



## The joy of intimate theater with Echo's *The Thin Place*.

The intimacy of Echo Theatre Company's production of [The Thin Place](#) begins before you even enter the theater.

An usher approaches you with a small piece of paper and a pencil. You're encouraged to put down the name of a loved one that's passed on. You're assured this name won't be used in the production but that it'll be placed onstage so they can carry that name with them.

It's a clever way to prime the audience for the space they're about to enter, which feels a bit like a warmly lit Victorian parlor. There's an altar of sorts at one end with some pillar candles. On the other end, two comfy wing chairs. The audience is split into two seating sections that face one another across the playing space, promenade style. The audience finds itself gazing at itself across the playing space — a bit like observing the other guests across a dinner table.

The real intimacy begins when actor Caitlin Zambino meets playwright Lucas Hnath's words. Ms. Zambino plays Hilda, who's our narrator and storyteller for the evening. She begins by disarmingly addressing us as if we're friends she's gathered to tell about her special bond with her grandmother. It feels so casual that the play sort of sneaks up on you and you're deep into it before you really realize what's happened.

We go from Hilda's story of her grandmother to meeting Linda who's something of a British medium. Before we know it Linda is calling up the names of the spirits who are speaking to her. It's something of a seance.

It might be useful here to know that the playwright has dedicated the play, in part, to the memory of the late magician and raconteur of the con Ricky Jay.

What starts as a seance transforms into something more complex, and like Lucas Hnath's other plays, what's on the surface is simply the door to calling up the spirits of our political climate, white guilt, and how we all manipulate one another.

The cast of four is pitch-perfect, but it's really Ms. Zambino who carries us through the evening. There's so much subtlety and simplicity in her connection with the text and the audience that she's worth the trip to Atwater Village.

*The Thin Place* is a beautiful example of what makes LA's intimate theater so special — seeing great theater in a small theater. Grab some friends and plan to grab some wine after the show to call up your own spirits.

[The Thin Place](#) plays at the Echo Theatre Company in Atwater Village through April 24th.

This is Anthony Byrnes Opening the Curtain on LA Theater for KCRW.