

CIRCUSFEST 2014

## CircusFest 2014: Capilotractées at the Roundhouse

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014

An old and forgotten circus act – the hair hang – is currently being revived by two Finnish artists, Sanja Kosonen and Elice Abonce Muhonen. Part of the Roundhouse's CircusFest, Kosonen and Muhonen's show is one of a wave of contemporary circus acts that are resurrecting antiquated circus tricks and refreshing them with unique and modern twists. The hang hair, thought to originate from China, involves hair being tied into a tight plaited bun with a large metal ring suspended through the centre. These rings clip on to a plethora of ropes and pulleys from which the dancers dangle at varying heights while performing a number of acrobatic feats.



It's a brisk, wry piece full of dry humour spliced between nerve-wrackingly advanced acrobatics. Spectacular episodes include Muhonen spinning in fast circles while suspended from the ceiling by her bun; Kosonen hanging from a trapeze by the crooks of her knees, while Muhonen dangles down from her head; and Kosonen balancing upon a tightrope attached to Muhonen's head, which she suspends while hanging from the stage set.

Amid these death-defying acrobatics are bizarre sketches played out with droll comedy by the duo. Using a deer head puppet Muhonen explains that when wet human hair becomes more elastic, a single strand can hold up to 100g, making it as strong as aluminium. In another eccentric act the duo suspend themselves upon a metal scale, playing electric guitar and bass while performing surreal jumps high in the air.

At times the sheer risk involved sends shivers through the audience. Suspended on one half of the metal scale, Kosonen is slowly lifted as Muhonen adds heavy weights to the other half, eventually adding her own weight. In an attempt to lower herself to the ground Muhonen passes the weights back to her partner – the effort involved manifests in great beads of sweat that drip down Kosonen's face as she dangles limply in mid-air. She balances precariously, dropping a 5kg weight. Grimacing and wobbling she sends gasps through the crowd, correcting herself in the nick of time.



The performance is as bizarre as the old circus act upon which it is based, making one feel instantly catapulted into a topsy-turvy Lewis Carol-esque world, full of strange characters and weird feats. Odd, quirky and utterly captivating, this is a circus act of dazzling power.

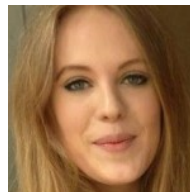
Verdict: ★★★★★

Alexandra Sims

Photos: Daniel Michelson

Capilotractées is on at the Roundhouse until 6<sup>th</sup> April 2014, for further information or to book visit [here](#).

## MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

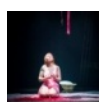


ALEXANDRA SIMS

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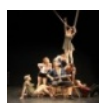
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