

# the village VOICE

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Hoch leaps enthusiastically over the boundaries. His ostensible purpose, as revealed in the reggae-rap couplets of that final turn, is to make his audiences stop thinking in terms of *them* and *us*, accepting other people simply as people.

Pretty as the sentiment is, it sets a task too small for Hoch's talent, which is potentially very big. His gift, after all, is to present for our pleasure the differences between people, to celebrate their variety, not their sameness. The sketchiest of his pieces, like the two radio DJs jabbering at different ethnic

## Theater

By Michael Feingold

### Some People

By Danny Hoch  
Joseph Papp Public Theater  
425 Lafayette Street  
598-7150

**Danny Hoch is a solo performer** of terrific accomplishment, already much lauded in these pages, who has a moral mission of his own: The secret behind *Some People*—which comes out, a little mawkishly, during his encore piece—is that Hoch sees himself as a crusader against prejudice. The field in which he chooses to create his characters is the somber, grungy, violence-ridden cityscape where the newest Americans live: Latinos, blacks from the Caribbean basin, Russians, Poles, Hasidim, Asians. Unlike Eric Bogosian, who austere confines himself to his own gender and ethnic group,

constituencies, are urban reportage with an exotic twist. The best ones—the Polish repairman learning English as he works his way through the neighborhood, the Latino man trying to cope with his son's death in the crossfire of a street shootout—are nearly full-blown dramas, in which the simple assumption that we all have feelings is undercut by a complex sense of life's bitter chanciness.

The black kid in a dead-end construction job talking to his former pal, now at college majoring in Black History, is the best developed instance of this, and Hoch frames it with a mordant prologue and epilogue, showing the youngster in a Chinese takeout, mocking the immigrant who waits on him as he has mocked his buddy's aspirations. It's in these complex pieces that Jo Bonney's discreet direction comes subtly into play. What they indicate, taken in tandem with Hoch's uncanny ability to inhabit these other selves that he's perceived so sharply, is that his work is moving toward a large-scale vision of urban life, for which his simple preachment against prejudice is only a foundation stone; it would be awful if he settled for sententiousness. Fortunately, his artist's killer instinct, his energy, and his brazen charisma all work against it. ■