

From **The Times**
January 21, 2010

Rites of Privacy at New End, NW3

Sam Marlowe



Five dark secrets and a handful of sequins: this solo show by David Rhodes, imported to London after an off-Broadway run, combines confessional intimacy with theatrical camp. Directed by Charles Loffredo, its 90 minutes offer a colourful collection of vignettes.

The theme of parallel lives and the rift between seeming and being is deftly linked with the notion of dressing up. Rhodes, seated at a dressing table, meticulously applies make-up, a coiffed and highlighted wig and a powder-pink silk pantsuit while he relates his childhood love of raiding his mother's wardrobe. Diamanté flashing at his ears and throat, mint julep in hand, he is transformed into Clarinda, an ageing Southern Belle widowed in circumstances less innocent than they appeared.

She is followed, in more installments from Rhodes's personal history and some impressively slick costumes changes, by a lonely Jewish man from New Hampshire, a rabbi whose wealthy father fled with his family from Germany just before the Holocaust, a woman doctor whose marriage is in jeopardy and a Belgian boy of Portuguese extraction who has left behind his devout Sephardic home in Antwerp and immersed himself in sex, drugs and the New York gay scene.

The motif of a concealed existence echoes the secrecy in which many Jews historically have been forced to practice their faith. Rhodes, bright-eyed and agile, is an engaging performer.