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Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel

Aline Breucker & Quintijn Ketels / Side-Show

Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel is the third part of Side-Show's Trilogy of the imagination. Following on from *Wonders* (2013) and *Spiegel im Spiegel* (2017) the company deploys circus as a collective dream machine. On stage, hundreds of cushions are used to create a circle in which the audience can take a seat. On, beneath, or in the cushions, we dream about the (im)possibility of things in a variety of acts. Thus the performance becomes a temporary hideout for relaxed rebellion.

What does circus and spectacle signify without surprise? By means of an interplay between announcement and performance, *Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel* seeks out the spectacular in the everyday and the everyday in the spectacular.

Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel is a relaxed performance. This means that right from the start, the show was created with the aim of being accessible to audiences who need a more relaxed environment in which to go to the theatre or the circus. The codes of the theatre, such as the norm of sitting still and not reacting verbally or physically to what is taking place are adjusted in a relaxed performance. The show also avoids strong and sudden stimuli such as strobes and loud noises. *Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel* can be watched from close up or from further away, and the doors of the auditorium always remain open. It is both possible and permitted for the audience to move freely.

“For the first time, we are not on stage ourselves, but we are directing a group of acrobats. Together with the audience, they seek out an unforced trance in which we can all nestle. This trance can serve as a rebellious escape route from the weight that we sometimes feel on our shoulders. In order for us all to awake, perhaps we must first collectively dream the impossibility. That is the rebellion that Side-Show envisages. Because if we can imagine it, it might perhaps happen.”

- Aline Breucker & Quintijn Ketels



Quintijn Ketels



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Audrey Guyon

Concept and direction Aline Breucker & Quintijn Ketels

Performers Camille Paycha, Gianna Sutterlet, Philippe Droz, Elsa Bouchez, Patrick Pun, Ruben Mardulier, Majo Cázares

Scenography Aline Breucker

Costumes Aline Breucker

Music Maxime Steiner

Dramaturgy Vincent Focquet

Choreographic advice German Jauregui

Assistance costumes Irma Morin

Technical coordination and lighting design Michiel Soete

Technical assistance and set construction Gert De Cooman

Technicians Korneel Moreaux, Lukas Vanhoutte

Photography Jan Castermans

PRODUCTION Side-Show

COPRODUCTION Kunstencentrum VIERNULVIER, CIRKLABO/30CC, Circuswerkplaats Dommelhof, Miramiro

PARTNERS GC De Kriekelaar, Plateforme 2 Pôles Cirque en Normandie / La Brèche à Cherbourg, De Grote Post, Théâtre Marni, Wolubilis, La Bellone, CENTQUATRE-PARIS, laGeste, SACD

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TOUR DATES

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12 > 14 May 2023 Festival CIRKL, Leuven (BE) **PREMIERE**

6 > 8 June 2023 De Kriekelaar, Schaarbeek (BE)

3 > 4 October 2023 De Grote Post, Ostend (BE) **OPTION**

15 > 16 October 2023, De Spil, Roeselare (BE) **OPTION**

27 October > 2 November 2023 Theater op De Markt, Pelt (BE)

14 > 16 December 2023 Festival van de gelijkheid & VIERNULVIER, Ghent (BE)

4 > 7 February 2024, De warande, Turnhout (BE) **OPTION**



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A temporary shelter for relaxed rebellion

Text by Aline Breucker & Quintijn Ketels

With thanks to Marie Henry & Vincent Focquet

Introduction

This text is a story that mixes reality and dreamt pathways. Through it we hope to bring a concrete view to the broad question of inclusion in the cultural sector. In writing it, we were inspired by our realities as parents but also by our experiences as artists in the performing arts. We are currently creating a new piece, *Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel*. It is a piece imagined as a *relaxed performance* – one where we think about how to provide access to circus and theatre for audiences that don't normally enter into these forms.

Antoine

My name is Antoine, I am ten years old, and I belong to a very special clan! It's the Tourette's clan! Since knowing I'm part of this clan, I've been doing much better. Or at least I know I can't help it – that it's not my fault when my body does things I don't want it to...

Aline

Antoine has a complex form of Gilles de la Tourette's syndrome – a combination of multiple neurological and autism spectrum disorders that have a big impact on his behaviour. He often loses control of his body and his speech.

Antoine

When I go to a place I don't know, I love to hold my mum or dad's hand. I mustn't let it go.

Quintijn

Antoine finds it difficult to orient himself in a space or place he doesn't know because he doesn't recognise its codes and contextual cues. He has to relearn them each time. Going somewhere he has never been before causes a lot of stress because he will have to tame the unknown, a bit like deciphering a code but without knowing the numbers or their order...

Blanche

My name is Blanche and I am 6 years old already. I'm tall. I like to dance, sing and play with Finn, Amarillys, Ilyana, Lara, Mirthe, Galileo, my two black cats Zouzou and Madame and my seven chickens (especially Meloentje), and with my brother Antoine. But when the computer in my big brother's head isn't working very well, or when it gets stuck, I've learned to calmly put my shoes on and go play at the neighbours' house. I'm often afraid that when we're not home it will be difficult for Antoine, so I don't want to go out either.

Aline

My name is Aline. I am a set designer, costume designer, director, and performer. I am the mother of Antoine and his little 6 year-old sister Blanche.

Today I have energy! I'm a mother who's fit and ready to take on any challenge. Today I want us to prepare a family outing... But going to see a show – just the four of us, as so many families do – is really not easy for us.

Quintijn

We don't do it, or we don't do it anymore, because we've hit too many walls. When we go out, nine times out of ten we come up against an unsuitable environment that forces us to shorten the outing, go back, or even cancel and go home. When you've paid ten euros for a ticket and you have to leave the room after the first three minutes of the show, you really ask yourself whether you want to put yourself in this situation again...

Aline

But today I feel rested enough to put this outing in place and organise it as much as possible. I'm even ready for the worst – that is to say I'm ready at any moment to turn back, to give up on the idea, to accept the stares of others, accept that we may not even get into the room, or that we will have to leave after only ten minutes... All this means that I feel up to it. And you, *mijn liefje*?

Blanche

I'm so excited to go to a show, but I'm really scared that my brother will get mad and hurt a stranger, or my mum and dad. That he'll yell a lot and then we'll have to leave and everyone will look at us...

Quintijn

My name is Quintijn, I am the father of Antoine and Blanche, the husband (and lover) of Aline. I am a circus artist, author and director.

I run the company Side-Show together with Aline.

Aline

From my point of view as a mother, I have long tried to hold back the disabling aspects of Antoine's syndrome. But now enough time has passed that there's room for acceptance – and much more. I see Antoine as a child who develops in a different way, quite far from the established norm... but for me as a parent, the aims are the same, and the experience of trying to adapt is the same as for any other form of development. My children inspire me.

Antoine

When are we going, how far is it? What time is it? I'm hungry.
Fucking motherfucker! You are not my mama!

Quintijn

And here Antoine uses an uncontrolled vocabulary, I dare not even repeat it.

His Tourette's takes over because he is stressed.

I put my hand on his back to reassure him...

It's OK, daddy is here.

I adjust the clock that counts down the time. It's a kitchen clock, with the time written in red. Antoine can see the hour of departure before it comes.

Aline

When Antoine regains his composure by eating an apple, I look with him at the path on the map and he visualises the route.

Antoine, can you show me the way in the car?

Antoine

Yes – I'll hold the phone!!!

Aline

I believe that every child, every person should have access to education and culture. But to realise an inclusive access for all, it is essential to respect the particularities of each person and to try to understand their needs. Otherwise it is the context that becomes disabling.

Observation leads to better understanding...

Quintijn

We reserved our seats...

for 11am.

We also had the option to go there at 2pm or 6pm, but for Antoine it's better in the morning, because then he isn't too 'full' of the day yet. And if he's also had a good night the day before then we stack the cards in our favour to actually make it to this show.

A pdf booklet was sent to us by the theatre. We printed it out so we could study the show as a family.

The backdrop and each scene is described in words and pictures.

The scenes, the characters, and some 'key' moments that play with surprise have been demystified, so Antoine knows exactly what will happen in these 'surprising' moments.

These *trigger warnings* allow us to anticipate what will happen.

Antoine

I'm stressed.

Fuck Fuck Fuck! You are not my mama! It's so boring here, boring like a duck.

Unicorn bitch.

Aline

Thanks to the provided audio files we listened to the show's music and found the 'squeaky' moments. Antoine has already planned to put on his headphones at certain points. There are sounds he doesn't like, others he likes a lot.

There is even a song he studied on the piano that he would like to sing on mic in front of the audience.

Well... if the opportunity arises. We'll see how things unfold, and how the theatre team handles Antoine's obsessions.

Blanche

In the book there are pictures of everyone. They look nice, they all have big smiles. It reassures me they won't make fun of Antoine if he shouts or makes strange noises during the show.

Quintijn

We started by analysing the route to the theatre. 15 minutes by car.

The car park is easily accessible. The walk to the theatre is on a main street, but with a large pavement.

We looked through pictures of the theatre (reception, box office, main hall, auditorium), and explained that the people who work there are there to help us.

They will introduce themselves to us by their first names and usually chat for a bit.

Aline

Now let's hope Antoine has a good night and that tomorrow we can enjoy a family outing for once.

We still have some preparations to make.

The better prepared we are, and the more the framework is defined, the easier it is to improvise.

Aline and Quintijn (together)

Coffee coffee coffee coffee coffee... and off we go... The car starts...

Antoine and Blanche (singing together)

Blue day, when it thunders

And the sky falls down I'm here with you alone

Blue day, just one second

Let's dance until the morning and the sky opens up again

Cycle with you all over town

If that's what you want, then that's what I'll do

I'm here on your blue day

Blue day, just one second

Let's dance until the morning and the sky opens up again

Antoine

The GPS told me we'll be there in six minutes. Blanche, look – six minutes isn't long at all.

Quintijn

We arrived at the theatre on time, the journey went well, Antoine and Blanche sang the whole way there...

So far so good.

Antoine

Oh yeah... I recognise this bit... now we're going to go in through the big door in the middle.

Blanche

Antoine comes, we put our coats on the rack, and then we can go into the room. There's no queue.

Aline

Indeed, there is no need to queue here. Waiting in line is usually very difficult; it's a moment where the stress ramps up very quickly for Antoine. But here we can enter the room as soon as we arrive. The doors are open and will stay open. There will be no darkness in the room, and you can enter and leave whenever you want. You can sit wherever you want, near or far from the action.

Quintijn

The show has started, but it doesn't look like it.

The stage is a work in progress. The actors are putting up curtains, laying down cushions, and helping us take our seats – on the cushions, or on chairs for those who prefer. They talk to us, introduce themselves, and chat with us. We all sit in a circle.

Aline

Little by little, the set is built. Antoine and Blanche help to install a curtain and get used to the actors. They recognise them because they have the sheet with the pictures and names. They each get a cushion and choose a place to sit. All the objects are white, the large curtains are white, and Antoine is quickly soothed by the neutrality and soft luminosity of the space. He doesn't need to run around.

Antoine

Look Mum, you can see the clock counting down to the show. Only 38 minutes and 40 seconds to go until the bit where we applaud.

Blanche

Can I lie down in the cushions?

[Yawns]

Even though there are other people, I feel comfortable here. There are 80 people in the room. Is that a lot, Mum? I know the show is going to start when the music with the guitar starts.

Aline

One of the actors addresses the audience and speaks softly.

He introduces himself. His name is Ruben and he announces that he will soon dress up in a panther costume and pretend to be a panther but that he will always be Ruben. Just Ruben dressed as a panther – a gentle panther who can go *rhhhhhaaaaawwww*, and who's about to do a somersault.

Quintijn

The show proceeds as planned.

There are glitter cannons, somersaults, acrobatics, moments of choreography, fast action, slow action, showers of feathers and rose petals, falls and songs, laughter and tears.

Antoine doesn't ask when it's over, he knows when it will be over. He recognises the scenes and is happy to know what will happen next.

Aline

In the hall another family changes places, deciding to watch the show from a little further away. Someone from the team helps them to find a place where they feel comfortable. This takes a little time. But the time is given to this need and it doesn't bother anyone. It is welcomed in the show. At least they don't have to leave the room and feel like a failure.

At the end of the show we applaud loudly, the actors thank us for coming. They sit with us on the cushions, and we can talk to them and ask questions...

Everyone leaves the room at their own pace. The actors walk people out a few at a time and put a souvenir in their hands.

Antoine

I don't want to go!!!! I haven't done anything and I want to do something.

Quintijn

Ruben hears this and approaches Antoine and Blanche and asks them if they want to help him gather the cushions into a big pile. Antoine and Blanche are happy to help.

Antoine

Before I leave I want to sing you a song!

Aline

The scene is reversed... The actors become the audience and the audience becomes the actors. Antoine shares what he has experienced...

The audience that needs to take time after the show has the opportunity to do so. You don't have to hurry to get out, you can relax in the cushions. It's very pleasant.

Antoine

I'm hungry! Shall we go?

Blanche

This time I want to point the way and tell the time!

Quintijn

The car ride home goes well. When we arrive at the house it's almost 1pm, time to eat. The four of us can even eat at the table (which is not often the case when Antoine is under stress). For the moment, Antoine doesn't need to decompress... he's happy, Blanche too, everything is normal... we find calm in the house, and it feels good...

In the morning, we made a schedule for the day with words and pictograms. Antoine follows the schedule. 1pm lunch, then making a hut and trampolining in the garden. 4pm snack, and a little board game for the four of us. We all decide in advance that Blanche will win. Antoine often looks at the sheet with the schedule to keep track of the time.

Aline

The children are in the garden making a hut, inviting the neighbours' children inside.

We notice that Antoine must not be depressed, no tantrum on the horizon, and the family feels light and a little energised by the family theatre experience.

At one point I hear Blanche and Antoine talking about the show.

In their hut, they have the book of the show in front of them and are replaying a scene to the little neighbours.

Antoine

Next time you will come with us!

Blanche

If I put on a panther costume I'm still Blanche but I'm a Blanche who will walk and jump like a panther, *rrrhhouaaah*. And when I take the costume off I'll be Blanche again...

Aline

It will seem as if nothing has changed, yet nothing will ever be the same again.



About Side-Show

Aline Breucker thinks in pictures. Since graduating in scenography from Brussels' École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels de La Cambre, she has been building bridges between the visual arts and the moving body in the performing arts. She does this in various media as a visual artist, and as a costume designer and scenographer in circus, opera, dance and theatre. Aline began her artistic career as an assistant to Vincent Lemaire in the opera houses of Innsbruck and Zürich. She designed costumes for Hopla Circus, Le Carré Curieux and many other circus companies and artists. Together with Jorge Jara, she designed the scenography for *La Traviata* (2009) at the opera house in Santiago (Chili). In 2010-2011, Aline was involved in the project *Face-O-Scéno*, in which an exchange took place between scenographers from Burkina Faso and Belgium. In this period, she worked on projects including the Pan-African theatre festival *The Récréatras* and on a performance of *Un Paradis sur terre* for a young audience. As a costume designer, Aline also had a longstanding connection with the Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC). Circus' rich history acts as a source of inspiration for her work.

Before studying at Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC) in Brussels, **Quintijn Ketels** devoted himself to acrobatics at Cirkus in Beweging and to classical piano at the music academy. Although the music never disappeared, movement gained the upper hand. With *La Familia Rodriguez* from Hopla Circus, which grew from his graduation project at ESAC, he embarked upon an intense, five-year global tour with performances in China, Mexico, Israel and various European countries. Thanks to a Wild Card from Wim Vandekeybus/Ultima Vez, in 2014 he took part in the *Dance WEB Scholarship for Contemporary Dance and Performance* at the ImPulsTanz dansfestival in Vienna. In the meantime, Quintijn also continues to teach at Espace Catastrophe, ACAPA Tiburg and Cirkus, where he is responsible for the specialist subjects aerial and partner acrobatics.

Quintijn and Aline met one another at ESAC, when Aline was making costumes for a number of graduation projects. Based on a shared fascination for the traces that a movement leaves behind, in 2009 they together set up the company **Side-Show**. Their first performances *Wonders* (2013), *Spiegel im Spiegel* (2017), *Sho-Ichidô* (2018) and *Portraits* (2021) are characterised by a strong visuality. In their work they attach great importance to shared artistic research, such as *Permanent Laboratory: From A to B*. For this, Side-Show set up a series of 10 residencies (2015-2016) with the support of the Flemish Community, for which the company invited artists from various disciplines including dance, theatre, circus and visual art. The only goal is to define an individual physical language in which the body is both the object and the subject of research. Together, Quintijn and Aline have not only created a company, but also a family. This intense dynamic of living and working together is a defining factor for the themes in their work.



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ABOUT THE TEAM

Majo Cázares

As an acrobatic dancer, Majo mixes contortion, dance and floor acrobatics into her own movement style. Versatile and curious, she plunges into various performing arts adventures where she touches on contemporary circus, dance, physical theatre and cabaret. Her career path is marked by learning artistic gymnastics, ballet, contemporary dance, theatre and a short passage at a school of design. Until she graduated from the École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC) in Brussels in 2015. That same year, she founded the contemporary circus company Naga Collective, which presented its first performance *Persona* in 2018. Majo is a performer there and also responsible for the company's production, administration and communication.

Majo performs both in Belgium and internationally. She works with companies such as Atelier BTC, Les Cabaret Capricho, Circus Monti, GOP Variété-Theater, Lumen Creations, BLUEBACK, XL Production and The Sassy Cabaret. She cross-pollinates with artists Lolly Wish and Alexandre Paulikevitch. She also occasionally participates in *We Are Not Expired* projects with retirees or lectures to children as part of *All That Drag*.

In 2013, Majo receives a scholarship from Mexico's National Fund for Culture and the Arts (FONCA) as an artist. Another grant followed in 2016 for the *Persona* project. She is also co-author, performer and choreographer of the performance *JERK*, with Maud Joiret and Marthe Lagae, and co-organiser of the queer and feminist project *Stripclub Meuf.x*. Majo is artist in residence at Cabaret Mademoiselle in Brussels. In summer 2022, she joins the artistic team around *Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel* of the company Side-Show.

Majo divides her time between performing and creating, between teaching sports and artistic disciplines especially in the studios of Brussels Art and Pole, Vibes by V and Full Moon. As a teacher, she wants to break with the traditional and Darwinian "one size fits all" approach to professional training. She chooses to create caring learning environments and individualised trajectories.

Gianna Sutterlet

Gianna Sutterlet grew up in Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland. From a very young age, she took circus classes in Sainte-Croix where she gained her first acrobatic experience. There she also had the chance to further explore the performing arts and experiment as a director. She took all this baggage with her to ESAC (Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque) in Brussels. There, she specialised in Korean plank and acrobatics and met Julio Calero Ferre and Daniel Torralbo Perez. In 2018, the trio was invited to perform their exit act at several international festivals such as Young Stage in Basel and FIRCO in Madrid. They then co-founded Tripotes la Compagnie ASBL, a Brussels-based company with a special focus on circus techniques and musical performances.

In 2019, Tripotes la Compagnie presented *Encore une fois* as its first creation. The acrobatic trio also collaborated for several seasons with cabaret/dinner shows such as Palazzo in Vienna or URBANATIX in Bochum. As a performer, Gianna also participated in the multidisciplinary *Ernst* and played in several other performances such as *(V)ivre* by Cheptel Aleïkoum or *Softies* by Fabuleus vzw. In 2020, she trained at CNAC and obtained a Certificate in Analysis and Interpretation Technique in Circus Dramaturgy.

Camille Paycha

Camille Paycha was born in 1992 in Paris. She now lives in Ostend (Belgium). In 2015, she graduated from the Academy of Circus and Performance Art in Tilburg with straps as a specialisation. Since then, Camille has been working on her own projects with Helaba Compagnie (*I ate the entire fruit salad*, for the 500th anniversary of painter Hieronymus Bosch). She also realised *The Hangman Radioshow* with Noortje Sanders and Thijs Veerman, a location project about the scope of radio. This collaboration between Camille and Noortje was later continued under the name Radio Sancha. Together they produce videos, performances, exhibitions, ... Their video *WaterRuis*, commissioned by the Oerol festival, was nominated for the Joop Mulder Plak in 2020.

At the same time, Camille experiments with circus as a practice, leaning towards proposals that speak for themselves. She seeks to refine her aesthetic, relying on the power of imagination and the use of humour, violence, objects and bodies, the idea of immorality and all their intersections.

In 2021, she assembled a team to produce *Ice Skates And Other Cruelties*: Laura Gilles-Pick, Markéta de Borggraef and Stéphane Gilles-Pick. With this performance, Camille became the winner of CircusNext 2021. Camille is currently touring with *The Time Of Our Singing* by Janni van Goor, *Portraits* by Side-Show and *Ice Skates And Other Cruelties* by her own company. She is also a member of the artistic board of ACAPA in Tilburg and participates in the research project *The Circus Dialogues*.

Patrick Pun

Pun Wing Leung was born in Hong Kong. At the age of 12, he became bored with his studies and sought his interests elsewhere. Eventually, he finds his passion in juggling. After exploring diabolo for a few years, he begins artistic training at a school of contemporary dance. After graduating from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, he returns to juggling and enrolls at Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque de Bruxelles (ESAC) where he explores different circus practices through movement. For three years, he uses his knowledge to develop a more intimate and personal relationship with his diabolo, through improvisation and the body.

Meanwhile, he collaborates with the collective Simul Solus for the performance *Sparkling*. In 2022, he joins Side-Show for the creation of *Permit, oh permit my soul to rebel*.

Ruben Mardulier

Ruben was born in 1993 and graduated from the Academy for Circus and Performance Art in Tilburg in 2015. Since graduating, Ruben has worked as a performer with the likes of Alexander Vantournhout, Panama Pictures and Ulrike Quade Company. In 2016, he co-founded the artist duo Mardulier and Deprez with Michiel Deprez, which took an unconventional approach to the medium of circus. This way of working created a unique body of work with a recognisable signature. 2022 marks the beginning of a new turn, namely the start of a solo practice in which simplicity, absurdity and the relationship to the body are key elements. With a special focus on the concepts of caring and collectivity, Ruben engages in collaborations with fellow artists from different fields. He himself uses a broad spectrum of media, ranging from performance and installation to painting and poetry.

Philippe Droz & Elsa Bouchez. Compagnie La Scie du BOURGEON

Elsa and Philippe met at a circus school in Chambéry, where they worked on themes like body, movement, play, creativity and partnership. After a year of preparation at Arc en Cirque, they enrolled in the Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque de Bruxelles (ESAC), where they perfected their acrobatic lifts with Slava Kukushkin. They finished their training in 2010 and began their professional life with the number *Accroche-toi*.

In 2011, they founded the Compagnie Un de ces 4 and created their first street performance *Madame et sa croupe* mixing circus, humour, acting and music. In 2013, they joined the company Side-Show to create and tour the show *Wonders*.

At the same time, Philippe and Elsa worked on several one-off projects (*Bleu Enfin !*, *Rouge*, with the Cie l'Elastique Citrique, *L'Ange Bleu*, ...). In 2017, they were part of the cast of *Spiegel im Spiegel*, Side-Show's second creation. In the years that follow, they continue to perfect their work as a duo and enrich their technical vocabulary. In their research, emotion is often given as much or even more space as technique.

As a result of all these experiences, they set up their own company La Scie du BOURGEON and, under this new name, premier *Innocence* at the UP Festival in Brussels in March 2018. Until today, they present the street version of this intimate show, titled *Encore heureux!*



Audrey Guyon