K N O T

NIKKI & JD

Updated September 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN INTRODUCTION	2
ABOUT US	4
ABOUT KNOT	5
OUR AIMS	6
SOURCES OF INSPIRATION	8
OUR RESEARCH	10
ARTISTIC TEAM	12
OTHER COLLABORATORS	14
TECHNICAL INFORMATION	15
PROVISIONAL CALANDAR	16
CONTACT	17

AN INTRODUCTION

After working together for four years and gaining experience with other British contemporary circus companies including **Barely Methodical Troupe** and **Square Peg Circus**, Nikki & JD created our first show, ***Knot***.

Knot explores a gay man's struggle to be true to himself in a heterosexual partnership. Featuring two acrobatic performers, **Knot uses circus, dance and story-telling to examine love and conflict between a single 30 something woman and a gay man.**

Knot premiered in February 2016 at London's ***Resolution!*** Festival at **The Place.**

Following on from positive audience feedback, it was selected by **Crying Out Loud** for an England-wide tour as part of the Circus Evolution Programme in November 2016. During this tour, the show was seen by 1,733 people across 10 performances at 9 venues: Oxford Playhouse; Circomedia, Bristol; Jacksons Lane, London; Déda, Derby; WAC Studio, Coventry; Hat Factory, Luton; The Civic, Barnsley; and the Lowry Compass Room, Salford.

More recently, the work has been selected for the 2017 **CIRCa festiva**l in Auch and for the **2018 Festival d'Avignon** via the Spotlight UK Circus programme. An extended version of ***Knot*** is currently under development, with a provisional UK tour booked at **9** venues for February-April 2018, including London's 2018 **Circus Fest.**

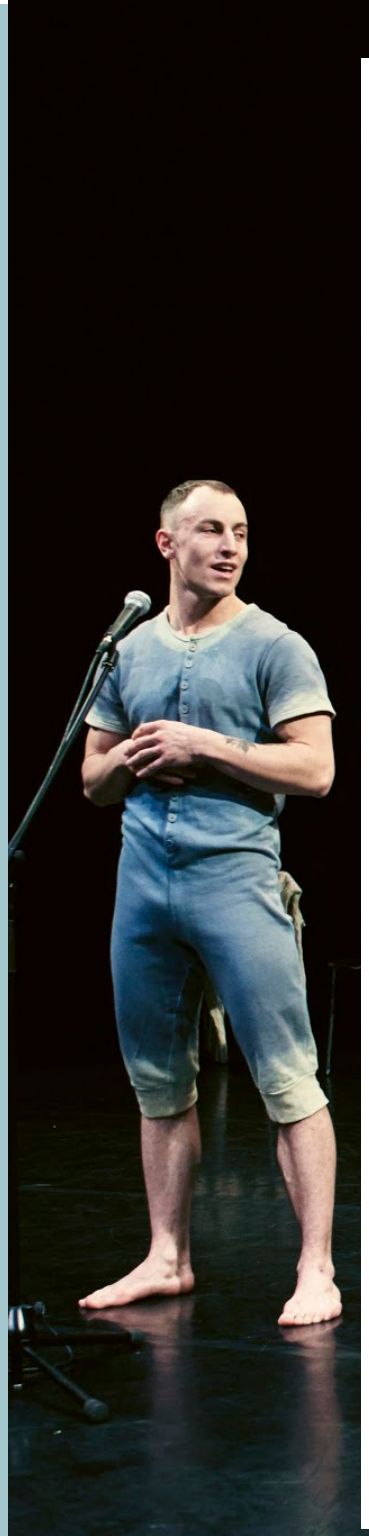
ABOUT US

Nikki & JD was established as an artistic partnership and hand-to- hand duo in 2013. Nikki & JD are members of **Barely Methodical Troupe** for the company's production of ***Kin***, which premiered at the **Roundhouse**'s Circus Fest 2016 and has since toured to 11 venues and festivals across the UK including the Latitude Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2017.

Other recent accomplishments include performing with Taiwan's leading contemporary circus company, FOCA, in April 2017; becoming finalists in 2015's Circus Maximus competition at the Udderbelly and showcasing bespoke duets at the CANVAS Showcase in May 2015 for programmers from across the UK. Prior to this, Nikki & JD performed in the 2014 national tour of ***Rime*** by **Square Peg circus.** They are Associate Artists at Déda, Derby; Jacksons Lane, London and members of the Up and Out Network.

ABOUT KNOT

A chance encounter between two acrobats; a frustrated lover and a jilted dreamer. This is the story of two hearts making sense of perfection. The Knot is the invisible string that connects two people. Sometimes strong, sometimes just about to break, it is the complex yet simple bond that we juggle with our whole lives. This piece follows the journey of individuals through the absurdity, joy and mundanity of making things work. Acrobatics, movement and storytelling combine to expose the hopes we hold for the ideal lover.

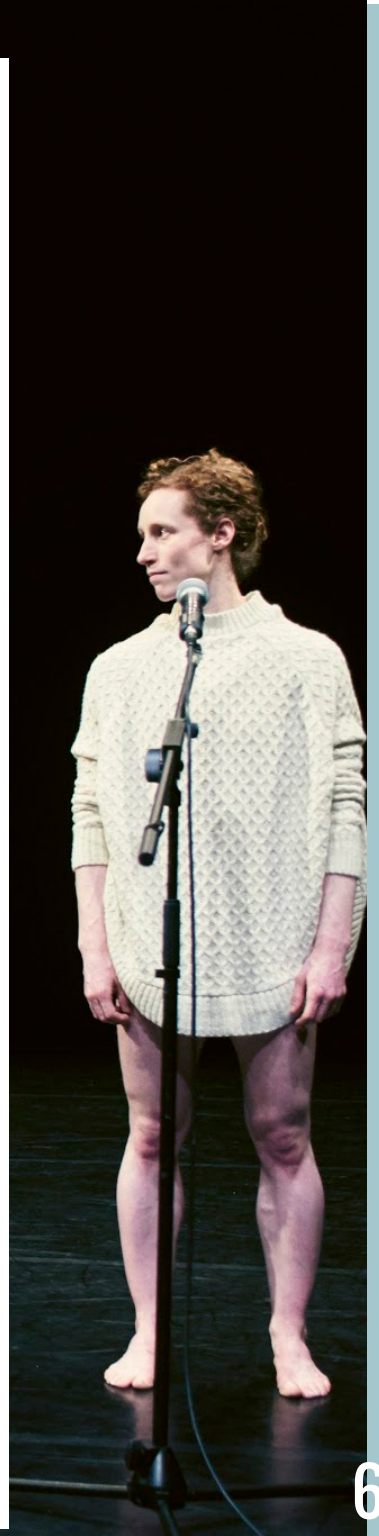


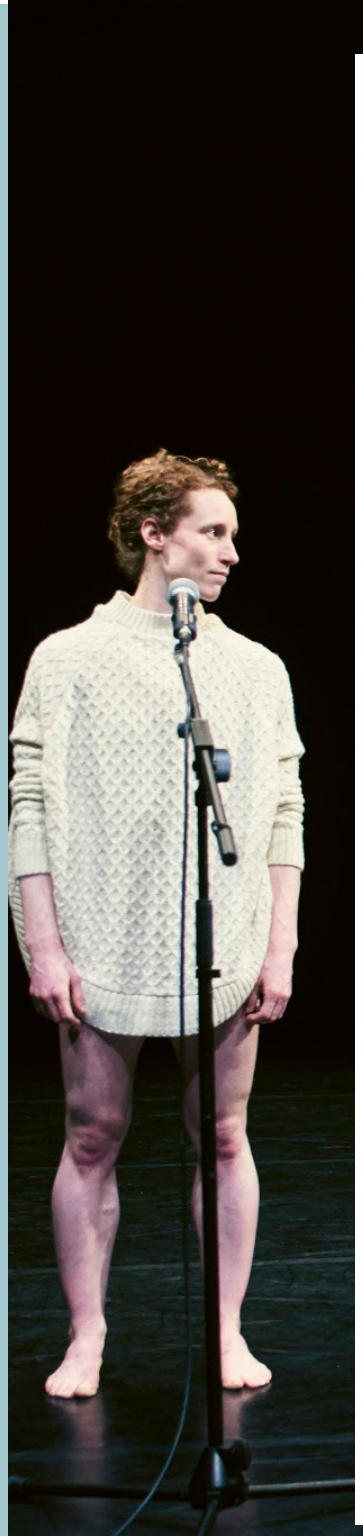
OUR AIMS

AS A COMPANY

We aim to blur the boundaries between circus, dance and theatre. Using storytelling as an anchor, our work seeks to move and amuse our audiences while taking them on a narrative journey. Our movement language combines hand-to-hand acrobatics and contemporary dance to find new ways of communicating emotional awkwardness and grace.

Ultimately, we are seeking to contribute to a new image of British circus as an art form: Moving beyond the aesthetics of traditional circus and iconoclasm, while drawing on Britain's rich seam of gleefully ironic and socially-minded work from companies including Ra-Ra Zoo and Gandini. We believe there is a critical role for heartfelt stories about the human condition within the language and movement of British contemporary circus.

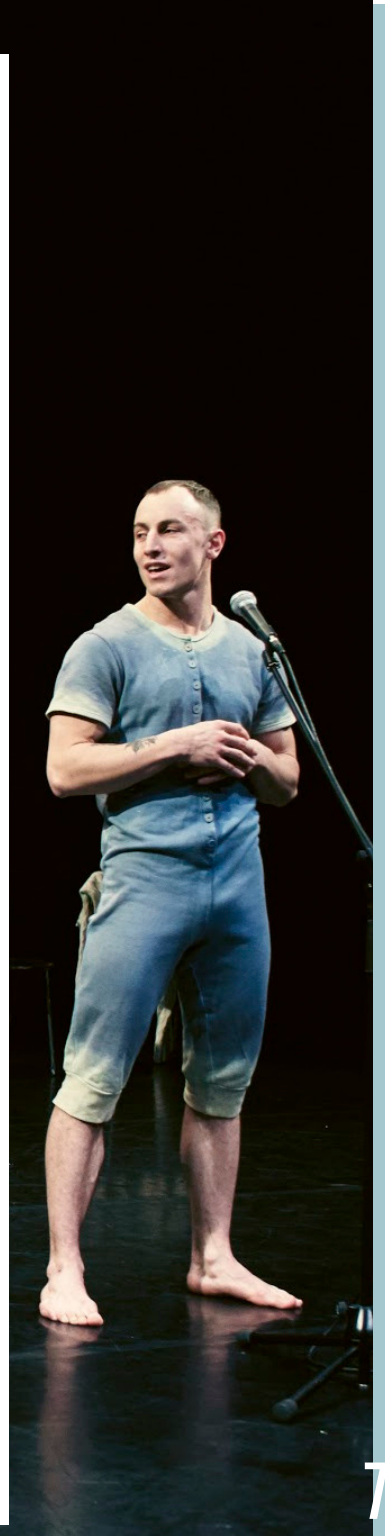




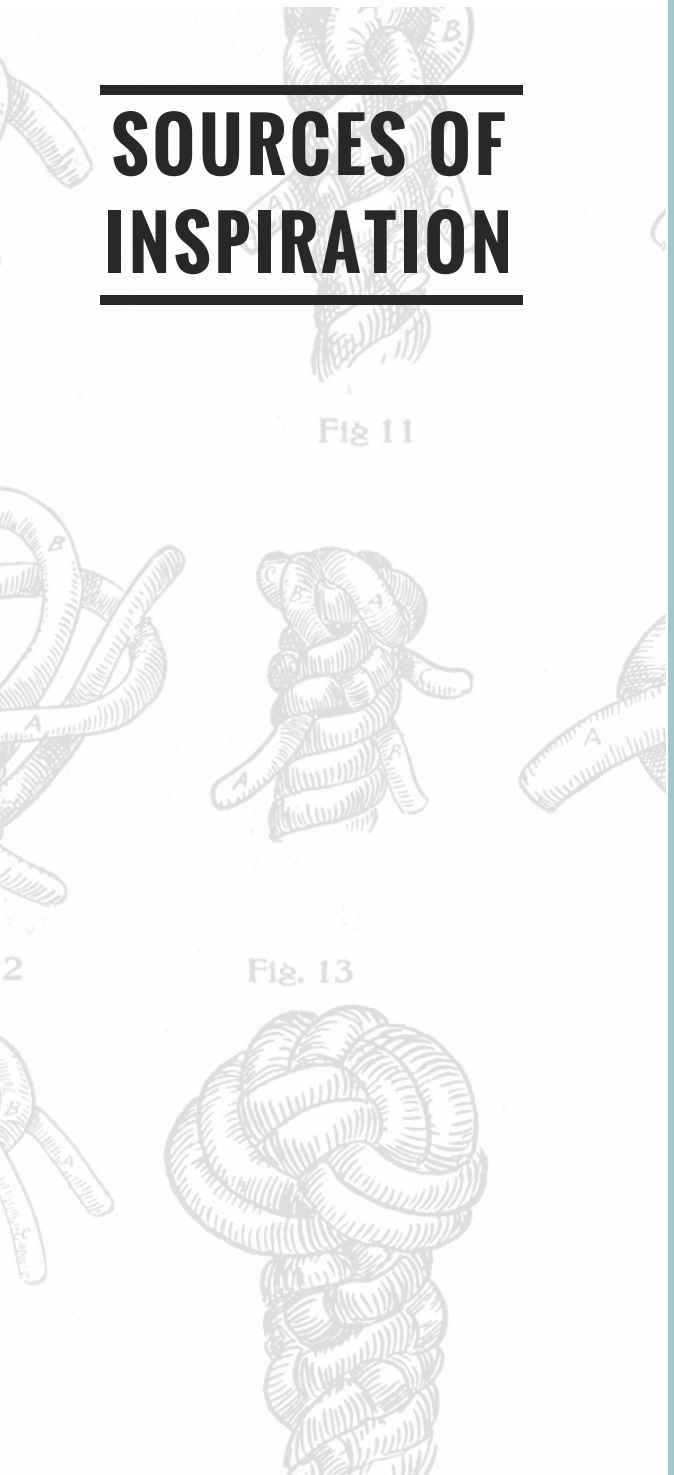
WITH KNOT

With our first production, Knot, we are seeking to play with audience expectations. We ask: What do people expect to see when a man and a woman are being physically intimate on stage? How can we use their prejudice to make them question what they are seeing? Can we twist their expectations around what they believe to be true or genuine? Can we make them ask: “Are these characters real?” In the process, we hope to expose the challenges and hopes we experience in our intimate relationships with other human beings.

At the heart of this work, we explore what it means to be a gay man in a heterosexual world and a single 30-something woman in a society that seems to expect motherhood, marriage and family.



SOURCES OF INSPIRATION



WHAT INSTIGATED KNOT

Knot was inspired by one of the most humiliating experiences we have ever had as an acrobatic duo. In a highly choreographed moment at a cabaret gig, our two characters were meant to conclude a romantic pas de deux with a passionate kiss. Instead, we found ourselves in an awkward embrace, Nikki coming in for a kiss while JD jerked his head away. We hoped for a rapid curtain call before slinking home in sheer embarrassment. The idea for Knot was born.

We asked each other: “Why do we keep getting asked to perform these ridiculously romantic and passionate acts at cabarets and corporate gigs? Is that really what an audience expects to see every time a man and a woman move together?”

We concluded: “Yes, they probably do.” But wouldn’t it be fun to play with that expectation?

ARTISTIC INSPIRATIONS

Our work has been inspired by the emotional intensity and intricate imagery of **contemporary dance** choreographers including Ohad Naharin, Jiri Kylian, Crystal Pite and Hofesh Schechter.

We feel that hand-to-hand can often appear overly gymnastic-like and stylised, creating an emotional barrier with audiences. To address this, we began working in 2014 with **Martin Corri,** an expert in the movement language known as 'gaga', as developed by Isreali choreographer Ohad Naharin. The use of gaga allowed our bodies to challenge and change old habits, **shedding our inhibitions to celebrate the odd and the unexpected in movement.**

Our movement language has since benefitted from our collaborations with choreographers and dance mentors including Pippa Duke (trained at the Royal Ballet School and danced as a soloist with The Bayerische Staats Oper, the former Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater and with Hofesh Shechter in Cult); Ellis Saul (trained at the London School of Contemporary Dance); Ben Duke (founder of Lost Dog dance company); and acrobatic choreographer Nicolas Germaine (teacher at École nationale de cirque de Montréal).

Our work has also been heavily influenced by the powerful narrative and story-telling skills of Ben Duke, who has acted as a mentor and dramaturg throughout our development of Knot, and of Scottish story-teller Gary McNair and his one-man piece The Gamblers' Guide to Dying.

OUR RESEARCH

Work on ***Knot*** began in October 2015 at a residency at **Jacksons Lane**, London, with dramaturgical support from **Rosamond Martin**, artistic director of ***You Need Me*** theatre company and graduate of LISPA (Lecoq pedagogy in physical theatre and theatre making). Our first phase of research explored themes of physical and vocal expression of intimacy in hand-to-hand training, as contrasted to the exaggerated passion of our work within London cabaret. Off the back of this research, we were awarded a year-long Artists in Residency at **Déda** school of dance, Derby, UK.

In November 2015, we completed a two-day residency with our dramaturgical mentor, **Ben Duke**, at Laughton Lodge Community Cooperative in the English Sussex country-side. The residency allowed us to focus on story-telling about our real-life partnership, from our first meeting through to our first major commitments to performing together.

Using improvisational tasks, combining text and movement, we successfully created a rough structure for the first version of the show by the end of the residency. We completed the choreography, acrobatics and textual content in a series of residency sessions at **No Fit State**, Cardiff, Wales and **Déda,** Derby, with input from dancer **Martin Corri** and dramaturg Rosamond Martin.

Following on from its premier at the **Resolution! Festival**, London, in February 2016, ***Knot*** underwent significant artistic development to strengthen its narrative arc and to clarify the emotional language of its choreography. Further residencies were completed with dramaturgical support from **Ben Duke and Rosamond Martin**, and movement mentoring under **Martin Corri and Pippa Duke**. This second phase of development allowed us to research the relationship between text and movement in the piece. We gained new insights into the power of simplicity when trying to express dramatic story-telling through movement. The research led to a stronger relationship between our words and movement, creating a much clearer story for November 2016 UK tour.

The French version of the show was translated at a residency at **La Grainerie,** Toulouse, with mentoring support from **Morgan Cosquer**, co-founder and performer of **Compaignie Endogene.**

Work on Knot continues, with an extended hour-long version of the show due for completion by early 2018.

ARTISTIC TEAM

Jean-Daniel Broussé
(hand-to-hand base and co-founder of Nikki & JD)

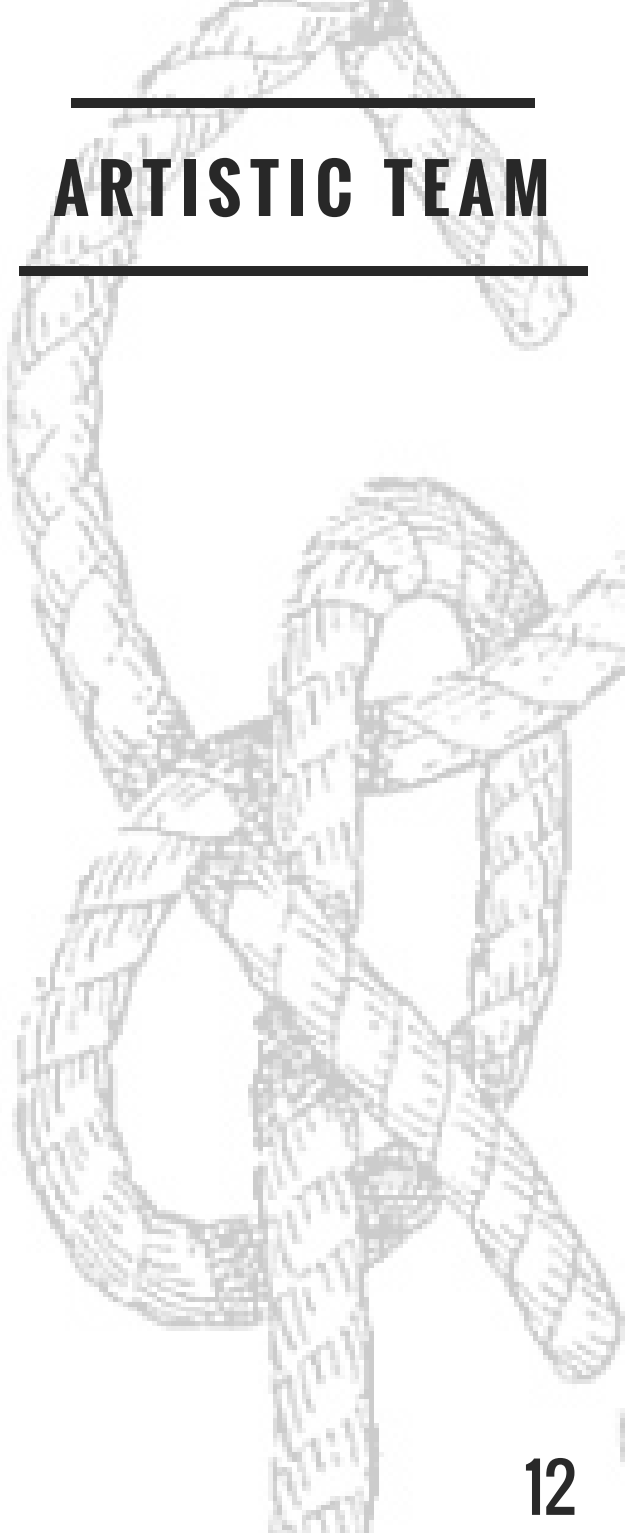
Jean Daniel (JD) Broussé studied a BA (Hons) Degree at the National Centre for Circus Arts where he specialised in Icarian Games, Cradle and Hand to Hand. He has over 8 years' performance experience with companies including Roundhouse Circus Company and Square Peg contemporary circus.

Nikki Rummer
(hand-to-hand flyer and co-founder of Nikki & JD)

Nikki trained for 10 years as an artistic gymnast in Washington State, USA, and has since trained handbalancing and hand-to-hand at the National Centre for Circus Arts. In addition, she trained the afro-Brazilian movement art, Capoeira, for 10 years under Brazilian-led schools Raizes de Rua and Cordao de Ouro.

Ben Duke (dramaturgical mentor)

Ben Duke is the Artistic Director of dance theatre company Lost Dog. His company's newest work, Paradise Lost (lies unopened beside me) received high critical acclaim at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, has been nominated for the 2016 South Bank Sky Arts Award, was shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award in the Innovation, Experimentation and Playing with Form category. He also directed Kin by Barely Methodical Troupe and has been commissioned to create work for Scottish Dance Theatre and Rambert for Sadlers Wells in London.



Martin Corri (choreographer)

Martin Corri studied at the Royal Ballet School and danced for 10 years with the Netherlands Dance Theatre, under the direction of Jiri Kylian, working with William Forsyth, Matz Ek, Nacho Duato, Hans Van Manen, Ohad Naharin, and Paul Lightfoot. He then joined Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company in Israel as a dancer and teacher. During his 16 years in Israel, he taught at all the major dance companies including Bat Sheva, KCDC, Emanuel Gat, and Kombina. Now in the UK, he has been teaching Rambert Dance Company, Michael Clark, National Dance Company of Wales, Balletboyz and Square Peg.

Rosamond Martin (director)

Rosamond is a founder member and joint artistic director of storytelling-theatre company You Need Me, and founder member and associate director of circus-theatre company Square Peg. Rosamond studied at the National Centre for Circus Arts and LISPA (Lecoq pedagogy in physical theatre and theatre making).

William Ingham (lighting designer)

William trained at The BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology where he studied Theatre and then went on to Goldsmiths University where he specialised in Lighting. Notable credits include Rich Isn't Easy (Tristan Bates) The Ghost Train, Rope, Marigolds, Love Story, The Mystery of Irma Vep, The Haunting, Better Together (The Jack Studio Theatre). In 2013 William received an Off West End Awards nomination for Best Lighting Design for his work on The Mystery of Irma Vep.

CHOREGRAPHER/MOVEMENT MENTORS

ELLIS SAUL
PIPPA DUKE

FRENCH VERSION DRAMATURG

MORGAN COSQUER

MUSIC

ANNOBON BY ALDO ROMANO, LOUIS SCLAVIS, HENRI TEXIER
ORIGINAL MUSIC BY TIM LENKIEWICZ
CHOPIN NOCTURNE IN F MINOR - OP. 55, NO. 1 (VARIATION) BY CHAD LAWSON
SWAY BY DEAN MARTIN

ORGANISATIONS

JACKSONS LANE / CRYING OUT LOUD / LA GRANERIE / JERWOOD CHOREGRPAHIC FUND / ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND / DÉDA / WARWICK ART CENTER / UP & OUT NETWORK / THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR CIRCUS ARTS / THE PLACE

*Terms and conditions apply

OTHER COLLABORATORS

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

STAGE DIMENSIONS

Minimum size 7 metres wide x 4.5 metres deep
Minimum height 4.5 meters to rig
Suitable for proscenium arch and thrust stages.

LANGUAGES

This show contains text. We can perform in two languages: **French** and **English.** Surtitles are available on request.

SHOW DURATION

There are two versions: **35 mins** and **60 mins**

SIZE OF TOURING PARTY

3 people: 2 artists and 1 technician.

AGE GUIDANCE

7+

LINKS

Trailer for the show
https://vimeo.com/164266455
Full-length 35 minute show (English)
https://vimeo.com/196699881

PROVISIONAL CALENDAR

AUCH (France) Circa festival
24 OCT / 25 OCT

DERBY Déda
10 FEB

CANTERBURY Marlowe Theatre
24 FEB

LINCOLN Terry O'Toole
28 FEB

SOUTH HOLLAND center
1 MAR

BRIGHTON Old Market
2 MAR / 3 MAR

BANBURY Mill Arts Centre
9 MAR

NEWBURY Corn Exchange
20 APR

LONDON The Place, Circus Fest
17 APR / 18 APR

BRIGHTON Caravan Showcase
13 / 14 / 15 MAY

AVIGNON Festival (France)
JULY

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