

Edinburgh Fringe 2015 Review: Institute

Gecko's surreal production impresses [Amy Wong](#) thanks to its imaginative staging and flawless choreography

Thursday 3 September 2015



★★★★☆

Venue: Pleasance Courtyard

Gecko's *Institute* is a bold piece of physical theatre about dependency, fear of rejection and the pressure that accompanies other people's expectations. It's a beautifully choreographed production that's executed with meticulous precision by the show's four actors (Chris Evans, Amit Lahav, Ryen Perkins-Gangnes and François Testory as Daniel, Martin, Carl and Louis respectively) and technical crew. The sound effects and lights used to add a comic touch or heighten the tension at various moments throughout the show are triggered with perfect timing - *Institute* is a highly polished yet surreal production.

The staging is wonderfully atmospheric and perfectly conveys the clinically corporate environment in which the characters struggle. The filing cabinets surrounding the centre of the stage create an imposing circle of industrial browns and greys. The cabinet drawers are used imaginatively during the show. The actors pull them out to reveal different settings including a restaurant in which Martin meets his girlfriend Margaret. In another scene, Daniel opens a drawer and a collection of audio files revealing his crippling self-doubt play automatically.

The most impressive thing about *Institute* is how effortless the cast's performances seem. A sequence in

which Evans, Perkins-Gangnes and Testory collectively suggest the form of a woman with just a pink hat, a red shoe and a purple glove is seamlessly executed. A scene in which Martin becomes the puppet of the other characters who control his movements with sticks is also handled with dexterity. Another scene which sees one of the actors appear to fall through the floor is another highlight.

Institute spends a lot of time treading an uneasy line between funny and disturbing, but this ambiguity is one of the show's greatest strengths as the characters' ability to separate reality from fiction is cast into doubt. Unfortunately, *Institute* does lose its way a little towards the end and would benefit from having a slightly shorter running time. However, the show has a powerful climax and is ultimately a beguiling, unique and thought-provoking piece of theatre.



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