

# Frankly, a bit of a mystery...

Frank at Newcastle  
Playhouse until June 8

FRANK, a co-production between Northern Stage and a Manchester-based theatre company called Quarantine, is billed as "an exploration of honesty".

It is a step into the unknown followed by a journey to be made alone.

Scarreee! I sent the wife.

It is an unusual theatre production in that the audience members enter individually at 10-minute intervals.

The brainchild of director Richard Gregory *Frank*, "an inhabited installation of separate yet connected rooms", is a

way of making each audience member the star of his or her own show.

Personally, I have always appreciated the dark safety of the auditorium (if I'd wanted to be an actor, I'd have applied for stage school). So I was happy to sit and watch the bold and the brave make their exit.

Their faces were shining. They all spoke of emerging with a desire to share their experiences inside the labyrinth.

The problem is, part of the deal with *Frank* is that you are not allowed to share your experience with anyone outside the installation.

My wife emerged after 30 minutes with a faintly

bemused expression but clearly buoyed up by Frank. What had been going on in there?

At risk of incurring the director's wrath, I will pass on a few snippets. She talked of being served soup and of a beautifully scented room full of herbs, and another with seaweed and a violin and yet another which appeared to have been the scene of a recent fire.

"Like a cross between a dream and a nightmare," she said. But she was smiling. Maybe I'd better get in there some time and check it out.

For a chance to experience Frank, tel. 0191 230 5151.

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