

De Standaard  
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### **Everyone on stage!**

In *Invited*, the choreographer Seppe Baeyens and a varied group of amateurs invite the audience to dance. It's an impressive experience.

The lights go out. A man starts singing. A child joins in. The sixty-year-old sitting next to you then also joins the round. You can immediately sense that in *Invited* the boundary between inside and outside, viewer and performer, active participation and passive watching will become blurred.

In the middle of the stage, the other half of the audience has sat down on a gigantic blue 'snake'. It's called *Rope*, is 65 metres long and was designed by Ief Spincemaille. The thing starts moving, hesitantly at first, and then soon aided by dozens of hands. It's wonderful, that sense of shared responsibility among strangers. *Rope* is turned into a circle. Its middle becomes a place of performance and encounter. For this examination of co-authorship, Baeyens assembled more than fifteen performers – amateurs, but above all marvellous people. There is the charming 94-year-old Léon, whom we had already seen in *Tornar* (2015), and also two men with Down syndrome and a handful of teenagers with a tremendously precocious attitude. They lead you by the hand to another place to sit or into the arena for an intimate *pas de deux* or a runaround.

It's amazing to see how Baeyens has got this extremely varied group into a position where it can sustain a social choreography on this scale. The 'dancers' inspire so much trust that each 'viewer' knows what to do without a word being spoken. The rules of the game are both clear and open.

The drum-fury Karen Willems and her two musical companions force up the energy level live on stage while the motley sea of people swells into a whirlwind. It is not only this image of diversity and solidarity that is deeply moving, but also the realisation that you are fundamentally a part of this miniature society – whether you watch warily or eagerly take part. It takes some doing, in a theatre with 150 people.

Theatre, as an art of the here and now, is proud of its capacity to create communities, but this is more often a myth than a reality. Not in Baeyens' case, however. His social intelligence and eye for composition and structure make *Invited* a compelling, disarming experience.