

NEW YORK POST

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Performer shows he's good 'People'

IN THE good old Hollywood days, when a bright young kid wanted to put on a show, he would grab Judy Garland (or Mickey Rooney), run into the nearest barn and stage a slap-up Broadway musical!

Things are more modest now. Today you rustle up a few monologues, go to the nearest thrift shop

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for an assortment of clothes, practice funny, ethnic accents, and find a local stage anxious to put on a one-man (one-woman or one-anything) cabaret act and call it theater.

It isn't theater — it is a cult of personality taking place inside a theater and under the auspices of a theatrical organization.

But although a song recital isn't an opera, it can have its place (even though, we must warily note, recitalists rarely compose their own songs), so these one-person shows

can occasionally strike a chord more meaningful than mere self-aggrandizement on the part of the performer.

This season, the New York Shakespeare Festival is starting off its season — which promises to be its busiest in years — with a couple of one-person shows playing in repertory at the Public Theater/Shiva Theater, Danny Hoch in "Some People" and Jenifer Lewis in "Queen of the Camp Cabaret."

First up to bat was Hoch this past Sunday, with Lewis officially opening next weekend.

Queens-born and raised, Hoch is young, polymorphously talented, multi-accented, india-rubber-faced, possessed of a keen ear for the more likely forms of vocal caricature, a splendid comic timing, and possessed of one those new-comedy gifts for spinning out a short tale with long details.

He apparently successfully tried

Clive
Barnes



out an earlier version of "Some People" at P.S. 122 last season, and now this amplification has been moved to its present location.

Hoch is a beguiling young man, who in his cultivated abrasiveness recalls something of Eric Bogosian, and it can certainly be no accident that his show, like Bogosian's own, is staged by Bogosian's wife, Jo Bonney.

He works on a stage bare except for a few props, and a clothesline carrying vestigial costumes for his character changes.

The characters are a cross-section of Hoch's Queens neighbor-

hood, ranging from a fiercely incomprehensible disc jockey, the Caribbean Tiger, to a long-suffering Jewish mother stressing her long-suffering freedom from racial prejudice, or a Puerto Rican girl getting ready to go out on a date.

He is a good observer, and a very effective naturalistic actor. At times he really gets beneath the skin of his cartoon characters, but unfortunately the skin is never particularly deep.

So far, Hoch does not show the insights and subtextual commentary that enabled Bogosian to parlay his own comic shtick into acting and his character sketches into playwrighting.

Even so, there are enough people in Hoch's "Some People" to make him a young talent worth seeing, and even more, worth watching.

Joseph Papp Public Theater, 425 Lafayette St., near Astor Place, East Village. Ticket prices \$25-\$35. 212-922-2222.