

SK!N by TerryAndTheCuz: A Thought-Provoking, Beautiful and Unsettling Look into the World of Human Trafficking – OzAsia Festival Review

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[MALAYSIA/AUS ~ AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE]

The Maj Gallery, Fri 1 Oct.

I arrive at the processing centre. I fill out a questionnaire and provide various personal details, ranging from the practical (emergency contact, health conditions) to the subjective (Can I dance? Am I attractive?) and even the unnerving (How old will I be when I die? If I went missing, what's the maximum amount my friends and family would pay?). Then I sign a waiver indemnifying the producers and the Festival Centre Trust from liability for injury, damage to property, or ticket costs should I be ejected for disturbing the performance.

I surrender all of my personal possessions... my backpack, and with it my mobile, my wallet and other personal effects. I'm given a plastic poncho, affixed with a number badge, led down a hallway, and asked to wait with a few other people. We are slightly nervous, but game for the experience, knowing very little of what we'd signed up for.

Once everyone has been processed, my group is led out into the cold, drizzly Adelaide night on an adventure that will prove funny, tedious, provocative, beautiful and baffling, often all at once. The goal is to give a taste of the experience of the victims of human trafficking and refugees, while the OzAsia synopsis holds out the promise of a dance performance, and without giving too much away, nor having a personal refugee experience to compare to, *SK!N* delivers on those counts. Spoilers follow.



When we arrive at a second location, we are led into queues, made to jump through bureaucratic hoops, suffer minor humiliations, split into groups again, herded into close confines, and ultimately treated to a gripping contemporary dance performance that is the ostensible reason for the experience. The choreography is haunting, and the dancers evoke the slow, steady breakdown of self that refugees and the dispossessed suffer in captivity.

Afterward, there are still other paths to follow. The dancers take some audience members to another location. Others are treated to a comparatively 1%-style blindfolded headphone sound-bath and hand massage. My group is led to a surreal after-party where we toast champagne to refugees and ourselves for daring to care, even for a moment, as *Pachelbel's Canon in D* plays on, secure in our bourgeoisie beneficence.

All in all, TerryAndThe Cuz's *SK!N* provoked and unsettled me. The overwhelming message delivered is that we can all do more to help our people in captivity.

Matt Saunders

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