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## Review: Hamlet (solo) (The Word Festival)

By [Lucy Eveleigh](#)



I have seen and read [Hamlet](#) many times but it has never been more succinct and clear as it was in this version, which shouldn't be surprising, as [Raoul Bhaneja](#) plays every single part.

Dressed in black upon a black stage with no sound effects and very little lighting he begins by creating the sound of the wind, and we are immediately transported to the graveyard and the eeriness is palpable. From here we move to countless locations and Bhaneja glides effortlessly around the stage, moving seamlessly from character to character with a subtle change in his body or voice.

I found each of the characters detailed to perfection without him making grand choices or running and sweating around the stage. The dialogue was delivered with an ease that allowed the words to do all the work and Bhaneja became the perfect mouth piece for them. It was for the first time today that I realised the power of Shakespeare. You don't need lavish sets or magnificent costumes, accents and wigs – you need Raoul Bhaneja to speak his words with an honesty that doesn't allow you to stop listening to him or watching him.

I loved the little moments of humour he injected into the play, often with just a look. It is incredible to see someone create that relationship with his audience and I felt that we were his scene partner and he never let me down. He never tripped over this huge text, never faltered in his characters and kept up this energetic commitment to this piece that I felt it to be a remarkable feat.

I saw Bhaneja several years ago in one of my favourite plays, [The Domino Heart](#) by Matthew Edison and thought then what a strong performer he was, but to see him performing this whole play by himself was a wonder to behold.

It saddens me that a) the theatre was not full – it should be and it says something to me about the state of Toronto audiences that it was not and b) some people walked out! I have no idea why.

Of course I suppose Hamlet isn't for everyone – but I'm pretty sure that Raoul Bhaneja is.

Details:

[Hamlet \(solo\)](#) is playing at the Word Festival at the Young Centre in the Distillery District (55 Mill St) through November 27th, 2011

Shows run Sunday at 6.30pm

Tickets \$20

Tickets are available by phone 416.866.8666, in person at the box office or visit <http://www.youngcentre.ca/thewordfestival>

*Photo of Raoul Bhaneja by Andrew Kenneth Martin*

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