

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2013 – Review: Hirsch ***

Hungarian-born John Hirsch was orphaned by the Holocaust, and after wandering penniless for three years in post-war Europe wound up in Canada. The gay Jewish refugee found his niche in the theatre, and, despite initially not speaking English, just over a decade later he co-founded the Manitoba Theatre Centre, which became a model for regional theatres across North America, and rose to become one of the country's most influential theatre directors.

Alon Nashman, a Jewish actor from Toronto, gives a spirited, Hungarian-accented performance as the colourful, often abrasive figure, whom he first met as a 13-year-old. The play starts and finishes with Hirsch's Aids-related death in the same city, and covers his spotlight-seeking theatrical exploits, which took in Israel's Habimah Theatre in 1970.

Directed by co-writer Paul Thompson, "Hirsch" makes clever use of simple props, such as a huge white sheet, which, with help from assistant stage manager Shawn Hitchins, doubles as the sea during Hirsch's travels and a chuppah (Jewish marriage canopy) in a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle award-winning production of "The Dybbuk", which Hirsch translated and adapted.

However, as a one-hander, it proves just a bit over-ambitious, and suffers from being rather jerky, over-intense and not particularly emotionally engaging.

Submitted by [Lee Levitt](#)

