

# A LINE COULD BE CROSSED AND YOU WOULD SLOWLY CEASE TO BE by Intercultural Theatre Institute

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## “Holding On to a Sliver of Hope”

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**Reviewer: Isaac Tan**

**Performance: 5 September 2019**

With an ominous-sounding title like *a line could be crossed and you would slowly cease to be*, one expects the play to be a doomsday declaration.

So imagine my surprise when the play, written by Andrew Sutherland, is anchored by two rather domestic stories. The first is a gay couple who has been keeping their relationship under wraps, but finally decides to move in together. And one of them has the urge to search for the mother who abandoned him. The other story is of a shy architect trying to strike up a conversation with a lady at a café. And the latter is doing a research project on the environment and wants to present her findings through art.

As the relationships develop and fissure, themes of loss and hope come to the fore. Factoids about the environment, such as the sex of turtles being dependent on environmental temperature during the nesting period, are subtly woven into the conversation.

Throw in animals telling us that individual or governmental efforts are not enough to save the environment, and we get a complex play that questions what we are going to do when everything that we know has changed – whether that’s within a domestic relationship, or on a global level.



Credit: Bernie Ng

Koh Wan Ching may be troubled by her impact on the environment, but her impact on the show's direction is far from troubling. She puts the training that the students of Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) undergo to excellent use. The ensemble (Jin Chen, Theresa Wee-Yenko, Ted Nudgent Fernandez Tac-An, Tysha Khan, Wendy Toh, and Nourel Houda Essafi) exude a strong sense of physical dynamism and fluent mask work.

Despite the limitations of the space, Koh also manages to create a sense of grandeur for the entrance of a dying goddess by crafting a movement sequence that has the ensemble manipulating a long cloth.

That said, it is puzzling why guest performers (Jeremy Lim plays the gay partner while Jey Lim Jun Jie plays the shy architect) are recruited to play principal roles, given that this is an ITI graduation show. Furthermore, the intentions of Jeremy's character are never made clear. As such, his scenes with ITI student Earnest Hope Tinambacan never progressed beyond a sense of wistfulness throughout the whole show.

Jey fares better opposite ITI student Regina Toon, as they have a better sense of connection. The little movement sequences that show the development of their relationship are also fun to watch.

It is anyone's guess when we will have crossed the line of no return when it comes to our survival. But I am consoled by the fact that at least we have an excellent group of storytellers on our shores. One can only hope that some other life form gets to understand these stories when we are gone.

Do you have an opinion or comment about this post? Email us at [info@centre42.sg](mailto:info@centre42.sg).

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

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### **A LINE COULD BE CROSSED AND YOU WOULD SLOWLY CEASE TO BE by Intercultural Theatre Institute**

5 – 7 September 2019

Drama Centre Black Box

## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

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**Isaac** graduated from the National University of Singapore with a BA (Hons) in Philosophy, and he took Theatre Studies as a second major. He started reviewing plays for the student publication, Kent Ridge Common, and later developed a serious interest in theatre criticism after taking a module at university. He is also an aspiring poet and his poems have appeared in Symbal, Eunoia Review, Eastlit, and Malaise Journal.