

## Zug-Zwang @ The Studio, Oct 7

Characters, pathos and knob gags

Posted by Gareth K Vile, Sun 12 Nov 2006



This year's Glasgay! programme has distinguished itself through an eclectic and diverse collection of events. Its posters have already taken over the underground, with the 'Hey Hetero!' series surprising commuters with bold, colourful and cheerful satire: the 'Rushes' season has begun, generating enthusiasm and pride across the city.

'Zug-Zwang' was originally conceived by Martin O'Connor for the Arches' house company. Relocated in the bright gallery space of the Studio in Saltmarket, this playful take on perceptions of masculinity straddles the divide between stand-up comedy and popular therapy. O'Connor expertly guides the audience through a parody of a New Man workshop, jumping between characters, pathos and knob gags. At times it is hard to differentiate between his personae, but if his thrusting delivery rarely deviates from quick-fire patter, the material remains penetrating. Pub-joke interludes sit uneasily amongst the emotive monologues about penis extension, or Fight Club-style addiction to self-improvement; repeated gags about 'getting his hairy man out' may mock the piety of American male empowerment, but they provide only cheap laughs.

Managing to present the so-called crisis of masculinity as pathetic in both senses, 'Zug-Zwang' represents a necessary manoeuvre to escape the confrontational nature of the gender identity dialogue. Witty, compassionate and well-delivered, it introduces a strong theme to Glasgay! and was warmly received on its opening. The finale came far too quickly.