



Laura Murphy

A Spectacle of Herself

Written and performed by Laura Murphy and Directed by Ursula Martinez. A co-production with Contra, Carré Magique & Cambridge Junction, Recipient of Summerhall's Mary Dick Award 2023

Contemporary performance maker and circus artist Laura Murphy returns to Summerhall Fringe with the debut of a new creation fusing aerial rope, theatre and creative captioning that will tour the UK this autumn.

Join Laura on a mission to serve herself up (in)appropriately for your consumption, in a bold, cinematic, acrobatic odyssey through the frontiers of mental health, queerness, rage and the 21st Century space race.

Directed by Ursula Martinez, with Laura's critical and cheeky signature mix of autobiography, lip-sync, video and aerial rope, *A Spectacle of Herself* navigates the personal and political, to seek out new worlds and ways to be seen.

Praise for *Contra* at Summerhall 2019 'Blistering' ★★★★★ (Fest). 'A complex new form of solo-theatre' (Scotsman). 'Murphy's ability as a circus performer is mesmerising' ★★★★★ (TheWeeReview.com).

Laura Murphy comments: "A Spectacle of Herself is a show about what it means to occupy space and the way in which different spaces transform how we are seen. As Kae Tempest recently described it, exceptional behaviour can make you a target, but in another context it can make you safe. My experience of theatre is a reflection of this, as it's a space where my difference and the behaviours and characteristics I mask in daily life, are accepted and enjoyed. So for me the often outsider identity of the circus performer extends beyond acrobatics, into performances of human emotion, neurodivergence and gender queerness, experiences and expressions that in many spaces still don't feel acceptable.

As an artist and writer I often explore personal autobiographical experiences in contrast to and in relationship with broader social narratives. Political events over the last three years have particularly led me to question myself, my identity and the place that I and others occupy in the world. With *A Spectacle of Herself*, I wanted to explore the link between mental health and personal identity, in tandem with these bigger scale political expressions of space-taking, including the "space race" led by billionaires to colonise Mars and the global climate disaster we are witnessing. Patriarchy and objectification are central themes in this



work, given the way that space is often policed, organised and monopolised"

A Spectacle of Herself builds on the momentum from Laura's debut show *Contra*, which interrogated personal, social and historical occupations of the female body and was a cult hit at Summerhall in 2019 earning a Total Theatre award nomination. The show went on to tour to 11 countries with subtitles in three languages, building enduring relationships between the company and the wider European circus sector.

A Spectacle of Herself is a co-production with inclusive, interdisciplinary arts centre Cambridge Junction and Carré Magique, a Pôle National Cirque, one of a network of national organisations supporting a leading circus sector in France.

Cambridge Junction CEO Matt Burman comments: *"Cambridge Junction is delighted to be supporting Laura's work and the making of her new show A Spectacle of Herself. I've had the privilege of seeing work-in-progress and the show promises to be smart, funny, very real, politically on the money, and a brilliant balance of eloquently crafted contemporary performance and deftly integrated and highly*

skilled aerial work. Fringe audiences are going to love A Spectacle of Herself"

A Spectacle of Herself has integrated creative captioning designed by video and caption designer Ben Glover, supporting D/deaf and hearing impaired audiences to access the performances. The show is this year's recipient of the Mary Dick Award which offers a supported run as part of Summerhall's 2023 Fringe programme for a d/Deaf or disabled artist or d/Deaf or disabled-led company, combined with mentoring and support from acclaimed disabled-led company Birds of Paradise to make the work accessible for audiences.

Tom Forster, Summerhall Fringe Producer says *"Having hosted Contra as part of Festival 2019 their work quickly gained a strong reputation as an artist to watch and left our audiences wanting much more. Contra was considered amongst audiences, press and staff to be a cult hit, which was a remarkable achievement given its short two week long run. Our programme for 2023 would struggle to make sense without groundbreaking circus work such as this returning to continue where it left off"*

Laura Murphy is a genre defying queer and neurodivergent performance maker from Bristol. Her work is cross-disciplinary fusion of theatre, live art, aerial choreography, dance and verbal explosions, which integrate intimacy and spectacle. She is a circusnext laureate and gained a total theatre award nomination for her first solo show *Contra* in 2019. She is known for her innovative approach to circus performance and has recently collaborated with Scottee, Peaches, Terry O'Connor & Dickie Beau. She holds a PhD investigating aerial work's potential as a critically engaged practice and its use as a vehicle for social and political propaganda and has taught practice as research at international circus institutions including Circomedia, the National Centre for Circus Arts & Stockholm University of the Arts.

Ursula Martinez is a theatre maker, writer, performer and director. She co-directed the award-winning *Office Party*, and directed Victoria Melody's *Northern Soul*, Leah Shelton's *Bitch on Heat* and Lucy McCormick's *Triple Threat*. She is an original cast member of the Olivier Award winning contemporary circus/variety phenomena *La Clique* and *La Soiree*, and is an associate artist with performance provocateurs 'Duckie'. Martinez's solo shows include *A Family Outing*, *My Stories*, *Your Emails*, and *Free Admission*, in addition to *Wild Bore* an international collaboration with Adrienne Truscott (US) and Zoe Coombs Marr

Event Details:

- **Summerhall Main Hall, 2nd-13th August** (not 7th) 12:55 pm - 1:55 pm
- Guidance 16+
- Captioned

- **Touring to** Derby Festé - Déda 21st September; Circus City, Bristol 6th & 7th October; Jacksons Lane, London 1st November; Cambridge Junction 9th November; Lowry, Salford 28th November.

Credits:

Performer & Writer Laura Murphy
Director Ursula Martinez
Producer Nicole A'Court-Stuart
Lighting Designer Jen Roxburgh
Video Designer Ben Glover
Film maker Holly Black
Production Manager Dean Sudron
Devising Projection Designer Mark Morreau
Access Consultant Max Sutherland
Lip Sync Supervisor Dickie Beau

Image credits: Holly Revell

(Australia). For all her theatrical accolades, Matinez is probably most well known for pulling red hankies out of her vagina!

Ben Glover is a deaf video designer who uses interdisciplinary skills in both creative and technical fields producing innovative and often expressive creations typically informed by his background in theatre and computing. He has developed a particular interest in work that explores contemporary issues and more personal topics such as his deafness. His recent work includes video designs for; *Mee & The Band* (Eventim Apollo), *Hear My Soul Speak* (RADA), *Americana!* (Hellenic Centre). He has previously received the Mead Fellowship award for his Virtual Reality project *Simple Misunderstanding*.

Contra Productions is a collaboration between creative producer Nicole A'Court-Stuart and performance maker Laura Murphy. We make, tour & support the development of politically engaged, interdisciplinary, & boundary pushing Circus work. Our practice is informed by our queer and neurodivergent leadership, as well as our shared passion for exploring the critical role virtuosic practices can have within live work.

Co-produced by Contra Productions, Carré Magique Pôle national cirque en Bretagne & Cambridge Junction

Supported by Jacksons Lane Theatre, La Verrerie d'ales, La Grainerie Pôle Européen de production, Cologne Circus Dance Festival & The Invisible Circus Launchpad Scheme.

Funded by Arts Council England, Jerwood Arts & The National Centre for Circus Arts

Links & Socials:

www.contra-productions.co.uk

Instagram @lauramurphyropeweirdo
Facebook @lauramurphyperformance

Research Trailer, Black Bark Films 2022: <https://vimeo.com/6723096>