



**The Week**  
**20/02/2009**  
**Page: 23**  
**Section: General News**  
**Region: National**  
**Type: Magazines Business**  
**Size: 88.00 sq.cms**  
**Frequency: ----F--**

## Two one-handed performances

### **The Year of Magical Thinking**

*Dolphin Theatre, Perth (08) 6389 0311*

*Until 25 Feb Running time: 1hr 45mins ★★☆☆☆*

Helen Morse has an invidious task in this dramatic solo, said Sarah Wells on [australianstage.com.au](http://australianstage.com.au). She delivers a monologue by Joan Didion, based on her book *The Year of Magical Thinking*, about the sudden demise of her husband and the lingering fatal illness of her daughter. Blessed with a strong resemblance to the author, Morse does a



*Morse: bird-like grace*

splendid job of conveying “this tiny, deceptively steely woman with bird-like grace and well-pitched gesture”. As Didion, she “floats between weakness and strength”, and Matt Scott’s lighting furthers the duality by showing Morse, by turns, as haggard or angelically ageless. The raw emotion of the piece can be draining, but this is a journey worth taking. “Steel yourself, though, because your heart will ache.”

Actually, I found the overall effect only occasionally moving, said Ali Taulbut in *The West Australian*. The main character has a “self-absorbed intellectual poise and control” that makes her rather unlikeable. Still, she looks wonderful sitting alone on a chair surrounded by water in Christina Smith’s “beautiful, simple set”. And Ian Grandage’s live cello accompaniment adds much-needed emotion to Didion’s sometimes brittle prose.