

THEATER REVIEW

Excuse Me, But Your Teeth Are in My Neck

By Neil Genzlinger

‘Son of Drakula’

Dance Theater Workshop

219 West 19th Street, Chelsea

WHOLE ARMIES HAVE BECOME bogged down in the Balkans, so it was probably inevitable that David Drake would suffer the same fate in his otherwise terrific new one-man show, “Son of Drakula,” which opened last night at Dance Theater Workshop.

Mr. Drake, whose résumé includes “The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me,” here embarks on a genealogical search. He was born David Drakula and goes to inordinate lengths to find out how he is connected to either Bram Stoker’s fictional Dracula or the 15th-century East European warlord Vlad Dracula, known as Vlad the Impaler. Family members used to emphasize the pronunciation dra-COOL-a, “as if,” Mr. Drake says, “by pushing down hard on that middle syllable we could push ourselves away from those European roots.”

In a dazzling, inventive first act, Mr. Drake recounts his trip to the World Dracula Congress in Transylvania, using vocal acrobatics to bring to life the people he encountered. A sequence in which Mr. Drake relates snippets from the speeches at the conference (“Bitten by the Byte: Vampires on the Net”) is knockout hilarious.

Mr. Drake also weaves in glimpses of his childhood. His emerging sexuality is part of that, but this is not a gay play. It is, rather, a search for identity in all its meanings.

The second act finds him visiting a Croatian family that shares his unusual name, and here his ear begins to fail; the tale becomes meandering. But the first act makes the second forgivable, and Mark T. Simpson’s eye-catching set and lighting enhance it all nicely.