

Theatre

By Marijn van der Jagt

Theatre Group Schwalbe

Schwalbe speelt vals (Schwalbe cheats)

The eight performers come onto the stage in their underwear. Amongst a pile of clothing that lies on the stage, they search for vests, T-shirts, trousers, skirts, cardigans, socks and pants. They carry on until the pile has disappeared and they are all dressed differently. Such a dressing scene is common on stage: actors putting their costume on in the company of the audience, leading them step-by-step in their imagination. But what the performers from the young theatre group Schwalbe put on, later seems to be more of a battle outfit than the costume of a character in a play. For most of the performance 'Schwalbe speelt vals' consists of a physical game. On a marked out pitch, with goals at each end, the actors, divided into two teams, try to take off each other's clothing. All the 'conquered' pieces of clothing are thrown in the goal, and those ending up in their underwear are out.

The format is reminiscent of all the game shows that are on television at the moment, in which the physical skills of famous personalities are tested, from climbing to swimming and making fire to untying knots. With Schwalbe, the format of the game is simple, but the fanaticism with which the actors commit to the game means that they manage to achieve the same as all these game shows: you become fascinated by their grim determination, and the manner in which, through their actions alone, the performers reveal themselves. What is clever about this performance, is that nothing seems acted or set up, whilst there is clearly a fascinating build-up to the game. Very slowly, more aggression creeps into the fanaticism, the lightness of the game disappears, and lines are crossed – generating fury, and meanness. Everybody, both in the audience and on stage, knows that it is just a game. But the question is, who will be the first to forget it.

Tour starts January: www.schwalbe.nu