



Review

The Pipe Manager

Visy Theatre, Brisbane
Powerhouse
Until Saturday.
Reviewed by Olivia Stewart

If you're willing to go along with performer Lisa O'Neill (pictured) on what initially seems a dark and odd fantasy, you will be rewarded with a thought-provoking insight into real life.

The Pipe Manager's title alone invites us to question and while it might be a different case for engineers, the role's job description of "pipe innovation" both fires and perplexes the imagination.

But that would be taking it all too literally. *The Pipe Manager* unfolds as an adult storybook fable about creativity, corporate/bureaucratic oppression of the individual and the path to self-identity and personal freedom. Some audience members might find getting on the same page as O'Neill's character a challenge at the outset, but we're enticed to travel on the heroine's journey by an evocative marriage and balance of media elements. The 75-minute piece is a deft blend of live and graphic action.

It registers as a genuine creative collaboration spearheaded by creator O'Neill and writer Peter Berkahn. The three-dimensional dance-theatre artist alternates with illustrator XTN's anime/manga-flavoured projections, accompanied by dramatic voiceover, sound and lighting. O'Neill's physical command ranges from the simple elegance of a beautifully stretched leg and pointed toe, to a slow-motion

forward moonwalk, balletic lines, staccato body hiccups and understated yet telling visual expression.

While at times *The Pipe Manager* exerts a menacing intensity, this is broken by the quirky tone, comic moments and exhilarating originality.

Its left-of-centre approach won't appeal to everyone, but those prepared to step and think outside the box should find *The Pipe Manager* somewhat of a gem.