



Review by Judi Herman



David Rhodes in Rites of Privacy

## **Rites of Privacy written and performed by David Rhodes**

David Rhodes is a hugely versatile and winning performer who holds the stage with ease for this ninety-minute one-man show, which he performs at the New End Theatre.

The versatility is evident in his extraordinary transformations before the eyes of the audience into each of the five Jewish characters whose story he tells. Equally at home playing both sexes, he morphs into a southern belle, an isolated New Hampshire Jewish man, a refugee Rabbi, a suburban doctor in a predicament and a Belgian immigrant caught up in the New York City gay club scene.

All five have dark secrets which he reveals with skill and which no reviewer should have the insensitivity to reveal! But wonderfully well-observed as his five storytellers are and however gripping their tales, it's those transformation scenes between that enchant and impress. This is pure theatre and audiences cannot help but respond to the bravery of a performer who stands before them in a pair of tights, telling his own story even as he pulls on the next costume (each cleverly constructed to slip on with minimum fuss – including a whole suit and shirt and tie into which Rhodes steps in a moment).

It's fascinating to watch Rhodes applying and removing vivid and complicated makeup and arranging each wig – but no more fascinating than hearing his own story, as the gay son of a pair of New York Jewish psychiatrists, trying to find his way out of the closet. He reveals a little more as he works through each transformation. So it's tantalizing waiting for the next 'installment', although it never makes each new incarnation less than interesting. Aspects of his characters resonate with his own story – a Sephardi gay from Antwerp tells tales of Marrano who secretly dared to practice their faith even after forced conversion by Ferdinand and Isabella before the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

This is a brave and thrilling performance that is as theatrical as it is frank and honest – and credit should go to director Charles Loffredo with whom Rhodes clearly enjoys a fruitful creative partnership.