

This review appeared on Liu Fang, a theatre reviewer's blog on September 6, 2014.
Below is the English translation.

Labyrinth: An Experiment on Humanity

Labyrinth felt more like an experiment on humanity than a performance. In different phases of activities, the creators have different questions and requests for the audience; invited the audience to answer and participate genuinely. For example, for the majority of the show, the audience is divided into small groups and brought to 5 different "experiment stations". At one of the stations, the audience is asked to write down, on a long piece of white fabric, the most severe problems that the world face right now, and connect the ones they think are related. The answers turned out to be of all kinds: racism, religious wars, pollution, death of poetry, decline of literature, and an audience member just put everything under "cars and houses"; At another station, they are asked to write down their biggest wish for the world. Afterwards, they are told that their wishes would come true if they ate the piece of paper. In that case, are you willing to eat the paper? (Both the paper and the ink are eatable material.); At another station, the audience sit in a circle, share their memories about home while eating peanuts.

In a more adventurous part, the hosts invite four audience members on stage and, in front of everyone, ask them "the hardest questions", such as, "What do you think is your biggest flaw?", "Who do you not want to become the most?", "Whose heart have you broken?", "What is stopping you from becoming better?" The questions are for the four audience members on stage as well as the people who are listening.

The last part is perhaps the most interesting. We are at the end of the world, and the audience members are one by one "dying". The stage is in darkness. Everyone has to wear blindfolds, and find people around them by searching and touching, for the first condition to be alive is to have physical contact with at least one person. The questions followed are all about how much you want to live. What if volcanoes erupted? What about flooding? Hurricanes? Would you still want to live? If no food, water or air is safe to consume, would you still want to live? (As a Chinese audience member, I naturally laughed a little when I heard the question.)

If you have survived all of the above, great. The following questions are without logic. People on stage will randomly hear the rules out of the dark. "If you were born in March, you die." "If you are afraid of spiders, you die." "If you are used to getting up early, you die." I died at "If you favorite color is blue", and just as I sat down in the audience, I heard a girl mumble "What's wrong with liking blue?" Maybe you are too young to understand, there is never right or wrong to nature and history. What is wrong with people who died of disease? What is wrong with being Jewish? What is wrong with people who answered the call to come back and build the country?

After the "rules" that were at least spoken, death starts its random selection. The remaining audience, who are still blindfolded in the dark, if you feel a tap on the shoulder, unfortunately, you die. I saw a couple that held each other so tight that they seemed so determined to face life and death together. The director was going tap on one of their shoulders, but was stopped by another crew member. If it were me, I would definitely cruelly tear them apart. In that case, they would probably cherish each other more when they walk out of the theatre.

At last, all the survivors are covered in a huge parachute. When they are allowed to take off their blindfolds, they realize that all the people that filled the stage were gone, and there were only less than 10 of them under the parachute. The hosts tell them that they are the only humans left on earth. The camera captures what's on

their face, shock, excitement... They wonder about their mission and the questions asked: What would you bring to rebuild the world? Slightly to my disappointment, a lot of answers were too vague, like confidence, bravery, kindness, etc. Do you really think that our home could be rebuilt just by one's virtues?

Lights up, show over, leaving everyone with different thoughts. Some people (myself and my friend included) thought that the form was excellent yet the questions could be more striking, and some people were very excited that they discovered things they has never noticed about themselves. The director also shared her thoughts. She said that what surprised her most was how much people longed for love, and was not afraid to share that in front of everyone. This was based on a part where people's wishes are read out loud. Some of them are amazingly similar. "I wish that someone would truly love me." "I wish someone would understand me." "I wish that someone would grow old with me."

What surprises me is that this is what the director finds surprising. Has isolation become a thing about China? Is it that for this diverse international production team, this is something unusual? I don't have an answer, given that my wish was also in that category.