

UNSEEN

by
Jakop Ahlbom Company



typical Ahlbom style: combining physically exhausting acts with dance and illusions. These moments are often poetic, and they look fantastic and are often unexpected.

★★★★ NRC

Ahlbom shows us again with this small masterpiece how a performance without words gets a deep meaning.... Unseen is performed perfectly

★★★★ Volkskrant

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Parool

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Theaterkrant

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Dagblad van het Noorden



Dutch national newspaper De Volkskrant 17 Feb 2022

Technically, *Unseen* is perfect:

This kind of theater requires utmost concentration ★★★★★

By Hein Janssen 17 Februari 2022

A small children's bicycle aimlessly goes back and forth in a deserted room. Empty. Nobody is on it. Does this explain the sadness of the young couple? Are they not able to have any children? Or even worse: has the child died?

In **Unseen**, the latest performance by Jakop Ahlbom Company, the small bicycle raises all kinds of questions that are not answered. In an exceptionally detailed, rotating decor a living room, a dining room and kitchen appear in front of our eyes. This house where two sad people are living, oozes/breathes sadness and anger.

After **Lebensraum**, Ahlbom shows us again with this small masterpiece how a performance without words gets a deep meaning. The husband and wife live their lives with dull and boring routines: he goes to work every morning, and she wanders around the house. They can hardly bear to be with each other: she hits him with a fly swatter and he puts sharp pins in her tea.

Then there is the intruder all of a sudden: a burglar in the classic sense coming in through the kitchen window. However, he does not come to steal anything, but to bring a gift: a small, flowering plant. Slowly the tension in the house disappears: after a tough clash they carefully do a small dance, a hand ends up lovingly on a breast. The piano is played and songs are sung.

In Ahlbom's sublime universe, the three parts are played by Silke Hundertmark, Reinier Schimmel and Jakop Ahlbom himself. They do so with perfect timing, dances that move us, patterns of movement that take our breath away, carried out by flexible bodies swirling around each other like model dolls. Doors are suddenly disappearing in the beautiful sounds ranging from opera to jazz and we see mesmerizing scenes.

Technically, **Unseen** is performed perfectly. This is the kind of theater that requires utmost concentration. But the performance also has an emotional impact. The empty children's bicycle has become less threatening towards the end. Sadness turns into acceptance.

Dutch national newspaper Parool

Theater review

Ahlbom subtly brings love back into an empty house

A husband and wife are fighting a kind of guerilla war with each other in the carefully detailed performance **Unseen**. However, we also see love returning to an empty house.

By Hans Smit on 2 March 2022

The title *Unseen* refers to the atmosphere in the house of the nameless couple.

If you have an eye for detail you will enjoy Jakop Ahlbom's performances even more. You will suddenly see a cup moving on the kitchen counter, an item of clothing flying or a curtain starting to move all by itself. Expecting the unexpected really captures your attention, as in the new performance **Unseen**.

Ahlbom was inspired by the Korean film *Bin-Jip* and fortunately, he plays the part of the intruder himself. The control of his body is breathtaking, the way he lovingly and tenderly moves along with the wife or the way he avoids the blunt violence of the husband. He also does something with the cup that moves, *and* he brings back love into this empty house. The choreography, the set design and the props of **Unseen** are well taken care into the finest detail.

Mime theater performance: Unseen

By Jakop Ahlbom Company **Seen on** 24 Feb in De Meern

On tour 4 to 6 March in Theater Bellevue

Dutch national newspaper NRC 17 Feb 2022

Poetic **Unseen** never becomes homelike

The curtains are drawn in the small kitchen and the radio is softly playing. The lady of the house is making tea, as her husband wants to have breakfast. This might look like a homelike scene, but it's not peaceful at all. He hardly pays her any attention, only when they bully each other. This is becoming more and more extreme. For example, she leaves sharp pins on his chair, and he pours them into her mug. She nails his jacket to the table top.

Director Jakop Ahlbom immediately puts a strain on the relationship. He shows the loveless relationship in the quiet scenes. The man and wife are distant and there is a complete lack of understanding between them. The wife (Silke Hundertmark) tries to attract the attention of her husband (Reinier Schimmel), but it's in vain. The couple has lost each other over the course of time. Love has been replaced by hate.

Meanwhile, strange things are happening in the house hinting at a tragic event. An empty children's bicycle slides across the stage, and a small dress suddenly flies out of the wardrobe.

Kind acts of tenderness

The arrival of a burglar (a beautiful part for Ahlbom himself) shakes things up. He walks around the house and fixes what was broken during the many fights. He glues letters and cups back together, simply by touching them with his hand – and he brings a new plant. These are unexpected kind acts of tenderness in a household that is sweltering with insanity. Because the burglar is so close by, the husband realizes that he is losing his wife – or has already lost her.

The turning stage lets us look into the different rooms. The actors are climbing through the window or suddenly appear from the fridge. This is all happening in the The acrobatic performance of the burglar is excellent, but also the plainer choreographies of the husband and wife when they grow closer again. They still bump, trip and clash, but finally there is some longing in their togetherness.

Dutch review: "In het poëtische 'Unseen' wordt het nooit echt huiselijk" - NRC 17-02-2022

Jakop Ahlbom Company **Unseen**

TOUCHING (AND SOMETIMES COMICAL) MOMENTS OF POWERLESSNESS

By Karin Veraart 17 February 2022 - Seen on 16 February 2022, Theater Rotterdam Schouwburg

A lonely children's tricycle slowly moves through the house. This doesn't strike you as odd in a performance by theater producer Jakop Ahlbom. Soulless objects can spring to life in a way that makes you wonder: how? This can have a comical effect, or be very scary, or express immense sadness as is the case in his latest performance *Unseen*.

The performance **Unseen** immediately strikes us as one in the tradition that Ahlbom (Sweden, 1971) has carefully developed ever since he graduated at the Mime Academy in Amsterdam in 1998. Very soon, unusual things are starting to happen in surroundings that do not seem all that spectacular at a first glance. Characters appear on stage from places you don't expect, the stage shows itself from surprising sides, props are playing their own role in the mainly wordless scenes in which timing is everything. Ahlbom loves slapstick, circus (for example magic tricks), movies and horror movies full of surrealist scenes – and we can certainly see proof of that here.

He was inspired by a film when he created **Unseen**, namely *Bin-Jip* by the Korean cinematographer Kim Ki-Duk. Performers Silke Hundertmark en Reinier Schimmel, well-known faces of the Jakop Ahlbom Company, are making each other's life a misery in an unhappy marriage. The bullying by both of them are proof of this, but even more so the loneliness that they express – and then there is the lonely children's bicycle hinting at the cause for all of this. Nothing is said, which is typical for Ahlbom's work, but the body language is very clear: Schimmel with his tall and flexible body who literally overlooks Hundertmark constantly, while she wriggles into all kinds of inimitable shapes and forms to try and make contact with him.

This powerlessness is touching (and at times comical) to see – even though the makers are taking a bit too much time to let us experience the atmosphere. But then there is the moment of change: with the unorthodox entrance of a stranger. He slowly but surely changes the colour of the performance – ever so magically and lightly. In the end the man and woman can actually start to see each other again.

This makes **Unseen** into an easy-to-understand, somewhat fairytale-like performance with many recognizable moments. Perhaps it is not as spectacular and impressive as his previous work, but the exceptional talents of the performers, perfection at all levels and the original elements ensure our continued respect for Ahlbom. The audience keeps watching this performance as if spell-bound.

Unseen speaks a visual language

Intensely beautiful performance to watch

The small children's bicycle has pedals that are slowly going around. It's quietly going from the living room to the kitchen and the bedroom, all by itself. This is the melancholic opening scene of **Unseen**. The new performance by the Jakob Ahlbom Company.

With the typical style of Ahlbom combining reality and imagination, visual effects, dance, mime and humour, **Unseen** offers us an intriguingly subdued, but intensely beautiful performance to watch.

Ahlbom continues to amaze time and time again. After the overwhelmingly spectacular **Knock Out** in the summer of 2021 he brings us this performance of stillness about a childless couple that has grown apart. The husband comes and goes to work, and the wife wanders aimlessly from room to room. She takes quiet revenge by cutting wholes in the shape of eyes and a mouth in the back of his shirt. And by buttoning up the sleeve of his jacket. Until a burglar enters their house who gives the wife the attention she has missed for a long time. He pours her coffee, repairs an old love letter that was ripped to pieces, repairs a cup that was broken during a fight. Slowly but surely the relationship between the husband and wife recovers.

The Korean film 'Bin-Jip' (2004) was the main source of inspiration for Ahlbom in this case. This film is about a friendly burglar and an unhappy couple. However, Ahlbom has given the story a completely new twist. Using only visual language, without any spoken words, he tells a melancholic story which is moving and intoxicating to watch. His visual language is crystal clear, and he painstakingly protects the balance between humour and emotion. The image of the wife who puts her head in the fishbowl is both comical and heartbreaking at the same time.

Silke Hundertmark en Reinier Schimmel are an ideal couple. They dance around each other with perfect movements. Neat and practiced down to the last detail but seemingly spontaneous, every step, bow, turn are a part of the bigger picture. Ahlbom himself plays the part of the burglar. The ultimate fight between him and the husband, with a loose door serving as a hiding place, a weapon and a slide is simply beautiful to watch.

Unseen offers visual, physical theater that is hard to recapture. The message is: please go and see it for yourself.

Sonja de Jong

'Unseen' by the Jakob Ahlbom Company. Attended on: 16/2 in Rotterdam. On tour: 3/3: IJmuiden; 4 to 6/3: Amsterdam; 10/3: Hoorn; 1 and 2/4: Haarlem; 7/4: Amsterdam. Info: jakopahlbom.nl/agenda