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Night of forgiven trespasses

THEATRE

Don't Look Back

By Dreamthinkspeak. Old Treasury Building, Perth, February 9.
Tickets: \$60. Bookings: (08) 9484 1133. Until February 24.

BRITISH artist and director Tristan Sharps loves the idea of trespass, of being somewhere you shouldn't be. His unique form of theatrical performance involves putting his audience, a small group of people at a time, into a place they wouldn't normally be permitted to enter.

The no-go zone could be an abandoned grand hotel in Kuala Lumpur, a disused paper factory in Moscow or, in Perth, the majestic but moribund Treasury Building in the heart of the city. You arrive at your allotted time, take a seat in the waiting room and — with a touch of trepidation, it must be said — await your turn to step through the first door.

What unfolds is an *Alice in Wonderland*-like roam through a maze of rooms, down corridors echoing to the sound of your own footfall. Some rooms

hold enigmas, others are occupied by fleetingly glimpsed residents whose stares tell you they know exactly why they — and you — are there, reinforcing the ominous sense of trespass in the visitor's mind.

It's a fascinating approach to theatre: sow the seed of an idea in the participant's imagination and see it blossom under carefully controlled conditions. Instead of receiving the impact from without, you feel the transformative power of drama from within.

To describe the precise content of *Don't Look Back* would be unfair to anyone who is yet to experience it. Suffice it to say that one encounters exquisitely poetic images and a phalanx of ghostly guides, played by theatre students.

A clue to the piece lies in Sharps's revelation that he was inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Eurydice dies on her wedding day and is taken to the Underworld. Orpheus trespasses in the land of the dead, appeases the irate gods by playing his music and is told he may lead Eurydice safely back to the living world: but only if, the gods warn, "you don't look back". Of course he does. The metaphorical power of that journey touches everyone: we have all pondered our own deaths, tried to rescue people we love and failed. The act of trespass provokes an accusing look and that most existential of questions: "Why are you here?"

Should you choose to ponder the answer as you journey through Sharps's dream world, it can trigger powerful and unexpected emotions.

Victoria Laurie