

Is this really necessary?

Yes, it is

For The Time Being

Boukje Schweigman/Slagwerk Den Haag

Suddenly, a performer puts his head in your lap. It's just before the end of *For the time being*, the latest performance by Boukje Schweigman and percussion group Slagwerk Den Haag, in a hangar near Den Bosch. We're huddled together on the floor, tightly packed in an enclosed space. And without giving away the performance's grandiose apotheosis: we've created this space ourselves – us, the audience. Outside, the percussionists are making threatening sounds on their xylophones, but in here, in this huddle of some hundred members of the audience and fourteen performers, it feels safe. A cocoon of tranquillity and intimacy.

There's a reason why Boukje Schweigman has been called the 'queen of immersive theatre'. With *For The Time Being*, she takes the theatrical experience even further, by getting the audience more actively involved in the proceedings. Your first thought is disparaging: "is this really necessary?", but Schweigman goes about it with such charm that you gladly let yourself be used for her theatrical purposes.

In *For The Time Being*, Schweigman employs her own, perfected method: she picks a 'big' issue and uses movement (not a word is spoken) to build a complete universe around it. In this case time is the concept that's being looked at from every possible perspective and in a highly intelligent and inventive way to boot. In the first part of the show the performers are positioned across the floor, like statues frozen in time. Then slowly things start moving, everything accelerates, running and rushing about all around you, almost touching. Then back to slow-motion, downshifting as if time were liquid. There are powerful scenes in which the performers run around in a compulsive yearning to move, to stay ahead of time. It's easy to make the connection with our hectic daily life.

By comparison the scenes in which the audience is literally taking part can feel a bit studied. Starting with movements, the performers make personal contact with the audience. You're invited to jump together, a jacket gets passed around, you're lifted up. Is this all really necessary?

And yes, it is, because without the audience taking part Schweigman would not have been able to make her point; a plea for de-stressing. The performers have us running around, they're picking us up from the floor, making us laugh – and there we have it; before we know it we've effectively de-stressed ourselves. Now that's what I call theatrical empowerment!

(Alexander Hiskemuller for *Trouw* newspaper, translation Maaïke van Rijn)
