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THEATRE

Playing around with a modern groove

GAFF AFF

Opera House, October 18

Until October 24

Reviewed by Jason Blake

FROM Zurich in Switzerland, Martin Zimmerman and Dimitri de Perrot bring us an inspired blend of physical comedy and avant-garde DJ-ing.

Gaff Aff is Swiss-German slang for "staring at the monkey". The said monkey is a grey-suited, briefcase-toting office drone (the rubber-limbed, hatchet-faced Zimmerman) who alternately spins with or against the world, represented here as a merry-go-round-cum-gigantic record player whose changes of speed and direction mirror the feats of turntable trickery by de Perrot.

Gaff Aff begins as the audience

files in. De Perrot sits alone side of stage, slicing grooves into cardboard with a box cutter. He flips them on to the turntables and, by manipulating the sonic qualities of the thumping stylus, creates beats for Zimmerman – clad in a refrigerator-sized cardboard box at first – to dance to.

From this, a Buster Keaton-like character emerges: misshapen grey suit, tennis shoes, a rebellious briefcase. As de Perrot's turntable trickery turns mischievous, Zimmerman is thrown around and subjected to sudden reversals and stuttering beats.

At the same time, he orchestrates intricately pre-cut cardboard panels into ephemeral sets – a train, an office – that rotate around him.

Gaff Aff gently parodies and celebrates the modern groove,

with Zimmerman's marionette-like character, dancing on an unpredictable stage, seeming to represent the typical citizen of the 21st century. There is no simple beat to keep him marching in time and the centrifugal forces keep him off-balance.

At 80 minutes, it is a compact piece and entertaining, funny and novel throughout – though those with an aversion to the French mime tradition might find something that grates in Zimmerman's performance.

Its appeal is very broad, too, and children aged eight and up will enjoy the comedy and inventive pratfalling.

De Perrot's score, which cuts and twists blues harmonica and kitschy themes, is fascinating – to listen to and to watch being created.