

Review: Dancing with Seppe Baeyens

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**A dance performance in which the audience uncomplainingly participates on a Friday evening after a long week at work? Choreographer Seppe Baeyens has managed it with the heart-warming *Invited*.**

In 2015, Seppe Baeyens (b. 1981) created his first large-scale dance performance, *Tornar*, with a cast of non-professional dancers of all ages. The piece was selected for the Theatre Festival.

Yesterday evening, the choreographer's piece *Invited* premiered at KVS. This is another piece that features non-professional dancers from different generations, as well as almost the whole audience.

### **Wallflowers**

Either you have always regarded it as a weak point of dance performances that you weren't allowed to join in the dancing yourself, or else you are scared to death of stage creations in which spectators are obliged to participate. The choreographer Seppe Baeyens expertly succeeds in converting those of both persuasions. He is brilliantly successful at gently bringing about a symbiosis between the dancers and the audience, between the irrepressible party animals and the wallflowers of this world.

The highly unusual cast of *Invited* – sixteen people of every conceivable age, colour, creed and gender – is less a statement than an obvious choice for a dance project that is meant to be inclusive. The dancers look exactly like the spectators with whom they are mingling.

For example, they calmly set in motion a collective movement, thus naturally creating a pleasant group dynamic. Now and again they take someone by the hand so that they can cross the space together. In all this, they make no demands, create no expectations, and value everyone equally, leaving them free to participate or not as they choose.

### **Dance for Dummies**

Among the audience, which is now all mixed up together and spread around the theatre, fresh clusters of people keep on forming, springing up briefly before sitting back down again.

You could call the audience's part in all this *dance for dummies* if you could find a more respectful way to put it: crossing the stage, turning in circles, standing opposite one another and then going away again. In a way that does give you, as a participating spectator, an idea of what it entails to arrange bodies in time and space, which enables you to see how this sometimes works and sometimes doesn't. How you first test one another out, before perhaps briefly managing to achieve lift off together.

At this premiere, the audience will perhaps have been especially sympathetic, but it was fascinating to see how organically everything unfolded. It is perhaps somewhat premature to credit the audience with co-authorship – the ambition was too modest for that – but the supple interaction between the fixed choreography of the cast and the controlled input of the audience was nevertheless exceptional.

### **Tight rope**

We are not yet entirely sure whether the possibilities offered by that one prop, the striking artwork *Rope* by Ief Spincemaille – a 65-metre long and 30-cm thick blue braided cord – were utilised to the full. But as a flexible symbol of connection, an excellent tool whereby everyone is pulling together, it was certainly effective.

And finally, an impressive four-star rating for the rousing and intoxicating instrumental pieces with which the trio Stef Heeren, Kwinten Mordijck and Karen Willems constantly kept the rope tensed. And a further round of applause for our dancing selves.

*Invited* runs up to and including Sunday 25 February.

*Invited*, Seppe Baeyens / Ultima Vez & KVS, 24/2, 20.30 & 25/2, 15.00 & 17.00, KVS\_BOX,  
[www.kvs.be](http://www.kvs.be)