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# FINNISH CIRCUS & DANCE IN FOCUS



FINNISH CIRCUS AND DANCE IN FOCUS  
VOLUME ONE

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## CIRCUS + DANCE

Dance Info Finland and CircusInfo Finland merged in early 2023, with the publication Finnish Dance in Focus accordingly becoming Finnish Circus and Dance in Focus. As before, we will be showcasing Finnish artists working in various international scenes at different stages of their careers, however in addition to dance artists, we will now be turning the spotlight on circus artists too.

When I interviewed her for this issue (you can read the interview on page 10), aerial acrobat **Salla Hakanpää**, who followed the merger closely, wanted to emphasise that there are plenty of areas in common when it comes to what Finnish creators of physical arts need. Rather than seeing the new organisation as two associations roughly condensed down into one, Hakanpää instead sees the merger as efficient use of limited resources – in other words, an opportunity to expand the pool of experts working within these structures, to redistribute power (and accordingly also responsibility), and to boost networking between art fields. Personally, I see this publication as a very tangible way of combining resources – and an example of circus and dance art being able to coexist on the pages of the magazine as independent art forms, their characteristics serving to further enrich the content of the magazine and support each other.

Self-evidently, there are plenty of interfaces. When planning this magazine we thought about the direction we wanted to take when it came to the content for this issue. The ideas that came up included for example art and technology, a topical subject affecting all forms of art. However, as often happens, the content started to create in itself a theme for the first edition of Finnish Circus and Dance in Focus: feminist approaches. The theme is neither heavily emphasised nor forced, instead arising from our featured creators and pieces. Organically and in a way that is almost treacherously blatant. Feminism can be approached through the creators' gender and the content of their pieces, as well as through activities outside of the piece but linked to art: through work to change structures to make them better for everyone – and the skill of shared and ceaseless dreaming.

Helsinki, November 2023

**Heidi Backström**

Editor

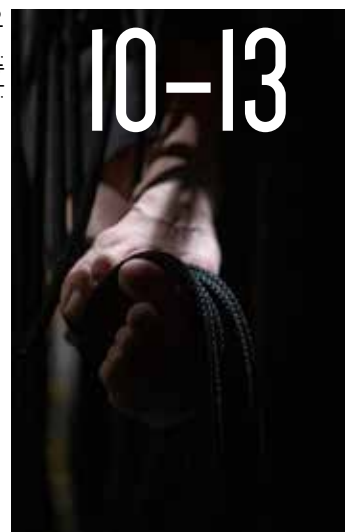
CIRCUS  
& DANCE  
FINLAND

We are an independent expert organisation representing and supporting the circus and dance sectors in Finland. We produce and disseminate information about the circus and dance arts, artists, the sector's conditions, results and impacts, and aim to develop these arts in Finland. We also facilitate international cooperation and exports in these fields. Our activities are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Read more on [circusdance.fi](http://circusdance.fi)

**Salla Hakanpää is a circus artist who speaks up.**

© Jouni Ihalainen



**Radical dreaming of a more equal future with choreographer Sonya Lindfors.**

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© Tuukka Ervasti



© Tani Simberg

**How to serve youngsters as art audiences?**

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# CHOREO-GRAPHER JYRKI KARTTUNEN IS THE NEW DIRECTOR OF DANCE THEATRE HURJARUUTH



*Winter Circus Joy.*  
📷 Uupi Tirronen



Jyrki Karttunen  
📷 Elina Keckman

**IN DECEMBER 2023**, dancer and choreographer **Jyrki Karttunen** stepped into the role of director of Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth. His career spans roles at Helsinki City Theatre, the Finnish National Ballet and the Karttunen Kollektiv group, to name just a few.

Hurjaruuth, which has been a staple of the Helsinki dance scene for 40 years, operates at the intersection of a whole host of performing arts forms, producing a wide variety of performances primarily for family audiences. The theatre is a pioneer in Finland

when it comes to stage arts intended for children, and Helsinki residents big and small are undoubtedly familiar with Hurjaruuth's annual Winter Circus, a tradition bringing light to the darkest part of the year for many in the city. Hurjaruuth has its own studio stage and premises at Helsinki's Cable Factory, where the current home stage for Winter Circus – the new Dance House Helsinki – is also located. Since 2012, Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth has also been organising the feminist Red Pearl Clown Festival.

As he begins his term as director, Karttunen is keen to emphasise that he does not want to promise any new launches or changes in particular: "My aim is to continue providing interesting performances for family audiences and developing the genre. Personally, I also have a particular interest in performances that take place outside black boxes, as well as pieces created in collaboration with children," Karttunen explains. ▮



*Red Pearl Clown Festival.*  
📷 Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth

## RED PEARL CLOWN FESTIVAL PROMOTING FEMINIST AGENDA SINCE 2012

**THE RED PEARL** Clown Festival, organised by Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth, has been bringing together Finnish and international clownery creators and audiences for more than a decade. The festival was established as a reminder that, although the majority of clowns through the ages have been men, there are plenty of clowns of other genders in both Finland and the rest of the world.

In 2021, the festival changed its name from the Red Pearl Woman Clown Festival to the Red Pearl Clown Festival, not

because gender equality had been achieved around the globe, but rather to better take into account the diversity of genders. The festival will continue to focus on female clowns and clowns from diverse gender backgrounds.

Describing the festival, Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth's new director, **Jyrki Karttunen**, states: "Red Pearl is a forward-looking clown festival absolutely brimming with potential, and I want to embrace its feminist roots as we further strengthen development of

the concept. If you ask me, our program of events centred around minority clownery are reason enough in themselves to come to Helsinki in March." ▮

**The next Red Pearl Clown Festival is set to be held at Dance Theatre Hurjaruuth, Helsinki, on 8–16 March 2024.**

[hurjaruuth.fi](http://hurjaruuth.fi)



PORTMANTEAU: PERTO  
 📷 Mikko Pirinen

## FINLAND GETS ITS FIRST ARTIST PROFESSOR IN CIRCUS ARTS

ARTS COUNCIL OF FINLAND can award the title of Artist Professor to particularly distinguished artists. The title always comes with a five- or ten-year grant. **Luis Sartori do Vale** is Finland's first Artist Professor from the field of circus art. His five-year term will commence in 2024.

Brazilian-born circus artist Luis Sartori do Vale arrived in Helsinki to join the Winter Circus at Hurjaruuth in 2011. Since then, he has been involved in establishing two contemporary circus groups in Finland, Nuua Company and Portmanteau. Both groups are well-known both locally and internationally.

"Being awarded the "Artist Professor" title and grant is an incredible honor," says Luis Sartori do Vale. He feels also surprised by this: "There are many other artists who'd deserve it, people who have done so much for the circus arts in Finland. I'm truly humbled."

For the coming years Sartori do Vale plans to continue exploring the dialogue between circus arts and other art forms, concepts and techniques, in a constant search for new and poetic aesthetics within the performing arts. "In parallel to my own works, I intend to keep developing different collaborations with other artists and companies, with the hope of contributing to the growth and enrichment of Finnish circus arts."

Beyond creating new projects, Luis Sartori do Vale also feels a personal obligation to ensure the longevity of these works once they have been born, striving to reach a vast and diverse audience both in Finland and abroad. ■

[luis-luis.com](http://luis-luis.com)  
[portmanteau.fi](http://portmanteau.fi)



Luis Sartori do Vale.  
 📷 Luis Sartori do Vale



1. **DANCE HOUSE HELSINKI:** *Johanna Nuutinen*  
 +Collaborators: *SKIN HUNGER* in October 2023.  
 📷 Ilkka Saastamoinen
2. **CIRKO – CENTER FOR NEW CIRCUS:** *Sivuhenkilöt:*  
*Luukamari* in November 2023.  
 📷 Mitro Härkönen
3. **ZODIAK – CENTER FOR NEW DANCE:** *Tiia Kasurinen: ON-STAGE: The Concert* in August–September 2023.  
 📷 Saara Taussi



## THE LOISTO PROJECT BOOSTS FINNISH ARTISTS' INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

LOISTO, jointly led by Helsinki's Zodiac – Center for New Dance, Cirko – Center for New Circus, and Dance House Helsinki, is a 2022–2024 project to develop the circus and dance production and touring environment. Zodiac, Cirko, and Dance House Helsinki are using the project to strengthen international opportunities for artists. "It will mean not only connecting with international networks and productions but also

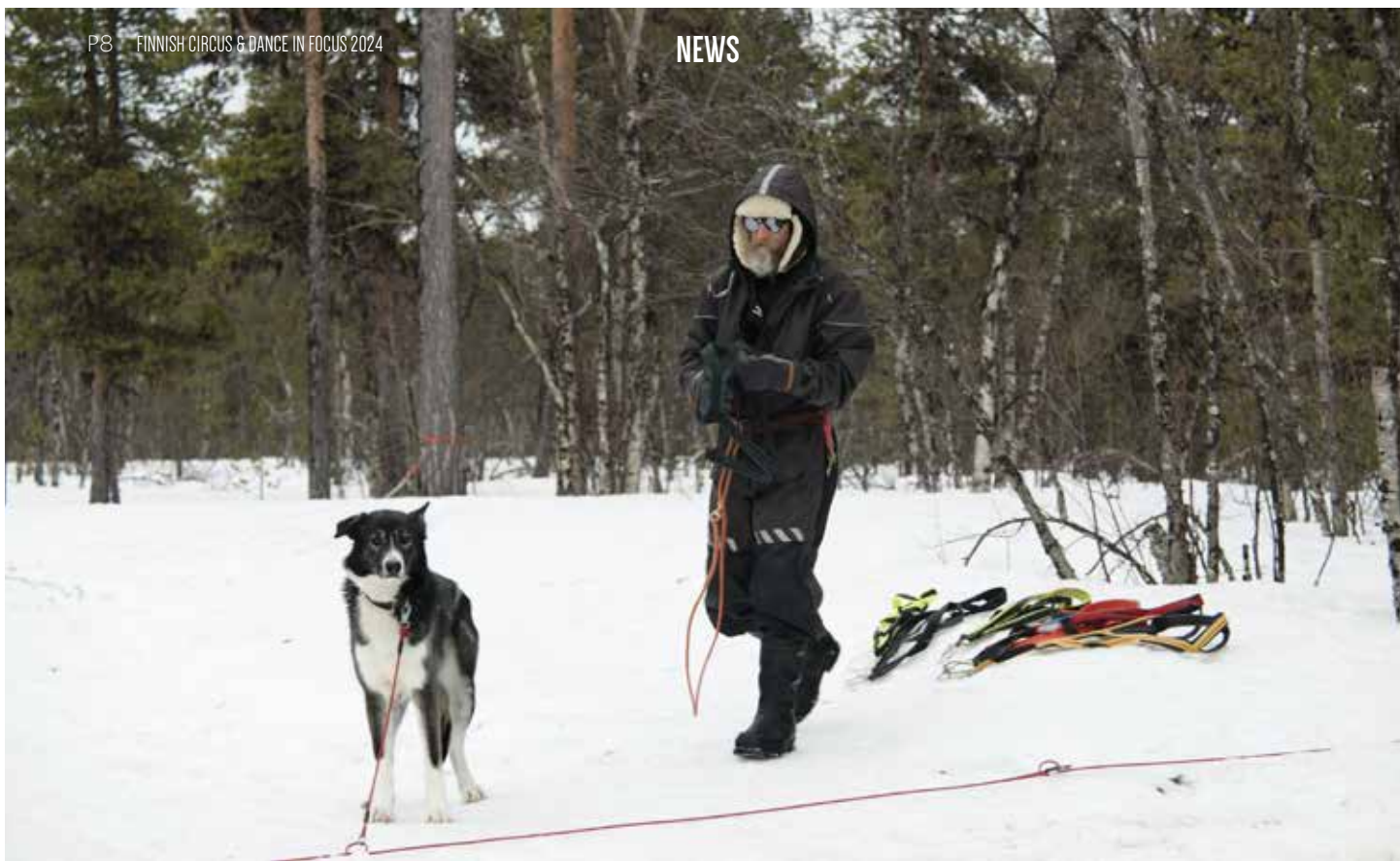
a stronger pre- and post-production role in their own co-productions, for example, and in building national and international co-production networks," said project lead **Katarina Lindholm**. Another aim is to initiate regular "open office" sessions for artists' and producers', focused on sharing knowledge and capacity building.

The production and agent layer in Finland is thin and weakly supported and artists

of all kinds need more sustained support for internationalization and career development. "The goal of the Loisto project is to strengthen all three of our organizations in their know-how and networks for working internationally and to develop their processes for presenting, producing, marketing, and selling works in national and international contexts. We've set our sights on creating long-term, sustainable international channels for artists and longer life cycles for their works."

The project is being implemented with a two-year proof-of-concept grant from the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation. ■

For more information, contact **Katarina Lindholm** [katarina.lindholm@zodiak.fi](mailto:katarina.lindholm@zodiak.fi) (dance) or **Salla Kurronen** [salla.kurronen@cirko.fi](mailto:salla.kurronen@cirko.fi) (circus)



*The Art of Quitting – Tommi Kittu and life in movement.*  
© Thomas Freundlich & Valtteri Raekallio

## THE ART OF QUITTING – DOCUMENTARY ABOUT DANCE ARTIST TOMMI KITTU

**NOT MANY FINNISH** contemporary dance artists get to star in a documentary film about themselves, but choreographer and dancer Tommi Kittu does. The film *The Art of Quitting – Tommi Kittu and life in movement* premieres in 2024.

**Tommi Kittu** (b. 1955) is one of the foremost Finnish dance artists of recent decades. His artistic heritage and way of working have had a significant influence on many of today's top dance practitioners in Finland. In 2012, Kittu abruptly concluded his career and left the dance scene. Since

then he has lived in northern Lapland, raising sled dogs in a log cabin that he built himself and which has no running water, electricity or access road.

In the film *The Art of Quitting* choreographer **Valtteri Raekallio** travels to the frozen wilderness of Lapland to meet his mentor, the retired master choreographer, to persuade him to revive one of his old works for the stage. The film follows Tommi Kittu as he rehearses, for the first time in nearly 20 years, his piece *In the Wrong Key* (2003) for a reprise premiere in Helsinki.

"Premiere in 2024."

The work is performed by an ensemble of Finland's best contemporary dancers, some of which danced in the original cast and some of which are now learning the piece for the first time. The warm-spirited 1,000-kilometer journey from the wilderness to the theatre stage and back brings the viewer into connection with an extraordinary life story and unique personal and artistic encounters. The film is a sympathetically epic road trip towards the key choices that we all face in life.

*The Art of Quitting* is made by choreographer Valtteri Raekallio and internationally acclaimed dance filmmaker Thomas Freundlich. ■

[lumikinosproduction.com](http://lumikinosproduction.com)

## FINNISH CIRCUS AND DANCE FILM NEWS

**FINNISH CIRCUS** and dance films are gaining attention, invitations and awards internationally. Here's a small collection of examples that shows the variety of the makers, topics and ways of doing.



### IMA IDUOZEE'S AFTER WE'RE GONE (2023)

Dance film *After we're gone* is part of the ongoing project *Diaspora Mixtapes* by the Nigerian-Finnish filmmaker and choreographer **Ima Idoozee**. The project is a series of multi-disciplinary art works that celebrates the past and future of the African diaspora. *After we're gone* has been part of the official selections of e.g. New York Indie Shorts Awards, San Francisco International Film Festival and Cannes Indie Shorts Awards.

[imaidoozee.com](http://imaidoozee.com)



### RACE HORSE COMPANY'S WALLS BENEATH OUR FEET (2022)

The circus short film *Walls Beneath Our Feet* inspired by the Pasila Street Art District in Helsinki explores urban life from unexpected angles. It is a collaboration between contemporary circus group Race Horse Company, music producer RRRK and the Helsinki Urban Art. So far it has been part of the official selection of 34 international film festivals and has been awarded with 7 prizes, including Best Cinematography in Experimental, Dance & Music Film Festival in Toronto, Canada and Critical Moves at MOVING BODY Festival in Varna, Bulgaria.

[racehorsecompany.fi](http://racehorsecompany.fi)



### MIRA RAVALD'S OMI (2020)

Inspired by mythologies of water deities, the short film *OMI* is a blend of dance and circus, combining elements of both Afro-Cuban and Finnish folklore. The film has traveled a lot and won among others the award for Best Experimental in Moscow Shorts and in Bahia Independent Cinema Festival in 2020. It has also been selected for ADF's Movies for Movers 2020 and Lisbon Film Rendezvous 2021.

[miraravald.com](http://miraravald.com)



### KATI KALLIO'S WALKS WITH ME (2021)

In the film *Walks With Me*, 80-year-old Sanna lives alone with her memories and houseplants. One day Sanna sees an event from her window that makes her reminisce about her friends and notice her own loneliness. The film has been an enormous hit and only in 2023 it has been awarded 11 awards including The Best Collective Body Award, MovingBody Dance Film festival, The Best Short Director, Rainbow International Film Festival in UK, Audience Choice, Contact Dance International Film Festival in Canada and Jury Recommendation Award, ROLLOUT Dance Film Festival in Macao. ■

[katikallio.com](http://katikallio.com)

# SALLA HAKANPÄÄ: AERIALIST, FREEDIVER, ADVOCATE

TEXT Heidi Backström TRANSLATION Lola Rogers

© Tinku Wessman



**Salla Hakanpää** ended up after she started publishing her views on the arts, and the structural challenges for unaffiliated artists in particular, on social media about ten years ago. Her social media activity led to active participation in, among other things, the planning of reforms to state subsidized art in Finland and the merger of the Dance and Circus information centers.

Working in the positions of trust takes exactly as much time as it's given to, but now Hakanpää wants to focus more on the actual art making again. "It's exciting right now to think about who I am and what I'm doing. I know I'm still an artist, at least."

## CONVERSATIONS ON STRUCTURES AND IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Salla Hakanpää has been publicly critical of art institutions and the structures and practices of art. Describing how she came to serve on boards and advisory groups for various organizations, Hakanpää says, "There's always muttering in the dressing rooms and over drinks. When somebody speaks out on social media, and has the

attitude that it's possible to do something about these issues, people get the picture that here's a person who's ready and willing to participate in doing something. And as I'm a person with a strong sense of social responsibility, I started to feel that if I'm interested and frustrated about these things, I might as well try to tackle them, especially when asked to take part."

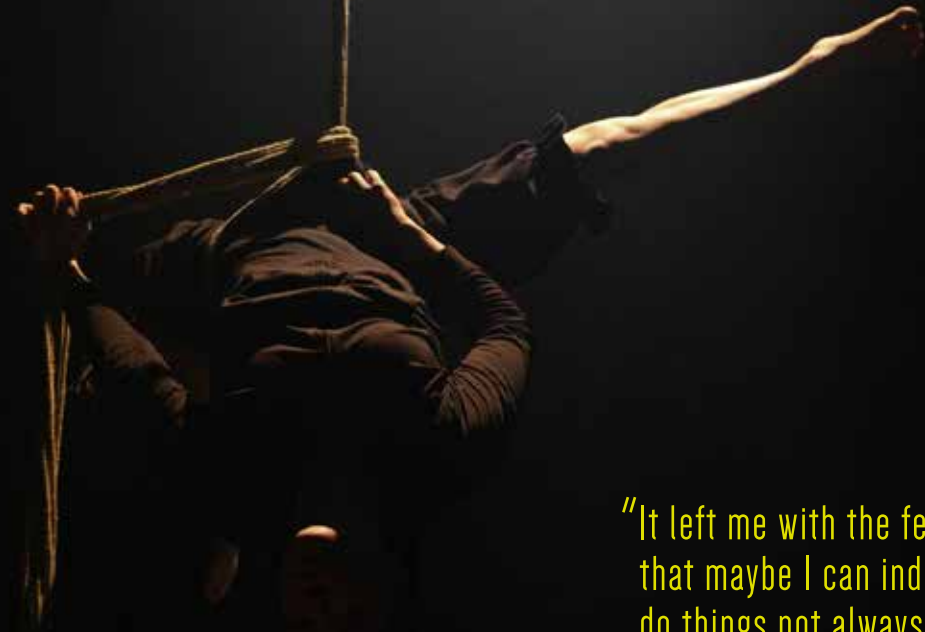
Hakanpää feels that her board and advisory work has allowed her to get to know and learn from people in the broader field of art, working among different professions and perspectives. "When I started the work I was much more rigid and uncompromising than I am now." Working within these structures, Hakanpää has learned to better understand – though it's hard to accept – the reality that the majority of artists and groups try to seize the same few opportunities that the industry with limited resources has to offer. "Who thrives or succeeds, whatever that means, is affected by so many things connected to the structure of the field as well as societal factors. People burn out or are constantly on the verge of it."

**CHAIRING THE BOARD** of Circusinfo Finland, membership on the board of Cirko – Center for New Circus, member of Dance House Helsinki advisory board – these are the positions of trust where circus artist



© Anna Kekkonen

SALLA HAKANPÄÄ: *Funis*.  
© Riku Pihlanto



“It left me with the feeling that maybe I can indeed do things not always tied to a rope.”

#### WATER AS AN ELEMENT OF CIRCUS ART

A 2010 graduate of the Turku Arts Academy program in circus arts, Salla Hakanpää is working on two pieces at the moment: a concert performance with two contemporary classical musicians and a piece with the group Reflectors, which will be their third. The installation show has the working title *Scenes of Invisibility and Presence*. “We’ve investigated things like whether contemporary circus can be done in such a way that the performer isn’t physically visible to the audience at any point in the performance.”

In addition to performances on stage, Salla is attracted to water as material and a setting for performance. She is also a national record holder in competitive freediving. Since her and WHS’ piece *Dive*, which premiered in 2016, she has created

performances in and around water. “I’ve made video-mediated underwater pieces in the past. Now I’m interested in taking the performance setting outdoors, into a natural water environment.”

Hakanpää is passionate about connections between aerial art and freediving. One has a strong connection to gravity, the other to buoyancy. In one, breathing and muscular effort are central, in the other relaxation is the key. Breathing is also connected with Hakanpää’s third area of professional curiosity – singing. Performing in a 2022 outdoor theater performance *Norpan aika (The Time of Ringed Seal)*, she was able to combine all of these passions. “The piece happened on and by a lake. I got to dive, act and sing. It left me with the feeling that maybe I can indeed do things not always tied to a rope.”

#### RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL TOURING

The ecological crisis, of which the coronavirus epidemic was just one striking example, has made Hakanpää think about what international touring means to her.

It’s often financially necessary for Finnish circus artists to have an international career because Finland doesn’t have a system that would support freelancers to be able to work and tour with the same piece for a long time. The funding emphasis is on premieres and new works, and performance seasons can be very short. “How and where are you going to create those pieces and nurture their life cycles?” Hakanpää says in frustration. The need to tour internationally also affects creators’ artistic choices. When Hakanpää and the working group did the living installation *Funis* for Cirko’s

“How and where are you going to create those (internationally touring) pieces and nurture their life cycles?”

large auditorium in 2022, she had to remind herself many times that they were making the work for the requirements of the space exactly how they wanted it to be there, without concerning themselves with how to fit it into a suitcase.

Aiming for an international tour has become the default setting, and that goal

is rarely questioned. Hakanpää wants to think about her work’s inherent value. “A long lifecycle, in other words touring, can of course be part of the value of a piece, but it shouldn’t automatically be. One value is that the work happens in a certain place for a certain period of time, and that’s fine.” Hakanpää points out that values and goals are decided on together as a group, and both installation performances and site-specific works can tour. “The solo show *Dive* has been presented internationally here and there and it’s very site-specific – you need a swimming pool with a diving platform.”

#### GOOD VIBES FROM FINLAND

For Salla Hakanpää, the advantages of Finnish contemporary circus are its good reputation and the diversity of performance. “We do things for different sizes

of conventional performance spaces, we do outdoor things, solos and works with large ensembles. There’s a broad conception of what contemporary circus can be, where it can be made and seen.”

Hakanpää thinks that Finnish contemporary circus has had a good international reputation since its very beginnings. “From the time of the very first troupes, Finnish contemporary circus has gained a distinctive reputation. Within that reputation it’s grown colorful and diverse. There’s not just one way to do ‘Finnish contemporary circus’. But all the pieces are united by the fact that they are made with care and precision. The artists really invest in what they do and how they do it and so the creations turn out bold and unique.”

[sallahakanpaa.com](http://sallahakanpaa.com)



SALLA HAKANPÄÄ: *Surface*.  
© Tom Hakala

# GENDER ON THE CIRCUS STAGE: “BEING YOURSELF AND DOING WHAT YOU WANT IS WHAT MATTERS”

TEXT Emma Vainio TRANSLATION Claire Ruaro

**AS FAR BACK** as the early 20th century, the stages of major circuses around the world were home to all kinds of bodies, with gender taking a backseat. While gender norms in the surrounding world were becoming ever stricter and women could not even do things like vote, in circus tents bearded women and immensely strong female trapeze artists were wowing audiences.

But as Professor **Janet M. Davis**, whose research focuses on circus culture, notes, this celebration of diversity was often an illusion. Rather than being the pinnacle of open-mindedness and somewhere that differences were embraced, traditional circus was considered a kind of safe space for ‘freaks’ who found themselves without a place in society.

What kind of framework does contemporary circus provide for gender representations? What can women, men or non-binary people do on a circus stage? What is touring circus life like for a mother with a little baby? And what about if a woman is clumsy or excessively sexy on stage?

To find out more, we discussed gender, chopping sauna wood, and artistic freedoms on stage with two circus artists.

## BALANCE, VIRTUOSITY AND CRAZINESS - WITH THE EFFICIENCY OF FINNISH WOMEN

“A woman chopping wood on stage is still seen as some kind of exceptional peculiarity in France. In Finland, we just accept that the wood for the sauna needs chopping, and someone’s got to chop it, man or woman,” ponders **Sanja Kosonen**, a circus artist living and working in France.

“Or a woman hanging out in her underwear on stage, rather than having to be some kind of feminine princess. It’s interesting to explore what a woman can be. But at its core, *Mad in Finland* is rooted simply in the idea that we can be whatever we want to be and do whatever we want to do,” Kosonen emphasises.

The contemporary circus performance *Mad in Finland* was created in 2012, when Circus Artist **Elise Abonce Muhonen** invited seven successful female Finnish circus artists, who were all living outside Finland, to create a commissioned piece for the Galapiat Cirque festival in France.

“It’s crazy that we still live in a day and age where a woman portraying a slightly different image of womanhood makes a performance feminist,” Kosonen states.







MAD IN FINLAND  
 © Sébastien Armengol

**“It’s crazy that we still live in a day and age where a woman portraying a slightly different image of womanhood makes a performance feminist.”**

*Mad in Finland*, which received the State Prize for Circus Art in Finland in 2015, was originally inspired by the book *Seven Brothers* (1870) by Finnish national writer **Aleksis Kivi**. The classic work paints a picture of the Finnish mindscape as deeply melancholic, springing forth from wild forest origins.

The main role in *Mad in Finland* is occupied not by seven brothers but by seven very close female circus artists – seven sisters, if you will.

“We worked on the basis of combining womanhood, Finnish identity abroad, and, of course, circus and the touring lifestyle.”

Sanja Kosonen has herself lived in France for 20 years. “I left Finland to continue my studies at CNAC (Centre National des Arts du Cirque), and then ended up staying in France for work.” Kosonen specialises in tightwire dance and highwire balance, and is also a key proponent of the ancient circus art of hair hanging.

The original intention was to perform *Mad in Finland* just once, but things ended up taking a slightly different turn, with it so far having been performed over 150 times in France, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland, to over 55,000 audience members.

Kosonen highlights the contrast in cultures, while French culture loves to spend time mulling over and talking about things, “The Mad in Finland team is very much about doing rather than discussing – Finnish women are next level when it comes to efficiency.”

*Mad in Finland* was created in just nine days. “We came up with the pieces, taught ourselves to play the songs, and sewed our costumes all within that timeframe. Each one of us came up with an idea for our own piece that was somehow linked to Finland,” Kosonen explains. “I created the dance scene based on traditional open-air pavilion dancing, which for me encompasses some of the essence of Finnishness.”

“We adore that unique Finnish craziness, and gently poking fun at ourselves – that’s a constant theme throughout the performance.” In their roles on stage, the performers chop wood, work themselves into a state of euphoria in pavilion dances, explore the contrast between darkness and light, and touch on reindeer, the Winter War, and national composer Sibelius.

“The performance ends with us heading to the sauna,” Sanja Kosonen laughs.



MAD IN FINLAND  
 © Sébastien Armengol

**“Time has brought something completely new to the performance: a kind of boldness to perform and even just exist in front of people with a changing body.”**

The group has remained a tight-knit affair, with only Finnish women permitted to be part of the show. “To keep our collective spirit strong and to make sure all the performers really understand even the deepest levels of Finnishness.”

Over the course of its 11-year history, *Mad in Finland* has seen 25 performers, as stand-ins have been needed from time to time. “With a show that involves seven women in their thirties, you know that’s just how it’s going to be from the get-go. We’ve had to factor in babies being born and some of us being on maternity leave,” Kosonen explains.

“Touring with little babies is a whole experience in itself. Often we’ve had the dads carrying the babies while the mums have been performing. I can remember plenty of situations when I was preparing for a performance while breastfeeding on one side and pumping on the other in some storage room. And at the same time finding a third hand to get my makeup

done. When you get onto the stage after all that, it’s like a sense of freedom! Motherhood has changed my attitude to the whole profession: nowadays, making art doesn’t feel like quite such a serious endeavour,” she explains.

While touring, the performers listen to lots of rap by strong female Finnish artists and practise their twerking. Often, there are also very loud vocal rehearsals underway too. “When we tour, it’s never a small affair: we have kids, dogs and boyfriends all along with us for the ride. There’s a really strong circus family vibe.”

The image of women in the circus world is strongly intertwined with sequined princess imagery, but even that is constantly being dismantled these days. “I would say that, in the dance world for example, those stereotypes are still even more strongly rooted,” Kosonen contemplates.

“But this kind of underwear humour – by women rather than men – and laughing out loud at yourself isn’t yet particularly common in the circus world either,” she states. “On a general level, women are under so much pressure to conform to different ideals and fulfil specific roles. But perhaps that’s not a problem specific to circus, maybe it’s a broader societal problem.”

When the *Mad in Finland* performance and group started up in 2012, the artists were in their thirties, so naturally, the majority are in their forties now.

“You can see it as a statement, too. Time has brought

**"No matter what we do, the bodies of women or non-binary people are always political."**

something completely new to the performance: a kind of boldness to perform and even just exist in front of people with a changing body," Kosonen says. "While the pace might have slowed in places, that does not matter in *Mad in Finland*: it just brings more humour, and charisma too!"

#### JOY OF THE MUNDANE, OUTRAGEOUS LIBERATION - AND THE POWER OF CONNECTION

"No matter what we do, the bodies of women or non-binary people are always political. Through the multi-art collective Recover Laboratory, we seek to give people the right to express themselves in a way that feels natural to them, regardless of their gender or gender norms," explains circus and performance artist **Miradonna Sirkka**.

"It's important to be able to stay true to yourself and also give those around you the opportunity to explore a wider spectrum of being. We have to make sure we don't start unconsciously replicating external behavioural models."

Miradonna Sirkka is one of the founders of Recover Laboratory. The group is known for its immersive multi-art pieces brimming with surrealism, wonderland installations and experiential routes designed for urban spaces, in the underground labyrinths of water treatment plants, abandoned factory buildings, and a network of tunnels of old fortifications.

The core group of Recover Laboratory comprises Miradonna Sirkka, visual artist **Sofi Häkkinen** and experience designer **Inna Huttunen**. The multi-art collective features women, men and non-binary people, in roles including performance artist, actor, musician and coder.

Sirkka explains that gender-related inequality can be seen in the structures around us and is always present, even if we do not want to see it.

"We engage in lots of big, tough conversations about values within the group. In our work, warmth, care and a family atmosphere are important," Sirkka states. "In the contexts of contemporary art and performance art, discussion about gender goes much further than it does in the contemporary circus world."

Miradonna Sirkka completed her master's degree in 2020, and as part of her thesis explored awkwardness as a working practice.

"For example, the frameworks of awkwardness or sexiness, spaces women are 'permitted' to occupy on stage, are very narrow. I like going a bit beyond that, walking the tightrope of those boundaries. The contrast is fascinating!"

"The scale men have available to them on stage is so much broader." When performing, Sirkka finds that stepping outside the traditional ideas of what women can do provokes reactions all the way from anger to praise for bravery.

"But is it bravery when you're just doing what feels to you like the only right option – something that's got to be done, as it were? Sticking to gender-based roles or trends dictated by some third party would feel inauthentic," she contemplates.

As Sirkka highlights, circus training coaches performers to stick to predefined standards – being lean, muscular and beautiful all at the same time – to make them aesthetically pleasing to audiences.

"I did that for long enough and felt like a piece of meat for people to applaud on the stage. I wanted to start creating some kind of alternative to this norm, something more interesting and interactive."

In 2023, Recover Laboratory's piece *<3 (Smaller than three)* was chosen as one of the 12 finalists in the highly-regarded Circus Next competition in Paris, the first Finnish piece to have reached this stage in ten years. The piece, combining contemporary circus with visual and sound art, is a celebration of the joy of absurdity and the mundane, of outrageous liberation – and of the power of connection. ■

[en.galapiat-cirque.fr/c24-Mad-in-Finland](http://en.galapiat-cirque.fr/c24-Mad-in-Finland)  
[miradonnasirkka.com](http://miradonnasirkka.com)  
[recoverlaboratory.com](http://recoverlaboratory.com)



**RECOVER LABORATORY: <3 (Smaller than three).**  
 © Christophe Raynauddelage



**MIRADONNA SIRKKA: What is a paradise for you? (work in process).**  
 © Tida-Liina Linnea

# ELINA PIRINEN AND MORTAL TROPICAL DANCES

TEXT Carmen Mehnert

**THE FIRST TIME** I met **Elina** was in 2015 when I was the program director for Performing Arts at Hellerau-Center for the Arts in Dresden, Germany, and we invited her to perform her piece *Personal Symphonic Moment* there. I was immediately taken by the way Elina and her female dancers deconstructed this performance to the enormous musical work of Shostakovich, making it a rather personal appropriation or, quoting Elina, an “autopsy” of the symphonic corpse. I liked how they searched for their own personal symphonic moments using all kinds of expressions and sentiments. And it had humor!

The next time Elina returned to Hellerau was in 2018. I had invited her for a residency to create her piece *Brume de Mer*. It was the last residency I programmed before leaving Dresden.

Elina came with her trusted collaborators – composer **Ville Kabrell**, dramaturge **Heidi Väättänen** and an all-female cast of dancers. They brought a beautiful and eccentric atmosphere to our venue full of dance history, built in 1911 as a school of rhythmic with a pioneering modern architecture by **Heinrich Tessenow**. Here, where **Mary Wigman** danced more than 100 years ago, I saw Elina and her dancers walking joyfully through the forest and nature, searching for wild roots for their show. Blond creatures in the middle of nowhere.

Time passed. We went our own ways. In 2021, in the middle of the pandemic, we reconnected, and Elina told me about the new piece she was preparing. She mentioned that she wanted to do a big stage hybrid work with a live choir, live music and dancers and dig deeper into the topic of contemporary feminist satanism as she described it. I remember the working title was *Experimental Satan Dances*.

More than a year later, in May 2023, I witnessed this piece, now called *Mortal Tropical Dances* which I personally like much more as a title.

In *Mortal Tropical Dances*, Elina combines music and dance in a way that is rarely seen, an exploration of eroticism, shame, danger, and excess. One can feel the feminine rage as creative power even if the piece is performed by a mix cast. The images and the movement material literally leak into the audience, and one understands the importance of the quality of her very specific movements and handwriting. This is a crucial aspect for Elina who spends much time, energy and patience with the dancers, making sure they understand that it's the quality of the movement that is the most important part, not the originality of the ideas. There is no movement without intention. Elina's work is very much based on the idea of bringing the human on stage with all its complexity, layers, passion, and corporality, where the mental and the corporeal worlds are not separated but form one.

This understanding is in my opinion what makes Elina's work so special. The dancers interiorize not only the movement

**ELINA PIRINEN:** *Mortal Tropical Dances.*

📷 Venla Helenius



**ELINA PIRINEN:** *Mortal Tropical Dances.*

© Venla Helenius



“Elina’s work is very much based on the idea of bringing the human on stage with all its complexity, layers, passion, and corporality, where the mental and the corporeal worlds are not separated but form one.”

vocabulary, but are also very aware of each other, of the audience, of the tension that is created between them and the audience. Elina is driven by the question of how to create material that involves the audience without them having to participate on stage. This happens, for instance, through the dancer’s gazes, inviting us as spectators into their world. One feels the connection and the intimacy without having to participate physically. Another interesting tool is how the dancers often use their hair in front of their faces. This allows them to be very sensitive and alert to what happens in their body and around them. How can one move and dance through this perception?

*Mortal Tropical Dances* focuses on the concept of ceremonies by dancing, playing, singing, and praying out energy, sex, hope, madness, joy, suffering, humor, imagination, warmth, and comfort. It is a peculiar work – sometimes romantic, sometimes painful, sometimes ecstatic and ritualistic – accompanied by a live Renaissance chorus and the energetic music composition full of different layers, doom guitars, strings, electronics, bells, and percussion by Ville Kabrell.

The feminine rage mentioned at the beginning is an attempt by Elina to “normalize” big feministic stage productions in today’s society that tends to marginalize and scale them as “grassroot importance”. Her work aims to create counterforces of subconscious heat in today’s world dominated by a depressing and fearful zeitgeist. The more alive, fearless, wilder, and wider the canvas of the stage is, the easier it is for us all to reflect ourselves on it and open new doors to imaginative worlds.

To me, *Mortal Tropical Dances* opens the door to a heterotopia in Foucault’s sense: disturbing, intense, incompatible, contradictory, and transforming. A world within a world where the living meets the subconscious. A piece full of free associations, scenes strung together in a kind of dream logic. I believe Elina prefers to use the word “phantasm” which comes from psychoanalysis. And the stage offers her the possibility to create phantasmas. Not fantasies. May the night come and take away the suffering.

Elina says: “I long for corporeal and aural art that has an ecstatic drive of a subject and a crowd. I long for obsessions, taboos, nightmares, daydreams, sorrow, lust, despair, joy, suffering, silence, horror, satisfaction, shame, unwantedness, imagination and hope”.

And like **Pina Bausch**, Elina’s motto is: go deeper, go deeper, go deeper. ■

[elinapirinen.com](http://elinapirinen.com)

**Carmen Mehnert** was born in Lima, Perú, and holds an MA in Applied Theatre Science from the University of Giessen, Germany. Since 2000, she has worked as a dance dramaturge. In 2019, she founded PLAN B – Creative Agency for Performing Arts in Hamburg.

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

TEXT Heidi Horila PHOTOS Uupi Tirronen TRANSLATION Lola Rogers

## PIE KÄR:

**Pie Kär has their focus on facilitation and participation**

**DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER** Pie Kär enjoys the diverse community of dance and wants to negotiate the structures of the dance scene.

**What phase of your life as an artist are you in right now?**

I'm in a kind of rebirth phase. I worked for some years with social choreography, but now I simply think about sociability, dance, and performance. I facilitate dance sessions for the people of the queer and trans community and I'm returning to thinking through the stage apparatus. I took a

break from making art last spring and kept a professional journal. I wrote in it: "what do I love? what is sacred to me? what of importance can I do with my skills?"

**In recent years you've been active as a facilitator for semi-professional dancers. What can a dance professional find in amateur cultures?**

A particular form of trust, breath for thought, and time. When working on a piece in a professional context, the processes tend to be short and intense, and the actual encounter with the audience

is just a fleeting moment in the arc of the piece. In amateur or more-than-professional contexts, we meet weekly and the group's existential questions can have continuity. I wonder if it's the constant lack of continuity that makes it so difficult to welcome audiences from wider demographics as a freelance dance artist in Helsinki. Personally I love seeing dance outside of the stages of dance institutions. I adore the Finland ballroom scene, for example.

**In your practice, you also take pleasure in going against the conventions and structures of the dance field. In which ways do you want to speak to audiences and artists?**

I'm especially interested in the audience's power and what kind of know-how they have about the unspoken effects that take place between every being in a situation that's framed as a performance or play. In my opinion an artist's place within a society is to ask and to question: what is it that people want to see here and what do they not want to see? Who are these people and who are they not? It is important to me to always approach art as interactive in order to make the agency of witnessing visible. In my next piece for teenagers and adults, there will be a conversational part in the middle of the performance, possibly in a framework of fiction or roleplay.

## PIE KÄR, 33

dancer-choreographer-facilitator

Graduated as a dancer from the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in 2014 and as a choreographer from Uniarts Helsinki Theater Academy in 2020.

**Works:** SOCIAL SOIL 2020–2022, Vili Katastrof (working title) 2024, Birds! Training (working title) 2025

**Word you would use to describe yourself:** spacemaker



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

FINNISH CIRCUS & DANCE IN FOCUS 2024 P25

## MILLA JARKO:

**Milla Jarko strives to get outside the bubble and stay slippery in their practice**

**CIRCUS AND PERFORMANCE** artist Milla Jarko conquered social media and Finnish contemporary stages with their character Tiikeri (Tiger). For them, the circus is an endless exploration of prevailing norms, wrangling, being in the world.

**One of your tools is the ring trapeze. How do trapeze tricks and artistic expression meet in your work?**

That way of putting the question is a bit tiring. I wonder if you would ask a dancer or an actor the same question. I don't think it's very interesting to separate technical tricks and artistic expression into their own compartments. It doesn't develop circus thinking. I want to think more ambitiously and energetically about all the things that tricks and circus arts can be. I'm interested in the circus' ways of being and thinking,

in the possibilities that its unfetteredness and its freedom can create, but also in the expectations. Ring work is part of this journey of exploration I'm on.

**You're 33. What phase of your life as an artist do you feel you're in right now?**

As this article shows, I seem to be an artist on the rise. I did my first solo piece in 2015 and was already considered a promising talent at the time. Maybe I'll be eternally promising. I've been working on the Tiikeri project for five years, but it can rest for a while now. I'm working on a variety of projects and as a cashier in a shop. I'm resting and shaping my practice, which will hopefully always be slippery and elude definition. I have to dare to get out of my own bubble every once in a while. Otherwise my ideas, as well as my artmaking, are in danger of

freezing and becoming monotonous.

**The Tiikeri project takes place both live and on social media. You took on a visible role on social media. What was that experience like?**

I considered social media untrustworthy, and I didn't even have a smartphone. I'm interested in taking on things that I can't comprehend, things that generate unpleasant, conflicted feelings for me. The 'social media me', Tiikeri, was being born.

I took social media customs as a model and flooded my Instagram account with various stuff. At some point I got completely addicted to it, but I gave myself permission. At the same time, the nature of it as a project protected me from the social media environment. I'm there when I feel like it, although I do think that reality and social media are one and the same these days.

## MILLA JARKO, 33

circus and performance artist

Graduated as a circus artist from the Salpaus Education Center in Lahti and from Le Lido – centre des arts du cirque in Toulouse in 2015.

**Significant works/characters:** Tyttö joka söi kuolleita lintuja (The girl who ate dead birds), 2015; Tiikeri (Tiger), 2018–

**Prizes:** Circus feats prize 2023, Finnish Dance and Circus Artists

**Word you would use to describe yourself:** growing



**KERTTU OPUS:**

**Forming a circus company and daily routines bring joy to Kerttu Opus' life**

A FEW YEARS AGO, circus artist **Kerttu Opus** found herself in the middle of a serious crisis. Opus feels that it led her in the right professional direction.

**Some years ago, you came down with arthritis of the spine. How did it change your relationship to the circus?**

Completely. I had been training myself as an aerialist since I was a child. When I lost the skills that I'd used to become a circus professional, and to place a value on myself and what I did, I had to completely redefine myself. Around that same time—right when the pandemic was going on—I moved back to Finland from Montreal, where I had been studying and living for nine years. When everyone's work disappeared the entire field

of circus arts found itself rethinking its place in society. My own process of identity sort of struck a shared seam, and I had time to work at it.

**Since that time, you've become excited about the quick-change technique. What opportunities for expression has it offered you?**

What I'm interested in, is how you can use circus to express things that no other art form can. I feel like I'm on the right track now. Quick-change magic is based on precise technique, and on changing clothes in the blink of an eye. I'm intrigued by the interface between illusion and a seemingly impossible reality. I studied how the technique can be adapted by doing things like

varying the tempo of the clothing change, while trying to say something essential about humanity at the same time.

**You and your spouse have jointly founded the Opus Company. What's it like to work with your own group, and in the circus field generally right now?**

It's really interesting. For instance, we were able to collaborate with the Cirko – Center for New Circus on a set of Sphere performances. We're grateful to all the support and funding organizations for the opportunities and resources we've found in Finland. With their help we can carry out projects even as an independent company. The fact that in Finland you can do things like make politically free art is also a privilege. The important thing for me is to take care of the wellbeing and survival of the community. Much more attention is being paid to the wellbeing of circus artists now.

**KERTTU OPUS, 30**

circus artist living and working in Tampere

Founded the Opus Company in 2022 with her spouse.

Graduated as a circus artist from the National Circus School in Montreal in 2014.

**Significant works:** Particle # B (2017), Colorsphere (2023), Suddenly: and other ways to change (2024)

**Word you would use to describe yourself:** real

**SUVI TUOMINEN:**

**Mixing disciplines broadens Suvi Tuominen's way of working and thinking**

IN HER PIECE *Future past* in Linnaniemi, dancer, choreographer, performance artist, and curator **Suvi Tuominen** reflects the connections between past and present.

**You are not just an artist by training, but also an archaeologist. What lines of**

**thought spill over from archeology into your artistic self?**

I think that because of the legacy of modernism, there is a movement now to chase the future in the arts; what is yet to come. However, I feel a friction with those

power structures that produce such future oriented thinking, and try to linger in the past as present, to perceive the present as "thick" as **Donna Haraway** puts it. In a recent work *Fracturing* with Mean Time Between Failures art collective, we examined the effects of screen culture on dance and present-day perception. It was also an archaeological experiment for me, as one of my excavation sites for the work was TikTok. I used some theories of archaeology and heritage studies while choreographing the work and looking at TikTok dances.

**You've been one of the curators for the Helsinki City Theatre's pilot project that opens new opportunities for contemporary performance in Helsinki. What can contemporary performance and institutional theatre give to each other?**

This need for new venues for contemporary performance in Helsinki came from the local artists. The project curates works that reflect or comment in some way on the conventions of their represented fields, whether it's circus, puppetry, or acting. I think there has to be a certain conceptual or meta level to a work in order for it to stay contemporary. By having this as a focal point in curating, both the artists and audiences can broaden their perspective on contemporary performance and be surprised where art takes us.

**How has curation influenced your work as an artist?**

I've noticed that I pay more attention to the questions around the audience during the artistic process. Different venues scale their audience profiles in various ways, so quite organically these structures have an effect on the artistic outcome and the aesthetics of it. It might seem counterintuitive, but taking the audience profile into account can also open up more experimental ways for the artists to approach their work. For me, finding audiences outside the art field simply broadens the social and political impact and implication of art. ■

**SUVI TUOMINEN, 34**

dancer, choreographer, performance artist, and curator

Graduated as a dancer from the North Karelia College Outokumpu 2017, master of arts from the University of Helsinki in 2019, master in Live Art and Performance Studies from University of the Arts Helsinki in 2021.

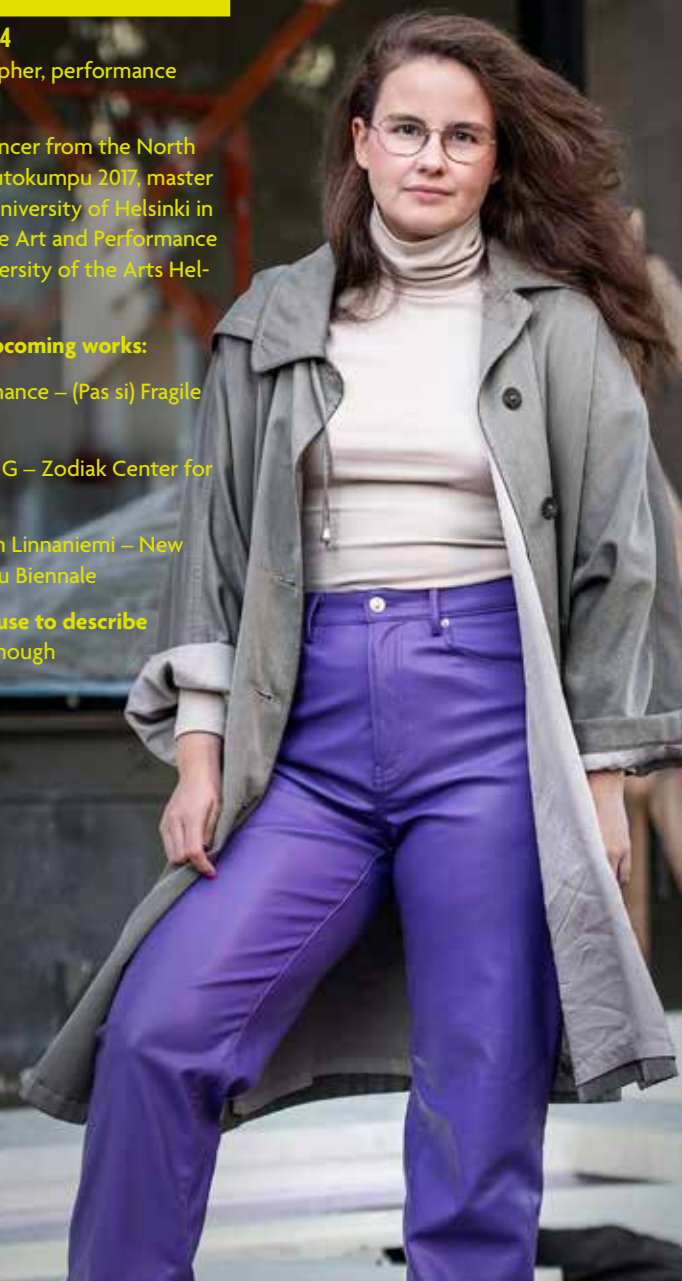
**Significant and upcoming works:**

2024 Solo Performance – (Pas si) Fragile Festival Brussels

2023 FRACPTURING – Zodiak Center for New Dance

2023 Future past in Linnaniemi – New Performance Turku Biennale

**Word you would use to describe yourself:** messy enough



SONYA LINDFORS: *Cosmic Latte.*

© Uwa Iduzee



# SONYA LINDFORS – RADICAL DREAMS

TEXT Alma Onali TRANSLATION Claire Ruaro

In her quest to shake up the Finnish art scene, time and time again Sonya Lindfors presents audiences with performances that ask difficult questions about what the world might be like without oppression and othering.

**PINNING DOWN** choreographer **Sonya Lindfors** requires a degree of scheduling acrobatics, with autumn traditionally being the busiest time of year in the performing arts.

When the day of our interview arrives, however, if you did not know better you might think Lindfors had all the time in the world. To someone not in the know, it might seem that Lindfors has endless time and energy, when in fact her schedule is tightly packed with various different commitments.

“It helps that my work feels meaningful and gives me the opportunity to help people.”

Around the time of our interview, one major demand on Lindfors’s time was that she would shortly be leaving for a European tour with her dance performance *One Drop*. However, this is an opportunity she is glad to have had, because taking a piece on tour from Finland – one of the more remote corners of Europe – is not something to

be taken for granted. She has noticed on a general level that European dance institutions simply do not have the money they had ten years ago.

“The Covid-19 pandemic brought about huge budget cuts, and since then, war and inflation have also played their role. Not to mention authoritarian powers gaining ground in various parts of Europe, which has also led to cuts to the arts. For the most part, art is a force promoting radical equality and diversity. Obviously, that’s dangerous!” states Lindfors with more than a hint of sarcasm.

Danger, however, is the 38-year-old’s destination, with radical dreams about a fairer world lying at the very heart of her work. Lindfors graduated with a degree in choreography in 2013, but her work goes far beyond that – forming what she sees as holistic, perhaps 360-degree artistry. In real terms, that means that her schedule

combines teaching, lecturing, dancing, guiding, mentoring, organising, facilitating, conveying, combining, writing, discussing ...

“Art is my way of forming a relationship with the world.”

One particularly important area for her at the moment is facilitating other artists’ work through the anti-racist and intersectional community UrbanApa, which she founded in 2011 in collaboration with Anniina Jääskeläinen. The community offers the likes of mini residencies for artists, particularly those who belong to a minority group or who do not follow the traditional higher education pathway into the sector.

“Luckily, growing up I had the kind of home that had the funds and opportunities to enjoy the arts, and the idea that art can really change the world was supported. Not everyone has that same opportunity.”

Lindfors emphasises that few Brown and Black people have access to the spaces she

“Current problems, such as polarisation and the climate crisis, can be linked to a breakdown in various kinds of relationship. This feeling of insignificance arises when we are separated from ourselves, each other and nature.”

operates in. For that reason, she considers it her responsibility to open doors to new creators. As one performer in *One Drop* states, while clattering down a narrow staircase holding a microphone stand: “Today I feel like a Black artist in a white institution. It is quite tight!”

However, Lindfors is also concerned about the future of the arts sector. In her teaching work, she meets youngsters constantly on the brink of burnout, with little faith left in their future.

“How can we have reached the point where we live in one of the world’s richest countries yet everything is so precarious all the time?” Lindfors says with clear frustration.

She believes it stems from a lack of communities, and through UrbanApa, she wants to fight back against this trend.

“UrbanApa is a shared dream and vision of the art institution of the future.”

Lindfors through her work is clearing a path for minorities and challenging power structures, such as the dominance of whiteness. Her pieces often have a deeply rooted theoretical basis, which is then developed in discussions within the working group. Sometimes, Lindfors combines performances with lectures, or when touring, she invites local artists to join the performances as visiting guest stars.

Lindfors stunned Finland’s whiter-than-white art scene with her piece *NOIR?* in

2013 – the first performance with a fully Afro-Finnish cast. The performance was a success, but at times audiences would laugh during scenes depicting pain points in Black history. It was at this point that Lindfors started to turn her gaze to politics and the histories of bodies even more closely.

With *Noble Savage* (2016), Lindfors changed tactics. Rather than dealing with personal experiences, she focused on bigger power structures. Her subsequent pieces, including *Cosmic Latte* and *camouflage*, also dealt with the theme of Blackness and Brownness and the mechanisms of racialisation and othering. At the same time, the pieces explored utopian, decolonial speculation on alternative futures.

The piece she is now touring with, *One Drop*, continues along the same path, looking at relations and how colonialism and the art world are linked to one another. A particular area of focus has been the 19th century – the golden age of imperialism, classical music and art. Beauty ideals in terms of both individual bodies and more generally in society were closely intertwined with power and oppression. The construction of monumental buildings in Belgium was only possible with blood money from the Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

“These are painful things to think about. What would Africa be like now, if there had been no colonialism or oppression? What would South America look like if the Indigenous populations had not been killed off by violence and communicable diseases, both brought by Europeans?”

*One Drop* is not Lindfors’s only new show for 2023 – she has also celebrated two other premieres this year. One of these was *Common moves*, intended for the Helsinki Biennial and created in collaboration with other Helsinki BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) artists. The second, *something like this*, was a dance piece specifically intended for young people over the age of 12. Lindfors approaches art intended for children with just as much seriousness as any other art, but there are, of course, some differences. The language, rhythm, and length are all adapted to suit children.

While in pieces intended for adults, it is harder for Lindfors to truly reach middle class, white audiences, with children’s performances the issue of how to navigate discomforts takes a back seat.

“In the working group we talked about what we would have liked to see as teenagers. And, on the other hand, what we, as educators and adults, would want children to see?” Lindfors explains.

The performance ended up incorporating lots of playfulness, encouragement, courage and daring. Lindfors considers acceptance of different body types to be another key theme, believing that dance can clear a wider space in the narrow gaps social media creates.

“Dance saved me so many times as a teenager in difficult spots. Could *something like this* inspire other young people to get involved in dance?”

Lindfors was presented with a State Award for Public Information in 2022 for her impressive and responsible distribution of information through multidisciplinary dance projects. The reknowned prize has been awarded annually since 1968 for commendable instances of sharing and popularisation of information.

“Receiving that award felt radical – it represented taking a stand on whose information and what kind of work are accepted and approved as information,” says Lindfors.

Information is power, she says. For centuries, different forms of information, such as that cultivated by Indigenous populations and bodily knowledge have been excluded from the Western perspective. However, this kind of information could help people and other creatures coexist in a more sustainable and meaningful way.

“Current problems, such as polarisation and the climate crisis, can be linked to a breakdown in various kinds of relationship. This feeling of insignificance arises when we are separated from ourselves, each other and nature,” states Lindfors.

For this reason, instead of individualism, Lindfors always returns to relationships, to dreaming of a better future. ■

[sonyalindfors.com](http://sonyalindfors.com)

SONYA LINDFORS: *One Drop*. Antonia Atarah, Mariama Slåttøy, Isabella Shaw, Geoffrey Erista, Nori Kin.  
© Tuukka Ervasti



SONYA LINDFORS: *something like this*. Akim Bakhtaoui, Linda Ilves, Ramona Panula, Sophia Wekesa.  
© Tuukka Ervasti





# FOR YOUNGSTERS, WITH PASSION

TEXT Heidi Backström TRANSLATION Claire Ruaro

When it comes to watching and participating in art, younger audiences – those in their teens all the way up to young adults – have categorically fallen by the wayside in comparison to other age groups. There are pieces tied to the age and interests of children from babies up to those of primary school age – and, of course, there is plenty out there for the working-age population and elderly people. It is only in recent years that young people have had the spotlight turned on them as an interesting potential target group for the performing arts, with dedicated quality pieces only now being created for them. Three Finnish artists tell us what fascinates them about young audiences and what the art field should offer for them.

© Ilkka Saastamoinen



## JANINA RAJAKANGAS: FOR AND WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, IN THEIR SPACES

**CHOREOGRAPHER Janina Rajakangas** started creating her piece *Teen* (2017, 2021–2022) when she became a bonus mother to a teenager. This change in her own life prompted her to start thinking about what

teenage life is, how it feels, and what embodiment and communality in the teenage context really are. “I feel that I cannot help but make work about what is around me, either bothering or intriguing me. I then create movement from the issue by embodying different aspects of it. In *Teen*, we created movement by embodying states related to teenagers like frustration, rage and affection towards other teens. I thought about how teenagers walk, or trundle along and how they hang out differently to how adults do,” Rajakangas explains.

*Teen* was a piece for teens and adults, and its performers were all high school students. The piece was first shown on stage for adult and art audiences at Zodiak – Centre for New Dance and went onto tour schools both in 2018 and 2021–2022. At the heart of the piece were encounters: the performers were in the centre of the space, with the audience surrounding them on four sides. The performers looked into the audience’s eyes, creating encounters between performer and spectator. Rajakangas tells that initially eye contact was difficult for the teenagers, but as the piece progressed it grew easier.

Rajakangas continued working with the performers from *Teen* in her performance *Venus*, which premiered at the Baltic Circle festival in November 2022. *Venus* explores the eroticisation of girls and young women on social media, a topic that came to Rajakangas through her own teenaged daughter. By this stage, Rajakangas already knew what her performers were capable of and how close they could get to the audiences.

In *Venus*, the themes that teenaged girls explore are



JANINA RAJAKANGAS: *Teen*.

📷 Sanni Siira

“There should be more diverse art and quite simply just more art available for youngsters. Diversity in terms of the artists and the content.”

– SONYA LINDFORS

presented to the audiences in such a way that the audience cannot escape or avoid them, with no room for misunderstandings. “Soon after *Venus* premiered, it became clear that *everyone* has encountered harassment on social media, even if they do not talk about it. The very nature of harassment means that people don’t tell anyone about it.”

Originally, *Venus* was created primarily for fellow parents to help them see the reality faced by young women and to shine a light on topics that can be difficult to put into words. However, in autumn 2023, *Venus* was adapted for ninth-grade students. In this version, the performance took place on a stage, not surrounded by the audience as in the original version. “In the piece, the performers were so exposed that we needed a way to create distance, a mental buffer between them and the audience. The stage and microphones create that,” says Rajakangas, explaining the choices that must come into play with young performers.

Rajakangas feels that high school students in particular have a dire need for pieces that deal with the kinds of things they are experiencing in their lives. Performers of the same age are one way of approaching the topic: “Having a question posed to you by a peer is a powerful experience. In the world of dance, 20–30-year-olds are well represented, but other groups lack that peer experience.”



**SONYA LINDFORS:  
PEDAGOGIC PERFORMERS -  
A DIRECT CONNECTION WITH  
YOUNG PEOPLE**

At the core of choreographer **Sonya Lindfors's** practice is connecting with diverse audiences through art. Her ears are ringing with talk of young people being a special group: "It feels like anyone other than white, middle-class adults is considered a special group when it comes to art." Lindfors's piece *something like this* has been created as a part of the *Zodiak 2025 – Zodiak Youth Project*, which breaks down the barriers between school age audiences and contemporary dance. The project involves, for example, experimenting with different ways of implementing performances aimed at young people and reaching new audiences. At the start of *something like this*, the working group came together to consider the question: what kind of performance would I have wanted to see as a teenager?

*something like this* is a performance featuring four big names in the Finnish street dance scene. Street dance is rarely seen on art stages and in art contexts: "These creators, techniques and worlds also belong on stages and by bringing them to such environments we can have a real impact on young people." Lindfors herself has taught dance since she was 15 years old, and the other members of the *something like this* working group also have strong pedagogic backgrounds. Teaching offers a direct connection with young people as audiences.

Young audiences are also nothing new to Lindfors. Her pieces *Cosmic latte*, *Noir* and *camouflage* deal with topics such as gaze and Black body on the stage and have been performed at youth festivals. The process for creating *something like this* was guided by a desire to show off the best sides of street dance: encouragement, playfulness, happiness and the joy of doing things and dancing together, the joy of one's own body. The background to this is Lindfors's own experience of her transformation into an adult, a stage of life where art and dance truly kept her going. "My body can be exactly as it is, big or small, visible or on the sidelines."



**SONYA LINDFORS:** *something like this*.  
© Tuukka Ervasti

**RACE HORSE COMPANY:** *Tattarmossen experience*.  
Rauli Dahlberg, Kalle Lehto, Florian Grobéty, Siiri  
Lehtiö, Jussi Liukkonen, Mia Toivola  
© Antti Suniala



**RACE HORSE COMPANY:  
PERMISSION TO BE ENTERTAINED**

'Art Testers' is a cultural education programme funded by two Finnish foundations – the Finnish Cultural Foundation and the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland – and the Ministry of Education and Culture, bringing all of the approximately 60,000 eighth graders in Finland to visit high-quality art locations around Finland every year. Artists and art organisations get direct feedback from the young people, allowing them to develop their content so that it truly speaks to young audiences. Around 4,000 art testers in southern Finland saw contemporary circus group Race Horse Company's *Tattarmossen Experience* in autumn 2023. *Tattarmossen Experience* is a performance about people who live on the outskirts of town, in homes they have built themselves from rubbish. The inspiration for the piece came from the Tattarmossen (Tattarisuo) neighbourhood in Helsinki, where RHC's training facilities were located. The industrial aesthetics of the area and extraordinary human fates are clear to see in this comedic performance.

The group wanted to make a piece that was unambiguously comedic, a show that anyone could enjoy. While the piece is not suitable for the very youngest members of the family, it is open to anyone else. "It embraces slapstick humour and fart jokes, the kind that don't offend anyone and get everyone laughing," explain **Rauli Dahlberg** and **Kalle Lehto** from RHC.

"Teens like it because there's plenty happening on stage. It proceeds at quite the pace, so it holds the audience's interest. Technically challenging moves really capture people's interest," Dahlberg and Lehto state, pondering the reasons *Tattarmossen Experience* works so well for young audiences. "In this piece,

we weren't aiming for deep artistic themes or trying to refine it into something aesthetically profound, instead the tempo and the moves were the key elements. You don't need to understand the deepest essence of art or some social phenomenon, instead you can just switch your brain off and enjoy it." Despite this, the teens surprised the artists by sharing all kinds of deep thoughts about the piece.

RHC considers it important for young people to be offered ways to be surprised and get adrenaline rushes from sources other than screens. They love to amaze audiences who have arrived with the presumption of 'ugh, theatre. Yawn.' "Then when they get into the theatre they're reacting, clapping and laughing, really having those wow moments."

**INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY, DIVERSITY  
AND PROVISION**

Janina Rajakangas, Sonya Lindfors and Race Horse Company's Rauli Dahlberg and Kalle Lehto all feel that high-quality art can and should be provided in young people's own spaces, such as schools. An active approach should also be taken to bringing young people into art institutions, allowing them to be involved in art even as young adults.

As Lindfors summarises: "There should be more diverse art and quite simply just *more* art available for youngsters. Diversity in terms of the artists and the content. More pieces that young spectators can enjoy and more works that allow them to challenge themselves. By making these changes we can allow every young person to find their own space in the field of arts, as a creator, as a spectator, as a participator." ■

# FROM UKRAINE TO FINLAND: I BELIEVE IN CHANGES, I BELIEVE IN PEOPLE, SAYS NINA BULGAKOVA

TEXT Emma Vainio

**UKRAINIAN DANCER-CHOREOGRAPHER Nina Bulgakova** left her hometown of Kharkiv when the war started, initially heading to the Czech Republic, from where her journey soon continued northward. With the support of Dance Info Finland and Artists at Risk she arrived in Helsinki in October 2022. Bulgakova was accompanied by dancers **Anastasiia Mostova** and **Katerina Zhuravlova** from her company Ethno Contemporary Ballet.

Bulgakova graduated from the contemporary dance program at the Kharkiv Academy of Culture in 2008. Before the war, she worked as a dance teacher and dancer in Kharkiv. "Body movement is a way of life for me. I am constantly dancing: at home, in the bathroom, on the street, with the trees," she says.

Since leaving Ukraine, Ethno Contemporary Ballet has performed in Finland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Lithuania. The group has already collaborated with many Finnish dance groups and artists. "In Helsinki, dance artist **Alpo Aaltokoski** has provided us with a rehearsal space, where I have also led yoga classes. He has also helped us in creating networks. Choreographer **Valter Raekallio**, in turn, has been a tremendous help to us in applying for grants."

"Artists should share more, break down barriers, and bring their skills together. Through open collaboration, something interesting and new always emerges."

In the autumn of 2023, Nina Bulgakova spent time in Northern Finland, in Oulu, and was involved in a piece directed by dance artist **Pirjo Yli-Maunula**, titled *NIGHTTOWN*. This commissioned work, which brought together a 15-member international team, was part of the Creative Europe project *Ulysses – European Odyssey*, where an event, exhibition, or performance based on one chapter of the book was realized in 18 cities. "It included dancers, circus artists, as well as light and visual artists. The project was intense and challenging but also a fascinating opportunity to develop as a dancer," says Bulgakova. "Artists should share more, break down barriers, and bring their skills



Nina Bulgakova  
© Daria Rodionova

together. Through open collaboration, something interesting and new always emerges."

As a choreographer, Nina Bulgakova draws inspiration from cultural roots, myths and nature. In her works, femininity, motherhood and sisterhood are also often featured. In 2024, she is preparing a new project with her group titled *Women and the Sea*. The piece delves into the oceans and draws inspiration from myths of water spirits from different cultures. *Women and the Sea* explores the symbolism that mermaid stories could reveal in this era. "We have forgotten how to live in harmony with nature. *Women and the Sea* brings mermaids to the stage as a symbol of the disconnection between humans and nature," Bulgakova explains.

"In our version, the water spirits stranded on dry land would like to return to the water, but they can't because the sea is so polluted that they can no longer live there." And as in many stories, mermaids cannot speak. They communicate by creating sounds with their bodies: clapping, snapping, and drumming different parts of their bodies, perhaps also producing a hissing sound with their mouths. The idea of silence resonates when

For Nina Bulgakova, dance means communication without words.

environmental pollution or some societal problem is acknowledged, but it is still not discussed. "On the other hand, when nature communicates with us, it doesn't use words but shows through other means that something is wrong."

For Nina Bulgakova, dance means communication without words. Not only with people but also with the spiritual level of the world – the touchless energy that can be sensed, for example, when walking in the forest. "When I dance, I connect with the surrounding world and the entire universe," she describes.

"I believe in changes, I believe in people. These thoughts give me energy to continue even if the times are hard." ■

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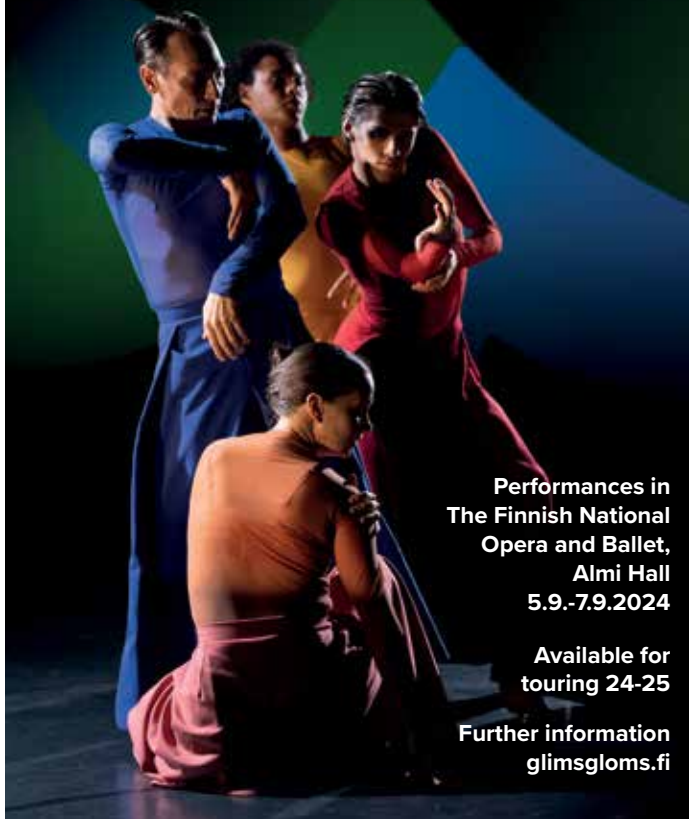
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Further information  
glimsgloms.fi

# DIRECTORY OF FINNISH CIRCUS AND DANCE

This is an overview listing circus and dance companies, production centres and regional dance centres in Finland. Discover more information about festivals, circus and dance education and organisations, venues and residencies at [circusdance.fi](http://circusdance.fi).

 performances for young audiences

## CIRCUS COMPANIES

**AGIT-CIRK**

agitcirk.com

**Contact:** Jenni Lehtinen

**Key words:** Circus performances, contemporary circus, multidisciplinary performances, young audiences, outdoor circus performances



**ARCTIC ENSEMBLE**

arcticensemble.com

**Contact:** Armas Lintusaari,  
Circus Artist & Producer

**Key words:** Contemporary circus, acrobatics, multidisciplinary, outdoor circus, circus tent

**AURA COMPANY**

sirkusteatteriaura.com

**Contact:** Markus Nivala, Art Director

**Key words:** Contemporary circus, theater stage, circus festival, circus school, street circus

**BLIND GUT COMPANY**

blindgut.com

**Contact:** Tuomas Vuorinen,  
Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary circus, multidisciplinary productions, outdoor performances, young audiences



Company Portmanteau, Piste, piste, piste © Mikko Pirinen

**COLLECTIF MAD / GALAPIAT CIRQUE**

galapiat-cirque.fr/c24-Mad-in-Finland

**Contact:** Anne Heuveline,  
Producer Contemporary circus

**Keywords:** Contemporary circus

**COMPANY KATE & PASI**

kate-pasi.com

**Contact:** Katerina Repponen

**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
all audiences

**COMPANY PORTMANTEAU**

portmanteau.fi

**Contact:** Luis Sartori do Vale,  
Director, Artist

**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
visual theater, interdisciplinary

**COMPANY UUSI MAAILMA**

uusimaailma.org

**Contact:** Seija Hakkarainen,  
Artistic Director

**Key words:** Multidisciplinary work, performance art, site specific, progressive circus, visual theatre

**DANCE THEATRE HURJARUUTH**

hurjaruuth.fi/en/

**Contact:** Jyrki Karttunen,  
Theatre Director**Key words:** Young audiences,  
contemporary circus, dance**ILMATILA**

ilmatila.com

**Contact:** Ilona Jäntti**Key words:** Contemporary circus, site-specific performances, multidisciplinary productions, young audiences**JÄGERHORN PRODUCTIONS**

mymagicdouble.com

**Contact:** Piia-Pauliina Mäntysaari**Key words:** Magic and Theatre, One-man-show, Poetic and Contemplative Magic**KALLO COLLECTIVE**

kallocollective.com

**Contact:** Sari Lakso, Managing Director**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
physical theatre**LUMO COMPANY**

lumocompany.com

**Contact:** Hanna Moisala,

Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
theatre & outdoor performances,  
site specific art**MILLA JARKO**

@tiikeri.arena

**Contact:** Milla Jarko,  
Maker of Performances and Producer**Key words:** Circusy- accessible weirdness,  
benign arrogance**NUUA COMPANY**

nuua.company

**Contact:** Olli Vuorinen, Artistic Director**Key words:** Visual theatre & contemporary circus performances**PISTE KOLLEKTIIVI / CROSS-ART COLLECTIVE PISTE**

pistekollektiivi.fi

**Contact:** Laura Rekilä, Project Planner**Key words:** contemporary circus, dance and theatre performances and applied art projects, art education**RACE HORSE COMPANY**

racehorsecompany.fi

**Contact:** Rauli Dahlberg & Kalle Lehto,  
Artistic Directors**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
physical theatre, young audiences,  
international touring, circus films**RECOVER LABORATORY**

recoverlaboratory.com

**Contact:** Miradonna Sirkka, Director**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
multidisciplinary art, site-specific performances, immersive experiences, surreal everyday**RISA**

riiasaku.com

**Contact:** Saku Mäkelä & Riia Kivimäki,  
Artistic Directors**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
contemporary dance, groundbreaking,  
physical, multidisciplinary**SIRKUS AIKAMOINEN**

sirkusaikamoinen.com

**Contact:** Sade Kampmila, Acrobat**Key words:** Circus tent, street performance, all audiences, modern circus**SISUS**

sisus.net

**Contact:** Inka Pehkonen,  
Artist & Founder**Key words:** Contemporary circus, circus films, touring shows, outdoor performances, female company**VILUS.ART**

vilus.art

**Contact:** Vilhelmiina Sinervo,  
Artist/Director**Key words:** Contemporary circus and dance, participatory/non-participatory, multidisciplinary performance**WHS**

whs.fi

**Contact:** Anne Jämsä,  
Administrative Director**Key words:** Contemporary circus,  
visual theatre, object manipulation,  
magie nouvelle**ZERO GRAVITY COMPANY**

zerogravitycompany.com

**Contact:** Aida Piirainen, Producer**Key words:** Contemporary circus, street circus, multidisciplinary productions, workshops, all audiences

# Alpo Aaltokoski Company

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DEMOKRAATTI 2023



Alpo Aaltokoski Company is one of the pillars of Finnish contemporary dance. During his career, Alpo Aaltokoski has created more than 65 choreographies which have been performed in more than 30 countries across five continents. Alpo Aaltokoski Company's works are characterized by choreographic skill and a seamless dialogue with light, sound and costume design which, along with the choreographer's strong movement, open the performances up to a wider audience.

## Uoma

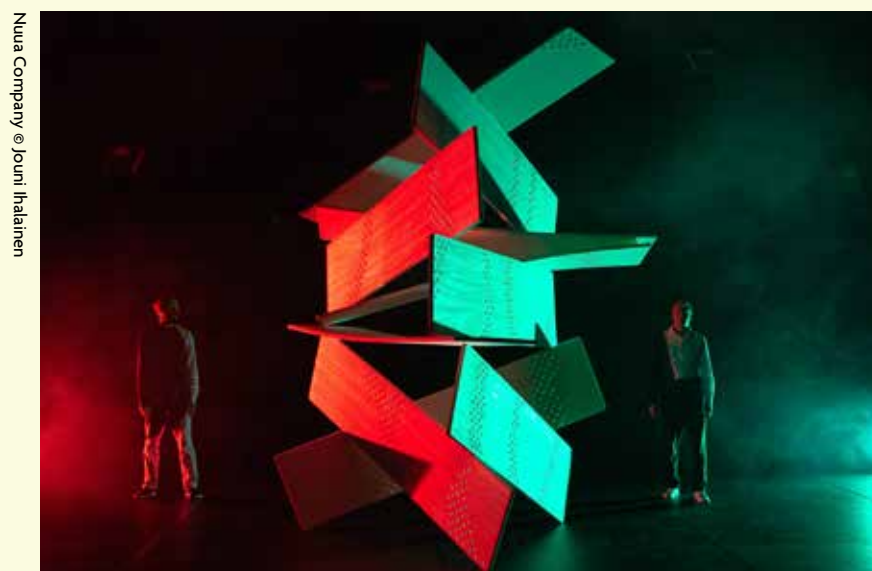
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aaltokoskicompany.fi



# DANCE COMPANIES

## ALPO AALTOKOSKI COMPANY

aaltokoskicompany.fi

**Contact:** Elina Aholainen, Executive Producer

**Key words:** Contemporary dance

## ARJA TIILI DANCE COMPANY

arjatiili.fi breakthefight.com

**Contact:** Arja Tiili, Manager

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, young audiences, streetdance, audience outreach work



## AURACO

auraco.fi

**Contact:** Päivi Aura, Artistic Director

**Key words:** Dance, mime, dance theatre, physical theatre, all ages



## AURINKOBALETTI - AB DANCE COMPANY

aurinkobaletti.fi/en/front-page

**Contact:** Sami Skantsi, Managing Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, dance theatre, adult audiences, young audiences, audience work



Ismo Dance Company: Duet from Men Who Couldn't Find Love © Sakari Vilka

## CARL KNIF COMPANY

carlknifcompany.com

**Contact:** Marjo Pyykönen, Managing Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, physical theatre, bold, poetic, unforgettable

## COMPANÍA KAARI & RONI MARTIN

compania.fi

**Contact:** Sara Hirn, Managing Director

**Key words:** Contemporary flamenco, live music and dance

## DANCE COMPANY OFF/BALANCE

offbalance.fi

**Contact:** Elina Häyrynen and Terhi Kuokkanen, Artistic Directors

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, combining artforms, collaborations, versatile repertoire

## DANCE THEATRE ERI

eri.fi

**Contact:** Tiina Lindfors, Artistic Director Dancer-Choreographer

**Key words:** Contemporary dancetheatre, an impressive multi-arts theatre

## DANCE THEATRE MD

tanssiteatterimd.fi

**Contact:** Anniina Kumpuniemi, Managing Director

**Key words:** Dance performances for all ages



## DANCE THEATRE MINIMI

minimi.fi

**Contact:** Jan Liesaho, Managing Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, contemporary circus, dance theatre, street performance, co-productions

## DANCE THEATER RAATIKKO

raatikko.fi

**Contact:** Jaakko Toivonen, Theatre Director

**Key words:** Dance theatre, performances for young audiences, contemporary dance



## DANCE THEATER RIMPPAREMMI

rimpparemmi.fi

**Contact:** Matti Paloniemi, Artistic Director

**Key words:** Dance theater, Lapland, touring, young audience, live music



## FINNISH NATIONAL BALLET

oopperabaletti.fi

**Contact:** Sampo Kivelä, Artistic Administrator

**Key words:** Classical ballet, neoclassical, contemporary dance

## FLOW PRODUCTIONS

flowprod.fi

**Contact:** Pirjo Yli-Maunula, Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance and circus, immersive shows

## GLIMS & GLOMS

glimsgloms.fi

**Contact:** Melinda Näsänen, Producer

**Key words:** Dance theater, contemporary dance, young audiences



## GRUPPEN FYRA

gruppenfyra.com

**Contact:** Pia Liski, Producer

**Key words:** Dance Theatre, contemporary dance, dance films

## HELSINKI DANCE COMPANY

hdc.fi

**Contact:** Antti Lahti, Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, dance theatre

## IMPROTANGO COMPANY

improtango.fi

**Contact:** Minna Tuovinen

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, improtango, relationshiptango

## ISMO DANCE COMPANY

ismodance.fi

**Contact:** Ismo-Pekka Heikinheimo, Artistic Director, Choreographer

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, choreography and architecture, visual culture, body politics

## JENNI KIVELÄ & KIND PEOPLE

jennikivela.com

**Contact:** Jenni Kivelä

**Key words:** Thoughtful contemporary performances with dance and spoken word

## JOHANNA NUUTINEN + COLLABORATORS

johannanuutinen.com

**Contact:** Johanna Nuutinen

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, commissions for institutions, independent productions, collaborations

## K&C KEKÄLÄINEN & COMPANY

kekalainencompany.net

**Contact:** Sanna Kekäläinen, Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, feminism, gender, politics

## KATJA LUNDÉN COMPANY

katjalunden.com

**Contact:** Katja Lundén, Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary flamenco, music theatre, contemporary dance, cross-disciplinary, groundbreaking



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## Hands some Feet: Colorsphere

Pori Dance Company © Riku Lehtopokku



**KATVE [BLIND SPOT] COMPANY**

katveblindspot.t.fi

**Contact:** Heidi Masalin, Artistic Director**Key words:** Contemporary Dance, young audiences**KINETIC ORCHESTRA**

kineticorchestra.fi

**Contact:** Jarkko Mandelin,

Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, multidisciplinary, acrobatic partnering, physicality, touring**KO-KOLLEKTIIVI**

ko-kollektiivi.fi

**Contact:** Satu Aavanranta

(formerly Tuomisto)

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, embodied re-thinking, dance art**LIISA PENTTI +CO**

liisapentti.com

**Contact:** Hanna Nyman,

Executive Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, performance, teaching, workshops, residencies**MALVINIEMI COMPANY**

malviniemi.fi

**Contact:** Mia Malviniemi, Choreographer**Key words:** Contemporary dance, live music, workshops for senior citizens, dance film**MAMIA COMPANY**

mamiacompany.com

**Contact:** Nina Mamiä, Artistic Director**Key words:** Contemporary dance theatre, touring company, fusion, multidisciplinary, site-specific**MYRSKYRYHMA / TEMPEST GROUP**

myrskyryhma.fi

**Contact:** Mervi Leivo, Producer**Key words:** Dance films, elderly people, contemporary dance, participation, arts&health**NOM KOLLEKTIV**

nomkollektiv.com

**Contact:** Jaakko Nieminen,

Artistic Director

**Key words:** New dance, performance art, contemporary**OSIRIS THEATRE /  
LOISKE ENSEMBLE**

osiristeatteri.fi

**Contact:** Riikka Siirala, Artistic Director**Key words:** Dance theatre, young audiences, senior audiences, site-specific work in nature**PETRI KEKONI COMPANY**

kekonico.fi

**Contact:** Petri Kekoni, Artistic Director**Key words:** Contemporary dance, original movement practice, strong visual thinking, site-specific**PORI DANCE COMPANY**

poridancecompany.com

**Contact:** Riku Lehtopolku,

Chair of the board

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, multidisciplinary collaborations**RAEKALLIO CORP.**

raekallio.fi

**Contact:** Valtteri Raekallio,

Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, site specific performances, immersive performances, modern literature, multidisciplinary art**RASA COLLECTIVE**

facebook.com/rasacollective

**Contact:** Titta Court, Artistic Director**Key words:** New dance, community dance, all audiences, touring, north**ROUTA COMPANY**

routacompany.fi

**Contact:** Sari Palmgren, Artistic Director**Key words:** Contemporary dance, residency, outreach projects, social choreography**SIVUUN ENSEMBLE**

sivuun.net

**Contact:** Ninni Perko, Artistic Director**Key words:** Dance theatre, contemporary dance, multidisciplinary, current issues**SONYA LINDFORS**

sonyalindfors.com

**Contact:** Sonya Lindfors, Choreographer and Artistic Director**Key words:** Blackness, black body politics, power structures, speculative futurities, decolonial dreaming practices**SUSANNA LEINONEN COMPANY**

susannaleinonen.com

**Contact:** Susanna Leinonen,

Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, touring company**TAIKABOX**

taikabox.com

**Contact:** Tanja Råman, Artistic Director**Key words:** Dance/technology, residencies, performance innovation, young audiences, building communities**TERO SAARINEN COMPANY**

tersaarinen.com

**Contact:** Iiris Autio, Managing Director**Key words:** Contemporary dance**TSUUMI DANCE THEATRE**

tsuumi.com

**Contact:** Salla Korja, Managing Director**Key words:** Dance theatre, folk dance, live music performance, contemporary dance**WILLMAN DANCE COMPANY**

willmandancecompany.fi

**Contact:** Marjaterä Willman,

Artistic Director

**Key words:** Contemporary dance, dance theatre, multi-artistic works**DANCE  
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## PRODUCTION PLATFORMS & VENUES

### CIRKO - CENTER FOR NEW CIRCUS

cirko.fi/en  
**Contact:** Jarkko Lehmus, Director  
**Key words:** Contemporary circus, presenter, residency programme, co-producer

### EHKA-PRODUCTION

ehka.net  
**Contact:** Anna Torkkel, Artistic Director  
**Key words:** New dance, performance, residency, festivals, workshops

### JOJO - OULU DANCE CENTRE

jojo.fi  
**Contact:** Helena Lindqvist, Executive Director  
**Key words:** Production center, festival, audience work, productions, guest performances

### TANSSIN TALO / DANCE HOUSE HELSINKI

tanssintalo.fi  
**Contact:** Mikael Aaltonen, Programme Manager  
**Key words:** Venue, dance house, presenting, dance and circus

### URBANAPA

urbanapa.fi  
**Contact:** Sonya Lindfors, Artistic and Managing Director  
**Key words:** Anti-racist and intersectional feminist art community, decolonialism, events, festivals, softness

### ZODIAK - CENTER FOR NEW DANCE

zodiak.fi  
**Contact:** Jenni-Elina von Bagh, Artistic Director  
**Key words:** Coproducing, contemporary dance, contemporary choreography, festival

## REGIONAL CENTRES FOR DANCE

### PIRKANMAA DANCE CENTER

pirkanmaantanssikeskus.fi/en  
**Contact:** Maija Hoisko, Executive Director  
**Key words:** Producer of contemporary dance, community dance, cultural well-being, residence

### REGIONAL DANCE CENTRE OF EASTERN FINLAND / ITAK

itak.fi  
**Contact:** Veera Lamberg, Artistic Director  
**Key words:** Contemporary dance, co-productions, workshops, festival, community work

### REGIONAL DANCE CENTRE OF FINNISH LAKELAND

tanssikeskus.fi  
**Contact:** Mari Hautala, Managing Director  
**Key words:** Promoting, creating work opportunities, festival

### REGIONAL DANCE CENTRE IN NORTHERN FINLAND

The regional centre is formed of four companies/producers in the area:  
 jojo.fi  
 routa.fi  
 rimpparemmi.fi  
 fullmoondance.fi

### REGIONAL DANCE CENTRE OF OSTROBOTHNIA

pohjanmaantanssi.fi  
**Contact:** Eleni Pierides, Manager  
**Key words:** Support organisation, creating job opportunities, accessibility, promotion

### REGIONAL DANCE CENTRE OF WESTERN FINLAND

l-tanssi.fi  
**Contact:** Sanna Meska, Managing Director  
**Key words:** Development, promoting, support organisation, workshops





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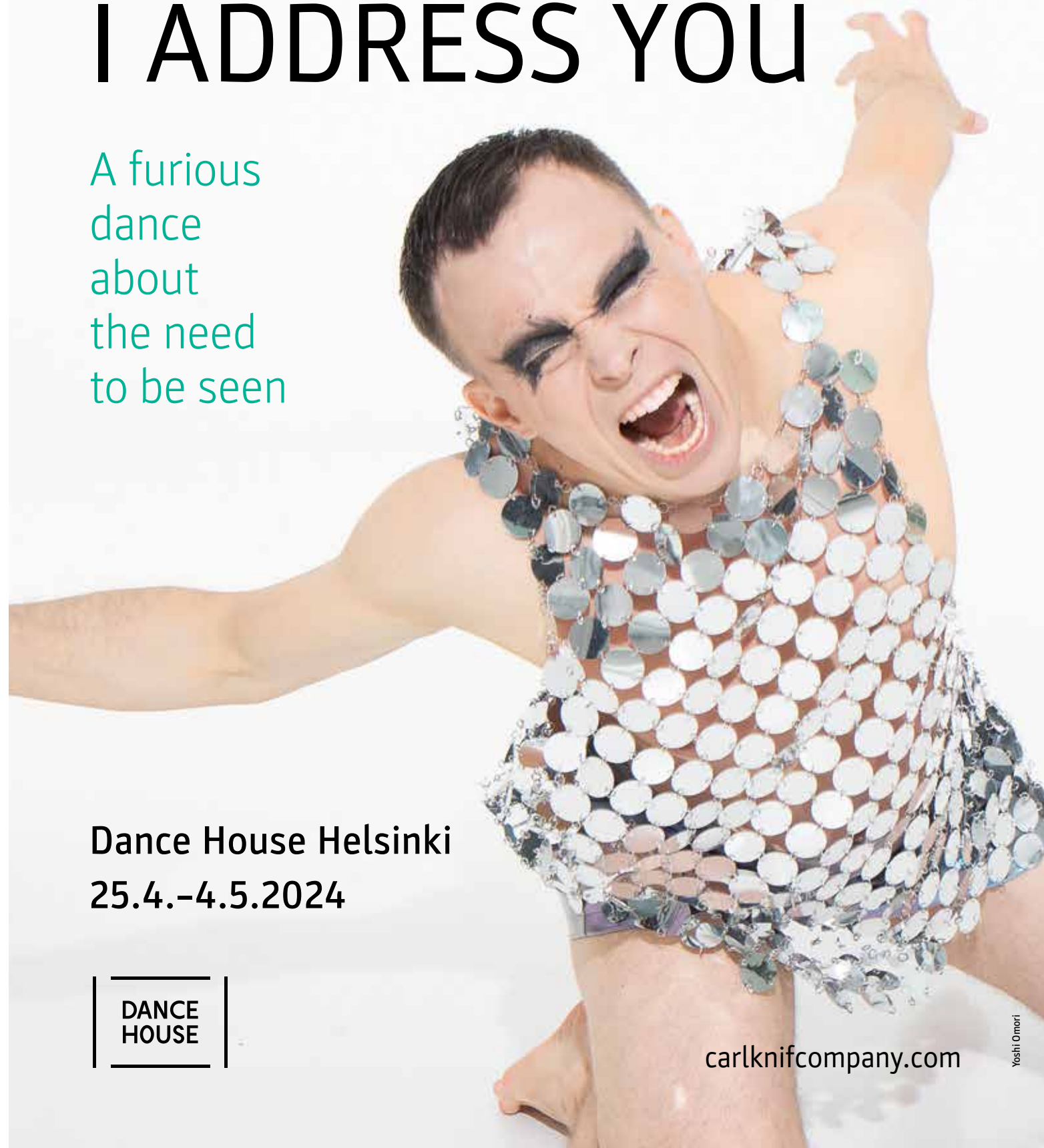
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**Sonya Lindfors:** *ONE DROP* / photo: Tuukka Ervasti **Choy Ka Fai:** *Yishun Is Burning* / photo: Sinem Kayacan **Sonja Jokiniemi:** *ÖH* / photo: Katri Naukkarinen **Mikko Niemistö:** *Odd Meters* / photo: Katri Naukkarinen **Zodiak's foyer** / photo: Sinem Kayacan **Oona Doherty:** *Navy Blue* / photo: Sinem Kayacan **Pauliina Feodoroff:** *Matriarchy* / photo: Sinem Kayacan **Tiia Kasurinen:** *ONSTAGE – The Concert* / photo: Saara Taussi **Kemppainen, Niemi, Peura:** *and then they left* / photo: Venla Helenius **Amala Dianor:** *Sigüifin* / photo: Sinem Kayacan **Elina Pirinen:** *Mortal Tropical Dances* / photo: Venla Helenius **Silvia Gribaudo:** *Graces* / photo: Sinem Kayacan