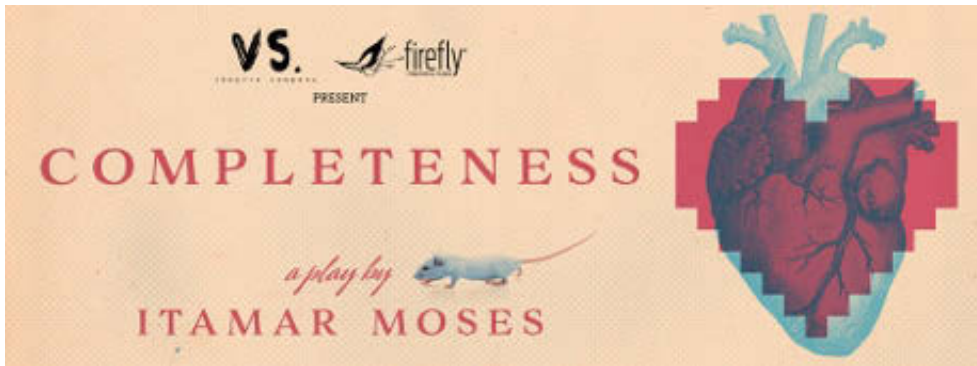


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Los Angeles Theater Preview: COMPLETENESS (Firefly Theater and Films & VS. Theatre Company)

by [Tony Frankel](#) on November 6, 2014

in [Theater-Los Angeles](#)



COMPLETELY SMART

The exciting and insightful writer Itamar Moses may be one of our brightest playwrights, yet he has astoundingly been given short shrift by the L.A. theater community. With over 10 produced plays (*Bach at Leipzig*) and musicals (*Nobody Loves You* and the upcoming *The Fortress of Solitude* with Michael Friedman at The Public), Moses has proved himself a writer of uncanny perspicacity into the human condition, especially those of his generation (he was born in 1977).

I caught the world premiere of his *Completeness* two years ago at South Coast Rep, and was immediately taken with his shrewd, funny, and naturalistic dialogue. The play, which opens this week at VS. Theatre, is both brainy and savvy in its approach/ avoidance strategies of love—a refreshingly original, contemporary and non-negotiable take on a very old subject.



Now, VS. Theatre and Firefly Theater & Films are co-producing the West Coast Premiere of a newly revised version of *Completeness*. This is the first time that Moses's work returns to Los Angeles since his local debut in 2008 with *The Four of Us*, also a VS./Firefly co-production. This production will be directed by Matt Pfeiffer and will feature an astounding cast: Steven Klein, Emily Swallow, Nicole Erb and Rob Nagle.

Completeness chronicles a complicated, captivating relationship between two scientific searchers. It all starts at a chance meeting that proves fateful only in consequence, not in origin, at a computer cluster in a university library. A glancing interaction leads to cooperation, collaboration and finally congress between Elliott, a computer-science geek, and grad student researcher Molly, a molecular biologist working on a daunting cross-departmental experiment on cell regeneration in yeast cultures. Garrulously chatting, the tech genius devises a data-mining algorithm to speed up her studies. Impressed by his instant mastery of her intellectual needs, Molly is drawn to this conditionally confident Elliott. He's a very nice nerd.



photos by Ed Krieger

Of course, each potential lover has a back story to overcome, deny or ignore. Elliot reflexively breaks up with undergraduate Lauren, who leaves when she realizes that she can't control this "intellectual property." Molly in turn is subtly harassed by a jealous anti-mentor, an enthusiastic colleague who lends her his precious mice for experimentation.

Theirs must be the most cerebral courtship ever staged (but still very adult—no minors for this one). Both partners are beset by the maddening uncertainty of love and how to test it. Too clever for any easy joy, too aware of all the variables that can mess up their data, and too afraid of repeating painfully recent mistakes, these overthinking lovers, proverbial weak geeks, seem paralyzed by the parameters and possibilities of passion. Will these born learners discover the art (not science) of forgetting what hurts in order to grasp what helps? You can find out through December 7, 2014.