

## *Sleep No More Explained: A Look at Interactive Theater*

“From here, you have but one decision to make: up or down.”

I looked \_\_\_\_\_ the staircase in front of me, wondering \_\_\_\_\_ the direction I took would actually impact tonight’s choose-your-own-adventure theater. Not one to be indecisive, I went up, then wondering just how many flights I should go. Exiting on the fifth floor, I quickly found \_\_\_\_\_ in an asylum, reading through patient records and walking past lines of cots and bathtubs.

After multiple trips \_\_\_\_\_ New York, I wanted to do something different. *Sleep No More* is New York’s best known interactive theater—a far cry from customary Broadway shows. There is (almost) no spoken dialogue, no barriers between the actors and the audience, and only a loosely-defined beginning, middle, and end. I had read plenty of *Sleep No More* reviews prior to my visit and still wasn’t quite sure what to expect. This isn’t a story: it’s an immersive experience like no other, sightDOING at its best.

In a converted Chelsea warehouse, theater-goers \_\_\_\_\_ welcomed to the “*McKittrick Hotel*” and challenged to participate in a story that’s one part *Macbeth*, one part Hitchcock, one part interpretive dance, and one part escape room.

Instead \_\_\_\_\_ sitting in an audience and watching the show, you’re free to independently wander and follow cast members \_\_\_\_\_ you wish. Each actor tells their own story, with other actors simultaneously telling interconnected stories in other rooms and other floors. You can’t watch it all, meaning everyone’s experience \_\_\_\_\_ unique.

That is how I found myself wearing a white *Venetian mask*, silently roaming through elaborately-designed sets, half entranced and half confused.

The show’s intensity is surreal. More often than not, I found myself chasing characters down staircases, barely keeping up with them to find \_\_\_\_\_ what happens next. \_\_\_\_\_ one point, I had to walk away from a nurse who never took her gaze off me, \_\_\_\_\_ eye contact burning a hole through my mask. Not once, \_\_\_\_\_ twice, I found myself completely alone in a silent cemetery that creeped me out so much I ran to a different set. To illicit such \_\_\_\_\_ emotional response is not easily done. \_\_\_\_\_ I wasn’t technically part of the story, the show is clearly participatory.

Since there's very little spoken dialogue, you'll never know \_\_\_\_\_ details of the set and the story are integral to the overall message and which are merely ambiance. This forces you to focus \_\_\_\_\_ everything, look through family photographs, and rummage through drawers, all adding to the fully immersive feel.

I left the show unsettled, in an altered state of reality as I walked back to my hotel under the Chelsea Highline. I was on pins and needles wondering \_\_\_\_\_ I missed. I never did connect all the plot lines and I'm still unsure \_\_\_\_\_ I even met all the characters. Knowing that I only caught a fraction of the story is exactly what made it \_\_\_\_\_ intriguing.