



★★★★ A perfect balance between humour and drama

There's a small boy who would like to completely disappear every once in a while. There's a rabbit who tends towards theatrics and likes to wear greasepaint. There's a fascinated assistant who allows herself to be swept away into the world of the grand spectacle. And there are tricks galore, from making balls disappear to sawing off heads. There's always something around the corner in a world where illusion is king.

With their show *The Great Illusionist* (8+), Het Filiaal theatermakers from Utrecht has managed to find the perfect balance between humour and drama. While not shying away from spectacle – the show is fast-paced and full of humour – there are also emotional close-ups. Because, what's underneath all of the hocus-pocus? Why are we secretly so fond of lies and deception? The young audience is confronted with questions like these. Does the deceiver like to lie, or would people rather be deceived than hear the truth? It is this rather philosophical approach, combined with tight performances that follow on each other's heels and well-executed classic magic acts, that make *The Great Illusionist* into a truly spellbinding show.

On stage are Gábor Tarján (musician and actor), Ramses Graus (object theatre maker and actor), and Henke Tuinstra (actor). The first two are members of the company. Tuinstra graduated from the drama academy this year, and this is her second production with Het Filiaal. With her expressive face and enthusiastic performance, she establishes a natural rapport with the young audience. Graus provides a sense of calm with his uncomplicated style, and he excels in the scenes in which he brings the rabbit to life. And finally, there's Tarján, who can usually be found at his instruments but is never just a musician. As the odd man out, he plays his role with gusto.

What first takes the show to a higher level is the script, written by director Monique Corvers, which contains dialogue that is hilarious and despondent in equal measure. Perhaps the best example of this can be found in the rather pushy – and also lonesome – rabbit, who, in the song 'A Rabbit without Roots', looks back sadly at how he lost touch with his own roots. The rabbit – a large and rather unsightly cuddly toy – is played beautifully by Graus, filled with emotion and contradictions.

There's a lot going on here, and at times we lose sight of the common thread. But it would be unfair to say that there is too much going on, especially judging from the reactions of the children, who watch open-mouthed from start to finish. Not to mention the parents.

Because these are no small questions being posed here by Het Filiaal. Where does a lie start and where does it end? What kind of dreadful place would the world be if all we had was the uncensored truth? Let's let the theatre be a place where magic can still reign. And where illusion reigns supreme.