

EYE WEEKLY

ART

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RADIO JERUSALEM

Yehuda Amichai, the Israeli poet discovered (i.e. translated into English) by Ted Hughes, died almost five years ago, at the age of 76. Toronto's belated tribute to Amichai came last week, when One Little Goat Theatre company performed two of the poet's radio plays, *The Day Martin Buber Was Buried* and *To Love in Jerausalem*, before an audience of over 100 at the Annex's Al Green Theatre, on May 20.

Both short, half-hour-long pieces were performed in the standard radio play format, with six actors lined up in a row in front of microphones — or at least, six actors and a shofar player, who played the ram's horn instrument with a gleeful and (I think, deliberately) orgasmic pulse throughout *To Love in Jerusalem*, the second and more successful of the two performances.

Martin Buber, an elegy about the famous Israeli philosopher, narrated by his many lovers and punctuated every five minutes by a short loop from Stravinsky's *Orpheus*, felt funereal and a little opaque. More salty and dirty — and therefore much more fun — was *To Love*, about two lovers who like to have sex in churches, mosques and cemeteries. (I guess in today's Israel, you have to get your kicks somewhere.)

In response to the lovers' trysts, the Muslim and Jewish authorities launch a joint investigation, "Operation Desecration," to try to curtail the pair, and what Amichai memorably describes as their "entwined Sabbath loaf of love." (Perhaps it sounds better in Hebrew.) If the recital was an intermittent success — let's say it was performed with a challah-load of love, but for devotees only — it's certainly provoked me (and hopefully others) into learning more about this thoughtful, profane writer.

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