

Gecko

Resource Pack



Photo of *Institute* by Richard Haughton

Introduction

This resource pack has been created for students and teachers who wish to find out more about Gecko and our work.

The questions have come from students and teachers.

The answers have come directly from Artistic Director Amit Lahav and members of the company.

You will find information on:

- The company and its performance style
- The audience experience
- Physical Theatre and Total Theatre
- The creative and development process
- Performing with Gecko

Visit the website at www.geckotheatre.com where you can:

- Find out even more about the company by exploring biographies and interviews with the team
- Download the text of each interview
- Watch past Gecko shows in their entirety
- Find productions photographs and trailers from all Gecko productions

Overview

Amit Lahav



Photo of *Institute* by Richard Houghton

Who are Gecko and what do you do?

We make theatre that is visual, visceral and ambitious, and we always aim to create world-class work that inspires, moves and entertains our audiences. Gecko was founded in 2001, and is now an award winning and internationally acclaimed company. With our expanding ensemble of international performers and makers, we create work through collaboration, experimentation and play. We have taken part in theatre and dance festivals all over the world from Bogota to Beijing; we have performed extensively across the UK on the national touring network and an original work for BBC TV in 2015.

The company is truly international, comprising artists, technicians and office staff from England, Ireland, Canada, France, USA, Colombia, Australia and more.

Why is the company called Gecko?

We wanted something that was international and something that implied energy. At that time we were doing a lot of flying on stage and climbing up walls.

What is your trademark style of performance?

We perform very physical, epic pieces, which highlight the complexity of human nature. I have now spent 12 years making work, developing a style of exploring physicality on stage. This style is very athletic and honestly emotional. We use the breath as an anchor for all exploration.

How would you define physical theatre?

Physical theatre usually involves more of a focus on movement, imagery and diversity in performance styles. We use very little text to make our work but the piece is 'written' and 'storyboarded' like any other piece - we just use different visual styles to explore our themes and characters in the rehearsal room. For us, it's about using whatever tools we have as performers, designers and writers to bring these powerful moments to life. In the modern industry; movement, puppetry, imagery is incorporated into work across the board. The RSC regularly uses 'physical theatre' - perhaps the term is becoming less and less important. Maybe we are all just making theatre to the best of our unique individual ability?

When did you first encounter physical theatre?

I made theatre with street children in South East Asia, and our shared language was physical, visual and expressive. We had no shared spoken language or cultural reference, therefore I realised this was the kind of expression I wanted to explore in my own work.

Each performance involves so many different elements choreography, scenography, puppetry, design, lighting, sound. How do these evolve through the creative process?

We never consider these elements to be individual, they are simply part of the whole. Each element develops simultaneously throughout the rehearsal process to ensure an organic coherence in the final production.

Where do you get your inspiration?

We find inspiration for our work all around us, in our personal lives, in the news, politics and in relationships we have with our friends and family. We work with human nature as a starting point, real complex human emotion and situations.

What are Gecko's main influences?

I pushed myself to work with visionary theatre makers – people like David Glass, Stephen Berkoff, Lindsay Kemp and Ken Campbell. I worked with these people and I discovered that what infected me the most was their passion, and the way they threw themselves into their world.

When I started the company, this gave me a license to be confident. I didn't become influenced by any one singular person, or any one singular style, I just had a burning desire to make work and to express myself. I am influenced by everything I see and everything I experience – the relationships in my life, by film, theatre, dance; I think that I'm influenced all the time so I could definitely not say any one particular thing.

Gecko use a wide range of language in their shows, what is the significance of this for you?

I've never been interested in using English and language as the main form of communication between the pieces and the audience. However, I am fascinated by the use of voice in performers and I wouldn't ever want to make a show where performers couldn't use their voice. I love language so having international performers who can use their own languages, and for there to be numerous languages on stage, has become something that works very well for Gecko. It's clear to the audience if there are several languages on stage that there is no one spoken language of the show, and that sort of disarms a certain part of the brain which is craving that sort of communication, therefore enabling audience members to engage in a more musical way and allowing the piece to become more visceral, so that they can interpret the show personally. The use of language in shows is about the pleasure of hearing voices, rather than an intellectual process. Movement and voice come from the same place - and both drive intention.

Given that your performances do not have the rigid structure of a script, do they change from one show to the other?

They don't change fundamentally, in the same way that a scripted piece of theatre doesn't change. However, because the potential for interpretation is much broader, the flavour and atmosphere can be radically altered - rather like a band feeding off an excited audience.



Photo of *Taylor's Dummies* by Nick Gurney

Gecko Productions



Photo of *The Time of your Life* by Richard Haughton

2003 ***Taylor's Dummies***

[click here to watch the full show](#)

A chance encounter with a mysterious woman throws Taylor's world into turmoil. Eloquently crafted to music, *Taylor's Dummies* plumbs the depths of male desire, through a series of visual scenes that are both stunning and deeply emotional. Sharp suited performers walk up walls and fly through the air, life-sized dummies come to life, and a baby doll sings 'Fly Me to the Moon'.

2005 ***The Race***

[click here to watch the full show](#)

One man is on a collision course with his future, sprinting to the most important moment of his life. But will he be ready? What will he feel the moment he sees his child's eyes?

Visually stunning and astoundingly athletic, barely pausing for breath this show chronicles a man trying to reconnect his feelings and truly live. *The Race* is a whirl of masterful movement, vivid colour and emotive music.

2007 ***The Arab and The Jew***

[click here to watch the full show](#)

We have seen our fathers shouting and waving their arms in the air. We have watched from a distance and hidden from the news.

Allel Nedjari and Amit Lahav grew up on opposite sides of the Arab-Israeli divide. Here they celebrate their brotherhood and laugh and cry at their reflections. *The Arab and The Jew* is both a riot of sound, image and movement and an ambitious dance of reason and reconciliation.

2009 ***The Overcoat***

[click here to watch the full show](#)

Get the coat, get the girl, change the world!

In a futile government department reminiscent of Chaplin's 'Modern Times', Akakki falls in love with the beautiful Natalia. His feelings for her are not returned; this drives him to be the best and win the ultimate office prize – the overcoat. But how far is Akakki willing to go? And at what cost?

Inspired by Gogol's short story, *The Overcoat* creates an intoxicating world where a man's thoughts and dreams spill out into everyday life...

2012 ***Missing***

[click here to watch the trailer](#)

Missing is a deliciously warped journey into the depths of the human psyche. Follow Lily, a woman whose soul appears to be decaying. She is very successful in life and love but something is missing...

Amit Lahav's production invites the audience to experience a series of extraordinary images, jaw-dropping choreography and a tantalizing multilingual vocal landscape. The shadows of Lily's past invite her, along with each audience member, to consider how far they have strayed from who they are and where they come from.

2013 ***Institute***

[click here to watch the trailer](#)

What does it mean to care for one another in a busy world of high-pressure targets and expectations? What does it mean to lose everything and everyone? Where do you turn?

Four male performers, portray four very familiar human beings, each driven by a desire to care and be cared for.

2015 ***The Time of Your Life***

[click here to watch the full show](#)

An original, 30-minute live performance by Gecko created especially for *On Stage: Live from Television Centre*, which was broadcast on BBC Four on Sunday 15th November, 2015.

The Time of Your Life has an ordinary man at its heart. Desperate to feel different and to find a real human connection in a world consumed by social networks and mass advertising, the man embarks on a journey through rooms representing different milestones in his life. The rooms are transformed using powerful visual effects to create an increasingly vivid world for the viewer that disintegrates as quickly as it appears.

The Audience

Amit Lahav

For someone who has never seen Gecko's work, how would you describe what the audience will see?

When you come and see a Gecko show, you sort of fall into a dream – or a nightmare, depending on your relationship to your own dreams and nightmares. This is a very imaginative world, which is full of contrasts. Every part of the show is like a painting: it's very beautiful, and each moment is crafted very carefully so you never really know what's going to happen next. There are always tricks; things that will emerge from unexpected places. Someone could fly, so there's a surprising element. Often there's a scary element, because it's dark and the shows are a reflection – and a comment – on life. Beautiful does not necessarily mean pretty. We might explore how ugly a person can be, and that in itself can be a beautiful thing to see.

These elements are there really to take the audience to another dimension. I think every part of the show is an invitation that says 'I invite you to re-imagine the world'... Hopefully the audience can accept that invitation and we can fly, for the duration of the performance and beyond.

You strive to make your work 'wide open to interpretation'. How do the public give you their feedback?

A Gecko show is visual, visceral, ambitious theatre crafted to inspire, move and entertain. The audience is right at the heart of the narrative.

We love to meet our audiences, because they are the final authors of the work. We hold a post show discussion with our audience during every run. We are always fascinated to hear their questions and comments. We are very close to our audiences not only in UK but also all over the world via our social media accounts.

A show continues to develop whilst on tour. How exactly does this process work?

I liken this process to that of a touring music group; as we understand the music more through playing, we realise that certain aspects need to be tighter and other parts need more space. So occasionally I shorten a scene, change the music or adapt the lights as we understand the composition.

Does that mean that people might see a very different show, depending on when or where they see it?

Yes, but also people seeing the show on the same night can have incredibly varied experiences also.

Physical Theatre and Total Theatre

Amit Lahav



Photo of *The Arab and The Jew* by Ed Collier

What is, for you, the difference between dance and physical theatre?

I think the difference is a lot to do with expectation, and by that I am revealing that there is no difference in my mind - I don't think about the distinction. However, with physical theatre the process can lead you on a journey and into a world of symbolism more intrinsically than dance does. With the unfolding of a narrative in physical theatre you're more bound by the rigours of construction.

What is your relationship with physical theatre and when did it first interest you?

All I know is the theatre that I make, I don't have any other way of expressing myself – the fact that it happens to be globally called physical theatre never really crosses my mind. I suppose one way I could express this is to say that I am committed to finding ways to engage people imaginatively without the use of text – this means that all ideas I have pass through the lens of Gecko theatre, which happens to be called physical theatre.

Do you think that physical theatre is still seen as a serious art form?

Of course. Physical theatre and dance are as valid as any other form of expression. For us, they are the only way to make work. It is essential that the artistic community continues to redefine the boundaries of performance as we compete with YouTube and TV and a world of instantaneous, quick-fix entertainment.

How is physical theatre received by UK audiences today?

Our audiences across the world are always very intelligent, open-minded people who are seeking entertainment and want to see something special. Physical theatre is extremely popular in the UK, other companies like Frantic Assembly, DV8 and Complicite are also hugely successful all over the world. We all use our own forms of 'physical theatre', we are very different companies but that is advantageous for audiences, the variety of entertainment is important. We want to be part of a diverse theatrical community.

What role does music play in a Gecko show?

You could describe a Gecko show as a totally rhythmical experience in that I feel the shows sonically, but actually it's more than what you hear; I think I feel the shows as rhythm from quite early on. I have a sense of how I want the audience to experience the show to start with, is it that it comes in very fast and your ripped into the show and then there's a part which is much softer, that will call upon us in a certain way. I feel the shows very rhythmically, almost like I'm a musician with the shows, the tempo, the feeling of the movement, the feeling of how things come on stage, all have to have a musicality to them. That just gives you a sense of how important the musicality of the show is, actually music and sound scape and those elements have to support, extend, stretch, surprise the audience, all to that one purpose, which is to call peoples imagination to open up. The music is very important and I have a strong sense of what music works for the show and what music doesn't. I have a long-standing collaboration with Dave Price who composes new music for the show and who offers up existing music when we're trying to feel our way into the world of the shows. It's central, it's like a script; the music is like a script for me, it's fundamental.

Gecko has been praised for their use of TOTAL THEATRE. Could you explain what this term means to you and why it is central to Gecko's work?

The difference to more traditional types of theatre might be a synthesis of multidisciplinary forms and a collaborative/ensemble process between actors, writers directors and production team.

Gecko's style is holistic, meaning that all its parts are only explicable as a whole. There are five main devices operating at the same level – choreography, lighting, sound, design and 'performing style' (of each performer). These all have totally equal responsibility in telling the story. I suppose Gecko's most powerful storytelling 'device' is the ability to pull all these elements together in every single moment of a show.

Our style is something that requires the whole of a person's expression. Of physicality, the mental approach, the imaginative approach, spiritual approach, emotional approach and it's the bringing together of all of those things so that all engines are turning the same revs at the same time, altogether.

Gecko has a very distinctive visual language and style – How have you developed and cultivated this?

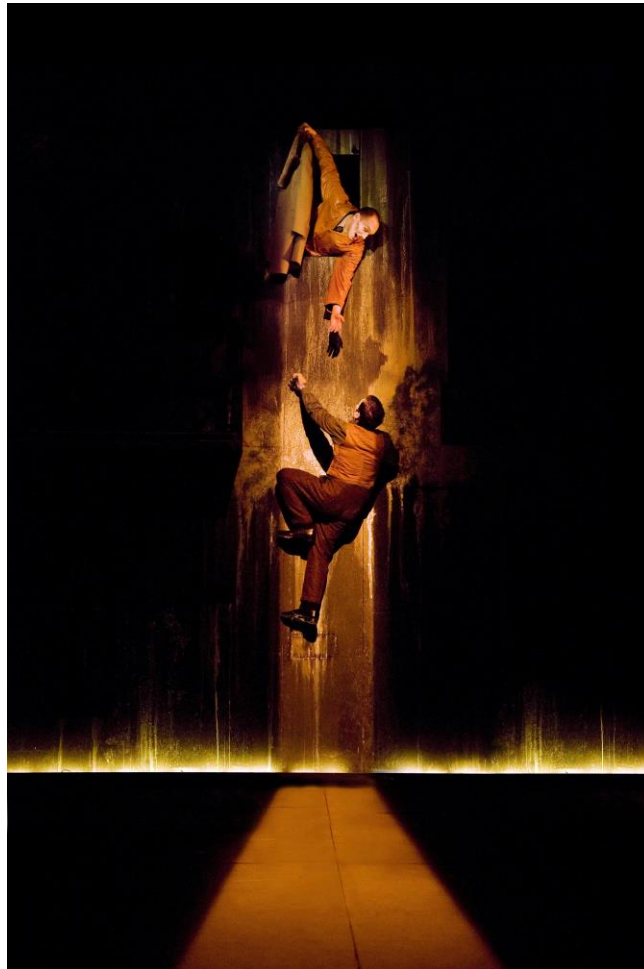


Photo of *The Overcoat* by Richard Houghton

It's been a very personal voyage, a very genuine relationship between me and how I see the world; plus all the experiences I have had as a freelance theatre maker; plus a constant willingness to listen and share. The fact I don't hear in my right ear also plays a part in this – I focus much more on an individual's body language therefore. The single experience that had the most significant personal impact on me would be the 4 years I spent in Southeast Asia making theatre with disenfranchised young people.

Performers often control, operate and manipulate scenic elements in your productions. How early in the creation process do you begin to think about the scenic design?

Very early. If I have a feeling about something scenic as the very first idea, I'm happy with that. If it comes later, I'm also happy with that. Any of the five core elements (above) can materialise at any time in the process.

How would you best describe the working relationship between the artistic director and performers with the designers of a Gecko production?

It's an incredibly organic process, woven around a simple timeline structure. Within that basic timeline there is an enormous potential for the piece to grow organically with all performers and makers contributing. The process is very singularly led by me, but simultaneously very collaborative!

How do you ensure that the design elements of a production all contribute to the storytelling process?

I try to bring design elements into the studio as early as possible to test out both their practical and metaphorical potential. Nothing that is designed is purely aesthetic – everything is functional.

What is the most difficult element of the creative process?

Making a Gecko show is an extremely difficult process... it's difficult to say which aspect is more difficult than others because it truly is an organic process that requires care on every single level. Because you are building up all elements of the show at the same time, you can't really take your eye off any one aspect.

For the technical stuff to be right, one has to work endlessly again and again on the functionality of the show, moving a screen at exactly the time that you are moving a person and a chair and a light. There's a painstaking quality to that, it instantly moves out of the realm of being technical and becomes poetic. Those functional things drift into the realm of poetry, and the things that you imagine to be poetic, like some of the movements, become very technical because you want them to have a precision to them. The composition of everything is a very difficult element. Having one singular idea is great, and you can really work up that singular idea. But actually bringing all of the ideas together and having a whole meaning or a sense that there is a composition to it is probably the thing that takes the longest and therefore is the most difficult.

If I had to pick one specific aspect that was particularly difficult I would say it's the poetic, transformative parts of the show, which have personal meaning for each and every member of the audience. When I find those usually quite metaphorical ideas, I always have a feeling that this is going to be something that will be broadly interpreted, and if it sits within the show then those things are real gold. Thinking about a puppet is one example; with a puppet you tend to either take the puppet and it becomes a very emotional, personal thing about you as child - or you can think in a conceptual way about it and it becomes something that has a meaning to do with the world and to do with innocence. That's one example of how a transformative idea can work.

The Gecko Process

Amit Lahav

The process for all the shows I have made starts by allowing the initial thoughts and ideas, scenes, characters - whatever these might be - to emerge. This process can take a long time and you have to be patient. You have to be alert and ready to pick up the 'emails' as your brain sends them through.

At a certain time you have to organise these ideas, to try to understand the value of what they are. These ideas slowly build up to something, slamming together when you have no idea what the result will be but they will always take you on another journey.

The final concept can take a long time to come together, once it has we will then start creating and designing the physical and technical elements associated with all Gecko shows.

Then it has to be tested out with an audience. We don't think 'let's put it together and just see how it is to play in front of an audience'; it's much more significant than that. The audience is as important as any element of the show, like a character, a performer or the lighting... and their response instantly changes what the show is.



Photo of *Missing* by Robert Golden

Because of the long process, everything is an influence in some way - so many things can impact on the process. It's a little bit like standing in front of a blank canvas, you might have an initial idea, then you might read a book or watch a film, you might have an argument or have a dream, or something else might encourage you to think 'there needs to be a chair in the painting'. When you add in the chair you realise that the table no longer works so the focus becomes about a coat stand, which then needs a coat to bring the coat stand towards the chair. The same concept applies when we're creating a production; we start with a blank canvas.

Everything happens together. It's not like a conventional theatre process where somebody is in a rehearsal room with a script and then they add the lights. All the various elements have to happen together, so those things are being thought about from the very first day.

For me, the main language for the audience is not words. Language comes from the same place as movement; it is an emotional vehicle but it is not the only means by which the audience understands the storyline. It is visual language which interests me more.

As with all Gecko shows, the first performance represents a new start and trajectory for the piece. I find it almost impossible to know a show until the audience interacts with it.



Photo of *The Arab and The Jew* by Jamie Gramston

The Development Process

Associate Director Richard Rusk

The idea; Amit dreams up 'the seed' of a new show, for example;

The Arab and the Jew: How does AI feel about his 'Arab-ness' and Amit about his 'Israeli-ness'. How do we feel about each other?

Missing: A woman with a decaying soul, a missing child and a scientist who is fascinated by the human soul.

Institute: We are entering a time in which we are potentially more fractured and disconnected from one another than ever before. Are we losing our ability to read each other and therefore protect and care for one another? Is it too late to care?

How these 'seeds' arrive varies from one piece to the next: they become the catalyst for new ideas and images and as subsequent investigations unfold the central idea can and will shift. The Race started as a piece about servicing one's life and ended up being a piece which explored pending fatherhood. Initial ideas are tested out physically and this often happens as part of Gecko residencies or workshops with students. These themes are then explored with Gecko performers.



Photo of *Missing* by Robert Golden

Missing grew out of a residency with Kanopy Dance Company in America and we happened upon some central ideas; the idea of a woman with a decaying soul, a missing child, and a scientist who's trying to understand a human soul in a scientific way. Over time it's like bouncing down the sides of a funnel where you get more and more focused into a singular point of intensity, exploration and focus. The scientist and the child dropped away a little bit

and got pulled into being something to do with the woman with the decaying soul, and some notion to do with her as a child, having gotten lost somehow. Following one's instincts is central to how all shows begin.

Development of new ideas

Amit then reacts to the early exploration with new ideas and images, new starting points for investigation, possibly a new seed, music ideas arriving from physical discoveries, music ideas to stimulate new movement discoveries, early structural/design thoughts. An explosion of ideas will emerge in this time. Testing a draft sequence will involve putting a run or sequence of ideas together, possibly with some early structural apparatus (e.g. a wall). This test will give a sense of what the world might be. Creating the 'world', Amit will try to hone in what the world of the piece is.

For example:

- **Taylor's Dummies:** Inside Taylor's head, underground jazz worlds emerge, dingy home existence, sparse and empty, in this show Taylor played by three men encapsulates the world).
- **Missing:** Lily has an internal world which is full of her past that she somehow has denied, and in fact has rejected. The idea is that you can't ever really completely disguise or lose that, to the extent that her past, and the emotions contained within her past, explode out of her, almost like they exist as creatures themselves that want to live and not be suppressed.
- **Institute:** An incredibly organised and yet strange treatment world, where you have patients that need to be cared for, and people who have authority over them but who clearly also need to be cared for.

Working up a draft storyboard

Amit will make a 'flag in the sand' storyboard. There will be ideas which sit obviously next to each other, and there will be elements that seem very disconnected but Amit will have an instinct to test out.

First draft of the show

This process could take two weeks. Ideas are improvised, choreographed, rehearsed and transitions created. A first draft sound world will also be in place at this stage. Work will continue on the storyboard throughout this process, and will continue for the weeks that follow as Amit reflects on the various outcomes and discoveries made.

Second draft of the show

A new storyboard is created and a two or three week process will lead to another version of the piece. This version is often very different from the first; most of the material will be different and the sense of the world, the concept and the feel of the piece will have

changed. This version will have a full lighting journey throughout it and there will be at least three performances for audiences who are seeing a work in progress.

Third draft of the show

An adaptation of the second draft will follow soon after. The company will have two weeks to disassemble the show and remake it. The technical world of the show will change extensively, but the concept, feel, design of the show will clearly mark it as an adaptation.

Developing a version to tour

The process of making a version of the show for touring will take many months of reflection by Amit and in this time he will re-write the show. He will have an absolute understanding of the world of the piece and therefore all of its elements will flow clearly and a new storyboard will be created. A design will be worked up and most of the large or complicated elements of the show will be built in preparation for a rehearsal process.

The company will spend four to six weeks creating the new show which will have little surviving material from the previous version; four weeks to build the physical aspects of the show in a space, and to create and choreograph the material, and two weeks for technical work on a full equipped theatre stage with all of the light and sound elements of the show.



This process will take us right up until an opening night. Further adaptations will emerge during the first tour.

Further development

It is possible after extensive touring and another period of time in a rehearsal space for a further version to emerge, but this is dependent on Amit's satisfaction with how the show has developed, grown and settled down.

In a sense, the show is never made, and work continues on the piece for the duration of its life, although at a less and less dramatic rate over time.

Photo of *Missing* by Richard Haughton

Performing with Gecko

Amit Lahav and two of Gecko's devising performers
Anna Finkel & Chris Evans



Photo of *The Time of your Life* by Richard Haughton

What input does the cast have on a show?

AL: When casting the show we tend to look for certain qualities and an openness that suits the Gecko working process. Qualities include bold, physical expressiveness and experience of working across art forms, such as dance/theatre/circus. Often performers come by recommendation from trusted friends and colleagues.

Each performer brings different ideas and strengths to the room and sometimes it's a case of drawing on these. At other times I will have a very clear idea of where a scene/sequence needs to go and will guide the performers to that point. Often performers will be asked to offer something up based on what the scene could be and then this will be expanded and moulded into what is right for the piece.

Describe a normal rehearsal day

AL: The performers need to be connected to each other and they need to be able to produce fantastic, profound work. That doesn't just happen by entering a room and starting. We will spend an hour, sometimes two hours, getting the performers into a certain place

where they are absolutely on green in terms of being alert and able to respond and produce a phenomenal movement. Sometimes that movement is about how they respond to each other and what they give to each other. A lot of the preparation is making the performers be in a certain state of readiness, to give, to receive, to respond, and to be freely instinctive about what they are doing. A lot of Gecko work comes from an instinctive place, and that doesn't just happen when you walk into the room; you need to do a lot of preparation to be ready to do that.

How physically rigorous are your shows and what training do you follow?

AL: The shows are very athletic: they are demanding both physically and emotionally. We spend a substantial amount of time training in all ways to prepare for performances - this involves yoga, fitness, meditation and sport. The shows require the precision of a musician in an orchestra and the aggression of a boxer!

Why is experimenting with different types of theatre important for so many actors today? And what makes it different to traditional types of theatre?

AL: For a performer, experimentation, making discoveries, finding out what excites or means something to you and experiencing and engaging in different types of theatre, will broaden your theatre practice vocabulary and creative possibilities. This can give performers a sense of ownership of both their practice and creating ideas, which contributes to collaboration and an organic process of making a show.

The difference to more traditional types of theatre might be a synthesis of multidisciplinary forms and a collaborative/ensemble process between actors, writers, directors and production team.



Photo of *The Time of your Life* by Richard Haughton

Gecko are described as a Physical Theatre company – in practice is that a very different experience from working with a dance company?

From A London Dance interview with Anna Finkel and Chris Evans;

AF: With Gecko, the creative process involves a lot of rapid fire devising. We will be given an idea about a scene and have 20 minutes or so to work something out, then we move on to another scene. A key difference for me is that in dance we tend to work with a high amount of detail right from the beginning of making movement. With Gecko, the emphasis is more on broad brush strokes that help us getting a feel for a scene or movement vocabulary. The process then involves putting those scenes together one after the other and adjust them as they create the narrative and carry the story through. The movement is less fundamental than with any dance work I've done. It carries less weight, so when performing a scene I am more preoccupied with what is being communicated and that's where my focus lies.

CE: Essentially they are the same. The main difference I've found is that physical theatre can carve the audience attention in a wider range of ways. Somehow I watch dance differently to theatre, sort of like watching a film with subtitles. There is an attention shift with dance that physical theatre is able to hold onto.

What do you most enjoy about performing with Gecko?

AF: The dense, emotional nature of *Missing* means there are a multitude of new things to discover each time we perform it. The style of the work requires the performer to go fully into the emotions that are being portrayed. If, for example, one night the sentiment of anger is softer, it will have a whole series of repercussions on how you play the rest of the show. It's beautiful to be constantly discovering. Amit Lahav truly practices the theory that a show is never finished. He makes changes to the show daily – and given that some of them are pretty major, juggling scenes around is not uncommon. On top of this, he is always encouraging us to go deeper into the story – asking us to communicate our feelings fully.

CE: Whether physically, emotionally or technically, this piece has so many moments requiring precision. I really enjoy the level of attention that's needed. It's fun having to leave a scene as a performer, and come back the next second as a techie.

How has your training and experience to date prepared you for your work with Gecko?

CE: I trained at London Contemporary Dance School. It was a course that allowed you to squeeze it for all it was worth and gain opportunities; at the same time, you could also just get by and pass. For this reason it was a good boot camp, and made sure you knew if you loved dance or not.

AF: I trained at The School of Toronto Dance Theatre in Canada. It's such a fantastic school and I have been singing its praises ever since I graduated. The strength of the training lies in the competence of the teachers, of the artistic director Pat Fraser, and in the varied schedule and the small classes. We were 24 in my year and 12 by the end of third year so there was a lot of personal attention and care. Our schedule was different every week to

accommodate a host of visiting teachers in different disciplines. We had strong technique training of Graham-based technique and or contemporary barre/ballet every day. The focus was on being in the creative process and performing so for the most part our afternoons were spent working with external choreographers making pieces. We performed full shows at least twice a year. I can't big it up enough!

<http://londondance.com/articles/interviews/anna-finkel-chris-evans/>



Photo of *The Race* by Neil Hanna