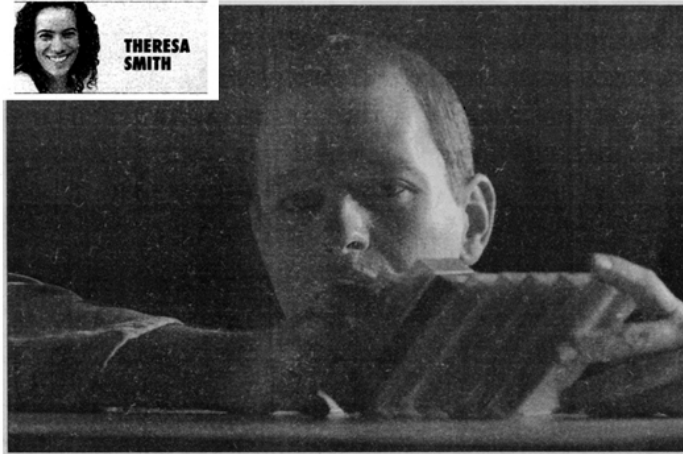


Horovitz digs to get honest



THERESA SMITH



ROY HOROVITZ remembers what it felt like to be a chubby kid, so he empathises with the character he plays in *My First Sony*.

"The scene with the father confronting him with his own image in the mirror... I know this stuff, trying to hide yourself in showers and everything," he said.

The obsessive recording of everything Yotam hears, however, is a trait belonging to the character in the play, not this particular 39-year-old Israeli actor.

Based on Benny Barbash's book of the same name – written as a monologue – the one-man one-act play, adapted by the author, is Yotam remembering some of the more painful moments of his life, including how his parents split and the end of their relationship.

Horovitz has been playing the role for the past 14 years, having originated it when he was looking for work after graduating from Tel Aviv University.

Originally it was done in Hebrew but since he started doing it in English two years ago he has played the role around the world in countries such as Slovakia, Czechoslovakia, Egypt – "there are 5 000 Egyptian students learning Hebrew literature. It took me by surprise. More than in Harvard and Yale and all the universities I did it in the United States" – and Canada and Germany.

He was in Grahamstown for the National Arts Festival, delivering his monologue on the Arena stage and playing Hans in *The Timekeepers* on the main programme.

"I like this mixture which goes for both productions, in some ways heavy stuff, and on the other hand they've got a lot of humour,"

While he identifies with Yotam's body image, he lost about 26kg for the *Timekeepers* role, it being set during the Holocaust.

"Holocaust for us as Jews, Israelis, Hebrew speakers, we are surrounded by it all the time. We learn about it, we know people, it wasn't strange at all."

Before he started working on *The Timekeepers* he directed a play at the Habimah National Theatre which was also Holocaust-themed.

"You don't have to go far in order to find your way to this material," he said.

"It doesn't look to me as ancient history. Also *The Timekeepers* deals with three kinds of victims. One is a Jew, one is a homosexual, the other is a German criminal. There is this question of this gay prisoner which is very relevant to me as well.

"I may say *The Timekeepers* is on one hand a historical play because it is based in Nazi Germany in an actual concentration camp named Sachsenhausen.

"But on the other hand it serves as a metaphor, as a platform for dealing with prejudice. The two main characters have to overcome their own stereotypes and previous judgements towards one another.

"They start off very hostile towards one another and become friends. People here at one post-show discussion said it is very universal. 'It's not about you, it's about us', someone said here.

"I think it's true. You can relate it to any minority, any group or sector of people, and this is what it's all about."

● *The Timekeepers* and *My First Sony* are currently in Port Elizabeth and the former moves to The Theatre on the