

Following is a link to a news segment about “Labyrinth: Defining Humanity,” that appeared on CNSTV, a Chinese television news program, on September 9, 2014. While the broadcast is in Chinese, the interview with the director is in English. Below is also the translation of the brief article accompanying the news clip online at chinanews.com.

Labyrinth: Defining Humanity, CNSTV Segment

Speaking of Theatre, one would normally think of “watching a performance”, where the actors act on stage and the audience sit and watch. On September 5th, 2014, *Labyrinth: Defining Humanity*, An experimental documentary theatre piece that had the audience be the performers, opened in Beijing.

Upon entering the theatre, we see a space surrounded by white fabrics. All audience members are on stage, moving and doing different tasks following the hosts’ instructions. Their reactions are all filmed and projected onto the surrounding white screens. The audience members are asked to participate in 5 different “experiment stations”, answer “the word’s hardest questions”, go through “apocalypse”, etc. The process requires them to watch, to listen, to speak, to eat, to move and to communicate with strangers. Chinese audiences are considered “shy” and “not-expressive.”

But the level of participation in this show was a pleasant surprise to the director, Mei Ann Teo. “We thought a lot about what that would mean for Chinese, how willing they would be to step up. Being Chinese myself, I understand the cultural difference. So we actually craft it in a way that we are not asking people to perform, but we are asking them to participate. I can tell you, the way that they came in and stepped up had such a beautiful quality of relief, of being able to express themselves. It was a beautiful thing to watch. So I hope that the people who come to the show will have that experience.”

The 65 audience spots were filled. The participants are on the younger side as well. Most audience members express that they really enjoyed themselves. “I have almost forgotten the real world, as if this (the theatre) is the real world.” “To be honest I wasn’t very invested at the beginning, but later there was this part where you wear headphones and listen to the sound of chopping vegetables, that’s when I felt more calm and drawn in.” Some audience members mentioned that the activities could be more stimulating. “I thought it was very interesting overall, but it didn’t exceed my expectations. Nothing was terribly surprising to me. “