

The Show for Teens *TOWER OF BABEL. Planet Earth/Game Over/Reset: a Review.*

By Simona Reklaitytė - age 17

The show that takes place in the Parqueted Hall of the National Kaunas Drama Theatre greets its spectators with intimidating music and foreboding environment. The fear is deepened by the dark surroundings, a gloomy melody coming from an old instrument and the actress's costume. Some participants try to ease the tension by laughing, others hide behind their friends or start clutching their arms.

Those who dare to stay are rewarded with an especially interesting experience of an unconventional (and cautionary) performance. The groups of spectators are able to enjoy four fundamental features of the show: extremely unique decorations (created by Signe Gerda Landfald), an interactive and mesmerising story (directed and written by Hilde Brinchmann), an intricate set of choices and even a possibility to determine how the show ends. The project, co-authored by Norwegian, Lithuanian, Icelandic and Hungarian creators, surprises the audience with its decorations, professionalism of actors and an intriguing story.

The environment of the performance will undoubtedly leave an impression: the space that is realistic and question-raising at the same time is very interesting to be in. It brings forth a wish to explore every corner available to you and analyse as well as touch the objects around. At the same time, you start wondering how the other rooms look (if they even exist?). Moving in a circle generates the feeling of amazement and a plethora of questions, but the overall view becomes accessible only after the walls fall down and the groups come together once more. The spaces and decorations then become the main topic of discussions. The Water Space, whose bright colours and allusions to the underwater world draw everybody's eye, is a favourite amongst the majority.

The costumes of the actors (created by Helena Andersson) is another perfect tool that helps to construct this alluring and daunting environment. The behaviour and speech of the feral people – that use one of the four new languages created specifically for the performance – unequivocally signals that the creatures portrayed are not descendants of the nowadays' society. Their actions are unexpected, at the beginning of the performance even frightening and aggressive, but as the show progresses, the creatures start treating participants as their own people.

One more original characteristic of the show is the freedom of choice it offers. Following the climax represented by the fall of the walls, total chaos ensues, as the participants are unaware what to do, whom to join, whom to trust and whom to hide from. This confusion elicits the necessity to choose whether to sacrifice the things they have been entrusted with for the common good or to claim them for their own benefit. Even though, at this point, the worlds are connected and all participants can work as a team, this creates a microclimate that implies division, and decisions must be made in separate groups once again.

The show *TOWER OF BABEL. Planet Earth/Game Over/Reset* is brimming with different feelings and emotions that induce calmness, fear or chaos. It is a highly recommended watch for teens, as the authors analyse such relevant topics as environment protection as well as the climate crisis, and present its young audience with a challenge of choice – whether to follow the crowd or go on their individual paths.

The Post-apocalyptic World in Theatre: How Will One Act in the Face of Disaster?

2022 has been an important year for Kaunas and the entire Lithuania both. Having been awarded the title of a European Capital of Culture, Kaunas has experienced a conversion that gave birth to a variety of unique and creative projects. One of them is an international show, called TOWER OF BABEL. Planet Earth/Game Over/Reset, co-authored by Norwegian, Islandic, Hungarian and Lithuanian theatres.

For their creative project, Director Hilde Brinchmann (Norway) and her team chose an Old Testament's story about the formation of different languages. Not only does the said story reveal the futility of human endeavours, but discusses the benefits of unitedness and the cruelty of a possible disaster as well.

Upon arriving, every audience member has to choose a label. This choice determines the team they are appointed to and the end of the narrative they are deemed to experience together with the actors.

Having left all our personal belongings behind, with the label pinned to the lapel and full of determination, we stride towards the place of action through the twisting corridors of the Parqueted Hall. The show starts the same second you step over the threshold of the "tower".

A piano melody fills the hall. The inquisitive eyes of a mysterious lady sitting at the piano follow every participant entering the room. When everybody is inside, the legend about the Tower of Babel is told to the audience, filling their hearts with adrenaline and uncertainty. Together with other players of the game, we wait for a signal to move towards our separate worlds. A shrilling sound pierces the hall, and we all go towards a mysterious space, filled with plastic. After taking our seats, we look around to soak up our surroundings. Soon we are joined by the actors, who tell the story and reveal the sequence of events. Having understood we will not be able to live here, we follow our guides to the other worlds.

Step by step, we are led into a mental space of facing a huge threat, as there is nothing left to eat or drink. Soon we are given a possibility to find out who is deemed to become an aggressor and steal from others, who will try to negotiate and try to barter, and who will succumb to shock and stay paralysed. All of this constitutes an essential part of the performance, which gives every viewer a chance to change the destiny of the entire group.

In the last part of the performance, we have to choose – whether to unite and risk our tribe's existence or – vice versa – try to survive and change the situation on our own.

The end of the show brings about a multitude of thoughts. You cannot help but feel anxious about the future of humanity, the current global situation and its rapid decrease. At the same time, the show inspires you to look for changes within yourself and strive to make our world a better place.

Domas Ramažauskas, age 17