

27 FEBRUARY 2016 - ROTTERDAM MUNICIPAL THEATRE

## Schwalbe performs a time by Schwalbe Theatre Collective

### UNIQUE ODE TO THEATRE AND WHAT GOES BY

★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE

By Elisabeth Oosterling

**There are no reflections on the window; a light glows through it. Behind the window a woman sits at a small table with her arms crossed. Very briefly she sits there at the window of the little café, like one of the 'nighthawks' in the famous painting by Hopper. Then she stands up and takes a stepladder from behind the bar. She pulls something out of the wall, something else, and then pushes the walls together, dismantling the world she had just inhabited.**

The new production of the Schwalbe Theatre Collective, *Schwalbe Performs a Time*, is a tour de force. The performance takes an entire night, from one minute before midnight to six o'clock in the morning. In the wee hours of the night, five performers build up a dozen or so different sets, only to immediately break them down again. Building block after building block – in a series of perfectly coordinated actions – images take shape on the stage. Theatrical settings arise in which stories can establish themselves, but those stories do not unfold: right at the point when the curtain would rise, the breakdown starts again. Each setting is a glimpse of a world that will not exist tonight. Cardboard that very briefly comes to life and immediately becomes cardboard again.

The sets that Schwalbe assembles and dismantles in this performance are on loan: the interior of a café is from a production by Carver; bags and bags full of (deafening) tin cans are from Dood Paard. Some of the visuals are erected in no time, like a lighting box with a few stands from Jetse Batelaan; others take over an hour to set up – that little building with the non-reflecting windows, for instance, that Schwalbe has borrowed from the mime theatre company Bambie. Pitching in together, the performers lug around walls and sections of roof – all for that one image, even though it will only exist for a few seconds. For a moment, there is a promise of a different world, because of the set. But it turns out to be just as fleeting as theatre itself.

The Schwalbe performers Christina Flick, Marie Groothof, Floor van Leeuwen, Kimmy Ligtvoet and Ariadna Rubio Lleó assemble and dismantle in dedicated silence. There is hardly any consultation, and when that does occur, it is wordless. The performance is like a focussed choreography, with the performers as builders of borrowed worlds. Not all of this is equally fascinating: by 4 o'clock in the morning, the placement of dozens of trays of flowers (from *Van Waveren* by RO Theater), for instance, seems to last forever. As hypnotising as the assembly work can be, it can also seem terribly slow. At moments like those, the blankets on the bleachers are very welcome.

So, it's time for a little shuteye. Or going to the improvised bar in the corridor. And there you are then, in an almost deserted theatre in the middle of the night, standing in front of a tray of cheese sandwiches and a refrigerator loaded with beer, which you have to reload yourself ('please!') when you remove something from it.

In the six hours of *Schwalbe Performs a Time* there are tremendously fascinating images (*Apnea* by Rodrigo Sobarzo) and less successful ones, but this is undeniably a unique project, a splendid ode to the transitoriness of theatre.

<http://www.theaterkrant.nl/recensie/schwalbe-speelt-tijd/>

Photo: Stephan van Hesteren

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THEATERCOLLECTIEF SCHWALBE

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