

# FIGHT! PALAST #MEMBERSONLY

## by PENG! Palast

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### “FIGHT! PALAST #membersonly”

**Reviewer:** Myle Yan Tay

**Performance:** 6 January 2017

To be completely honest, I am wary walking into *FIGHT! PALAST*, performed by the German/Swiss group, PENG! Palast. The description of the performance is cluttered with hash tags, unclear if used ironically or not. But by the end of the performance, I find myself clapping enthusiastically, and more curiously, emotionally invested in the destruction of a Ikea store shelf. Before the bow, the three performers invite any member of the audience to join in the final curtain call. It is this openness that makes *FIGHT! PALAST* an enjoyable and sincere performance.

Dennis Schwabenland and Christoph Keller, both directors and performers of the show, take inspiration from Chuck Palahniuk’s novel, *Fight Club*, framing the show with a repeated choral synopsis of the first half of the book. Beyond that, motifs or scenes from *Fight Club* are combined with the performers’ real life experiences to build scenes. The scenes that stick closely to the source material feel trite as they bring nothing new to the table. The emulation of a call centre falls flat because it is sterile, not sincere. These scripted scenes pale in comparison to the monologues and interactions with the audience that are raw and sincere. At several moments in the show, the three performers enter the audience’s space, telling amusing anecdotes or railing against a particular aspect of their society. The audience feels a genuine connection with the performers’ spontaneity (as opposed to the artificiality the scripted scenes). In particular, Nina Mariel Kohler’s final monologue on gender and fighting feels authentic and genuine, forthright and unscripted. It becomes a raw,

unadulterated moment, and when she returns to the “ring” to fight, there are cheers from an empathetic audience.

During the show, two audience members are asked to assemble an Ikea shelf. Before the show ends, the performers ask the same two audience members if they would like to smash the shelf to pieces. As they do so, the audience cheers. But unlike Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, this is not an expression of anarchic anti-consumerism. Instead, it is *FIGHT! PALAST* reiterating their point: fighting, like art, is about human connection.

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## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

**Yan** is currently studying in Yale-NUS College, where he enjoys spending his free time in far too many productions. Having tried acting, writing, and directing for the stage, Yan looks forward to reviewing. He believes that theatre should challenge both the audience and creators.

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