



Eric Lurio

Artist, writer, adventurer!

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Auschwitz: the Musical, or the problem of North Korea



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Yeah, I know, the title sounds totally outrageous and disgusting, but recently, I saw a film called *Yodok Stories*, about a concentration camp in North Korea, and it's pretty amazing. There really isn't a difference

between Yodok and Auschwitz except that the camps up there are open up now and one percent of the prisoners are let go...

From the press blurb:

Yodok: site of North Korea's most notorious political concentration camp, a word that registers barely a blip on the radar for most of the world. The limited access to North Korea by outsiders gives little, if any, glimpse into the ongoing horrors of this closed off country's labor camps. but for those living here, dissent and disobedience of even the slightest degree are grounds for offenders to be relocated to the camps, from which few emerge alive to tell their story.

Multiple-award-winning director Andrzej Fidyk (*North Korea: The Parade*) finds a few such escapees living in exile in South Korea. Among them is Jung Sung San, former director of some of North Korea's most ambitious propagandistic musical theater displays. Fidyk convinces him to turn his talents toward a work revealing the true North Korea, using the traditional musical theater style. Exposing subject matter notoriously shrouded in secrecy, this uplifting and sobering doc blends testimonials from survivors and scenes from the controversial stage show, exploring in detail the atrocities these men faced as prisoners--and the challenges they face while trying to express them through art.

This film is at once one of the most heartbreaking and weirdest films I've seen in quite a while. Findyk's idea, on the face of it, is completely insane, but very well may have been the only way to do it. But it seems that most people in South Korea are guilty of Holocaust denial, and I don't mean the Jewish one, I mean the one going on in their own back yard. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, have died in the Yodok Concentration Camp, which is unique in that it has a small "revolutionizing" section which about 4% of the inmates have been let out, mostly children. The other concentration camps are just like the Nazis': death! Now I know that some of you out there may object to my comparing anything to Hitler or the Nazis, (Godwin's law and all that) but when there's something that really deserves it, what does one do?

Well, the answer is a Korean "*Lez Miz*." It sound weird and a bit gross. The film goes back and forth between interviews with escapees and rehearsals and performances of the musical itself. We hear talk of Darfur, and we must never forget, and we must always remember that Kim Jong Il isn't just a short, smarmy buffoon. Millions have been murdered in various ways in North Korea, and more must know about what happens there.

It's all reminiscent of what was going on in the once and future Cambodia (then called "Democratic Kampuchea") back in the 1970s, just before it was invaded by Vietnam in 1979. and it was a charnel house. Almost two million people were killed. The two Kims have been ruling North Korea for over half a century, and no one knows how many millions were killed. Something has to be done, and now! But nothing will happen unless they shoot first. Nobody wants another Iraq or Afghanistan. So the people there will suffer.

That is unless Kim and his cronies decide to shoot first...but no one expects that either. Hoping for war is horrible, but what is the alternative?

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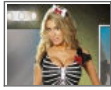
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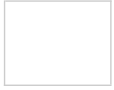
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