

AFTER SEDARIS

[part XVI of the ongoing TASK series]

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Any performer (s) may perform this in any public or private setting.

Context

In the June 20th 2022 episode of *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend*, David Sedaris recounts an event where he was asked about his boyfriend Hugh [who was in attendance]. Sedaris answers by stating that Hugh had died. Sedaris points out that he enjoys putting out misinformation when talking about Hugh and he eventually revealed to the audience that it was a joke. Sedaris doesn't do this out of malice or to mare Hugh's public image—he seems to suggest that it's an effective performative tool; something that opens a “beautiful” and empathetic space for the audience to enter into:

Sedaris: *From an audience point of view, right, let's say you're live and we've all come to see you and someone asks about your wife and then you say your wife died a few weeks ago and its still—*

Conan: *pretty raw—*

Sedaris: *—as an audience member it really just kind of puts you into a really special place and you feel special because now someone's asking Conan about this and Conan—it's obvious he's about to start crying and you know...I don't know, there's something beautiful about that.*

Conan: *well...you're a sociopath*

[Laughter]

Instructions

- (1) Say something to create this “Sedaris-Space”
- (2) Allow the space to remain open for as long as you like
- (3) Close the space
- (4) Debrief

Example

- Context: The ‘Sedaris-Space’ is opened at the beginning of a concert and closed at the end. *After Sedaris* is the context in which the program occurs. The title of the piece is listed last on the program.
- (1) Slightly delay the beginning of the concert. Attribute this delay to a member of the ensemble. Communicate the reason for this delay as being a death in the family.
 - *“Everyone, can I have your attention please. I’m so sorry but we will be starting a bit later than expected tonight. Our guitarist, Ryan, is running late. He asked me to send his apologies and to share that he is dealing with a sudden death in the family and that he will be here shortly.”*
- (2) Wait.
- (3) Take the stage and put some focus on the selected ensemble member.
 - [Ryan takes the stage with the ensemble. Once seated he says something like...]: *“Thank you for your patience and understanding everyone.”*
 - Perhaps share more “information” about the situation.
- (4) Perform the program
- (5) Following the last piece before *After Sedaris* on the program, close the space by revealing there was no death in the family. Raise the house lights.
- (6) This is now the last piece on the program listed as *After Sedaris* is where the debrief occurs. It should take the form of an ensemble-audience discussion. Perhaps it may be helpful to have microphones in the audience and to play the Podcast recording provided above.