

Corps tendres [Tender Bodies]

Lucie Yerlès

Creation January 2026

Executive production MARS - Mons Arts de la scène



“Corps tendres” is an immersive performance centered on the sense of touch. Touch as a gesture of care, tenderness, support, learning, safety and sometimes violence.

The audience is invited to take part, accompanied by four circus artists and a musician, in a sensory performance that sheds light on our responsibility toward the bodies we encounter, exploring the interdependence between our intimate stories and the environments in which they unfold.

A workshop before invite those who wish, to delve deeper into this research blending acrobatic virtuosity with a collective inquiry into notions of trust, boundaries and consent.

“Nothing is more ordinary, more shared, and less explored than touch” - Claire Richard



©Esther Waters

Artistic statement

I have always felt that my relationship to touch was somehow “out of the norm.” Coached, manipulated, spotted, pushed, held, thrown, massaged - all these words shaped the daily life of my circus body in pursuit of the spectacular. When I stepped away from the world of circus to enter that of academia, and later of theatre, I became aware of the gap between myself and my new peers in relation to the norms and codes of physical interactions. This sometimes created discomfort and misunderstanding between us.

Through constant adaptation I learned to accommodate this gap, something which has continued to raise questions for me ever since: How can we articulate these differences in norms from one environment to another so as to better understand one another? How do our life paths shape the way we physically interact with others? What place does the body hold in the creation of our friendships, our daily encounters, our professional connections? What political implications and decisions lie behind our most ordinary interactions, as well as our most intimate ones?

The growing social distance embedded in our daily lives is the result of decisions that deeply affect us and allow our vital need for touch to slowly become a consumer product. Today in the Western world, touch is increasingly confined to the couples sphere, creating imbalance, dependence, and violence, constantly challenging the boundaries of consent. “Am I with this person for fear of losing access to the tenderness or affection they provide?” “Do I need to use dating apps just to get a hug?”. The prevailing hygienism and individualism contribute to the slow erosion of our social fabric, leading us into extreme and dehumanizing situations, even within our own families.

I would like to reaffirm the importance of touch in every sphere of our lives, whilst also questioning the issues linked to our growing inability to listen to one another and to respect the boundaries of others as well as our own. In Corps Tendres, we unfold the ambiguities, complexities, and challenges hidden within even the most ordinary forms of physical contact.

Through my migrations across different haptic* environments, it has become clear to me that the physical trust built between circus artists has a singular and uniquely profound quality. Circus has therefore been chosen as an artistic medium, for its virtuosity in navigating physical responsibility, trust between bodies, and - more deeply - for its philosophy of interdependence, one that is required to move at dizzying heights and to take paths that might otherwise seem inaccessible.

On stage, four circus artists, a musician, and the audience move through a landscape-like scenography full of reassuring textures and playful shifts in elevation. This opens the way to a porous relationship between performers and spectators, and for the hybridisation of different elements - sound, acrobatics, light, partnering work, physical or spoken testimonies. All of which feed the show's dramaturgy to form a single, coherent universe, reflecting the multi-layered complexity of human relationships.

Through this small, ephemeral universe-utopia, we set out to explore new forms of micro-politics unfolding in the murky, non-verbal zones of our relationships to bodies and their interactions.

** haptic: relating to the sense of touch*

*The most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself {...} To protect each other, to enact and practice community. A radical kinship, **an interdependent sociality**, a politics of care” Johanna Hedva “Sick Woman Theory”*

“ The theatre stage is transformed into a space for play, encounter, and intimate sharing. An immersive performance, Corps Tendres embraces the world while bringing to life the essential questions of touch and togetherness. Suitable for audiences aged eight and up, it is a tender, vital, and beautiful experience—like a hug. ” **13.01.2026 Music 3 – RTBF par François Caudron**

“When I have my flyer’s body in my hands, she entrusts me with what she holds most precious in the world - her life. And I love her for that, I push myself beyond limits for that, I support her for that. I listen to every one of her movements, every gesture - where will she go? At what pace? With what energy? What tension? How supple is she today? What is the density of her muscles beneath my fingers? I am here. I will catch you.” Text excerpt

Workshops & participating audiences



“Corps tendres” is above all a comprehensive research project carried out over three years with numerous audience groups. Questioning our relationships to bodies could not be done without exploring and testing how this subject resonates in different contexts. We ultimately chose to focus our research on a very particular space, one of the family. A place where notions of boundaries, consent, and lack of contact are so important and yet rarely discussed. Parents, children, grandparents, and chosen family are therefore the target audience for the workshops conducted prior to each performance, as well as for standalone workshops, festivals, and other contexts.

PARTICIPATING AUDIENCES

Before each performance, the team will lead a workshop meeting centered on the themes explored in the show and its physical material. Through games, lifts, and dance, a thread will be created. Taking part in “Corps Tendres” will allow the group of initiated spectators to experience a powerful performative and human connection.

This will be an experience of collective responsibility for the participants. Their inclusion during performances will be on a hybrid level, in which they are neither fully performers nor complete novices in the material explored.

>> The workshop is open to everyone, from 7 to 112 years old, whether shy or outgoing, athletic or not, alone, with friends, or with family, and is accessible to people with disabilities <<



This team has been put together according to the people I've met, all of whom I've fallen in love with, some older than others, some with whom I've worked before and some not.

I've tried to put together a heterogeneous team with a wealth of experience in movement and touch.

A team in constant evolution throughout the creation of "Corps tendres"

Lucie Yerlès, creative direction



Lucie Yerlès has followed an eclectic training path, combining a bachelor's degree in psychology from ULB with professional training in circus arts at the National Circus School of Châtellerauld and the Quebec Circus School. This training has led to a number of professional partnerships in theater, circus and dance, both as a performer and as an artistic collaborator.

In her first years, she worked alongside Coralie Vanderlinden, Sébastien Chollet, Yvain Juillard, Michèle Anne de Mey, Agathe Meziani.

In 2021, she created her first show-conference between aerial silks and neuroscience : "Le Solo", which questions what is happening in the spectators' brains when they are watching a circus show. The show is still touring on several stages.

In 2022, she began two new collaborations:

- With Julien Fournet (L'amicale de production) on his project "l'Enfance Majeure", in which she combines her different skills as a dancer, circus artist and teacher.
- With the company T.R.A.N.S.I.T.S.C.A.P.E on their project "Une anatomie du mouvement", choreographic portraits of life paths linked to physical practices.

In early 2023, she started creating her second show, "Tender bodies", an interactive research project based on the notion of touch.

Keen to maintain a diversity of playgrounds and working areas, and constantly reflecting on the porous boundaries between arts and entertainment, she also performs her aerial silks acts in cabarets and festivals. At the same time, she works as a teacher (at the Quebec circus school, with Unicef Turkey, at the ZipZap Circus school in Cape Town). Today, she trains circus artists in the use of collective intelligence protocols to create new acts, in particular DasArt's Feedback method, which she uses to moderate work stages.



Gaspar Schelck, artistic collaboration and lighting design

After training at Les Brigittines and Théâtre des Tanneurs, Gaspar has worked as a stage manager for various Brussels venues, including La Raffinerie, Kaai Theater, WorkspaceBrussels and Kunstenfestivaldesarts.

His fluency in Dutch and English have enabled him to tour throughout Belgium and abroad with companies such as Transquiquennal, Maria Clara Villa Lobos, Ayelen Parolin, Olga de Soto and Cie Hirschkuh. He also works for Tristero, Blueback and Kevin Trappenniers. Quickly interested in creation, and with a desire to seek subtlety and depth in technical work and lighting, he turned to contemporary dance and performance art, creating lighting for Youri De Gussem's "Zemiata" and Agathe Meziani "Met Liefde". He then designed the aesthetic for Ine Claes' show "asfaraswecantell" and Médéa Anslin "Lo Stupro - Corps".

In 2021, he designed lighting for Ayelen Parolin's show "with", Clément Thirion "Norman c'est comme normal, à une lettre près", Ine Claes "HUSH" and Léa Vinette "NOX". That same year, he moved to the other side of the spotlight, creating with Lucie Yerlès their first show, "Le Solo: une conférence circassienne", as co-project manager and lighting designer.

Loïc Lefoll, sound design

Loïc Le Foll is a musician, composer, and sound designer. After a classical music education at the conservatory, he discovered computer-assisted music in 2003. In 2013, he obtained a Master's degree in Sound from INSAS in Brussels.

He composes music for a wide variety of projects and creates sound designs for theatre. His music is both hybrid and sensitive, and his theatrical sound creations draw on his musical repertoire and his cinematic aesthetic.

He is a member of several bands - Pace Invaders, InDecay Records, Pang, La Flem - as well as several companies, including Point Zéro, Chaliwaté, Protéo, Invivo 5.12, La Gang, and Loïc Faure.





Philomène Authelet
Circus artist

Philomène has been twirling her way through movement and the physical arts for some time now.

She explores a multitude of artistic disciplines: gymnastics, parkour, martial arts, contemporary dance and the circus world, and particularly enjoys the crossfertilization of these worlds.

She worked with Alexander Vanterhouth's "Contrejour" as well as with many artists from Luxembourg (where she is from). For the past two years, she has been working as artistic coordinator with Charlotte Vercruysse on her short film "Delicate movements".

She works in parallel as a massage therapist.



Félix Rapela
Circus artist

Félix Rapela is a circus artist born in Argentina in 1992. His physical training began with years of kung fu and, later, assiduous floor acrobatics. He then discovered contemporary dance while studying circus arts at UNSAM in Buenos Aires. In 2018, after completing his studies, he moved to Brussels, where he created the dancers' collective Collectif Sudakas. He then went on to work with various projects and companies: Compagnie L'Eolienne's Swan Lake in France, Jordi Vidal's company and also in Erika Zuenelli's latest creation: Landfall.



Laila Umeko
Circus artist

A traveler at heart, Laila was born in South Africa, grew up in New Zealand, and now finds herself - at least most of the time - in Brussels, Belgium.

Her work is a fusion of contemporary circus and performance art that seeks to question (the world), challenge (stereotypes), inspire (joy), and discover (everything and nothing). Her research is rooted in the body - in acrobatic movement, aerial dance, and other intertwining elements that together create a form of visual poetry. Her distinctive and ever-colorful style makes her hard to miss in the rainy streets of Brussels!



Wout Deneyer
Circus artist

Wout is a multidisciplinary circus artist who graduated in 2019 from the École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC) in Brussels, specializing in aerial straps. After touring with various projects, he discovered the British circus scene. In 2021, he began working with NoFitState Circus as an aerial straps artist, acrobat/base, musician, and later as head rigger on the shows Lexicon and Sabotage.

He is currently co-developing an aerial project with Cie Kinaros, scheduled for 2026.



©DR

Concept Lucie Yerlès | **Artistic collaboration & lighting design** Gaspar Schelck | **Sound design** Loïc le Foll | **Performance** Philomène Authelet, Félix Rapela, Laila Umeko, Wout Deneyer | **Outside eyes** Lorette Moreau, Leslie Mannès, Albin Warette, Julien Fournet, Charly Magonza | **Assistant director** Pauline Corvellec | **Sound technician** Chamsedine Madec | **Scenographic support** Charlotte Lippinois & Charlotte Burgaud | **Production** Cécile Imbernon - La chouette diffusion | **Booking** Siham Berrada & Lova Randrianasolo - La chouette diffusion | **Executive production** MARS – Mons Arts de la scène

Financial support Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Service des Arts forains, du Cirque et de la Rue | Taxshelter, ING & Belgian Federal Government Tax Shelter | Wallonie Bruxelles international | Wallonie-Bruxelles Théâtre Danse

Co-production & Residencies MARS – Mons Arts de la scène | Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles | Maison de la culture de Tournai & La Piste aux Espoirs | Up - Circus & Performing Arts, Bruxelles | Le PALC, Pôle National Cirque, Chalons en Champagne | Chorège, CDCN de Normandie & Le Forum, Falaise | Central, la Louvière | Le Grand bain, La Madelaine-sous-Montreuil

Residencies Centre culturel Wolubilis, Bruxelles | La Roseraie, Bruxelles | La Cascade, Pôle Cirque Rhône Alpes, Bourg St Andéol | Théâtre Varia, Bruxelles | Ad Lib - Résidences Belgium's LIBITUM | La Grainerie - scène conventionnée, Balma

Potentiel d'Action ASBL
Registration number : 0766.583.773

<https://lucieyerles.com>
<http://www.lachouettediffusion.com>

Technical

Family friendly show suitable for audiences aged 8 and up

Duration : 1h15 + 20 minutes of post-show open stage time with the audience

+ 4-hour workshop with a group of 15–20 participants, held prior to the performances

Setup Day before

Minimum stage dimensions 10x10m

Minimum height 5,5m under the rigging point

Contacts

ARTISTIC

Lucie YERLÈS lucie.yerles@gmail.com
+32 499 73 96 34

BOOKING

Siham BERRADA - La chouette diffusion
siham@lachouettediffusion.com
+32 483 66 30 71

TECHNICAL

Gaspar SCHELCK gaspar.schelck@gmail.com
+32 484 24 82 92

