

# Cart Macabre – review

Old Vic Tunnels, London

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**Lyn Gardner**

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A journey into the heart of darkness, the storm-tossed oceans of sleep and perhaps even into death itself, Living Structures's theatre-cum-installation piece is certainly different – though it will hold few surprises for anyone who has seen immersive shows such as You Me Bum Bum Train and The Smile Off Your Face. Cart Macabre borrows from the twisted fairground ride and the masked carnival but also perhaps from the plague cries to "Bring out your dead". Audiences members are selected, carried away on a moving bier and then installed in a cart, which is then moved about the space. At times it feels as if you are on a ghost train, at others it's like being on a ship.

## **Cart Macabre**

Old Vic Tunnels, London

Living Structures

Until 22 December

Box office:

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[oldvictheatre.com](http://oldvictheatre.com)

Each time you trundle to a standstill, peep holes and slits are opened allowing for a glimpse of visions and nightmares: images of our bone nakedness, bloody hearts and reminders of the brief candle of life. Divested of our possessions, our breath captured in plastic bags by the show's crew of singing sailors, there is something haunting here about the ephemeral nature of our existence. But apart from the piercing beauty of the singing, the show seldom really touches the heart or soul.

The visions conjured are often a little too obvious, and there's never enough content for the amount of clunk and click paraphernalia that surrounds the manoeuvrings of the carts into place. The piece feels in need of considerably more layering and texture. Although there are surprises, they are almost always spatial rather than mental or emotional, and the impact of the final reveal is lessened because it has already been used a good deal in this kind of work. But this is certainly a novel experience that sends its audience out into the night if not stirred, then certainly a little shaken.