

O Rex Immersive technology is perhaps a promised land for those chasing the newest developments in technology. Like any powerful imagined space does it haunts the creator with tantalising new possibilities? Sadly the magic box of theatre seemed burdened with equipment last night.

Beginning in the convivial confines of the Muffatwerk bar; director Eric Joris invites 4 'volunteers', up onto a platform for the audience to choose between. Joris explains that the company has spent years exploring this technology with participants 'inside'. This show is a first attempt to place a single volunteer 'inside', with the audience 'outside' as observers. The chosen volunteer, Slatko stays while we take our seats in the auditorium.

Guided through headphones on a journey from the bar Slatko is transformed into O Rex, our tragic hero. En route his eyes are removed and he is given goggles, covered by a bandage. Voiceover instruction becomes our narrative, admirably told by two performers as Oedipus's memory. One is a figure of authority instructing and encouraging O Rex while the other provides haunting vocals and textual echoes derived from Oedipus by Stravinsky. The imagined history, our epic tale, is admirably narrated. Virtual visions down corridors and unknown chambers are thrown onto a screen while O Rex is led round and round the performance space like psychiatric patient.

The metaphor could have really worked. Technology rendered our Oedipus helpless in the hands of the techie 'gods' and we were also implicated, watching him at their mercy. Blinded and subsumed by the machines any initiative by O Rex sank him further into the situation, his 'fate'. The first twenty minutes watching this horrific ordeal unfold were certainly riveting.

The piece lost its way, the robots were 'on strike', refusing to provide any visual subtext. After the show Joris spoke about the technology in the same way that other artists can speak about ideas, so complex and self referential that they fail to communicate. He was unashamedly frank about how working with complex electronics means there is always the possibility that the show will not work. What then, is the company's contract with their audience? How much do they consider our role in staging these experiments? Are we important? It seemed not. As the theme of this piece was alienation from technology the company completely succeeded in making their point felt, but to the detriment of good old fashioned empathy, surprise and delight in the story.

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