Ristorante Immortale
A Floz Production
Dunstan Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre.
Ends 1 March. Tickets $28 - $42. $96 Family of 4.

The Ristorante Immortale is unlikely to get a listing in the Michelin Guide, or anywhere else for that matter. It has zany waiters, an accordion wielding cook, an endlessly hopeful owner and, it would seem, no customers at all. This restaurant is not so much immortal as in a state of limbo, running like crazy clockwork, every night the same, doomed to repeat its own history.

Floz Productions, based in Berlin, is an ensemble of performers specialising in mime, clowning, acrobatics, dance and mask-making. They come from all over Europe and the Americas and, after a season at the Perth Fringe, and some misadventures with their freight which delayed opening night by twenty four hours, have set up shop for two weeks in Adelaide.

With a red velvet backdrop and three sets of revolving kitchen doors on each side of the stage, the cast of five offer ninety minutes of madcap activity, a café spinning with its wheels in the air, a playful pecking order of organisational absurdity that begins with the owner snapping closed his menu and summoning a stream of tasks - whisking eggs, setting tables, folding serviettes and polishing plates to mirror brightness. Four times this happens and each time things meander into the past, into daydream, and into chaotic comic mischief.

The timing is crisp and the characterisations often touching. The large fleshy face masks, with enormous beaky noses, tiny drilled out eyes and mouths slightly ajar, have a marvellously bewildered look that magnifies the doubletakes and deadpan glances that are a staple of the piece. These are melancholy souls trapped in repetition and longing for a world elsewhere. The young waiter is forced into conformity, the elderly retainer is all sorrowful regret, the head waiter has vaulting ambitions while the owner and the chef tyrannise with glares and blows to the head. This the comedy of Jacques Tati, and Manuel in Fawlty Towers.