

OFF B'WAY PRODUCTION



EXTRAORDINARY SOLOS

nytheatre.com

Rites of Privacy

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY

David Rhodes

DIRECTOR

Charles Loffredo

SETS

Greg Emetaz

LIGHTING

Charles Cameron

COSTUMES

David Rhodes

SOUND

Charles Loffredo

CHOREOGRAPHER

Eric Chan, Corey Hill, David Rhodes

STAGE MANAGER

Tara Nachtigall

PROJECTIONS

Greg Emetaz

PRODUCING COMPANY

Moving Parts Theater

nytheatre.com review

Martin Denton · September 1, 2007

Growing up there was a boy in my building, Billy Werner. He lived on the sixth floor and we would play together after school. Dress up. Our private little ritual. We'd close the bedroom door and we'd dress up. Pirates, Cowboys, Indians, Spacemen...Mermaids.

That's the beginning of David Rhodes's blisteringly intimate solo show, *Rites of Privacy*. It announces, with startling clarity, the main themes of the piece. One is secrecy—the effects, for better or worse, of wrapping oneself up inside a version of the truth that's hidden from everyone else. During the show, Rhodes portrays five different characters—an aging Southern widow named Clarinda, an improbable New Hampshire Jew named Seamus Benavram, a Rabbi whose rich German father escaped from the Nazis before the Holocaust, a married woman with kids named Susan who has had an affair with a doctor, and a young Belgian hustler who gets wrapped up in the New York gay/club scene. Each of them, we discover, harbors a pretty dangerous secret—we're talking matters of life and death, here, literally. And each of them suffers from, and is diminished by, the very act of hiding.

All five, and Rhodes himself, are Jewish as well—a people who are used to hiding (sometimes in plain sight, by assimilating), and Rhodes explores this thread, explicitly and subtly, throughout *Rites of Privacy*.

Yet, there's another important theme here: the notion of dressing up. Of course, this can be a manifestation of the same kind of secrecy/hiding that we've been exploring so far; but, it's also meant to be taken literally: this show is very much a celebration of submerging one's identity into another, again for better or worse. Rhodes and his director, Charles Loffredo, show us the actor's transformations into each of his characters and back again very forthrightly; the show is as much about these transitions as anything else. I've never felt the actor's urge to play chameleon so keenly...and I felt stirrings of the same impulses in myself, as a child playing make-believe games with my sister years ago.

I think it's this ineffable and irresistible notion that makes *Rites of Privacy* such a magnetic and exciting work of theatre. Rhodes enters in a simple bathrobe and puts on Clarinda's stylish pants suit, too-big necklace, rings, and earrings, and her carefully coiffed wig, right before our eyes. He applies the rouge and makeup at a modest dressing table stage right. And then, voila: he's inhabiting Clarinda. When he's done, the wig comes off first (always; or, for the men, the hat), and then he's instantly David again.

Of course, the characters he creates here (he's the author as well as the performer and, not at all incidentally, the designer of the vivid, well-built costumes that define each of his alter egos) are detailed and fascinating and each, in their odd way, likable. The sixth character in the show is David himself, revealed to us slowly in anecdotes during the transitions, and then in a surprising and moving concluding monologue. Here he is himself, in a t-shirt and jeans, seated without affectation on a chair centerstage, matter-of-factly ending his story. It's gutsy and enormously affecting.

Loffredo's work as director and co-producer (with Michael T. Cohen and Rhodes) is expert. *Rites of Privacy* offers plenty of food for thought on its tantalizing main subjects of privacy, secrecy, rituals, and transformation; and it introduces us (inside and out) not only to a mesmerizing and talented actor but to a compelling collection of characters who have much to teach us about the powerful lure and danger of not telling.

Copyright ©2007 The New York Theatre Experience, Inc. All rights reserved.

A magnetic and exciting work of theatre...gutsy and enormously affecting

AUDIENCE MEMBER REVIEWS

Dear Angela,

I just got back from seeing *Rites of Privacy* at the New End Theatre in Hampstead and I just wanted to tell you about my experience. I actually picked the show quite randomly, because I just wanted to enjoy some theatre on my own, but David's performance had such a great impact on me. David is a wonderful storyteller – seamlessly changing into different characters and each character's story and secret totally absorbs you.

There is an aching honesty about his performance and be it his brilliant performing skills or that he has developed each storyline from his own life's experiences, you just believe the characters' stories.

Especially in the last scene, where he is himself again and where he tells us his own secret, he put my heart in a wrench and pressed it to the point that it was bleeding.

This is a story about the deep and dark holes that a lie can create, but also that life will go on even when there is a gaping wound. Ultimately this is a story about redemption – beautiful and honest redemption.

It would be great if more members could see this fantastic piece of storytelling. I will certainly take my partner to see it again on Sunday and recommend it to my friends.

Thanks for all your brilliant work at The Audience Club and I'm looking forward to many more shows to come.

All the best,
Michael

Hi Charles,

Just a note to say that we really enjoyed *Rites of Privacy* last night, thought it was a wonderful story, beautifully told. I could barely listen to some parts of it, because they really tore at my heart-strings - and with the amount of theatre that I see, I've become a little numb to that sort of thing, so that was quite something! On the other end of the spectrum, we laughed and smiled and recognized parts of ourselves in the brilliantly characterized personalities and left feeling like we'd be let into a very special secret. So thank you, to you and David!

Best
Cherry