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Like *Rashomon*, there's an imaginative minimalism at play in **Life With an Idiot** at the Gate Theatre. Fred Meller has created a fashionably spare, clinically white flat belonging to Masha and her civil servant husband, known simply as "I". Due to some unnamed misdemeanour that hints at a menacing, Kafkaesque world outside, the husband is forced to accept Vova, an "idiot" from the local asylum, as a houseguest. Inevitably the couple's chic orderliness is shattered by Vova's anarchic actions — ransacking the fridge, soiling the floor, cutting up books, seducing both his hosts — that end in physical violence.

Life With an Idiot is a free adaptation by director Ben Harrison and his cast of a 1980 Russian short story by Victor Eroyefev. On the page Vova resembled Lenin and was meant to be a metaphor for communism. On stage Vova is more of an id-like presence, destructively unlocking the repressed desires of Masha and "I". The end result is as unsubtle as political parables can get, and without the satirical bite. Instead we're told little more than that madness can be dangerous and liberating.

For all its crude absurdity, the production still elicits some fine performances from Gregory Gudgeon as the fussy, nervy "I", Tea Alagic as the emotionally thawed Masha, and Fergus McLarnon as Vova. There's also some stylish, Satie-like live accompaniment from pianist Charlie Winston. And you won't have seen such mess-making glee since the days when *Tiswas* ruled Saturday morning TV.

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