

Chutzpah! 2006

The Lisa Nemetz Showcase of Jewish Performing Arts

February 25 to March 5, 2006
with the Chutzpah! Plus series from March 6-12

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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From Ethiopia to Israel...with laughs

Once upon a time, in our village in Ethiopia, I saw a white guy. Unbelievable! For me, he was a medical miracle...When I first got to Israel, I saw so many white people, it freaked me out! I remember thinking: "I gotta be sensitive to these whiteys. They're a rare breed. They're a minority...They could easily get sunburned."

- from *It Sounds Better in Amharic*

Vancouver, BC – Chutzpah! welcomes direct from Israel an engaging performer who has been called "the Eddie Murphy of Israel." Ethiopian-born Israeli actor **Yossi Vassa** ingeniously blends storytelling and standup comedy in *It Sounds Better in Amharic*, an entertaining and poignant one-man show that makes its Vancouver debut on the Wosk 2nd Stage at the Jewish Community Centre on **February 26, 27** and **March 1**.

It Sounds Better in Amharic, co-written by Vassa and Shai Ben Attar, is a moving, personal account of a 700 kilometer journey by foot from Ethiopia to a refugee camp in Sudan and then finally, via airlift, to the Holy Land. Vassa shares nostalgic memories of life in Ethiopia mixed with hilarious perspectives on the adjustments that must be made when moving to modern-day Israel.

Vassa, who was born in Northern Ethiopia, was just ten years old when his family was part of Operation Moses, which resettled thousands of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Vassa put himself through school at Haifa University by filming stand-up comedy in Amharic, becoming something of an icon in Israel's Ethiopian community. Vassa was also a regular member of the cast of the weekly TV show, *Am Yisrael Live*, Israel's answer to *Saturday Night Live*. His co-writer, Israeli-born actor/writer/director Shai Ben Attar, is also a scriptwriter for television.

It Sounds Better in Amharic is co-written by Yossi Vassa and Shai Ben Attar, translated by Howard Rypp, with music by Tomer Yosef, and is produced by Israel's Nephesh Theatre. Performances are on Sunday, February 26 at 5pm; Monday, February 27 at 8pm; and Wednesday, March 1 at 8:30pm. All performances take place at the Wosk 2nd Stage in the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver (950 West 41st Ave at Oak).

Designed to celebrate established and emerging professional Jewish artists and their collaborators from around the world, Chutzpah! has earned an admirable reputation for its innovative and eclectic programming.

Now in its sixth year, Chutzpah! continues to present professional local, national and international Jewish artists and their collaborators creating an exciting multi-cultural celebration of music, theatre and dance of the highest calibre. Single tickets for Chutzpah! performances and workshops, which range in price from \$8 to \$25 (Opening Night Gala - \$36), can be purchased by phone (604 257 5145), online at www.chutzpahfestival.com or in person at the JCCGV (950 41st Ave). Chutzpah! Packs, which enable patrons to see four shows of their choice (excluding the VanCity Opening Night Gala) at a discounted price, are also available.

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