



Review - The Overcoat

Date Reviewed: 6th March, 2009

Director Amit Lahav has adapted Gogol's [The Overcoat](#) for [Gecko](#)'s latest stage production. The narrative is explored more via the movement than the dialogue (which is a mix of French, Italian and English).



Clerk, Akakki wakes from a restless sleep to face a real nightmare: his working day. He and his colleagues scurry around their office like lab rats, trying to attract the approval of their supervisor. They are motivated by the chance to win a luxurious overcoat which hangs over the stage. Akakki hopes that acquiring the garment will gain him the affections of Natalie and, when it looks unlikely that he will win the coat, he begins to consider an offer from a demonic tailor.

Gogol went so far as to include elements of ghost stories in the original tale but no humour. One of the striking features of Gecko's production is that, although the tale might be perceived on paper as grim, their telling of it has a real sense of fun. There are moments of inspired silliness, such as, when a clerk is promoted he literally rises above his peers as his desk is raised on hidden springs. After donning the overcoat Akakki bursts into a Las Vegas style version of "From Rags to Riches." Proof that Gecko is a company that seek to entertain rather than simply impress their audience and their enthusiasm is infectious throughout.

The performances are also very impressive from the seven strong company (Natalie Ayton, Amit Lahav, Robert Luckay, Dave Price, Francois Testory, Sirena Tacco and Tom Wu). Together, they convey the claustrophobia and tension of the daily commute. The dancing covers a range of styles but also imaginative examples of staging including Akakki walking down a wall as if the coat has given him magical abilities.

Ti Green's slate-grey set conveys the dull workplace as well as the barren inner life of the protagonist. James Francombe's imaginative lighting ironically covers the supervisor in a golden glow whilst a glowering red suggests that Akakki is striding into hell. The music by Dave Price not only provides a rhythm for the dancing but also a disconcerting reflection of Akakki's confused state of mind.

The sense of humanity and humour which Gecko brings to the original tale enhance its power and provide a moving and very entertaining evening.

-Dave Cunningham