



Gecko

Resource Pack

“ How does one create the conditions in which you can make the best work possible? It’s always been about that, right from the beginning.”

Amit Lahav
Artistic Director

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We hope that you will be able to enjoy this resource pack without printing it, however if you wish to do so then please download our more environmentally-friendly low-ink PDF [here](#).



Welcome

Devising in Gecko's world

Becoming confident with devising happens in stages. Unavoidably, it is a trial-and-error process - over time the experiments and moments which make you feel good develop as you get more attuned to what you like and you become clearer about what it is you are trying to make.

Sometimes, in the very early stages of a devising process, it is difficult to even know where to begin...

So, with that in mind, Gecko has created this resource pack that I hope will give you an insight into our devising methodology when making a show. I hope you will be able to apply some of our processes into your own devising work, or perhaps will be able to review one of our shows with a deeper understanding of our artistic ambitions and methods.

Whether you're studying for GCSE, A-Level or taking an International Baccalaureate, I wish you the very best with your studies and offer this bit of advice: commit 100% to every moment. This is what we do at Gecko and it can take you to extraordinary places!

With best wishes,

Amit Lahav, Artistic Director



“ The shows invite each audience member to explore their own humanity and see their own narratives and the world around them, reimagined. The potential is for personal catharsis, a call to arms and the redirection towards deeper human connection and community.”

Amit Lahav

An Introduction to Gecko

“ The process of discovery, of searching, however difficult, however glorious that is, the process of creating our own world, our own story, our own script - that is Gecko. ”

Amit Lahav



Gecko is an award-winning and critically acclaimed physical theatre company, founded in 2001 by Artistic Director Amit Lahav. The company is based in Ipswich, Suffolk, and regularly tours across the UK and the world. Known for its world-class performance that inspires, moves and provokes reflection, the company's work is physical, visual, visceral and ambitious, made through collaboration, experimentation and play.

The company's ensemble of international performers, technicians and designers includes people from the UK, Colombia, France, Hungary, India, Israel, Mexico, Norway, Serbia, Spain, South Africa and USA. As a truly international company that uses multiple languages within its work, the company has huge appeal around the world. The narrative of the work is created through movement, imagery and music.

In order to seat all theatrical devices deep into its work, the company takes a 'Total Theatre' approach and incorporates music, lighting, set design, props and costumes as early as possible during the devising process - creating a rich world in which every element and symbol is telling the story.

In 2022 the company will move into the Gecko Creation Space, a repurposed warehouse on Ipswich's waterfront, which will house the company's new headquarters along with a state-of-the-art devising studio.



Meet Amit Lahav, Artistic Director

Amit was born in Israel, growing up in London after his family moved there when he was one. He studied as an actor at Rose Bruford Drama College, where he specialised in Physical Theatre before working with several dance, visual and physical theatre pioneers, including Lindsay Kemp in his touring productions of *Variété* and *Elizabeth*, Steven Berkoff, Ken Campbell and David Glass in *Unheimlich Spine*, *Off The Wall* and *Blue Remembered Hills*. He was a key member of Glass's *Lost Child Project* working to create shows with marginalised children in Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Italy, Laos, Thailand, England and Vietnam.

“ I had a growing sense that I wanted to make something, a growing sense whilst I was being employed as an actor and a deviser that I had ideas and a quick sense of what it was I wanted to make. It was a growing, strong, powerful feeling that was disruptive to the process of me just being a performer to someone. Gecko didn't start as an attempt to make a company, it started as an attempt to create the conditions in which I could make something. ”

Amit Lahav

Why is the company called Gecko?

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

What are Gecko's main influences?

When working with visionary theatre makers like David Glass, Stephen Berkoff, Lindsay Kemp and Ken Campbell I discovered that what infected me the most was their passion, and the way they threw themselves into their world. When I started Gecko, 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, paintings, politics, the environment; I think that I'm influenced all the time.



Amit, 1988

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

When you come and see a Gecko show, you sort of fall into a dream - or a nightmare, depending on your state of mind! Every show inhabits its own unique and theatrical world - there will be moments where the ordinary and the extraordinary collide, creating an imaginative journey for the audience.

Each moment on stage is crafted very carefully; creating suspension and expectation; tension and excitement. The same crafting and rigour is applied to every element in the show - sound, lighting, costume, props.

The shows are both a reflection and a comment on life, which can sometimes be a dark place. All of the different elements are there to take the audience to a dream-like dimension. The experience is very much dependent on the individual audience member and their desire or ability to dive within themselves. In our dreams, our subconscious tries to make sense of our experiences in life using symbols and metaphors as stand-ins, rather than using our memory of events, with people and objects representing feelings and relationships.

Just like a dream, a Gecko show also uses symbols, shapes, archetypes and metaphors to represent aspects of the lives of the audience, making our shows a very powerful personal experience. An invitation to each individual audience member to re-imagine the world around them.

For this reason, there's no right or wrong interpretation of the show. By design it is entirely created for personal interaction and personal interpretation.

How would you define physical theatre?

Physical theatre is a broad term which can apply to a wide range of styles, from dance focused work that has a strong theatrical language, to text-based

theatre that incorporates movement. For us physical theatre is a theatrical world that doesn't primarily use words to impart narrative or understanding. It is a world in which metaphor is central to the language. This allows us to use a multitude of theatrical devices including movement, puppetry, object manipulation and acted scenes that help to develop the journey.

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 emotional - an entirely expressive language, but also an entirely human language of connection - because this was all we had to communicate with and share understanding and our experiences of life. It was a very pure form of honest and authentic expression. We had no shared spoken language or cultural reference and it was during these moments that I realised that this was the kind of human communication I was interested in and what I wanted to explore in my own work.



What is Gecko's trademark style of performance?

We perform very physical, epic pieces that highlight the complexity of nature in modern life. I have spent many years making shows and developing Gecko's style of physicality. We use breath as the anchor for exploring all movement and emotion. It's a style that's both athletic and emotionally honest.

Why is breath such a crucial part of Gecko's work?

My interest in terms of making work is often to do with uncovering authentic human emotion and the connection between that and physicality. You can't get to that emotion without breath being very present – if you held on to your breath, it would be the expression of holding onto emotion. Breath is the fuel

needed to express intention and the performer's humanity. It's a vital aspect of communication with the audience; the individual breath heightens intention and a character's emotional state, whereby choral breath incites a societal sensation - the audience breathe with the performers and experience those shared breaths viscerally. Breath is part of the script, it's fundamental. It's one of the key elements of Gecko training: teaching the performers how to breathe in a very connected and conscious way, in an emotive way, in a functional way, in a shared way, in a communal way.

Where do you get your inspiration?

Inspiration for creating work is all around us. It's in our personal lives, in art everywhere, politics, and in the relationships that we have with our friends, families and colleagues. A personal feeling, an emotion or reflection on the world around me is always the starting point.

How do you then realise these ideas for the stage?

The process for all the shows I have made starts by allowing these initial feelings to develop into poetic themes, followed by scenes and choreography from which new feelings and themes emerge - and so it unfolds. This can take a long time and requires patience to allow the ideas to grow.

It often occurs that scenes and moments I had invested a lot of time into no longer resonate for me within the ever-changing bigger picture, as new ideas begin to become more central.

It's not like a conventional theatre process where somebody is in a rehearsal room with a script and then they add the scenery, set and lights. All the various elements have to happen together, so those elements are also being played with and explored from the very first day. It is a collaborative process with everyone committed to the endeavour of exploration: director, designers, composer, makers and performers.



What input does the cast have on a show?

When casting the shows, we tend to look for certain qualities and an openness and playfulness that suits the Gecko working process and performance style. Qualities include courage, physical and emotional expressiveness and experience of making, devising and touring.

Each performer brings different life experiences into the room and often we draw 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. I will sometimes set a very specific task and ask the performers to improvise around a scene or choreographic instruction. This might then get expanded, edited or adapted within the context of the piece.

Describe a normal rehearsal day

The performers need to be extremely alive, alert and connected to each other. Ultimately, we need to be able to create fantastic, profound work! That doesn't just happen by entering a room and starting. We will spend a number of hours getting the performers into a certain state of readiness, where they

are alert and able to respond and play in an instinctive and emotionally authentic way.

A lot of the preparation is ensuring the performers can inhabit a state of complete imaginative, emotional and physical readiness, to give and receive with 100% commitment, and to be freely instinctive in all aspects of exploration, improvisation and creation.



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

The shows are very athletic: they are both physically and emotionally demanding. We spend a substantial amount of time training in all ways to prepare for exploration and performances - this involves yoga, fitness, meditation and countless Gecko games and exercises. The shows require the precision of a musician in an orchestra and the aggression of a boxer - however the elements of Gecko performance involving breath and emotion require the most time and attention. We have spent many years devising techniques and exercises that specifically expand and develop open and expressive (physical) emotionality.

Why is experimenting with different types of theatre important for so many actors today?

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 theatrical vocabulary and creative possibilities. This can give performers a sense of ownership, both of their practice and the ideas they create, which contribute to a collaborative process of making a show

At what point is the show seen by an audience for the first time?

We usually share a work in progress version of a new show with an audience in the second year of its development and after the first period of research and development (R&D) with a cast. This first performance can take the show on a new trajectory as I find it almost impossible to truly know a show until the imagination of an audience interacts with it. I'll then take the show into a second development phase, in which the piece is re-imagined and re-worked.

The audience is as important as any element of the show, like a character, a performer or the lighting.

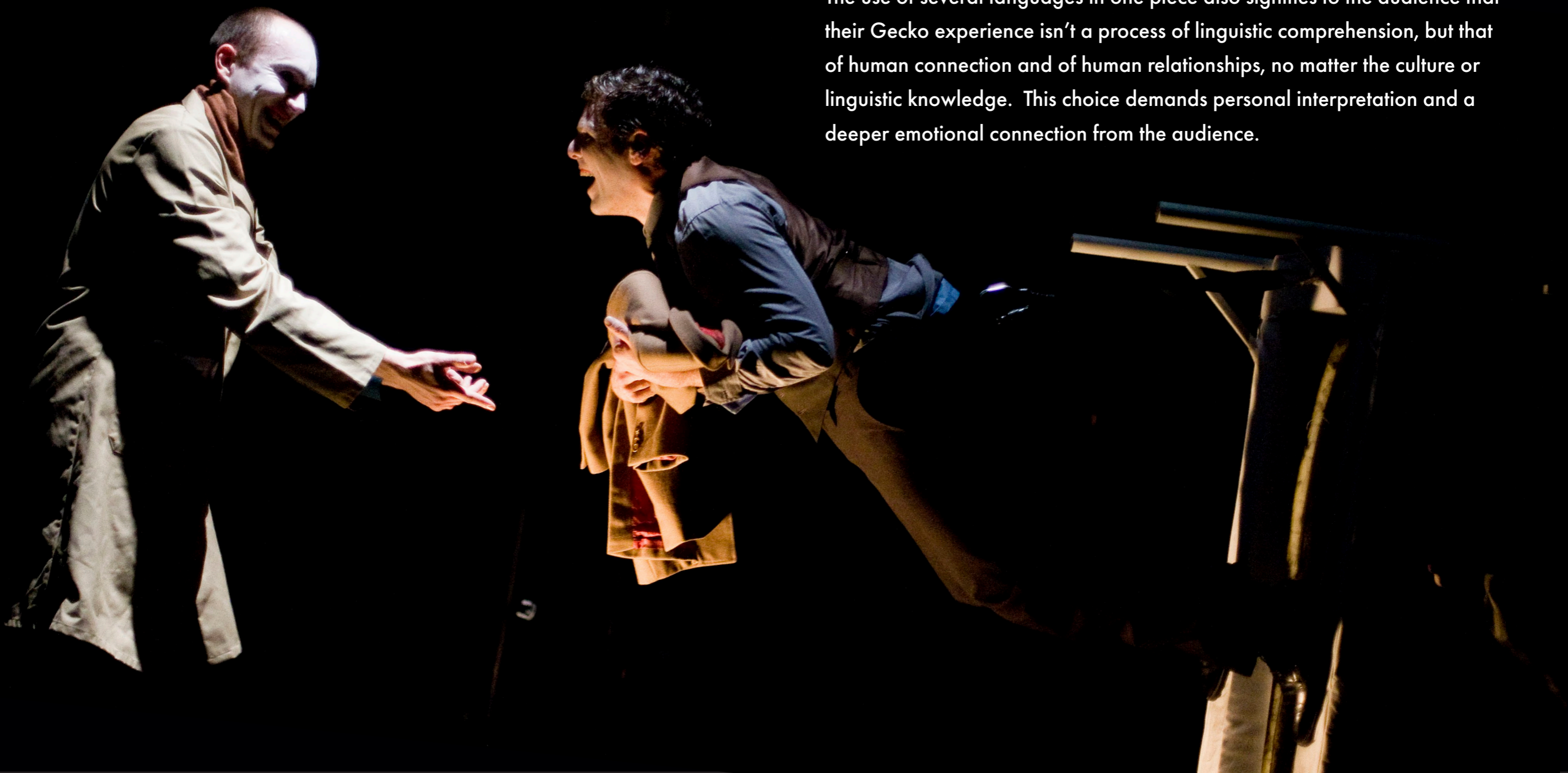
A show continues to develop whilst on tour. How exactly does that process work?

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

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

I've never been interested in using spoken language as the primary form of connection with the audience. However, speaking is inherently human, and my interest is certainly in creating a human world with powerful relationships. Speaking evokes intention and physical movement and with that enables clarity of emotion. I love the use of multiple languages, both as a beautiful texture of humanity and diversity and also as an emotionally expressive tool.

The use of several languages in one piece also signifies to the audience that their Gecko experience isn't a process of linguistic comprehension, but that of human connection and of human relationships, no matter the culture or linguistic knowledge. This choice demands personal interpretation and a deeper emotional connection from the audience.



A History of Gecko through Nine Shows, Two Films and One Fire



Shows

Taylor's Dummies (2003)*
The Race (2005)*
The Arab & The Jew (2007)*
The Overcoat (2009)*
Missing (2012)
Institute (2014)
The Wedding (2017)^

Films

The Time of Your Life (2015)*
Institute (2020)^

Associate Shows

The Dreamer (2016)
A Little Space (2019)

* Watch the full show for free on our [YouTube channel](#)

^ Available to education institutions through [DigitalTheatre+](#)

Taylor's Dummies

“ Taylor's Dummies allowed me to grow and see the potential of the language of Gecko - this kind of emotional, poetic language that really was unstoppable in terms of its ability to reach any populous around the world. ”

Amit Lahav



Taylor's Dummies was Gecko's first show. Developed during 2001 and 2002, it brought together theatre makers Amit Lahav and Allel Nedjari who experimented with creative techniques and performance styles that would become Gecko's trademark. The pair also worked with Dave Price and Helen Baggett, who have collaborated on most of Gecko's productions to date, Dave as composer, musician and performer and Helen as Associate Director co-developing the education and participation strand of Gecko.

Taylor is played by three men who each reflect the different aspects of his personality. The show delves into the depths of male desire as inside Taylor's head underground jazz worlds emerge from his dingy home existence.



The show was an audience and critical success, winning multiple awards in 2002. It was performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and extensively across the UK, before touring to Colombia, Ireland, Mexico, Serbia, Spain, Russia and Turkey – setting the scene for Gecko's international reputation.

The Race

Exploring impending fatherhood, the show chronicles a man battling conflicting inner thoughts and feelings. It won a Total Theatre Award and was performed at the Brits Off Broadway Festival in New York. It was the first time the company performed at New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich, establishing a relationship that would eventually lead to Gecko relocating to the town.



The Arab & The Jew

Allel Nedjari and Amit Lahav grew up on opposite sides of the Arab-Israeli divide and in this show they explore their backgrounds, Amit's Israeli-Jewish heritage and Allel's Arab-Algerian heritage. *The Arab and The Jew* is both a riot of sound, image and movement and an ambitious dance of reason and reconciliation.

Touring of the show coincided with Gecko's move to Ipswich in 2008 to become an associate company based at the New Wolsey Theatre and during a period when Amit felt that there was going to be a step up for Gecko - it was time to make a bigger show.



The Overcoat

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 reciprocated, driving him to seek success and win the ultimate office prize – the overcoat - hoping that she will finally notice him.

Inspired by Gogol's short story, this is the only Gecko show created by Amit that takes a text as its starting inspiration. It was commissioned by the Lyric Hammersmith and supported Amit to move from making productions for studio theatres to the mid-scale. It was also the first Gecko show to tour to China, developing Gecko's audience and reputation in the country. Rich Rusk joined the company as Assistant Director; he would later go on to become Associate Director and co-create our two associate shows.



Missing

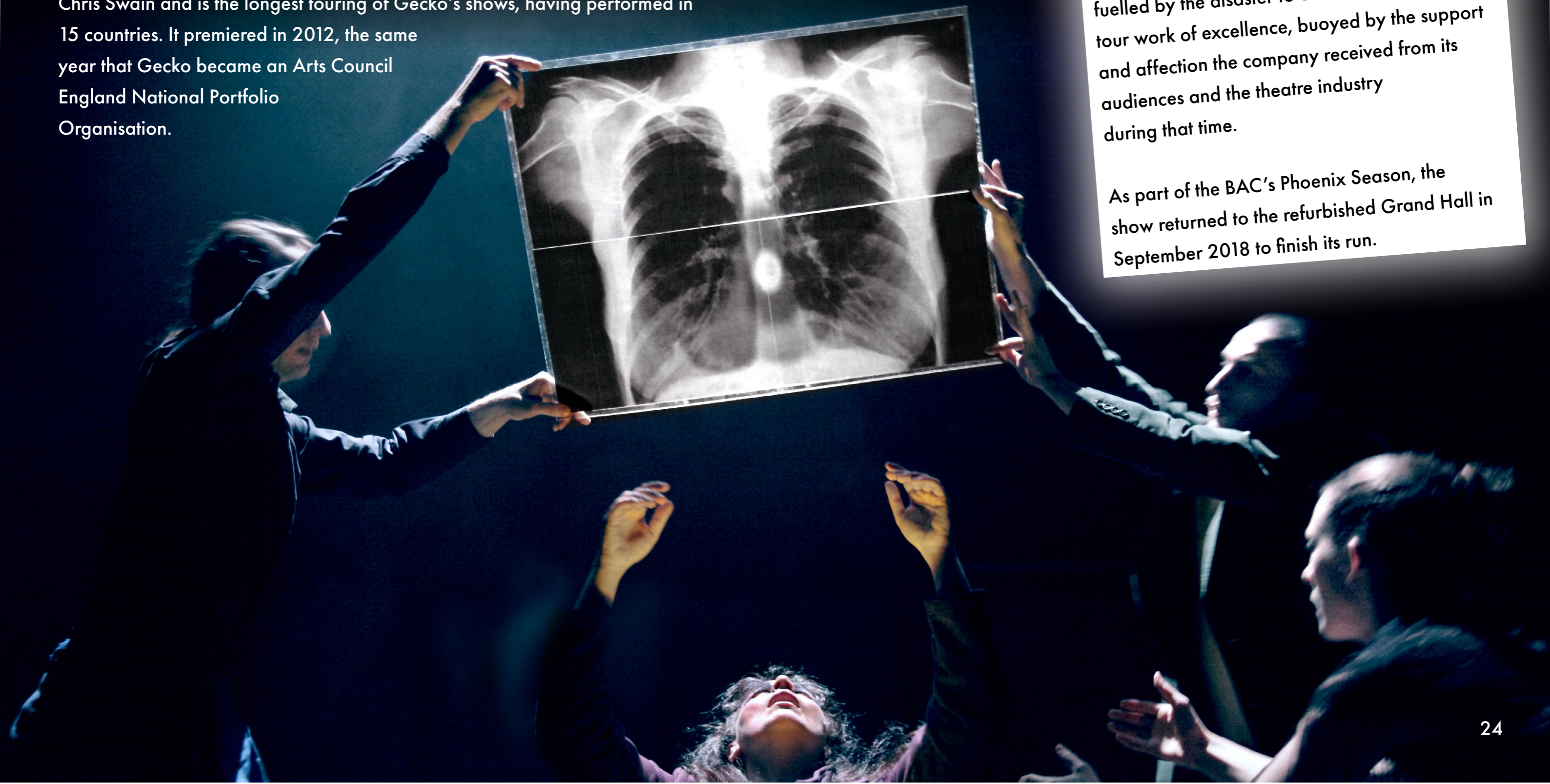
Missing follows Lily, a woman whose soul appears to be decaying. She is very successful in her working life, but something is missing. The shadows of Lily's past implore her to accept how far she has strayed from the person she really is.

This was the first collaboration with Designer Rhys Jarman and Lighting Designer Chris Swain and is the longest touring of Gecko's shows, having performed in 15 countries. It premiered in 2012, the same year that Gecko became an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.



On Friday, 13 March 2015 during a successful run at Battersea Arts Centre, *Missing* was lost to a fire that destroyed the Grand Hall. Following a successful crowdfunding campaign, the production was rebuilt in just eight days, allowing the company to go ahead with its planned tour of Mexico. The fire was a key event in Gecko's development, with the company fuelled by the disaster to continue to create and tour work of excellence, buoyed by the support and affection the company received from its audiences and the theatre industry during that time.

As part of the BAC's Phoenix Season, the show returned to the refurbished Grand Hall in September 2018 to finish its run.



Institute

Institute is an incisive dissection of the way we nurture and care for ourselves and each other.

It is the first Gecko production around which the company created an engagement project. With support from Wellcome and in collaboration with Suffolk Mind, the company provided a series of events and resources to allow audiences to further explore the issues of mental health raised in the show. While we've always delivered workshops to students, teachers and community groups, the success of the project marked a widening of the company's participation strand.



The Time of Your Life

Created specifically for *On Stage: Live from Television Centre* (a BBC Four programme showcasing four of the UK's leading independent theatre makers), *The Time of Your Life* is an original, 30-minute live TV performance.

This made-for-TV live performance has an ordinary man at its heart as he journeys through a number of rooms representing different milestones in his life, searching to find a real human connection in a world consumed by social networks and mass advertising.



“ In my opinion, society is currently set up in a rather dangerous way which pits people against each other. Ultimately, I am a believer and I'm full of hope, and that's why it's so important. I think we should re-imagine how we might care for each other, and be compassionate and generous to each other, and enjoy that as a natural life-force. ”

Amit Lahav



This was Gecko's first foray into film and allowed Amit to create work for the 'eye' of the camera, creating a unique approach to capturing movement, such as the single shot in the film lasting 9 minutes and choreographed around a Steadicam camera operator, spinning on the spot in the centre of the performance space. The project inspired Amit to explore the medium further, leading to a number of TV/film collaborations.

The Dreamer

co-production with Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre

As part of the British Council's Shakespeare Lives (commemorating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death), this unique collaboration between China and UK theatre companies was inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Peony Pavillion*, written by Shakespeare's Chinese contemporary Tang Xianzu.

The Dreamer was Gecko's first international co-production and first associate show, created by Associate Director Rich Rusk with Devising Performer Chris Evans, alongside Gecko Creatives Rhys Jarman, Chris Swain and Dave Price.



The Wedding

The Wedding is Gecko's most ambitious show to date, with 9 performers. It allowed Amit to explore two areas of interest – the ritual of the wedding ceremony and a resulting sense of celebration, and the relationship between the individual and the state. Both of these constructs are linked to the notion of a contract, and this became an important presence in the show.

During the time the show was developed, the political world became increasingly fragmented and unpredictable, and the idea of an individual's marriage to society, and questions relating to separation and divorce, became increasingly prominent in the production.



A Little Space

co-production with Mind the Gap

Working with Mind the Gap, one of Europe's leading learning disability theatre companies, the company's second associate co-production was created by Gecko Associate Artists Rich Rusk and Dan Watson alongside the company's creative team and with Mind the Gap performers and artists Karen Bartholomew and Charli Ward.

Set in an apartment block, the show follows the lives of five people, exploring what happens when they connect and disconnect from each other, whether through choice or through isolation. Drawing on the performers' own experiences, *a little space* uses movement, imagery, sound and lighting to portray the needs, desires and fears of the characters.



Institute

Following *The Time of Your Life*, Amit continued to explore work in film through collaborations with directors Teresa Griffiths on *Egon Schiele: Dangerous Desires* (BBC2, 2018) and Adam Smith/Marcus Lyall on visuals for The Chemical Brothers' live shows. This strengthened his understanding of the genre and the process of creating a Gecko feature film soon followed.

Rather than capture a live performance of a production, Amit opted to create an original feature film based around the company's show *Institute*. The stage production's world of towering filing cabinets was replaced with scenes of corridors and treatment rooms, and additional characters were added to complement the original cast. The film was shot over 9 days in Suffolk in 2019 with editing in early 2020, supported by Director of Photography Emma Dalesman and Editor Todd MacDonald.

It was first broadcast in July 2020 during the pandemic lockdown as part of BBC Four's *Culture in Quarantine* series.



“ Adaptation from stage to film is all about honing in on the visual language and storytelling piece by piece, building towards a composition of something that illuminates and elaborates the central feelings I am trying to get to. ”

Amit Lahav

The Gecko Method

Amit spends three years creating a new production, which sees him go through periods of highly intensive experimentation in a rehearsal studio and periods of solitary research and reflection, culminating in an extensive technical rehearsal period and then a 'Creation Tour'.

Many creative elements, from design and costumes, to choreography, lighting and sound will be developed simultaneously as new ideas are created, tested and adapted. The company's devising methodology isn't necessarily linear, but the key elements of the process are outlined in this next section.

“ The importance of time to give you the freedom to express and explore your ideas cannot be underestimated. ”

Amit Lahav



Year 1: The Thinking Year

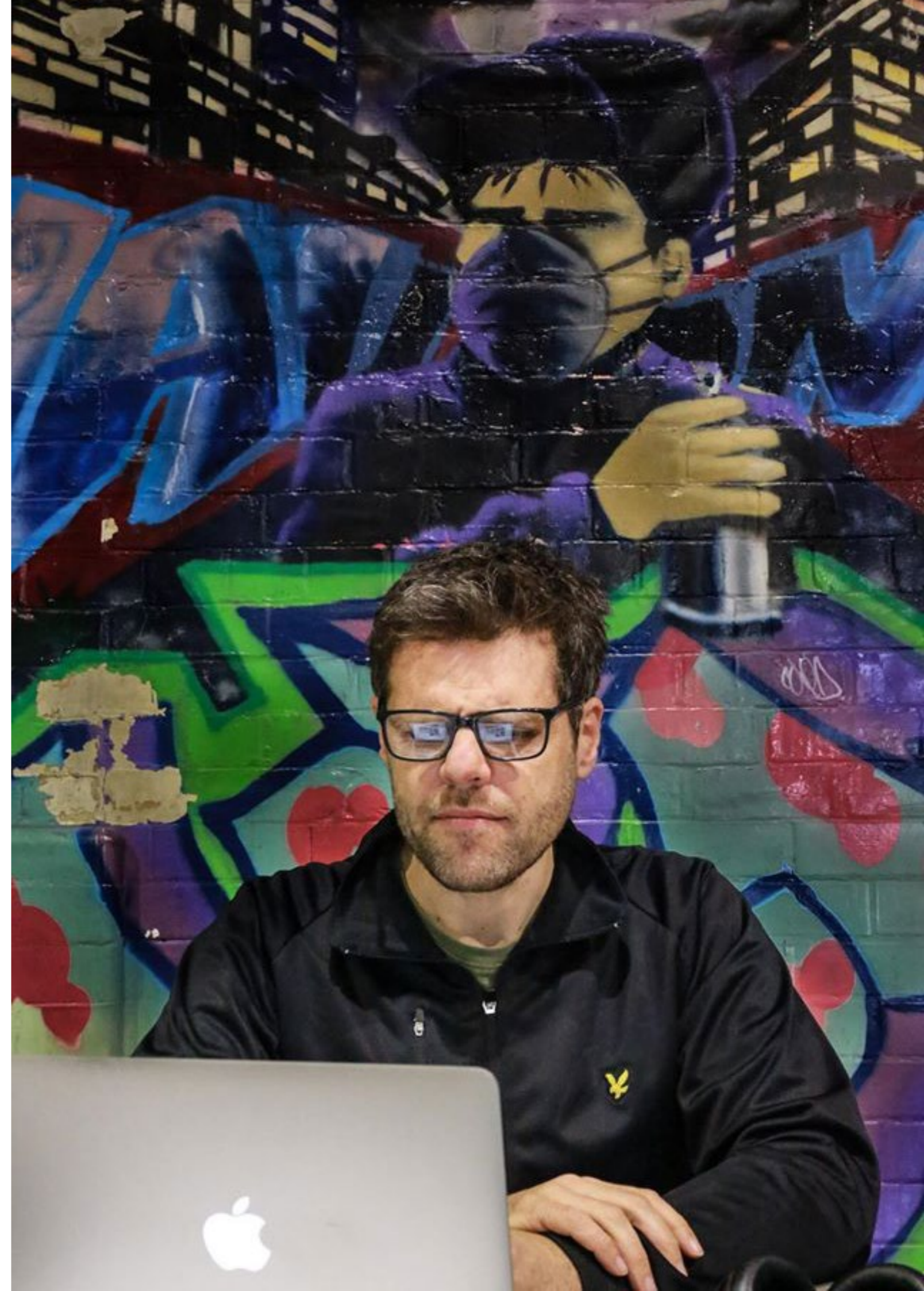
When working on a production, Amit will first develop the seed idea for a new show. This comes as a response to a theme that has current relevance to him and will often have a personal and societal aspect. How these 'seeds' arrive varies from one piece to the next, having an openness to the world around you is key. These seeds will become the catalyst for new ideas and images, which Amit collects and curates. As he explores and investigates them further, the central idea for a show can and often will shift. The most important thing for Amit to identify is which story feels vital to tell. Following his instincts is central to how all shows begin.

Amit will play with these initial ideas, testing them out physically, often with students as part of a Gecko residency or workshop. They are then explored further with Gecko performers. It is worth noting that a lot of this early development work is done in isolation – with Amit reading, researching, sketching and storyboarding, as well as creating and filming solo physical movements.

Finding the 'seed' of a Gecko show

What 'seed' was it that influenced Amit when developing the company's shows?

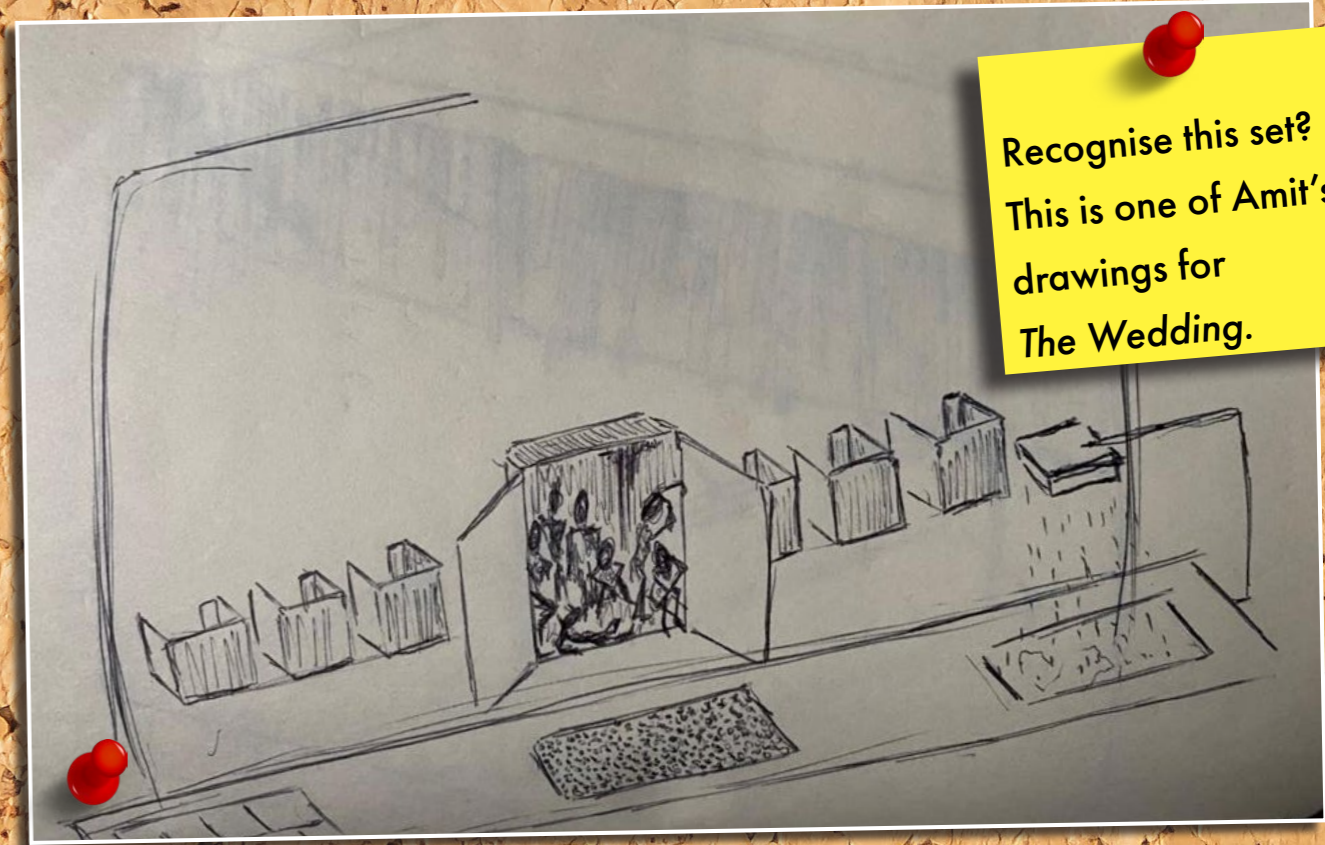
- Questions of heritage, especially dual heritage, a lost cultural heritage and the idea of a **decaying soul** led to the development of *Missing*.
- Exploring **how we care** for one another, or not, in contemporary society and the idea of care between men resulted in *Institute*.
- Feelings about an individual's 'marriage' to the state and the many (and sometimes hidden) **contracts of modern life** became *The Wedding*.



Amit's tips on creating storyboards:

Film Short Performances:
 I'll often film short performances using my phone of my solo work or with our performers and will put scenes, choreography and poetic ideas together in short runs, allowing me to gauge how they sit side by side.

Use Lists: I make hundreds of similar lists of scenes, themes, acts, and journeys for each show, allowing me to understand how each of these elements interact or conflict with one another, and helping me create a sequence of events to storyboard.



Recognise this set?
 This is one of Amit's drawings for The Wedding.

A large sheet of paper with various handwritten notes and sketches, organized into sections. The notes include:

- work hard Industrial 'Pom lands'
- Daniel is attacked by guilt during work scene
- Black spot on hand scene...
- Chris breath scene
- Nurses take control
- Ryan metal arm's slaps Daniel to empty chair
- Chris Dan's breath
- Chris realises to his child chair (we tear his childhood - relates to flying cabinet episode)
- Daniel's forward folk sequence where he conceives a child (We see a folk in the road)
- folk in the road (freak out) are way child other day architect's table Amit holds leg - talk CLAP hand off
- group therapy
- office dance duet
- office sequence with Hippobos cat
- Carer break scene
- Martin is creating the proposal version of the restaurant scene Daniel is reluctant They end of fighting!!
- during O's number Ryan senses Lie of imposture... Live distorts Ryan Daniel gets involved Martin watches horrified as 'Margaret' rips herself apart
- subtly we are in Martin's Restaurant - the feeling is different Martin 'im leaving you!' Martin is subtly completely alone
- Martin looks to his father? v. slow
- Daniel is in a tangle with guilt
- Carer break going over old ground 'destruction' movement
- Poles
- Martin + Lisa in silent room treatment based on the rehearsal in the rehearsal Moment sequence which ends his power/lock of power sense of being valued mixed with something inappropriate??!
- Ryan + Chris Daniel Poles Chris operates guilt child Ryan operates Daniel (struggle)
- Daniel is defeated by guilt of street comes with scan
- care duet
- care for Daniel guilt EXIT APPEARS for child
- Carer break going over old ground destruction movement

Here are some of Amit's lists and storyboards from Institute.

Record Sounds: Eventually I work with sound design, creation and programming. There is enormous emphasis on the sound regarding the storytelling, and it becomes necessary for me to build layers of sound in a timeline as part of the process of storyboarding.

Create Drawings: I draw from an early stage to try to make sense of how visual ideas link together. Sometimes these drawings can be incredibly simple, on other occasions quite complex and detailed. I use a variety of mediums, often just pencil and paper, but more recently I've been using an iPad which has allowed me to bring in photographic and video references which I can draw on and annotate.



Year 2: The Writing Year

During this period there is an explosion of ideas. Amit reacts to his early exploration with further ideas and images, new starting points for investigation and research, and sometimes even a new seed. Thoughts on sound and music will also develop during this initial physical exploration, as well as early structural ideas and designs.

Amit will then begin the process of developing 'images' to physically represent his thoughts, feelings and ideas which he'll combined together into a draft sequence, sometimes supported with some early structural apparatus such as prototype set work, props, costumes, sound or music, giving Amit a sense of what this physical world might become. The explorations will involve a constant sense of play - juxtaposing the ordinary with the extraordinary, editing, expanding, re-ordering. There will be a huge amount of material made, and much of this will be discarded as the ideas solidify.

Next, Amit will create a draft storyboard, combining ideas together to create a rough narrative, along with ideas which perhaps are strong but as yet seem disconnected from the main narrative of the story.

The storyboard process supports the creation of a first version of the show, which takes place over a seven-to-eight-week period, bringing performers and other creative team members (lighting, costume, design) into the rehearsal room. Ideas are improvised, choreographed, rehearsed and transitions created, with many of the sequences and ideas recorded (often using Amit's phone) as a reminder and for later development. The process will often span a few months, with a couple of weeks of studio rehearsals followed by time for Amit to reflect on the various outcomes and discoveries made and to continue work on the storyboard.

“ We do not know what the piece is until we've performed it, because it requires the imagination of the audience to put the final authorship on the piece. ”

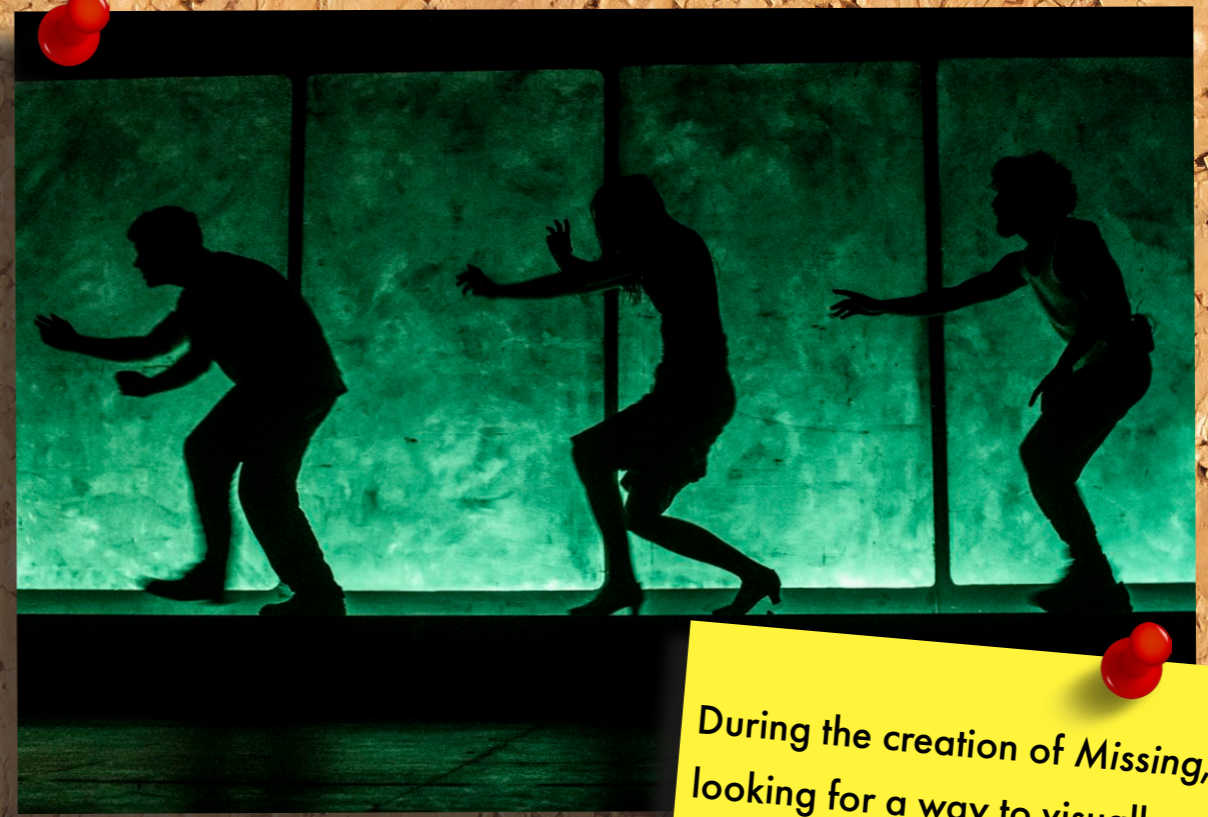
Amit Lahav

The team will have explored many different ideas and elements from lighting and sound, to props, set and choreography. Towards the end of the process, a work in progress version of the entire show is created, typically featuring a full set, costumes, props, soundscape and lighting design throughout. This work in progress is often shared with a live audience, sometimes publicly in one of Ipswich's venues or with invited guests. This is an incredibly important part of the process and Amit will use the response of the audience to focus on future developments during the final making year.

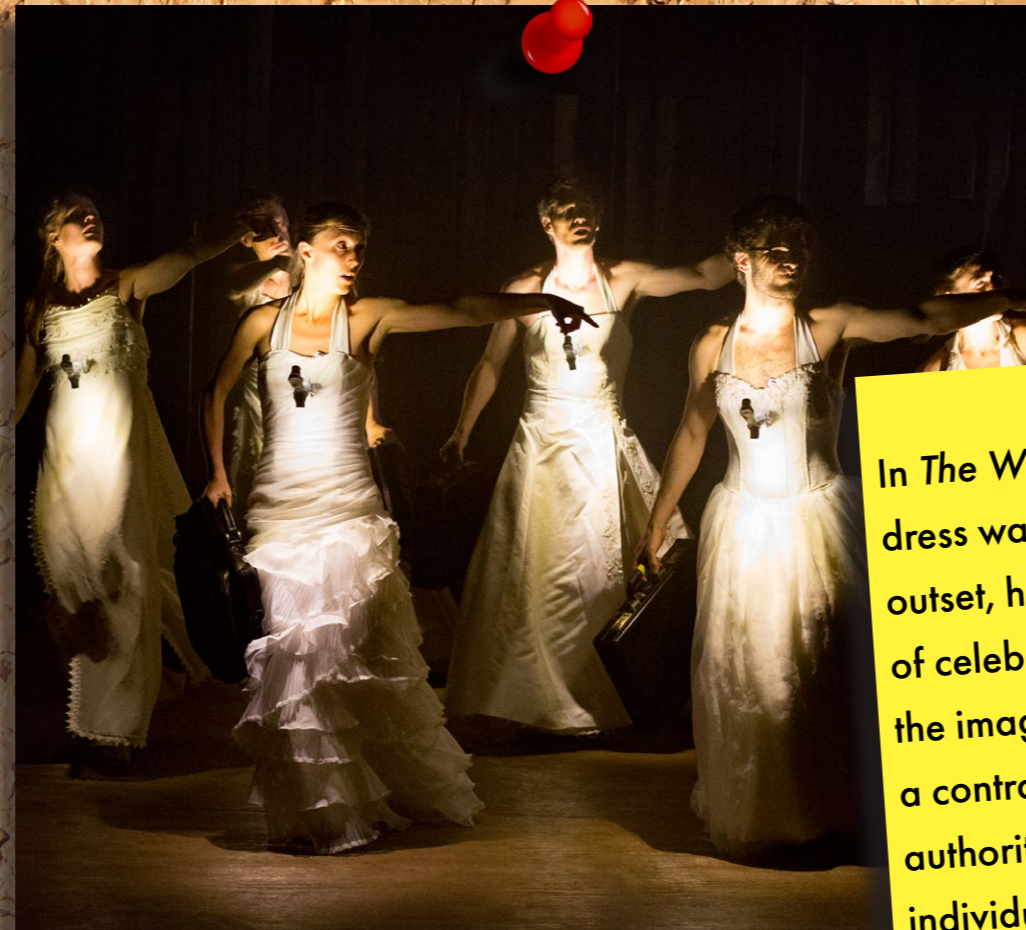
Developing the Image



With *Institute*, Amit sought to represent a world where there are patients that need to be cared for, and people who have authority over them but who clearly also needed care. The image of an incredibly organised and yet dysfunctional treatment world emerged very early on in the show's creation, developing from standard filing cabinets to the towering versions of the final set as seen in the show today.



During the creation of *Missing*, Amit was looking for a way to visually represent the idea of memories floating in and out of someone's mind whilst they moved across a space. Technically this started very basically with performers on a wheeled steel deck being pulled by the other ensemble members. As the show developed, this image became the travellers used by the performers seen in the show as it is today.



In *The Wedding* the image of a wedding dress was incredibly important from the outset, holding the familiar connotations of celebration that it evokes. By pairing the image of the dress with the signing of a contract and an unsympathetic figure of authority, Amit established the metaphor of the individual as a bride of the state, suggesting also more sinister connotations of entrapment and for those without a dress, exclusion.



“ A Gecko show is never finished!
It will continue to change
throughout its life to ensure
it remains alive and relevant,
reflecting the contemporary issues
important in society and for our
audiences during that time. ”

Amit Lahav

Year 3: The Making Year

As a response to the work in progress sharing, new ideas emerge, scenes are altered, and music and characters are developed which better serve the dramatic tension and emerging journey of the piece. In this evolving version of the show, much of the previous material will be different and the sense of the world, the concept and the feel of the piece may have changed dramatically. Amit will spend many months reflecting, developing and researching this to create the next storyboard for the show.

When he has an absolute understanding of the world of the piece and how all its elements will flow clearly together, a design will be worked up and most of the large or complicated elements of the show will be built in preparation for a technical rehearsal process.

The company will then spend six to eight weeks preparing for the first full performances; four weeks to build the physical aspects of the show and to create and choreograph all the material, and then a further two weeks for technical work on a fully equipped theatre stage with all of the light and sound elements.

Following that technical rehearsal process, the show will be performed to audiences and will embark upon a 'Creation Tour', through which significant changes continue to be made. Even on a show's second tour, many significant elements may change within the piece.

Each show 'settles' the more it is performed, although changes to the production will continue over its lifespan.

10 Steps to Gecko: Devising your own work

“Gecko’s style is both physically demanding and emotionally honest. When creating your own work, you should commit 100% to every moment. It is important to enjoy a sense of play, but equally important to play with total focus and intensity, something that Gecko calls ‘serious play’.”

Amit Lahav

If you are looking to devise your own work based on Gecko’s style, you probably won’t have three years in which to create it, but there are a number of the company’s processes that you could adopt to create a piece of total theatre that will inspire, move and entertain your audience.

1 Stimulus: Identify your stimulus (that you are given or that you choose yourself) and use this to focus your creation, research and development.

2 Research: Using your ‘stimulus’ as a starting point, explore music, film, text, art, news, sounds and media to find ideas and themes that are important to you as an individual. Collect and curate these in a format that works for you and allows you to organise them into a storyboard when you are ready.

3 Seed Idea: Taking your research, begin to focus on the central idea of your piece, its potential to explore emotion and the world you want to create.

Top Tip:

Experimentation, making discoveries and finding out what excites or means something personal to you will open up creative possibilities.

4 Serious Play: As a group use tasks to explore movement, content and sequences. Remember to commit with total focus, intensity and integrity – serious play – to achieve the best results, and to film this ‘play’ to review and support further development. Use breath, full emotional physicality, and think about juxtaposing the ordinary with the extraordinary.

Top Tip:

Whether you’re working on early ideas or rehearsing for a final performance, always ensure that you and your colleagues are ‘in the room’ – which to Gecko means being absolutely ready, fully focused and committed. Always start a session with preparation tasks first to ensure that everybody is ready to respond and produce phenomenal work.



5 **Develop the image:** Start organising your thoughts, feelings and ideas into an early storyboard, supporting this with structural items such as simple props, costumes, music or sound, giving you a sense of what your physical world might become.

6 **Rehearsals:** Use rehearsals to edit and organise your material, thinking about the transition between each idea, sequence or movement. Record each sequence separately to allow you to review later or to reorganise their order.

Top Tip:
Experience and engage in different types of theatre and performance to broaden your theatre practice vocabulary and variety of ideas.

7 **First Sharing:** Share your work in progress, either as a live or recorded performance, to gather feedback so far. How did the audience respond, how do they interpret your story, what is their emotional response to your work?

8 **Reflect and Refine:** From your feedback identify the strongest and weakest areas of your piece, be honest with yourself. Refine your work so that all elements flow clearly together until you have an absolute understanding of the world you are creating as you build towards technical rehearsals. Re-visit the building blocks you first used - full emotional physicality, breath, connection between performers.

9 **Technical Rehearsals:** Bring all of your ideas together to make your final piece, layering each element to create your world through a total theatre approach. Rehearse and refine to ensure your performance is of the highest quality.

10 **Final Performance:** Break a leg! Commit to this performance 100%, enjoy it and celebrate it. Making work like this is physically and emotionally demanding and you, your friends, family and teachers should be rightly proud of what you have created.





Becoming Gecko

If you're creating a devised performance that echoes Gecko's style and methods, use this handy checklist to support your devising journey and to ensure you are 'becoming Gecko'. Each element is key when making a Gecko show and in combination creates theatre that is ambitious, visual and visceral.

- ✓ **Serious Play:** Are you and your ensemble fully committed to your devising and performance, is everyone involved 'in the room'? From warm-ups to rehearsals, costume, lighting and design, everybody should be 100% completely focussed and absolutely ready to respond and create phenomenal work.
- ✓ **Breath:** Have you incorporated breath into your movement sequences? Use breath as part of your 'script' to communicate emotion, as a functional tool for your choreography, as a shared expression and to create a visceral experience for your audience.
- ✓ **Quality:** Are you completely committed in your pursuit to make excellent work? Every aspect of the process is vital in order to make shows of the highest quality. Create the conditions and find the resources that will allow you to make the best thing that you can possibly make. Be rigorous. Be prepared to discard material if it no longer feels right.

- ✓ **Emotionally Honest:** Is your work emotionally honest? Use a personal emotion, reaction or situation that means something to you as the starting point for your work and to open up creative possibilities.
- ✓ **Sharing Progress:** Have you shared an early work in progress? Feedback from your audience is essential in developing your narrative.
- ✓ **Physically Athletic:** Are elements of your performance physically rigorous? Vary the physical sequences in your work to include moments that require great precision, strength, control and emotional expression to help support your narrative.
- ✓ **Total Theatre:** Have you taken a total theatre approach to your devising? Develop lighting, set design, props, costumes, choreography and sound in parallel during your devising process so that all elements combine together to create your world.
- ✓ **Human Stories:** Does your narrative explore human stories and experiences? Creating work that is relevant and reflects the contemporary issues important in society and for your audience will promote an emotional response to your work.
- ✓ **An Empowered Ensemble:** Are you facilitating your ensemble to feel safe, inspired and empowered? Do you value every voice in the room? Let the personal skills, knowledge and stories of your ensemble help shape the world and content that you want to create.
- ✓ **Open to Interpretation:** Is your work open to interpretation? Although you may 'write' and 'storyboard' your work, combine a total theatre approach with poetic metaphors and a visual language that invites your audience to re-imagine the world around them and to interpret your show personally and emotionally.



“ A Gecko process is very raw. The idea is a spark that comes from me, but the piece becomes about everyone in the space, their stories, experiences and outpouring of inner life, which makes it a beautiful and very familial journey. ”

Amit Lahav

Further Resources

Develop your skills further by taking part in a Gecko workshop, led by Gecko's highly experienced devising performers. Our workshops are a practical and engaging exploration of the devising processes and performance techniques Gecko uses when creating a show. Find out more on our [website](#).

Check out [YouTube](#) for free access to recordings of our full shows, interviews with Amit, the performers and technical crew, along with hints and tips for devising your own work.

Join the discussion on [Gecko: Engage](#), our Facebook group for those teaching, interested in, or studying Gecko. Share your Gecko-inspired work with other like-minded creators, ask questions or join a Q&A with our cast and crew.

Sign-up for the [Gecko: Engage newsletter](#) to receive exclusive education offers and to be the first to hear about resources to support studying and teaching everything Gecko.

Watch *The Wedding*, its accompanying making of documentary, and our first feature film, *Institute* exclusively on [DigitalTheatre+](#) (the world's leading educational platform for the performing arts). Check with your school or college to see if they subscribe or ask them to sign up.

And don't forget to keep an eye on our socials or sign up to our [newsletter](#) for tour dates, employment and training opportunities, behind the scenes news, information on the Creation Space (our new HQ and state of the art devising studio) and much, much more!

Image Credits

Front: Chris Evans and Amit Lahav in *Institute*; Richard Haughton

1: Saju Hari, Nathan Bartman, Kenny Wing Tao Ho, Vanessa Guevara Flores, Miguel Hernando Torres Umba, Ryen Perkins Gangnes, Lucia Chocarro in new show R&D; John Ferguson

3: Georgina Roberts, Amit Lahav, Dan Watson, Fionn Cox Davies, Kip Johnson in *The Time of Your Life*; Richard Haughton

5: Kenny Wing Tao Ho, Ryen Perkins Gangnes, Fionn Cox Davies, Chris Evans in *The Wedding*; Richard Haughton

7: Amit Lahav in *Institute* (film); John Ferguson

8: Amit Lahav, personal archive

10: The ensemble (front row: Miguel Hernando Torres Umba, Katie Lusby, Kenny Wing Tao Ho in new show R&D; John Ferguson

11: Chris Evans and Anna Finkel in *Missing*; Robert Golden

13: Georgina Roberts in *Missing*; Richard Haughton

15: Robert Luckay and Amit Lahav in *The Overcoat*; Richard Haughton

17: Kenny Wing Tao Ho, Chris Evans, Ryen Perkins Gangnes, Fionn Cox Davies in *The Wedding*; Richard Haughton

19: Joseph Traynor, Al Nedjari and Amit Lahav in *Taylor's Dummies*; Nick Gurney

19: Joseph Traynor, Al Nedjari and Amit Lahav in *Taylor's Dummies*; Nick Gurney

20: Sachi Kamura, Amit Lahav, James Flynn, Cath Markee and Al Nedjari in *The Race*; Neil Hanna

21: Amit Lahav and Al Nedjari in *The Arab and The Jew*; Ed Collier

22: Robert Luckay and Amit Lahav in *The Overcoat*; Richard Haughton

23: Bart Soroczynski, Georgina Roberts, Chris Evans, Anna Finkel in *Missing*; Robert Golden

24: Battersea Arts Centre fire 2015, *The Guardian*

25: François Testory in *Institute*; Richard Haughton

25: Amit Lahav in *Institute*; Hide the Shark

26: The ensemble in *The Time of Your Life*; Richard Haughton

27: The ensemble (centre: Yang Zi Yi) in *The Dreamer*; Yin Xuefeng

28: Anna Finkel, Dan Watson, Louise Tanoto, Madeleine Fairminer and Fionn Cox Davies in *The Wedding*; Richard Haughton

29: Lorraine Brown in *a little space*; Tom Woollard

30: François Testory in *Institute* (film); John Ferguson

31: François Testory, Ryen Perkins-Gangnes, Amit Lahav, Kenny Wing Tao Ho, Vanessa Guevara Flores and Miguel Hernando Torres Umba in *Institute* (film); John Ferguson

33: The ensemble (centre: Kenny Wing Tao Ho in new show R&D; John Ferguson

36: Amit Lahav; Rich Rusk

39: Louise Tanoto, Dan Watson, Chris Evans, Dave Price, Kenny Wing Tao Ho in rehearsals for *The Wedding*; Rich Rusk

41: Chris Evans, Amit Lahav and Ryen Perkins Gangnes in *Institute*; Richard Haughton

41: The ensemble in *The Wedding* (work in progress); Mike Kwasniak

42: Ryen Perkins Gangnes, Lucia Chocarro, Miguel Hernando Torres Umba in *Missing*; Bethany Hobbs

43: Kenny Wing Tao Ho, Amit Lahav, Ryen Perkins-Gangnes and Chris Evans in rehearsals for *Institute* (film); John Ferguson

46: Katie Lusby and Madeleine Fairminer in rehearsals for *The Wedding*; Rich Rusk

47: The ensemble (front row: Anna Finkel, Amit Lahav, Ryen Perkins Gangnes) in *The Time of Your Life*; Richard Haughton

49: Amit Lahav, Katie Lusby, Saju Hari, Lucia Chocarro, Kenny Wing Tao Ho, Ryen Perkins-Gangnes and Vanessa Guevara Flores in new show R&D; John Ferguson

51: Anna Finkel, Ryen Perkins Gangnes, Kip Johnson, Greg Cooke, Madeline Fairminer, Chihiro Kawasaki and Amit Lahav in *The Time of Your Life*; Richard Haughton

Back: Ryen Perkins Gangnes in *Institute* (film); John Ferguson

Resource pack design by Francesca Bloor



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