance in a sort of authoritative way if the conditions are not ideal: *"Maintaining who you are in the face of indifference is the only way to get them to come over to your side. If you do the same jokes and they don't get a laugh (…) and you maintain your framework and you say 'this is funny and if you're not getting it then that's on you.' You don't say that but that's the implication. That here is this very successful person who has travelled all over the world and is very very funny and right now you're not laughing and he's just laughing at that, because he can't believe that these rubes in Fort Myers, Florida right now aren't laughing at what he is saying, then the psychological implication is that the fault is with you, the audience and not the comedian."* Austin agrees that the comedian has to radiate confidence: *"It's all about going out there and reassuring everybody I know what I am doing. (…) It's just the thing that I know what I'm doing and they just want to feel safe with you and trustworthy with you."* Meanwhile, Austin is fascinated by how much a comedian can achieve by controlling the crowd: *"You take a giant group of individuals who come off the street, and they're like coming off of work, and they are catching up after a long weekend, and you turn them into one collective consciousness that sort of feeds off of what you're performing."* He further points out that once established, the audience don't want to leave the collective mind-set: *"They are all basically part of one giant collective but then when they realize that they are being an individual they get self-conscious they don't wanna be the individual. That's what the comedian is."* Alongside of that, Mathew describes what an inexperienced comedian might go through when he does not maintain control and how easily a slip up or a failed joke can destroy the whole act: *"Because the failure affects the confidence in his material, and his confidence in the material affects his delivery, and that affects his non-verbal communication, his voice sometimes goes up an octave or two, he loses eye contact with the audience, he takes a step back and he becomes to all intense and purposes something that the men look down on and the women are embarrassed for. (…) As an audience member seeing*

a comedian fail is brutal, your stomach hurts. The audience wants you to be confident, the audience wants you to get up there and go 'I know what I'm doing I'm going to make you laugh' and that lets them relax and when they relax they can laugh harder."

Moreover, Mathew speaks of his experiences with comics who hurt their own credibility by *"hanging on to the symbol"* of Stand-Up Comedy when unnecessary: *"They stay up on stage, they stay in the lights, they speak into the microphone, despite the room being 15-20 people, and there's a fundamental lie at the heart of that, meaning that you stand on a stage and in lighting and speak into an amplification device out of necessity. (…) It's perceived as you're pretending to be a comedian and I believe it hurts your credibility as a truth teller. (…) You are hanging onto the artifice of Stand-Up Comedy, that is unneeded and it creates a wall of artifice between you and the audience. (…) I believe on a subconscious level you holding on to that microphone, is you clinging on to the artifice, the symbol, you're saying 'I need this symbol so that you know that I'm a comic' and I believe that that hurts your credibility."*

Austin says: *"In writing there is this one thing that's called 'Show, don't tell'"* which essentially means that a comedian must add the delivery and truly show the audience that he is capable and worth their time.

5.3.2 Aspects of delivery

A range of different aspects of the delivery emerged from the data gathered. The comedians' answers covered a range of non-verbal communication elements to be considered.

Bodily movements

The respondents separated into two groups regarding the activity on stage. Although all are active to a certain extent, it mostly is just as much as necessary, whereas John and Matthew stated they were fairly mobile on stage as it helps the audience pay attention. John says he tries to use the whole space of the stage, he often overly comically plays with the cord of the mike.

Matthew says right from the start he is very active regarding his gestures and kinesics in general: *"I like to go back and forth, (…) I like to sit down, stand up, jump off the stage, jump on the stage, I like to utilize the stage as a props almost to hammer home some of the points that I am trying to make."* Though he admits he has shortcomings in the field of mimics: *"One of my problem is I am not an easy or natural smiler, so I need to remind myself 'Hey, you're going on stage put a smile on your face.'"* Luke explains a smile fitting the situation at the end of a punch

line might enhance the success of the joke. Keith admits he should work on his activity on stage, in the meantime however, he turned the whole situation in a bit where it almost violates the principle of aesthetic distance: *"I've actually been trying to turn a bit into walking around. Because I'll tell the crowd 'People say that I need to walk on the stage more and you know it's really tough because naturally I don't do that when I'm talking to people, I don't just start walking you know. Walking back and forth when I'm talking to someone' and then like five minutes later in the middle of a joke I just start walking and they'll maybe remember 'Oh it's because he thinks he needs to move around but it only, like, why is he walking back and forth for no reason?'"*

Posture

According to the interviewees, the ideal posture on stage is to stand straight, avoid slouching and keep the head up as much as possible, some mentioned using the mike stand. The most important thing though is to feel comfortable on stage. Austin describes his posture as follows: *"My posture is like straight up and my chest is out. So it is that confidence, but also the comfortableness of just being who you are."* Mark wants to come off rather casually: *"Just kind of upright but still kind of laid back, (…) I want to give away the feeling that I am just up there talking, for 20 minutes."* Matthew shares his tip for young comedians: *"Lean forward don't lean back, (…) lean forward into the audience and let them know I'm the guy who is in charge. I talk a lot about dominance and I don't want you to think that I am trying to alpha male the group and I am certainly not an alpha male in any of my interactions with people off the stage.(…) But on the stage, I understand that, you know, straighten my shoulders, (…) standing straighter, and basically conveying an aura of confidence is very important."*

Looking

The area where a comedian is looking depends a lot on the size of the audience. The size determines whether the comedian will be looking directly at them as individuals or at the audience as a whole. John, Matthew, Mark and Austin like to make eye contact if possible, whereas Keith says straight forwardly he does not like to do that. Matthew argues direct eye contact can be beneficial and enhance the comedian's credibility: *"Eye contact, where you're not afraid to look away is a very powerful way to keep people's attention and show them that you are perfectly okay with what's being said."* John makes it part of his on-stage persona: *"That is part of the whole creepy thing I do."*

When it comes to larger crowds the respondents strongly suggest avoiding looking at one area because: *"If you just look at people in the front, people in the back, they know you are not looking*

at them, so they'll get disinterested," (Keith) *"if you focus too much on one side of the room, the room that you are not paying attention to will completely shut down and not laugh at anything"* (Mark). The solution is either spreading the attention: *"I like to give even coverage to the entire crowd as far as eye contact goes throughout the jokes so nobody feels left out"* (Mark), *"for the most of the time I just kind of follow the laughs, so if one side of the room is laughing more than the other I will focus more on that"* (Austin), or looking at the audience as a whole and that way creating an illusion of looking at everyone individually: *"I like to play to the back more of the room, because that way everyone is in your line of sight"* (Keith), *"I kinda make it seem like I'm looking at them, I'm not like looking up at the ceiling but I'm looking at their foreheads or their bold spots or their hats"* (Luke), *" (some comics) do that trick where they just look at the back of the room and the wall above the crowd"* (Austin).

Appearance

The respondents were asked about their appearance on stage. An appearance can be a distinguishing factor though in this study, the results say there is not necessarily given a lot of thought about it this way. The interviewees agree about dressing elevated to some extent, although not too much, as it makes the comedian look presentable and authoritative to a certain degree.

Some of the comedians have personal dress codes but none of it is persona related or to enhance the delivery, except for Austin who says: *"I will just wear a short sleeve shirt, that's kind of colourful, because (…) on stage I am kind of a goofball, like I am a giant kid."* Keith adds: *"My friend (…), he wears a sweater with a tie. Because his material is very dark. (…) And he has noticed that when he wears a sweater and a tie people are more open to creepiness, than if you're just wearing your normal clothes."* Luke says he decided on not wearing short sleeves with no real purpose. John and Matthew decided on a general appearance so they would not have to worry about it – *"I went out and bought ten of the exact same shirt, three pairs of the same jeans and two blazers. The blazers can be matched with pants if I need a suit and I can always throw a tie on if I go there. It's all black except for the jeans which are blue obviously, and I have nothing but black socks, black underwear and black belts and black shoes,"* Matthew says and expands his reasoning: *"Part of this was, because I look better in black, part of this is because I was travelling and I realised one day as I was packing both a brown and a black belt, brown and black shoes and white, blue, yellow, different socks and I was like 'Wait a second, I don't need all this shit, I can just wear black and that just cuts down all of my choices and I don't need to worry about it' and then even further than that when I got all the same black shirt I went 'Oh, now I don't even have to think*

before I pack.'" Mark says it depends on the occasion: *"If it's a house party I am fine with whatever, if it's a bar show then I don't really care and if it's a comedy club then I like to dress a little better."*

As for appearance in general, the respondents agreed that comfort is very important as discomfort can affect the comedian's confidence and concentration, where the comedian might be more concerned about their outfit than the show. Luke states that: "(He) *was at one competition and one of the categories the comics were judged on was appearance, which I thought was odd, but I guess it makes sense, its showbiz so people want you to look nice"* (Luke).

Non-Verbal aspects of speech

Comedians will manipulate the non-verbal components of speech. They might change the pace of delivery and influence the dynamic of the spoken word through their voice (Mark and Matthew), inflect their voice in different ways (John), or they can regulate the audience: *"I'll just yell at someone in the crowd and whatever you have to do to get their attention"* Keith says, Austin has the opposite approach: *"If there is a table of people being noisy and loud, naturally you kind of wanna yell at them to tell them to be quiet, but the best way to deal with that is instead of yelling at someone who is being noisy you just lower your voice and subconsciously they will realize how loud they're being when they can hear their own voice and they will quiet down."*

The act

All of the interviewees said they were more eccentric on stage as opposed to off stage. Further, Matthew states: *"There's a lot of people in comedy that like to turn it off, when their not on stage"*, he also adds that *"there is a saying in our business: 'Save it for the stage'"*. Essentially implying that Stand-Up comedians tend to heighten their energy and put on their specific act before going on stage.

Some Stand-Up comedians have developed completely different characters from who they are as Luke gives the example of Larry the Cable Guy. None of the respondents says their act would contain anything similar. All say their on-stage-selves are partially altered versions of themselves off-stage. John has tweaked his persona: *"In my act I come off as creepy"*, Matthew states: *"When I'm on stage it's (…) a more sort of crystallined version of myself. It's not that far from what I'd be like if you'd met me in high school you know when I was 15 years old. I was a lot more obnoxious then but, it's a very similar demeanour"*, Luke says on stage he is *"more blunt, more dryer, almost not very animated on stage but that's not a conscious decision as*

much as still finding my legs", Keith admits: *"I come off in my act as someone who's very confident. (…) I am actually a lot more shy normally"*, Austin says he was finding his persona for quite some time, in the meantime he would adopt personas of other comedians: *"When I first started out I was 19 and I didn't have anything, so I listened to Mitch Hedberg and all of a sudden I come up the stage and sound like a stoner even though I never do drugs or anything and then I would listen to Carlin and I would do a lot of ranting and raving"* although now he claims he is a big goofy kid and tries to portray that in his act, and Mark states: *"I am extremely selfish. When I am on stage I want that whole time to be about me and my problems."*

John stresses that it is crucial to stay in character and further built it: *"If I'm addressing a female audience member, I try to be all like 'Oooh, hey' there is that creepiness, (…) I have that creepy on stage persona,"* moreover he says: *"We have one gentleman we call him the bitcher. He is an older gentleman and a lot of his material is basically complaining about being old. It's just how that is. So we call him Ed 'The Bitcher' Barco. And that's how he gets introduced."*

5.3.3 Memory

The comedians participating in the study were asked how they remember their jokes throughout sometimes up to 90 minutes of performing. Unanimously, the comedians claimed it comes with repetition and muscle memory comparing it to musicians and their songs, or even taxi drivers and their routes. Having done their shows hundreds of times, the explanation seems beyond reasonable. Other methods might involve doing the same outline every show (Matthew) where he "(tries) *to do new material at the same spot every time, so* (he doesn't) *forget to do it and it's usually wedged between two jokes that (…) work which helps* (him) *maintain confidence* (throughout the) *new material."* Additionally he says he has $4 - 5$ different steps to get to the end of his act. That being said, Mark renovates his material rather differently – by new jokes pushing out the old ones: *"That's how my set keeps evolving and building."* Luke leaks his method: *"I'll have a lot of jokes on the same theme (…) and they're not necessarily related jokes but it's the same theme."* Austin claims – though not being his case – that *"some comedians don't have a set order for their jokes, they sort of just walk up on stage and sort of just feel the crowd and get a sense of where they want to go."*

5.3.4 Improvisation and spontaneity

As stated numerous times in the responses, improvisation is a huge factor in Stand-Up Comedy. The sense of spontaneity must be there. Mark says: *"It's a big part of being a comic while still balancing that with structured written material. (…) I still throw in improv every single show that I do."* In accordance, Austin adds his observation: *"Some comics will just sort of go on stage and talk to the audience immediately and form those moments, whereas some comics will just sort of do prepared material."* Mark further states he used a lot of improvisation *"in the beginning as I never wrote down my jokes and did just what came to mind. (…) I would say it plays a big part especially if you're doing an extended set."* John on the other hand says it is *"part of* (his) *show, no major factor. Most Stand-Up comedians that I know, mostly not a huge factor, there has to be a level of improvisation just based on the room, based on what happens in the room."*

The spontaneity and improvisation can prove vital in three situations the interviewees mentioned: when adjusting to particular circumstance, when reacting to a sudden instance, or when turning into a product in form of a joke made up instantaneously.

John and Matthew state it always helps that, if a comedian is not the first one up on the stage, to watch all the previous acts to determine what works and what does not and then adjust their own set accordingly. Be it the material in the sense of clean/not clean or not appropriate jokes, or the delivery. Matthew even goes as far as suggesting to have a clean and regular set ready at all times. Austin argues: *"I really wouldn't say* (the material) *changes that much, so much as the framework for it does."* Mark on the other hand says he changes his material, but not because of the audience: *"I have to put in these little curls and twitches so I don't get bored by my own material in the course of the weekend."*

As for reacting to things that happen, Matthew says the comedian should be prepared to comment on anything that might happen during the show, he even goes as far as suggesting having prepared a *"sort of pre-meditated improv."* According to the respondents the most important thing about spontaneous events during a show is that the comedian on stage is a commentator so *"if something like that happens, they need to be prepared to basically address the elephant in the room"* (Austin), *"if there is something weird happening in the club I can't act like nothing is going on, cause then I seem insincere"* (Luke). Austin warns though: *"You wanna make sure you only comment on things everyone is in on. So let's say if someone drops a glass and it breaks you wanna comment on that, cause everyone heard that, but if (…) the person in the very first row yawns maybe 4 people in the audience saw that."*

In case of products from improvisation and spontaneity, Keith says he likes to expand jokes on the fly based on the audience's reception. So after the main punch line he might build on the success of the joke. John states he might change the whole punch line and *"usually if it works out well, I will incorporate it."*

5.3.5 The comedian's attitude

The study's respondents questioned the attitude and motives of comedians nowadays and said that to be truly successful one must have a positive attitude towards it. Mark explains: *"You have to want this to be a part of your life. Stand-Up Comedy has to be so important to you that you know that you won't ever go anywhere unless you start doing it. And you only want it for what it is, not for what it can give you. (…) It's about knowing that it's a part of who you are and no matter what, you were always gonna end up here anyway. It's about having that level of commitment to it."* Keith expands Mark's point: *"You kinda have to be obsessed with it anyway, you have to be kind of a psycho to want to be a comedian."* Austin discusses the right motives: *"I think the most important part about being a comedian is remembering your job is to make people laugh. (…) You shouldn't be doing this for you, you should be doing this for them."*

Furthermore, the interviewee's answers were clear to identify two additional facets of a comedian's attitude of great importance. The willingness to work on themselves and always improve, and the confidence the comedian presents.

The willingness to improve

The level of commitment – as mentioned above – is a telling attribute to a comedian's potential success. Among the responses, several stated they would record themselves for review purposes where they can see flaws and imperfections. Having a bad set will happen to any comedian, no matter how accomplished they are. The thing the comedians must take away from it is: *"Why did I do a bad set?"* (Luke), what can be improved? There are different approaches, though the motivation and the goals are the same: *"You come up with an idea, you write it down, you practise it out, maybe you tell a friend or two to get an idea, you go to an open-mike and you develop it"* (John), *"I like sitting down, writing out the joke and getting it perfect, constructing it, taking away, adding, (…) you tell it, if it works, you refine it, you remove unnecessary words to make it nice and concise"* (Austin), *"Seinfeld used to be a big believer in eliminating words. (…) The fewer words that you have the better. Seinfeld believed every word in your act should either be setting up or paying off. (…) Write your joke out and then take a look and go 'Alright, how can I take these 37 words and make them 18?'"* (Matthew). Austin says he has gotten greedy as he

always longs for the perfect reaction: *"For me personally, it's not a successful joke unless it gets a big laugh or an applause break."* And Matthew gives the reason why one should be willing to work hard to improve as he feels that *"the learnable aspects of Stand-Up – how to set the room, how to present material – those aspects can be thought. (…) Maybe not through a teacher – they can be helped with a teacher, but through active learning, getting up on stage and really thinking about it. You can learn how to make anybody laugh, even using really terrible material."*

Confidence

One of the most mentioned themes throughout the empiric part of the study was the topic of confidence. As the comedians assented with one another, being omnipresent and omnipotent – in a way – when it comes to Stand-Up Comedy, confidence is one of – if not – the most important thing about Stand-Up Comedy.

Matthew says: *"I had a good friend, Richie Burn, who broke it down this way: 'There is four stages of a Stand-Ups career, and those four stages are: I hope I'm funny, I think I'm funny, I know I'm funny and I don't give a fuck if I'm funny or not.' (…) And that last barrier, getting in to that phase is when you can be 100% yourself. That funny guy that could make his group laugh, because, you don't give a fuck. The audience doesn't really register to you, cause there is a million of those audiences and if they don't like you - yeah, so what? And this ironic thing happens, which the less you care about their reaction the more they want to give you the reaction that you want."*

Mark's opinion is obvious: *"Just have confidence in your material. (…) And have the confidence to power through your material, do the time that you have been given. (…) It comes from having a commanding presence as soon as you get behind the microphone using a strong voice going into your jokes that shows that you have confidence."*

Austin concludes correspondingly: *"The thing that basically sells comedy more than anything, more than writing, more than delivery - the number one thing I think you need to succeed is confidence."*

5.4 Answers to the research questions

5.4.1 RQ1: How does performance comedy differ from humour in everyday life?

According to the respondents, the main differences are that everyday life humour emphasizes spontaneity to a greater extent as opposed to humour in performance comedy. Moreover, humour in everyday life is more context related.

In performance comedy, the comedian constructs humorous moments, he might even try and artificially create spontaneity. The comedian on stage has to create a bond based on trust with the audience, almost a sort of friendship. In everyday life humour, this bond serves the purposes of set-up to a punch line.

5.4.2 RQ2: Which external factors have to be taken into account during a Stand-Up Comedy performance?

The answers showed that external factors which have to be taken into account are the venue, the equipment, the audience and distractions.

Generally, the asked comedians rated the importance of external factors rather highly. Even to the point, where bad external conditions can destroy the act no matter how good the comedian is, albeit largely agreeing a good comedian should be able to perform in any given circumstances, which does not necessarily mean the show will be good.

Setting up the room in the right way is an important factor. There ought to be no obstructions between the audience and the comedian, the audience should be closely packed together, the comedian should have a stage as it adds to his authority – these all are aspects that make it easier for the comedian for in these cases they don't have to work that hard for the audience's attention opposed to inadequate venues.

According to the responses, the ideal venue for Stand-Up Comedy should be a smaller crowd of not more than 200 people, low ceilings for better distribution of sound, the audience almost cramped together so they feel more as a group rather than individuals, the lights dimmed and the bar outside.

When it comes to the equipment, the results say that there is not much that a comedian needs apart from a stage, a microphone, and a stool. All can be used for simple manipulation during gesturing or other aspects of delivery.

As to the audience, the interviewees say it is one of the most important elements in Stand-Up. They further stress how audience-dependent Stand-Up Comedy really is. The audience is the main component to a joke's success, it is the audience's response that determines whether a joke is funny or not. However, the audience as a whole can be influenced as well using. The demographic and general diversity of the crowd might prove crucial. Even more fundamental is the audience's attitude towards the comedian. Bearing in mind the point where the audience essentially decides about the success of a joke, having a crowd with a bad attitude towards the show is draining for the comedian and not easy to handle. Some audience members might not even be in the venue for the comedy gig which shows in the lack of respect towards the people involved in the show. On the other hand a crowd with a good attitude almost makes it impossible to have a bad show. A comedian must adjust themselves accordingly to the crowd. Another part of a comedian's arsenal is the so called *"crowd work"* – also *"working the room"*, where the comedian will engage with the audience in a dialogue like fashion. This seems to occur with a higher frequency if the audience is not responsive in the desired form. Engaging with the audience will make them interested and pay attention.

Regarding the potential distractions in Stand-Up Comedy, the responses say they vary by origin: the venue itself can be the source of distraction or it can be the people in the room – the staff or the audience. The respondents have performed at venues where the owner left the TVs on during the show, which was distracting the audience, as for the people in the room – waiters might drop glasses, or audience members will talk with each other, heckle or even take phone calls distracting themselves, the people around them and the comedian.

5.4.3 RQ3: How can a comedian affect their show?

A comic has multiple options to affect the show. Literally all he does can and will affect the show. There are forms of deliberate affecting and undeliberate affecting of the show.

Delivery being probably the most important and simultaneously the most comprehensive topic of them all. The delivery are all features the comedian can work with on stage to properly convey a joke. A joke has two dimensions – the material itself and the delivery – how the comedian portrays the joke. Be it their bodily movements which can be used to

amplify a joke, their posture to radiate confidence, where they are looking (e.g. into the audience, make eye contact), their appearance and look on stage, the non-verbal aspects of speech and their act in general (e.g. if they have a characteristic on stage persona).

Additionally, a comedian's memory is very much a factor as well. Comics in this study said they would remember their whole act simply because of repetition. They have done their acts hundreds of times.

The facet of improvisation is yet another tool a comedian can use to have an effect on the show. They must be ready to use it if they have to adjust to a certain circumstance, when they have to react or comment on something that just happened, or when coming up with an entirely new joke or part of a joke on stage. Adjusting to certain situations and conditions which might come up requires a sense of improvisation and spontaneity along with experience, the same can be said about reacting to sudden occurrences and when coming up with a new joke it is more about the heat of the moment and reading of the audience. If it works, the joke more often than not ends up in the act for further use.

The comedian's attitude is of great importance as well. The level of commitment the comic is willing to engage in is a mark of a future success. Individuals who are willing to improve themselves and work on themselves and their techniques are more likely to make it in Stand-Up Comedy, according to the study's respondents. The confidence a comedian displays on stage is another telling factor. As several times stated in the study, confidence is the most important thing about Stand-Up Comedy as everything derives from it. According to the interviewees, having confidence in themselves, in their act and even if not, making the audience believe they are confident, is the x-factor of Stand-Up Comedy.

6 Discussion

Several psychological aspects of Stand-Up Comedy have been identified and described. In the given fields major points have been detected. In the difference between on-stage and everyday life humour the spontaneity and context dependence of off-stage humour has been cited as a significant element. In regards to the external factors surrounding Stand-Up Comedy audience dependence and the room's set-up stand out. As for the comedian's impact, delivery and confidence are remarkably relevant.

The presence of psychology phenomena was suspected before though never identified, let alone described. The findings essentially open doors to further analysing, and further explanation and understanding of the importance of psychology in Stand-Up Comedy. The spontaneity and context dependence display the main reason why humour in performance comedy is different from humour in everyday life. Many jokes being funny off stage would not be funny on stage due to the needed context, the background – if you will – of the joke. Without an audience there would not be a show, the audience is the most powerful element in Stand-Up Comedy, the comedian can merely try and get them into concordance with themselves using the room's set-up inter alia. The set-up of the room has an immense effect on the audience, thus on the show, even before the show itself begins. Among other means of a comedian's methods, their confidence and delivery are key for regulating the audience. The confidence is present throughout the entire presentation of the comedian, the delivery is what makes the jokes vivid and effective.

The results of this study regarding the description of the ideal room for Stand-Up Comedy correspond with what Quirk (2011) describes in her study differing in a reason for packing the crowd together as much as possible because of making the audience a homogenous group. This was not mentioned by the interviewees in this study though it was implied. Further, seating the audience as close to each other as possible is a point which is supported by Provine's (2001) concept of contagious laughter, because if they are closer the chance they will engage in a collective laughing response is significantly higher.

In accordance with the results of this study, Limon (2000), Goodwin (1986) and Freud (2005) say the success of the act, or a joke in this case, is heavily audience determined as the audiences is the deciding factor.

Most studies concerning a either public speaking, rhetoric or Stand-Up Comedy cited in this paper, put a signific amount of weight on the delivery, be it the timing (McIlvenny,

Mettovaara, & Tapio, 1992; Stebbins, 1990; Braun, 2009), eye contact (Lloyd-Hughes, 2011), voice manipulation (Stebbins, 1990) or concrete techniques such as involving the audience in the punchline (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009).

Among other findings, Seizer's 2011 study on obscenity in Stand-Up Comedy is in consensus with this study's findings concerning the use of profanity in the forms of attention grabbers.

As for alternative explanations of the findings, certainly the questions asked have to be considered. As the questions are noticeably derived from past researches, there tends to be a bias towards the findings of said studies, which may explain the similarities in the findings.

Moreover, the factor of the respondents' experience has to be taken in account. The comedians interviewed in this study all had a fair amount of experience in the field and there is little doubt that with more/less experience the findings would slightly differ.

As said before, there has not been a study of this sorts before and this could possibly be an inviting door opening study for future research in this field. The understanding of the workings in a Stand-Up Comedy show can possibly be of benefit for starting Stand-Up comedians as well as for audience members in terms of critical thinking and anti-manipulation tactics, but also as a sort of advice as to how to help make a Stand-Up Comedy show better. Taking this study into account, it could lead to improvement of Stand-Up Comedy shows due to the insight given for the audience and the comedians.

However, because of the relatively small sample and their homogenous origin and area of residence, the results can by no means be considered applicable and valid for the entire community throughout the world. Nonetheless, the study's findings give the reader a respectable insight on the topic at hand, especially in the USA. Taking into account the experience and opinions of variously seasoned and diverse-in-style comedians, the research conducted has brought several points worth further examination.

The study's aim was to give a thorough outline of psychology phenomena and psychology in general in Stand-Up Comedy. It is regarded as a stepping stone for further research. Some degree of exploration has been achieved, nevertheless, further explanation of the resulting findings is surely in order. Put simply, the focus of future studies should be more on "why" than "what" as "what" has already been identified. The possibility of experiments or additional exploration with a wider sample is certainly a prospect. Social-psychologists

might be included in an analysis of video-footage of Stand-Up comedians and the results can be compared with the Stand-Up comedians' analysis.

The recurrent matter of confidence's importance in Stand-Up Comedy alone is research-worthy. Even though the comedians claimed they were not necessarily confident people in their personal lives, they insisted on the importance of on stage confidence. They also claimed well projected confidence gives the comedian a dominant, or superior – if you will – status over the audience. Why does this work? Why is it so important? Could one trace this back to basic mammal instincts? Only future research can tell.

7 Conclusion

The study has brought a level of understanding of the Stand-Up Comedy processes. However, there is no appeal to declare the study's results finalized and universally applicable. The research was conducted in order to create an overview of the matter at hand, so further research can work with the analysed data and results.

According to the research, the main differences between on stage and off stage humour are the spontaneity of off stage humour and the context-dependence of off-stage humour. On stage humour is noticeably more structured in the form of set-up – punch line. The context and trust of the comedian – audience relationship has to be artificially created first.

External factors are a major determinant of whether a show works out well or it does not. Throughout this study, they were divided into four parts: the venue, the equipment, the audience and the distractions.

Moreover, the results showed the comedian should take extra interest in the aspects of their delivery and in their confidence displayed on stage, as these are key factors in how the comic affects the show.

Summary

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first one is the theoretical background consisting of the chapters 1.1 Stand-Up Comedy in Theory, 1.2 Types of Humour, 1.3 Conditions of Stand-Up Comedy and 1.4 The Stand-Up Comedian and their Strategies and their corresponding subchapters. Part two is the study containing the conducted research and the chapters 2 Research problem, 3 Methodological framework of the study, 4 The sample, 5 The results, 6 Discussion and 7 Conclusion and their subchapters respectively.

Stand-Up Comedy is a form of theatre performance where the so-called comedian is on display in front of an audience and directly communicates with them. The whole show is in the present tense, which means that everything around is part of the show and can influence it.

There are various conditions in which a Stand-Up comedian might find themselves. The venue has a considerably high influence on the show. It is not just the stage or its absence, but also the equipment or the general set-up of the room - how the audience is seated, how many people fit in and what the acoustics are.

The audience is another condition out of the comedian's reach. Stand-Up Comedy or theatre audiences are a special interest kind of audience. The workings in theatre and Stand-Up Comedy audiences are similar to a certain extent. Group dynamics apply in both and have a large effect as to why audience members might laugh. On some occasions, audience members are deliberately seated together as close as possible to enhance the dynamics in the audience and thus the much needed response in the form of laughter. The audience is often regarded as the most important component of any theatrical performance for without an audience, there would not be a show. This applies to Stand-Up Comedy in an even larger scale, because the audience's response to a joke determines the joke funny or not.

The comedians' personality tends to differ between on and off stage. There is also a visible difference between writers and comedians as comedians write their material, like writers, but they perform it as well, and between actors and comedians as comics do not score high on extroversion.

Furthermore, the similarity between public speaking and Stand-Up Comedy is indisputable. Public speaking and Stand-Up Comedy simile in realization as both are in the form of mostly one person talking to a crowd of individuals.

Aristotle's rhetoric is the cornerstone of public speaking. Even in the times of ancient Greece speakers took interest in the delivery of their speeches. Aristotle stresses the characteristics of a good speech as having ethos (credibility), logos (logic) and pathos (emotion). Ethos and pathos are as relevant in Stand-Up Comedy as they are in public speaking, whereas logos depends more on the type of humour and Stand-Up Comedy the comic does.

Moreover, Aristotle describes his Five Canons of Rhetoric out of which all are rather pertinent in Stand-Up Comedy. The invention, the arrangement, the style, the memory and the delivery have all visible impact on today's public speaking and Stand-Up Comedy performances as well.

On stage or wherever during a conversation it is not only the speaker's words that transfer a message. Non-verbal communication is a powerful component in the information transmission process. Be it the bodily contact or proximity between the communicants, the orientation and the showing of personal territory, the appearance of the speaker, the posture, the mimics, the gestures, the kinesics, the looking or even the nonverbal aspects of speech, all this is to be taken into account if trying to communicate.

Stand-Up comedians have an enormous amount of delivery methods or techniques which they can use to enhance their performance. Among others, they use non-verbal communication, timing of the delivery, extended pauses or numerous types of transitioning from sequence to sequence, topic to topic, joke to joke.

The study aims to identify and describe psychology phenomena in Stand-Up Comedy. The main focus is on external factors, means for the comedian to affect the show, and the difference between humour in everyday live and performance comedy. The data was collected online through semi-structured interviews via a recorded Skype call, which were later transcribed and analysed using the method of qualitative content analysis. The sample consisted of 6 male Stand-Up comedians from the USA between the ages $24 - 37$. They were approached through the website www.reddit.com.

The results show that humour in everyday life and on stage humour differ in the spontaneity and context-dependence of the former and the need for structure in form of

set-up and punch line of the later. More so, the impact of the external factors was divided into four elements: the venue, the equipment, the audience and the distractions, with the venue and the audience being the outstandingly important factors as they can solitarily affect the show immensely.

As for the comedian's effect, the main facets to be taken into account are the comedian's displayed confidence and the delivery. Accordingly to the responses, the elements of delivery were divided into bodily movements, posture, looking, appearance, non-verbal aspects of speech and the act itself. All of these have been mentioned and highlighted by one or more respondents with various reasons. The general consensus though is that delivery of the material is more important than the material itself and that confidence affects all of the comedian's aspects of performance.

The study offers a respectable overview of psychological involvement in Stand-Up Comedy and is inviting towards further research. The results are not by any means dogmatic as the sample was rather small, but they are a valid foreshadowing of what future research might suggest.

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List of appendices:

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Appendix n. 1: The bachelor diploma thesis assignment form

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci

Filozofická fakulta

Akademický rok: 2012/2013

Studijní program: Psychologie

Forma: Prezenční

Obor/komb.: Psychologie (PCH)

Podklad pro zadání BAKALÁŘSKÉ práce studenta

PŘEDKLÁDÁ:	ADRESA	OSOBNÍ ČÍSLO
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TÉMA ČESKY:

Pohled za oponu Stand-Up Comedy: Psychologie v Stand-Up Comedy

NÁZEV ANGLICKY:

A Look Behind the Curtains of Stand-Up Comedy: Psychology in Stand-Up Comedy

VEDOUCÍ PRÁCE:

PhDr. Jan Šmahaj, Ph.D. - PCH

ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

1) Základem pro vypracování bude Manuál pro psaní diplomových prací na Katedře psychologie FF UP v Olomouci (Kolařík, M. a kol, 2011) a také Úvod do metodologie psychologického výzkumu (Ferjenčík, J., 2000).
2) Studium relevantní české, spíše ale zahraniční literatury, zabývající se danou problematikou.
3) Zpracování teoretické části zaměřené na postupy stand-up komiků, na podmínky, ve kterých se mohou ocitnout (místo konání, tamní podmínky, apod.), role publika a podobnost s veřejným projevem.
4) Příprava výzkumné části, vypracování výzkumných otázek, příprava polo-strukturovaného rozhovoru.
5) Výběr respondentů.
6) Realizace rozhovorů.
7) Analýza dat a interpretace výsledku.
8) Diskuze, závěr a shrnutí.

SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:

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Myers, D.G. (1999). Social psychology. Boston ; Burr Ridge, IL ; New York : McGraw-Hill College;

Podpis studenta: ....

Datum: ....

Podpis vedoucího práce: ....

Datum: ....

Appendix n. 2: The Czech abstract of the bachelor diploma thesis

ABSTRAKT DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

Název práce: Pohled za oponu Stand-Up Comedy: Psychologie v Stand-Up Comedy

Autor práce: Benedikt Říčný

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Jan Šmahaj Ph.D.

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Abstrakt:

Cílem práce je identifikace a popis psychologických fenoménů v Stand-Up Comedy. Zaměřuje se na tři výzkumné otázky: "Jak se liší performační comedy od humoru v každodenním životě?"; „Jaké externí faktory musí být brány v potaz při Stand-Up Comedy?"; a „Jak může komik ovlivnit svou show?" Teoretická část shrnuje relevantní informace z předchozích výzkumů a jiných publikací týkajících se studovaného tématu. V praktické části byl zvolen kvalitativní metodologický přístup. Respondenti pro kvalitativní polo-strukturované rozhovory byli hledáni mezi americkými Stand-Up komiky. Rozhovory byly přepsány a následně analyzovány pomoci kvalitativní obsahové analýzy. Výsledky ukázaly, že hlavní rozdíl mezi humorem performační comedy a každodenním humorem je především ve spontaneitě a závislosti na kontextu každodenního humoru a také celková strukturovanost humoru v performační comedy. Mezi externí faktory, které je třeba vzít v potaz, patří místo konání, vybavení, obecenstvo a různé formy vyrušení. Komik může ovlivnit svou show mnoha způsoby, především však svým přednesem a sebevědomím, které na jevišti dá najevo.

Klíčová slova: Stand-Up Comedy, psychologické fenomény, humor, faktory

Appendix n. 3: The English abstract of the bachelor diploma thesis

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Title: A Look Behind the Curtains of Stand-Up Comedy: Psychology in Stand-Up Comedy

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Number of pages and characters: 81; 140 007 (168 229)

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Number of references: 40

Abstract:

The aim of the study is to identify and describe psychology phenomena in Stand-Up Comedy. The study focuses on three research questions: "How does performance comedy differ from humour in everyday life?"; "Which external factors have to be taken into account during a Stand-Up Comedy performance?"; and "How can a comedian affect their show?" The theoretical part summarizes relevant information from former studies and other publications accordingly to the studied issue. In the practical part, the chosen methodological approach is qualitative. Respondents for qualitative semi-structured interviews were looked for in the ranks of American Stand-Up comedians. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The results showed that the main difference between performance comedy humour and everyday life humour is in the spontaneity and context-dependence of everyday life humour and the overall structured nature of performance comedy humour. The external factors to be taken into account are the venue, the equipment, the audience and the distractions. A comedian can influence the show in many ways, most importantly by their delivery and confidence displayed on stage.

Key words: Stand-Up Comedy, psychological phenomena, humour, factors

Appendix n. 4: The list of the prepared questions for the interview

<u>Personal Info</u>

How old are you?

How long have you been doing stand-up comedy?

- When did you start?
- When did your acts become more frequent?

How long do your acts usually take?

Is stand-up your occupation?

- Do you think of a career in stand-up? / Where can your career lead?

Why do you do stand-up?

<u>First set of questions</u>

How does performance comedy differ from humour in everyday life?

How does your act differ from yourself off stage?

How do you know a new joke is great? Where to you try new material?

<u>Venue, equipment & conditions</u>

How many venues have you performed at?

What is the most unusual setting you have played at?

Have you ever performed without a stage? How was that?

Have you ever performed without a microphone?

How much of a factor do you think the venue & equipment is?

What's your favourite set up of the stage? Why?

How do you utilize the stage & equipment?

How much of a factor is the audience?

Do you think a comedian should be able to perform in any given conditions? Crowd, venue, distractions,…

- How does a comedian's material change according to situated performance and audience response? And adjust to the given venue/conditions?

<u>The use of Strategies & Non-Verbal Communication</u>

Are you aware of delivery/manipulative techniques in your act? If so, which do you use? Is it common to use them?

How do you remember the jokes and the general outline of the show?

How much of a factor is improvisation?

Are you aware of your non-verbal Communication?

- What is your posture on stage?
- Where do you look during the act?
- How much do you value your appearance?
- Do you have a generalized look?

How does a comedian accomplish a successful joke and invite laughter? What are your methods?

How much do you involve your audience into the act? Surveys, questions, dialogue with a person?

How much of a factor are these delivery methods, non-verbal communication, timing etc. to a successful joke/act?

_____

Considering all the above: What is the most important thing?

Appendix n. 5: Exemplary extract of the transcribed interview with Keith

Thank you, the next part is about the venue, the equipment and the conditions in general, so right from the start: how many venues have you performed at?

Probably, say like, 50, 30-50. Somewhere in between 30 and 50.

And what was the most unusual setting that you've played at?

I performed in a Chinese restaurant, and it was a benefit because this woman's husband died from drug overdose. And he was a born again Christian and she was in the front row and she was crying. And the whole family was there. That was odd. They said: "You know, we want you to do it, you know, you're gonna go up next, the wife, she is in the front row, she has been crying all night, and don't mention god, don't mention drugs, good luck." I mean, the show went fine but it was almost a joke in itself how the circumstances where so against comedy, you know.

And how did the venue look? The setting, the stage?

It wasn't really a stage. There was a microphone. I think we were in front of a fish aquarium, a fish tank, I don't know it wasn't really a stage. I mean, they moved the table, they put a microphone there and then that was basically it.

So you have performed without a stage?

Yes and without a microphone.

Okay, could you elaborate on that?

Sometimes the microphones don't work and then they say: "Okay, can you just do it anyway" and you have to. And, it can really suck, it can be tough. Especially if its bar show and you know, they have their TVs on, that's another thing – a big problem that I have with comedy shows is that they leave their TVs on and there might be basketball game or football, and I'm trying to talk over a sporting event meanwhile I kinda just wanna watch the game to, I'll almost be like "Oh, wow, that was a nice shot" you know, and I'm just like "What am I even doing here, we have entertainment already. I don't need to be here, you are all here to watch this." That's another thing, when you don't get a microphone and they leave TVs on and the audio on from the basketball game, that can all add up to be kind of tough. But, you have to do even the gigs that you don't want to do. The show that you are

scared of is gonna be the best show for you. Because you wanna always go towards what scares you.

How much of a factor do you think the venue is?

It is, it's big, really big. It can make, it's really big, but I mean, you have to be good too. But there are venues that I have been to that it's hard to bad because of how great the venue is the stage is the lightning. And how good the audience is, how attentive they are how smart they are. So the comedy club here in Madison, the Comedy Club on States street is what it's called is the best place I have ever performed comedy. A big reason why I live here is because of this club and because of how smart the audiences are. Because Madison is a college town, and college towns are the best place in my opinion to do comedy, because people are not so easily offended, they respect the crafts of writing, they write papers all day long themselves, you yourself you are a student you know what, you probably watch stand-up differently than someone who didn't go to college. Things that make them laugh might not be the same type of things that make college students laugh. I think college students, they like wit, they like intelligence from a comedian, maybe non-college students they want silliness, they want funny faces and puppets, you know.

Okay, and, what makes a good venue? Let's say, what is your ideal venue?

Big but not too big. Almost as it seems small, but there are a lot of people there. I don't know how they design it but there's a way to make it seem like everyone's close to the stage but there are a lot of people. That's good, the closer the people are to the stage is good. You don't wanna be able to see too much emptiness, because if you see—sometimes if the lights are so bright, you can only see a few people in the front, and then, maybe if you look at the back and then, well there is nobody in the back but you're missing, there is like a blind spot and there is a lot of people and you can't see them because of the lights. I like to be able to see people no matter where I look, if there is a big empty spot it kinda makes me feel like I'm talking to myself.

And how many people in the audience is ideal?

I've been getting used to 3 4 hundred people, this is what I really like. Id perform for more but nobody lets me yet. So that's the most people they let me perform for. So I'm sure when I have ten thousand people we can do another interview and I'll say "Yeah I like that, that's a lot better"

Okay, how do you utilize the stage and equipment that you've been given?

I don't really walk around a lot. I know I need do that more because I hear it helps people pay attention to you. I kinda talk with my hands, I've actually been trying to turn a bit into walking around. Because I'll tell the crowd "People say that I need to walk on the stage more and you know it's really tough because naturally I don't do that when I'm talking to people, I don't just start walking you know. Walking back and worth when I'm talking to someone" and then like five minutes later in the middle of a joke I just start walking and they'll maybe remember "Oh it's because he thinks he needs to move around but it only, like, why is he walking back and forth for no reason" and I'm trying to turn this into a joke. Because naturally I wouldn't do that.

Yeah, sure, okay, do you think a comedian should be able to perform in any given conditions?

Yes, always.

And why?

Because there is always something that you can do. I did a show a couple of months ago and everyone was talking to each other. It was like there wasn't a stand-up show going on, it was a loud bar everyone was having a great time with each other and I got on stage and made everyone a round of applause and I said: "You guys did it, you broke the record for the most conversation during someone's stand-up set" and they were like "heeyy" and then they start to listen to me and after like three minutes they started to talk to each other again and I said "I just want to, you know, you are a great audience, just give yourselves another round of applause." And they started to do it and I just said "You guys are really paying a lot of attention—to each other" and then they were all like "heeey". So you just have to kind of tease them, whatever you have to do, sometimes you have to yell. I'll just yell at someone in the crowd and whatever you have to do to get their attention it's gonna, there is always a way, you might not have your best show. If you are up there and you are scared they know, they don't care they don't wanna hear you.

Okay, how does you material change according to the conditions?

Yes, yes, see the worse the crowd the more crowd work. The more you wanna address the crowd, cause, they don't wanna listen to your jokes they don't care. But, if you're making fun of this guy's hat and they are gonna laugh at it because they know you are making this up right now, so.

Appendix n. 6: Exemplary extract of the coding regarding RQ3

Mark

- No, I feel like I am an entertainer, they came out here to be entertained, they came out here to be entertained, if they came out here to be involved in the jokes they can go to an improv show or something where they can scream at the stage. I am not gonna be screamed at I am here to entertain you. So sit back, shut up and let me entertain you. Because crowd word can quickly turn into heckling. And nobody likes hecklers. And I like people to just be quiet and pay attention to the jokes

- Yeah I know that eye contact, facial expression, hand gestures help sell a joke a little bit more than the joke itself. You have to put them in the moment of the joke. You have to be able to express that with more than with the joke itself. It has to be in your pauses and in the weird faces you make within the pause that lets them know that this joke is a little sillier than the joke before it.

- If it requires an act out then I will.

- I don't have very over the top act outs like Chris Rock would have. I like to make my jokes as subtle as possible while still getting my jokes across

- if you don't properly convey that, proper timing, the best joke in the world is just gonna sound horrible and flat.

- If you get to the punch line and people don't notice the punch line because you didn't take the extra step to let them know this is where the joke rounds up. You didn't deflect anything.

- , I just kind of stand there on stage, walk around a little bit. My biggest thing, I like to make eye-contact with the audience. A lot of people travel the stage so that they can reach the whole audience, I feel like I can do that with very limited movement so that's what I really go for, so I don't really utilize the stage too much

- I feel like when I take it of the stand now it's a lot more free. So a lot of the movements are in my hands, so I guess the microphone is an extension in a way

- That all comes down to the individual comedian, I just think that anybody who is worth a damn as a comic is gonna have some kind of ability to read their audience, and it's not so much about changing your material as changing the rhythm of delivery. If you are in a shitty venue or you have a wishy-washy crowd and they don't like the comedy that is moving at too fast of a pace or too slow of a pace then you find that right beat in the middle and you usually win them over. If you just don't give in to the fact that it is a horrible night already

- I would say I am. Like timing and word choice has always been important to me, even in normal conversation so I try to apply that to the stage. I know I am putting certain words in a certain order to build up a certain point where the punch will be that much more potent. There is only so many different ideas but it all comes down to word choice and word order. And timing of those words

- I don't do too much crowd work. I respect anybody who does crowd work. The crowd work I do is very light, it might be a quite jab here or there, but it's never anything more.

- I don't. A lot of people will let them talk over them, but really, what I do I don't even give them the opportunity, I roll right over them like I didn't even hear them. And then they feel so embarrassed that they talked out loud that they just shut up for the rest of the show. That's the way I go for. If you never give them attention they will go right back to not mattering
- It was a lot in the beginning as I never wrote down my jokes and did just what came to mind. I like the off the top of coming up with jokes I would say it plays a big part especially if you're doing an extended set
- and I have to put in these little curls and twitches so I don't get bored by my own material in the course of the weekend
- I still throw in improv every single show that I do.
- It's a big part of being a comic while still balancing that with structured written material
- I am extremely selfish. When I am on stage I want that whole time to be about me and my problems.
- I really don't think it does honestly
- I try to keep who I am on stage and who I am off stage extremely similar
- Newer stuff pushes out some of my older jokes. That's how my set keeps evolving and building. I just think of something new and I just push out an old joke and before I know it I have a brand new thirty or a brand new hour.
- I usually used to use the mike stand a lot because I was all nervous when I first started so it was like my anchor
- just kind of upright but still kind of laid back.
- I don't take any certain posture. I want to give away the feeling that I am just up there talking, for 20 minutes.
- It depends on the stage first of all as far as the audience is. And if it's to the left, to the right and in the centre, I like to give even coverage to the entire crowd as far as eye contact goes throughout the jokes so nobody feels left out, because if you focus too much on one side of the room, the room that you are not paying attention to will completely shut down and not laugh at anything. So you have to spread out your attention to everybody in the room so they feel included
- it's just muscle memory.
- A lot of guys keep notebooks, but mine is just kind of in my head. If it's worth the memory I will remember it, but it's always going through my head so I never forget any of it.
- when the show comes, it all just comes back to the mind and I am able to shoot it out again I like to give a laid back vulnerable appearance while on stage
- Not as much as I would say as the people who come out completely decked out with. I don't try to go completely scummy up there. If it's a house party I am fine with whatever, if it's a bar show then I don't really care and if it's a comedy club then I like to dress a little better, it depends on the surroundings
- No T-shirt and jeans mostly, maybe a button up shirt and khakis maybe. I don't think I have a generalized look. When I first started I would wear a white beany and a Liverpool jersey

Luke

- if it seem s like they're not paying attention, say something to grab them, say something that's more shocking or even just to be louder, or do something unexpected, they're not listening maybe talk to them ,engage with them
- Practise, erhm, you know, when I'm going to an open mic with new jokes I am trying out, ill write them down and bring a paper with me, but when I'm doing a showcase or a paid show, its jokes that I've done often in an order that I've done plenty of times, it just memorized
- I do know that I'm a little static on stage, you know, I don't walk around a lot or express myself with my hands, at least not in the beginning but half way through the set I get more comfortable and walk around
- I had to figure out what to do with both of my hands instead of just wondering what to do with my left hand, and besides that pretty much the same
- Sometimes I'll use a hand but nothing like particularly know worthy, which is like, just move your hand or something, sometimes I just don't do even that, sometimes ill hold a drink in one hand, microphone in the other
- you got to sell it, some things you just got to sell
- even if I smile after my punch line that could help, you know assuming it fits
- body language I think has a lot to do with it
- I think ideally, you should be able to adapt to whatever the situation is, especially, if you know it's a paid gig, that's, that's your job to make people laugh, and if you can't do it, well you didn't do your job well.
- more on a basic level ill asses the crowd, and maybe ill, I'm not a particularly dirty comic but I will go out and take curse words out if, say, it's an older crowd, or just any show that has to be clean I f a joke isn't doing well, I can kind of determine if there's other jokes that also won't do well and try to pick them out you know, you really just have to adjust
- Improv can be important if, mainly with, if you get a heckler or even if your just doing some crowd work, you know, somebody says something to me and I get heckled and I don't, I am not able to respond, well, that's generally gonna be it, you know, I've lost, but if I can think of something, then it can be worth it, it can be a much better set than had it not happen, when people can tell that you made something up on the spot, it's just more impressive
- Not particularly often, if something happens and you know, there something weird going on in the room that night or if somebody speaks to me ill speak back, if there is something weird happening in the club I can't act like nothing is going on, cause then I seem insincere
- I guess to a certain extent, that's kinda what stand-up is, it's kinda like, not like a monologue, as much as conversation where only one person is talking
- I am a version of the same guy
- I'm not like Larry the cable guy whole separate character
- know on stage id be more blunt, more dryer, almost not very animated on stage but that's not a conscious decision as much as still finding my legs

- I'll have a lot of jokes on the sam theme, for example I just have a bunch of oneliners all based on family members, and their not necceserally related jokes but it's the same theme and while I'm thinking about them I can think of all of those
- Normal I guess, probably slight sludge, just you know, the same way I would stand in everyday life
- Where do I look? Above the crowds' heads I generally don't make much eye contact but I kinda make it seem like I'm looking at them, I'm not like looking up at the ceiling but I'm looking at their foreheads or their bold spots or their hats
- I generally, try to wear a nice button up shirt, never wear short sleeves, I don't I don't know it's just something I've decided I don't want to do, wear short sleeves. And you know, try to look generally presentable
- I was at one competition and one of the categories the comics were judged on was appearance, which I thought was od but I guess it makes sense, its showbiz so people want you to look nice.