

During a time of healing, 'Journey into Blackness' celebrates diversity

KEVIN SMITH | STAFF WRITER

The words "we shall overcome" echoed throughout Dana Auditorium Saturday evening as the clapping audience for "The Collective" helped to top off the weeklong "Journey into Blackness" program.

The weeklong program consisted of four events including a community festival, storytelling, a presentation about African ancestry and finally a performance of "The Collective."

Two other planned events, "The Day of Silent Identity" and "The Significance of Red, Black and Green," were postponed due to inclement weather. The other events had low attendance.

Rick Kittle, an associate professor from the University of Chicago, gave the presentation "Finding the African in African Ancestry." Kittle discussed the genetic variations within Africa and how genetics has helped many African Americans gain knowledge about ancestry that was lost during The Middle Passage.

At the end of his presentation, Kittle explained the significance of his

research.

"People ask me 'why you do this? Why do you get so excited?'" Kittle said. "When I was growing up and I was in school, I would go to my friend's house, and they would have a coat of arms, family shields ... all I had to identify with were the horrific images of The Middle Passage. So this is why I do what I do."

Kittle's talk was well received by his audience. President of the Campus Activities Board Marcus Rowe was quite moved by the talk.

"I was aware that all of us have some sort of connection to each other, but I had no idea that that connection ran as deep as genetics," Rowe said. "I took a lesson from that, seeing that we essentially are related so that kind of makes

us all a family, and you're accountable to your family; so everybody can work together to make a change, especially in light of what's been going on on campus these last couple of weeks."

Holly Wilson, the coordinator of Africana Community Programs, was also affected by the presentation.

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The week's events were concluded with "The Collective," a series of opera-like performances about the meaning of blackness. "The Collective" was by far the best-attended event of the whole week, and was applauded tremendously at its end.

"I've seen that show before, and I get something out of it every time," Rowe said.

Both Rowe and Wilson were disappointed with the low attendance of the event, but agreed that it was expected due to various reasons.

"They were definitely under-attended, but I have a feeling it had a lot to do with the week before, unfortunately," said Wilson, who still considered the program a success. "A lot of people's energies were towards the incident that happened on the (Jan.) 20th and between catching up on homework and sleep. I'm a firm believer that people who are supposed to be at events are there."

Marcus Rowe agreed that the events' low attendance was expected, but still believed they were important to have.

"It's kind of expected when you have events that are centered around topics dealing with minorities; it's kind of hard to get people who aren't in that minority to show up," Rowe said. "We learn from these events, and what I think is really good for the community is just to know how close we all really are."

Fantasy and reality collide in *Pan's Labyrinth* *Fairies and fauns in Franco's Spain*

KEVIN BRYAN | STAFF WRITER

"Pan's Labyrinth" is one of the best fairy tales produced in years. No child should see it.

Ofelia (Ivana Baquero) and her pregnant mother, Carmen (Ariadna Gil), go out to the country to live with her new stepfather, Captain Vidal (Sergi Lopez). Vidal is a captain in Franco's army, during The Spanish Civil War. He brings his sick wife to his remote fort where he is tasked to destroy the last few rebels who live in the nearby woods.

He wants to be there for the birth of his son.

Ofelia has not been in the country before, only reading about it in fairy tales. She searches for the fantastical and finds it. "Pan's Labyrinth" does a wonderful job of showing the fantastical that most people either miss or ignore. Too focused on the war or the pregnancy, none of the adults notice the labyrinth or the strange stone totems in the woods.

Not only is "Pan's Labyrinth" a fairy tale, but

it is also about fairy tales. Ofelia escapes the horrible violence of her stepfather and the worsening state of her mother by escaping into a fantasy world in the nearby woods.

The first insect she sees she assumes to be a fairy. It is one. The fairies are not pretty; they do not grant her gifts, but they take her to someone important. Down at the very bottom of the labyrinth she meets a faun (Doug Jones).

The faun tells her a story. She is the princess of the king of the underworld. If she accomplishes three tests and proves her identity, she can return to her kingdom. She can escape her human life.

The tasks are unusual; the

and forth between the faun's tasks and the difficulties of her normal life. She makes friends with one of the house servants, only to discover that she is aiding the rebels.

The fantastical in the story is similar to one of Grimm's fairy tales. There are difficult tasks, there are horrible monsters, and there is moral uncertainty. Anything in the fantastical world, however, pales to the darkness of the reality she tries to escape.

Captain Vidal is the true villain of this film, and the element that sets it apart. Vidal kills an innocent man and is annoyed only because his time was wasted. Vidal wants a son, not a wife, and certainly not Ofelia. He acts without remorse almost to the point of seeming inhuman. He might just be too much of a monster to watch.

The rest of the humans seem human. They have their own doubts and limits, and all have their own way of relating to Ofelia. The housekeeper Mercedes (Maribel Verdu) once believed in fairies but now instead believes in a rebellion that is just as

"Beautiful and exhilarating. A fairy tale for grown-ups."

Roger Ebert
Chicago Sun Times

tasks are deadly, and some of them are wrong. Ofelia wonders if she can trust the faun. The story weaves back



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unlikely. The doctor once believed in the rebellion but still believes that honor can exist in so dark a world.

Her mother dreads the day Ofelia will wake up from the fairy tales and see the way things really are. The rebels know they will die but no longer care. Vidal's soldiers gasp at his actions but continue to assist.

Ofelia is caught between a man she knows is evil, and a faun that she does not trust. Watching her story alone would make this movie worth watching. The depictions of both worlds — the bleakness of the real and the newness of the fantastical — make this a movie to watch again.

But not too often, or Vidal might make you sick.