

# Missing without trace



## THEATRE

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### *Sky*

MANY Jewish survivors of the Holocaust would identify strongly with the despair of a person confronted by the likelihood of a relative's death, but tortured by the uncertainty of not knowing what has happened to the loved one.

Actor Henry Szeps stars in John Misto's one-person play, *Sky*, at the Universal Theatre, as the distraught father of a missing pilot.

Szeps plays Rocco Bettoni, whose son has gone missing in a light plane over the sea. The circumstances of the disappearance are mysterious with young Frank transmitting a description of an unidenti-

transmitting a description of an unidentified craft hovering around him before he goes "off air."

Rocco is harrassed by an unscrupulous media invading his family's privacy and outraged by a government bureaucracy frustrating his inquiries. Following suggestions that Frank has been taken by a UFO, Rocco embarks on a fruitless search for answers until obsession, grief and guilt — represented by the vulture clawing at his heart — lead him into madness.

An actor with many roles to his credit, Szeps is best known as the selfish brother in ABC TV's *Mother and Son*.

*Sky* opened in Melbourne last week following a successful season at Sydney's Ensemble Theatre and Szeps hits the ground running with a performance of both passion and finesse.

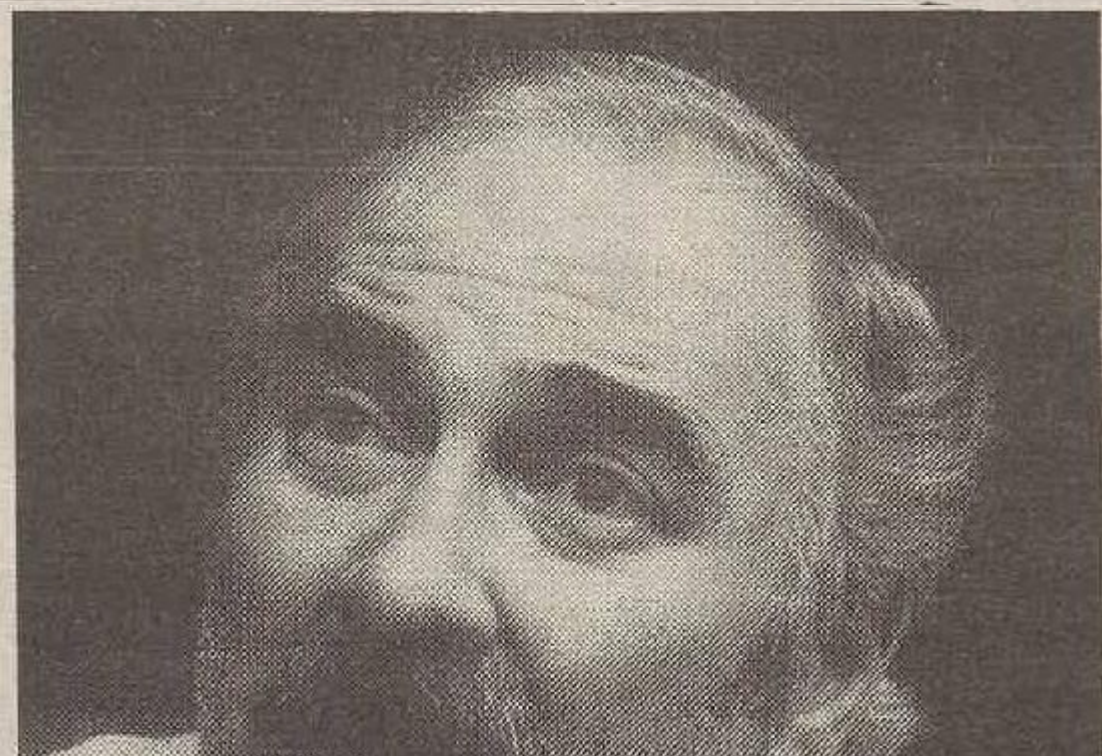
On opening night, he raced the dialogue in spots and his Italian accent was inconsistent. But these are minor quibbles with a large performance which was still convincing throughout as it careered from one emotion to another, through bewilderment, humour, grief and anger. Szeps gives his heart to this play and to his audience.

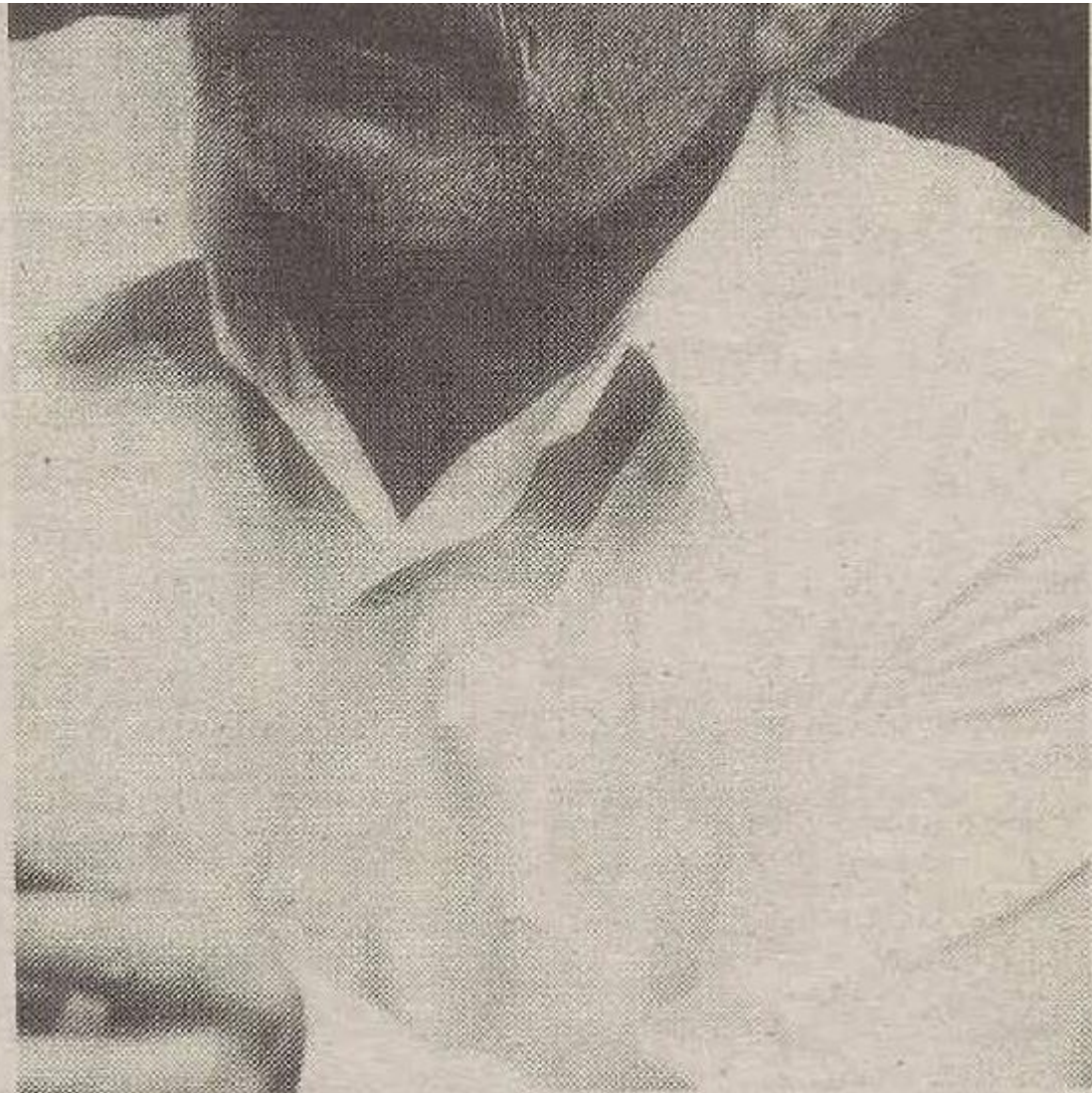
Although the story of *Sky* has similar-

Although the story of *Sky* has similarities to an actual disappearance over Bass Strait in 1978, the production explores the trauma caused when a loved one goes missing.

Misto says his interest in this subject stemmed from the disappearance of relatives in Beirut with whom he had corresponded for years.

Two hours of this maudlin subject would weigh heavily on an audience, but for the considerable humour as Bettoni relives his distress. Some of it has an inappropriate stand-up comedy quality. The play would benefit from cuts in the second half of Act I as Rocco's sustained sorrow and obsession threaten to blanket what is





**Henry Szeps in *Sky*.**

overall a very entertaining and warm theatrical experience.

Misto's writing is natural and witty, with moments of poetry to boot, and Szeps delivers it accordingly to resounding applause.

*Mark Boral*