

SLOW THINKING

SESSION #6: CREATING CIRCUS IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

Wednesday 4th November 2020

Upswing's *Slow Thinking* is a series of collective, online and free-to-attend conversations that respond to the needs of the circus sector. We are inviting circus artists, practitioners and programmers to join and discuss topics that we, as a sector, feel preoccupied with at this time.

SESSION 6: CREATING CIRCUS IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

Since the last Slow Thinking session in July, the sector has been finding ways to create, to present work, and to engage audiences both online and in person. In Session 6, we discussed creation in these extraordinary times, with some food for thought provided by circus artists and organisations in the form of newly created work. These creative insights - shared as audio-visual content - served as a springboard for an open collective discussion.

Below is a written summary of the initial conversations with contributors sharing work - and links to their videos. Following that, you will find links to the recorded open discussion, an audio only version of the discussion, and a transcript.

CONTRIBUTORS

This session included contributions and provocations from:

- Jerone Marsh-Reid and Susan Kempster, Upswing, *Catch Me*
- Lina Johansson, Silvia Fratelli and Freya Stokka, Mimbres, *In the Park* and *To Untouch*
- Massimiliano Rossetti, Lost in Translation Circus, *Interlude Circus*
- Sadiq Sadiq, *The Chosen Haram*

For full biographies and information on the projects each artist / organisation spoke about, see pages 4 and 5.

1. KEY SUMMARY POINTS - CONTRIBUTOR SHARING SECTION:

Jerone Marsh-Reid and Susan Kempster, *Catch Me*

[Click here](#) to view the trailer shared at the session

Key summary points:

- Reworking an existing piece meant that Jerone and Susan already had the memory of each other's weight, what each other's bodies felt like, and how they moved. This meant that they were able to tap into those memories as the socially distanced no-touch piece was created;
- Filming the performance for digital sharing enabled a focus on the nuances of the performance - previously unseen angles and details that would not be seen by a live audience members;
- The experience of performing live to a socially distanced audience wearing masks was difficult in the first instance, as Jerone and Susan could not read and respond to audience reactions;
- The piece organically took on themes related to this time, without losing the original concept of the live version created last year.

Lina Johansson, Silvia Fratelli and Freya Stokka, Mimbres, *In the Park* and *To Untouch*

[Click here](#) to view *In the Park*

Key summary points:

- As an acrobalance company, Mimbres had the challenge of creating *In The Park* - a filmed performance for Newham Unlocked - socially distanced. This meant playing with apparatus, angles, composition of shots to portray the balance and height that would usually feature in their shows;
- Artists could feel lonely in the process of creation, especially when so much of the work centres on touch and support of one another.
- After lockdown and a pause in training / rehearsing together, the reconditioning of artists bodies was important when returning to creation.
- Touch in *To Untouch* was handled carefully, and the performance built up to the point of touch - so that this did not trigger audience members, and to show the importance of that moment.

Massimiliano Rossetti, Lost in Translation Circus, *Interlude Circus*

[Click here](#) to view the video shared at the session

Key summary points:

- Lost in Translation (LiT) formed a creative bubble to create Interlude, which was easy to do as the company is a close-knit group who tour together and, in some instances, live together;
- In this way, the method of creating remained the same for LiT, and shows and concepts could continue to be created as usual;
- Interlude is a festival of circus, created in partnership with Norwich Theatre, which was cancelled during the first lockdown. Given that, after lockdown, the creative team were able to quickly come together to work, the festival was quickly put together and performed in LiT's circus tent in August / September 2020;
- The challenge for LiT was managing risk when people from outside of the creative bubble were in contact with performers - specifically audiences;
- Audience interaction is key in Interlude performances, and these aspects were re-worked to ensure social distancing and Covid-safe measures were woven in as part of the performance.

Sadiq Sadiq, *The Chosen Haram*

Sadiq was unable to attend the sharing part of the session, and therefore a pre-recorded interview was shared.

[Click here](#) to watch the pre-recorded interview with Sadiq

2. OPEN DISCUSSION SECTION:

The open discussion section of the session was recorded. Click on the below links for video, audio and transcript formats:

- [VIDEO RECORDING \(YouTube\)](#)
- [AUDIO ONLY \(.MP3\)](#)
- [TRANSCRIPT \(.DOCX\)](#)

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES



Jerone Marsh-Reid and Susan Kempster, *Catch Me* (pictured second from right)

Jerone and Susan, Upswing's *Catch Me* cast, together with Upswing's Artistic Director Vicki Amedume, talked about the experience of recreating *Catch Me* into a socially distanced version both for live outdoor performance and for film.

Catch Me is an intimate and surprising take on age, race and gender. A duet - at a distance - between an older woman and younger man, two bodies discover unexpected connections whilst never quite reaching each other. Part installation and part performance, *Catch Me* asks how we see each other and who we value.

Jerone Marsh-Reid trained on the Physical Theatre course at East 15 Acting School. He is an Artistic Associate of the physical theatre company Project Lockout and was engaged as Movement Director for their recent production *The Maniac Complex*. Jerone has just performed two shows at the Greenwich and Docklands Festival. These shows include Upswing's reworked version of their previous show 'Catch Me' and Told by An Idiots reworked show 'Get Happy'.

Theatre credits include: *The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel* (Told by an Idiot); *The Deep* (Clifftown Theatre, Rich Rusk from Gecko); *The Things I've Dismissed* (Clifftown Theatre, Project Lockout); *Feel The Fear* (Camden Fringe/Fusion Festival, Project Lockout); *Mood* (Clifftown Theatre, Simon Hunt); *Catch Me* (Upswing, European Tour); *Breathe The Beat* (UK Tour, Lucie Talbott).

Twitter: @jeronemarshreid

Susan Kempster is a choreographer, performer, teacher, theatre maker and movement coach/director. Her career has taken her from Sydney, Australia to Tokyo, New York, Madrid, Barcelona, and now to London where she has been living for the past 6 years. Her teaching work includes vocational training and professional dance company classes, along with workshops in improvisation, composition and choreography. In London she has been teaching in HE as well as working as a performer, most recently with Upswing Aerial Company in the intergenerational outdoor touring show *Catch Me*.

www.susankempster.com

Lina Johansson, Silvia Fratelli and Freya Stokka, *Mimbre*, *In the Park* and *To Untouch* (pictured second from left)

Lina Johansson and Silvia Fratelli, Co-Founders and Co-Artistic Directors of Mimbre, discussed the challenges of their new performances *In The Park* - a recorded film; and *To Untouch* - a new live performance.

To Untouch was created specifically for Greenwich+Docklands Festival this September and explores new and different ways of keeping physical connections and complicity between each other, when the impulse of direct physical touch has to be restrained. Similarly the site-specific *In the Park* reinterprets how bodies relate to each other from a distance.

Mimbre is a female-led company creating nuanced, breathtaking and highly skilled acrobatic theatre. They use circus and dance innovatively as a physical language to illuminate human connections and promote a positive image of women.

www.mimbre.co.uk

Massimiliano Rossetti, *Lost in Translation Circus*, *Interlude Circus* (pictured right)

Massimiliano Rossetti, Company Director and Performer of *Lost in Translation Circus*, discussed the challenges of realising and presenting *Interlude Festival* - a partnership with Norwich Theatre which saw a six-week programme of live performances and participatory activities delivered in a circus tent in Norwich. Massi will also talk *Lost in Translation's* approach to making new work during this time by forming creative 'bubbles'.

Lost in Translation is one of the UK's leading contemporary circus companies. They create both indoor and outdoor ensemble-based performances, working with a tight-knit group of performers from Italy, France, Ireland and Australia.

www.lostintranslationcircus.com

Sadiq Sadiq, *The Chosen Haram* (pictured left)

The Chosen Haram tells the story of two queer men and their chance meeting through a dating app. It portrays the highs and lows of their relationship and the barriers that they face. Performed on two Chinese Poles the story is mixed with gravity defying tricks and choreography to make even stoic hearts melt.

Sadiq, a mixed heritage circus artist from the UK, studied at London's National Centre for Circus Arts and then went on to tour with the contemporary circus company Ockham's Razor. His own devised work takes a focus on the intersection between faith and sexuality. He also works in cabaret and held a residency at the prestigious Café de Paris in London's West End.

www.sadiqsadiq.com