

THE PLACE

Little M

The Little Mermaid Transformed

By Anders Duckworth | Presented by The Place

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About


The story of Little M's transformation is a celebration of difference and acceptance. This retelling of *The Little Mermaid* considers trans experiences and shows how important it is to feel at home in your own skin.


Dance, puppetry, projection and narration will transport audiences to a magical underwater world in this new work which will resonate with anyone who feels like they're swimming against the tide.

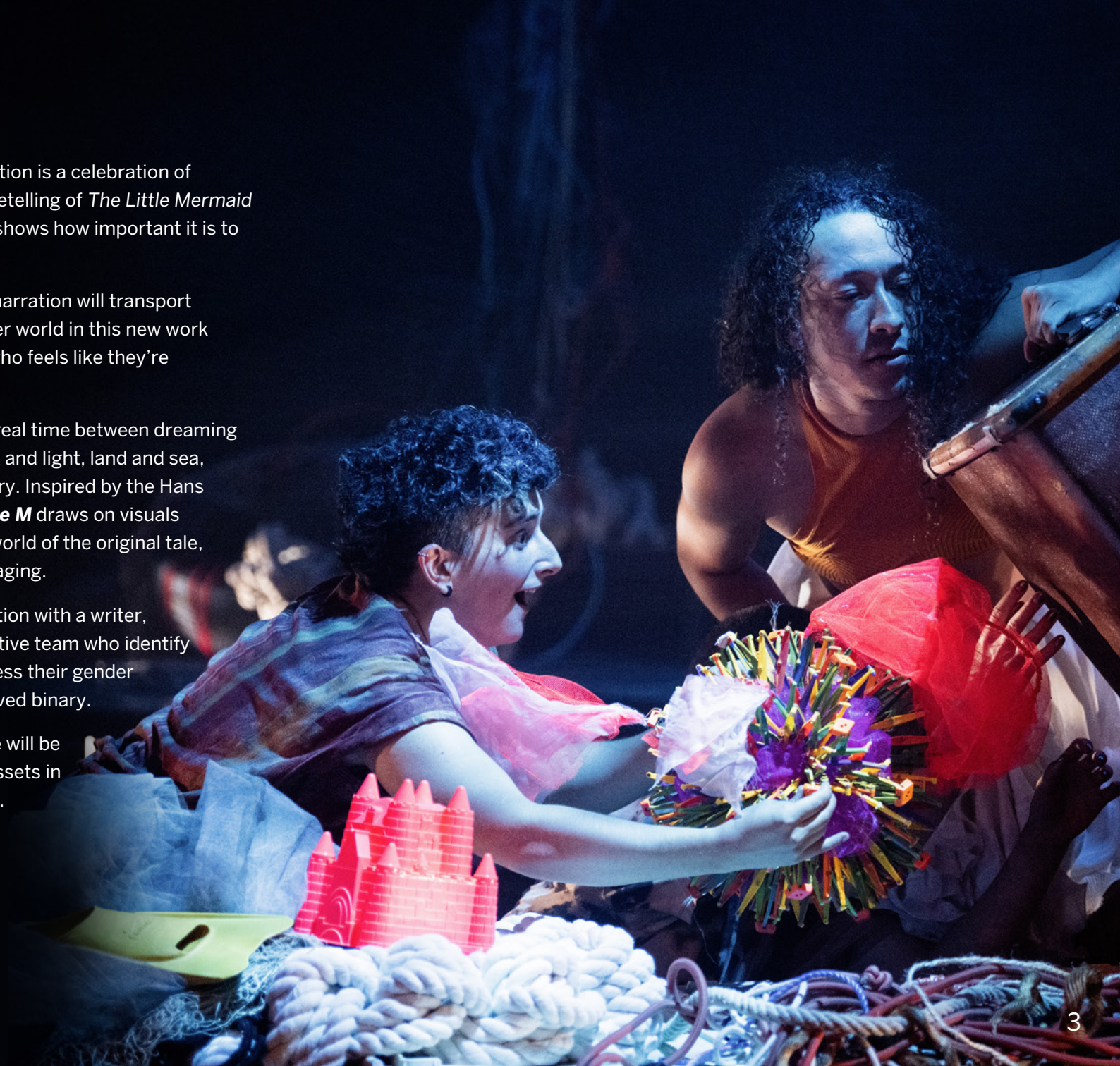
The world of **Little M** sits in a surreal time between dreaming and waking, modern and old, dark and light, land and sea, the mundane and the extraordinary. Inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale, **Little M** draws on visuals and ideas from the 18th century world of the original tale, contrasted with contemporary staging.

Little M will be made in collaboration with a writer, designer, five dancers, and a creative team who identify as trans, non-binary, or who express their gender in another way beyond the perceived binary.

Alongside the show's creation, we will be developing marketing copy and assets in collaboration with partner venues.

 [Watch the Sharing](#)

 [View the Mood Board](#)



Guiding Principles

Little M is being created with six key guiding principles at its heart:

- 1. Little M is Queer and trans centred.** It's at the heart of the stage design, writing, choreography, and the identities of the individuals in the cast and creative teams. At the same time, **Little M** will be accessible and open to all, welcoming audiences from a wide range of backgrounds and identities.
- 2. Little M is not afraid of complexity.** It will face difficult and complex ideas and feelings by inviting curiosity and questioning. It will be unafraid, and its fearlessness will be a driving force in the creation process.
- 3. Little M will be fun.** There will be silliness and playfulness throughout: through the script, through the characters, and through their interactions.
- 4. Little M is Queer chic.** It will incorporate elements of Queer fashion and design. We're interested in making something audiences will recognise as Queer chic.
- 5. Little M celebrates the power of transformation.** While celebrating the transformation of **Little M**, transformation will also be found elsewhere: in the progression of the characters, through costumes, and the setting of the show. As the piece progresses, it starts from a dark and desolate sea floor which through **Little M's** brave journey, Transforms into a colourful and joyful world.
- 6. And lastly, Little M must have a happy ending.** It's really important for us to have a trans story with a happy ending. Ultimately, **Little M** will come to feel confident in their identity, and be understood, loved, and supported by the people around them for who they are in all their wonder, beauty and queerness.



Choreographer



Anders Duckworth (they/them)

Anders (they/them) is a British/Swedish, trans, non-binary dance artist, choreographer, and visual artist. Their creative practice blurs boundaries between movement and visual arts and is heavily rooted in collaboration, often with artists in fields such as computer coding, residual media, fine art, projection, fashion, music technology, and design. They make work that seeks to question our relationship with the material and explore how dance and other art forms can be combined to create magical worlds.

After initially studying art and design, Anders graduated from the **London Contemporary Dance School** in 2014, later returning to complete their MA. They are currently a Work Place (associate) Artist at **The Place** (21-26).

Works include the award-winning short film **Polystyrene Dreams** (Dir. Jack Exton, 2013) and installation pieces merging fashion and animation. In duets like **Projected** (2015) and **Absent Impressions**, (2015) they explored the analogue projection of old film stock and the materiality of celluloid respectively. Anders's recent work, **Well Lit**, (2020) explores their personal experiences of gender and cultural identity, premiering at Palladium, Malmo. **Mapping Gender** (2022), a solo performance exploring gender and landscape in collaboration with sound artist **Kat Austen** and olfactorist **John Foley**, premiered at **The Place**.

As a performer they have worked with **Maresa von Stockert**, **Lea Anderson**, **Requardt & Rosenberg**, **Wayne Parsons**, **Kasia Witek**, **Jose Agudo**, **Protein Dance**, and **Opera North**, among others.

andersduckworth.com

'I want to reimagine The Little Mermaid as an accessible modern tale, bringing the trans and non-binary experience to the fore whilst celebrating difference and acceptance. This piece will show that identity is not fixed and that although swimming against the tide can be challenging, it's important to be able to feel at home in your own skin. This will be shown through a transgender and non-binary perspective, yet the message is universal. I also hope audiences will resonate with the sense of euphoria and joy in discovering who you really are.'

Photo by Christa Holka

Writer



Luke Skilbeck (he/they)

From cabaret Chekhov (**The Bear/The Proposal**, Young Vic) to drag king plays (**JOAN**, winner of **Off West End Award** and **Fringe First Award, Milk Presents/Derby Theatre**) Luke's work centers Queer and trans experiences in unexpected ways. Luke is the Artistic Director of **Milk Presents Theatre Company**, formally an Associate Company of **Derby Theatre** and the **Bush Theatre**. The company create theatre and host community residencies, Queer club nights (including Trans Filth and Joy for Manchester Pride) and workshops. Their work has been described as 'powerful, dynamic and irreverent' by the Scotsman, and they are quoted by The Stage as making 'theatre that flies in the face of convention'.

Luke works extensively as a writer, director and associate director, including as Associate Director on Queer cult musical Fun Home based on Alison Bechdel's memoir (Young Vic) and more recently in TV, including writing a non-binary crime thriller (87 Films / Freemantle).

Luke is a leading trainer for venues and organisations to enable them to make positive change and welcome trans and Queer audiences and artists into more spaces. Their work with young people spans over twelve years, from running youth theatres to creating work for children, young people and their grown-ups. This includes for example **The Strongest Person** (Tuke Special Educational Needs School and the Young Vic), **Marty and the Party** (for 2-6 year olds, made with **Derby Theatre**, current UK tour including **HOME** Manchester and the Southbank Centre, London), **Silver and The Mountain** (non-binary odyssey for 8-11's developed with Theatre Centre), and intergenerational trans cinema project **MOVIE STARS** currently in development with **Reading University**.

milkpresents.com

Designer



E. M. Parry (they/them)

E.M. Parry is a trans*-disciplinary artist and award-winning designer working across theatre, opera, live art, queer cabaret and drag, specialising in work which centres queer bodies and narratives. They are an Associate Artist at Shakespeare's Globe, a Linbury Prize Finalist, winner of the Jocelyn Herbert Award, and shared an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement as part of the team behind *Rotterdam*.

Theatre includes: ***Hamlet, As You Like It*** (Shakespeare's Globe); ***Translyria*** (Sogn og Fjordane Teater, Norway); ***Effigies of Wickedness*** (Gate Theatre/ENO); ***The Tempest*** (Regent's Park); ***Rotterdam*** (Arts Theatre/Trafalgar Studios/Theatre503 – London, 59E59 Theater – New York, and UK Tour); ***An Improbable Musical*** (Improbable Co., Royal & Derngate Theatre); ***As You Like It*** (Northern Broadsides / New Vic Theatre, touring); ***We Dig*** (Emma Frankland & Co. / Oval House); ***Dorian*** (Reading Rep); ***Grimm Tales*** (Unicorn Theatre); ***The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*** (New Vic Theatre); ***Here I Belong, Milked, Each Slow Dusk*** (Pentabus); ***Posh*** (Nottingham Playhouse/Salisbury Playhouse); ***The Miser*** (Watermill Theatre) and others.

Their designs were included in Staging Places: **UK Design for Performance** (V&A Museum), and they recently showed their live art performance **Prickling at the Prague Quadrennial**. They were artist in residence at **Triangle LGBTQ+ Cultural Centre**, Deptford in 2022. **E.M. Parry** trained at **Motley** and **Wimbledon School of Art**, and is currently completing a PhD in queer history and performance at the **University of Brighton**.

Marketing

Age Recommendation:

- Suitable for young people **aged 9+ and their families**.
- **Primary Schools years 5 and 6** will be drawn to the familiar fairy tale story and visual feast.
- **Secondary Schools years 7 and 8** will resonate with the coming of age themes in this alternative retelling.

Target Audiences:

- **Family Theatre Audiences:** Luke Skilbeck's script gives **Little M** a strong sense of narrative for a whole cast of characters, while contemporary dance will give the piece a unique visual language, **Little M** will attract family theatre audiences. Luke's recent works for family include *The Strongest Person* (Tuke Special Educational Needs School, Young Vic), *Marty and the Party* (HOME Manchester; Southbank Centre, London) the *Silver and The Mountain* (Theatre Centre).
- **Contemporary Dance Audiences:** having danced for Maresa von Stockert, Lea Anderson, Protein Dance and Requardt & Rosenberg among others, Anders Duckworth is fast establishing themselves as one of the leading choreographers of their generation. Their unique contemporary choreography will bring the story of **Little M** to life.
- **Fantasy Genre fans:** **Little M** is aimed at audiences interested in fantasy, including theatre shows like Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, fantasy novels and TV series.
- **Queer Families and Allies:** Themes of gender identity, transformation, and questioning gender norms will resonate with Queer families or young people who are exploring their identities, are Queer or trans identifying. These themes will also resonate with any LGBTQIA+ people and allies.



Marketing

Key Selling Points:

- **A magical adventure awaits:** Enchanting stagecraft and magical choreography will transport audiences to a mythical underwater realm. Meet a cast of mesmerising mermaids, underwater creatures, and rambunctious sailors. Dive into the unknown, discover the magic that lies beneath the waves, and get ready to go on an adventure of self-discovery.
- **The Little Mermaid transformed:** *The Little Mermaid* is a popular title with family audiences and, with the recent release of Disney's live action version, with audiences of all ages. **Little M** is an alternative, transformed retelling of the Hans Christian Anderson story, and an opportunity to explore both the popular story's fairy tale origins and to rediscover it from a whole new perspective.
- **Coming of age, identity and inclusivity:** **Little M** is a celebration of trans and Queer identities, but more broadly it celebrates the joy in being accepted, understood, supported and loved for who you are, which will resonate with young people of all identities and ages.
- **Creative collaborators:** **Little M** is created in collaboration with acclaimed creatives: choreographer **Anders Duckworth** (whose recent work *Mapping Gender* was hailed as a 'beautifully tailored piece of performance art/dance theatre that entices the senses' (*Dance Art Journal*)), writer **Luke Skilbeck** (Artistic Director of Milk Presents Theatre Company and whose work has been described as 'powerful, dynamic and irreverent' by the Scotsman) and **E.M. Parry** (whose designs have transformed international stages including The Globe, ENO and more).

 [See more images from the sharing here](#) (Credit: Camilla Greenwell).

A full Marketing and Communications Pack will be provided to presenting partners.

Communications

We always work closely with artists, venues and other partners like schools and youth groups to ensure support is in place when developing, communicating and sharing new work.

We will collaborate with partners to develop a marketing and communication strategy that will empower venues to engage their local audience. To do this, we will facilitate consultations and workshops to develop assets and campaigns. We will also be working in consultation with organisations including Gendered Intelligence and Fatt Projects.

Presenting partners will receive a comprehensive Marketing and Communications Pack which will include:

- Promotional copy
- Print and digital assets
- Target audiences and key selling points
- Press release template
- PR angles and suggested pitches

All communications for the tour will be managed by The Place, who will be responsible for all public messaging and will manage a protocol to support the public conversation around **Little M** in press and online.

The tour will be supported by Bread and Butter PR to do this.

Workshops

We will offer a variety of workshops that are available to book alongside the production, including:

- **Puppet Making Workshop:** Puppet maker **Scamp** leads a workshop which takes participants through the process of designing and making their own sea creature puppets using recycled materials. Participants will learn puppetry techniques like movement and storytelling. These fun and accessible workshops can be tailored to age groups from 4+.
- **Contemporary Dance Workshops:** Choreographer Anders Duckworth hosts a workshop exploring the movement in *Little M*, with two options: one for teenagers or young adults new to dance and one for more experienced dance students.
- **Queer Collaborations:** We are keen to meet with local Queer community groups in your area, especially those that are working with children and young people. We can host tailored workshops or conversations around Queerness as appropriate. Project Facilitator, Orrow Bell, can be on hand to facilitate conversations and workshops with Queer groups.



Company Wellbeing

The Place is an inclusive space, producing and programming work that represents a range of different voices, lived experiences and perspectives. Little M is an example of this.

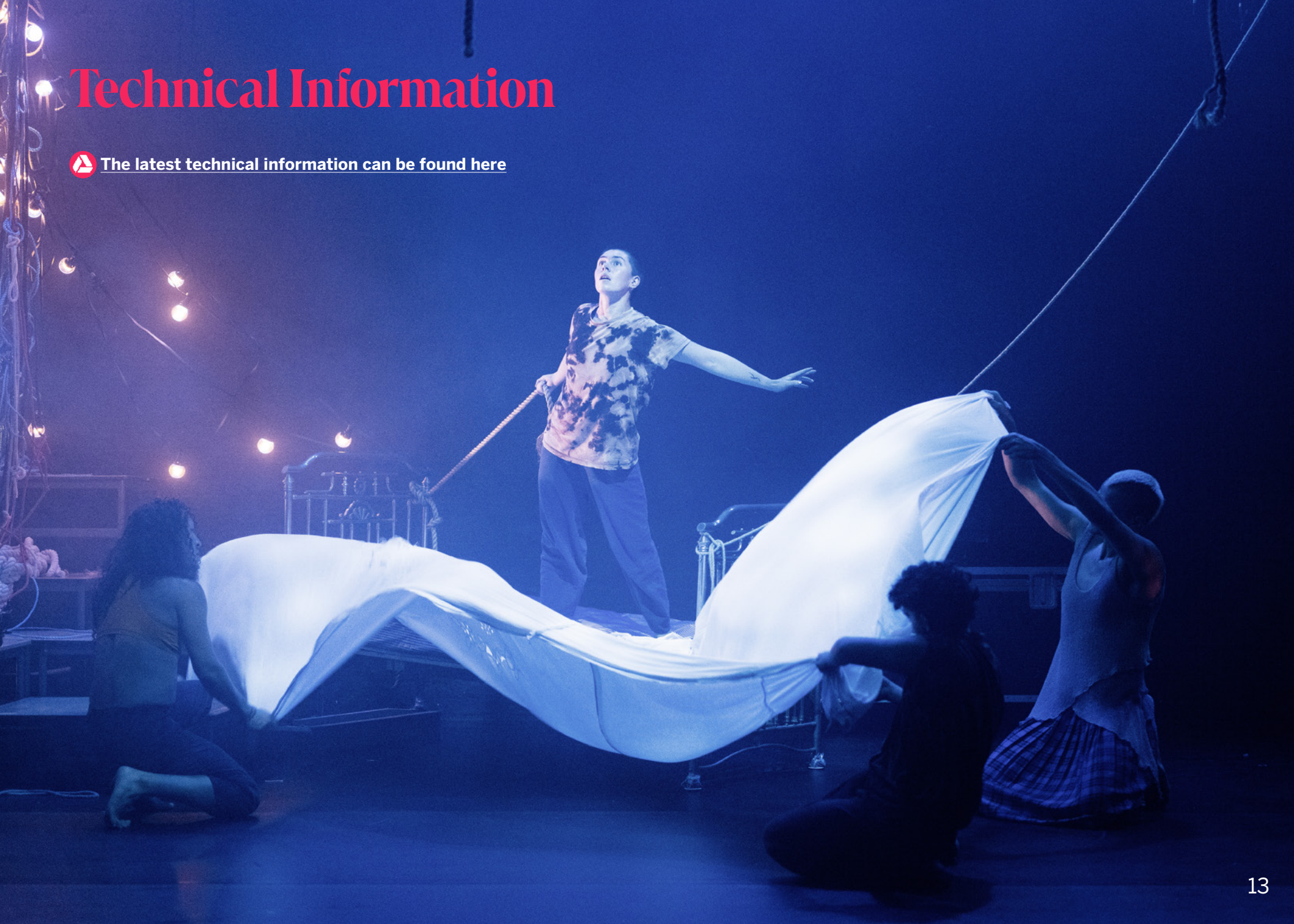
We are committed to the health and wellbeing of all our companies, and have created resources and schemes to support this on tour, including:

- **Company Wellbeing Pack:** to include resources on self-care and how to actively work on better mental and physical health while on tour.
- **Venue Pack:** to include a Studio Visitor Guide and an Access and Queer Awareness Document to support venues to make visiting companies feel welcome and safe.
- **Access to Wellbeing in the Arts:** an arts industry centred charity that provides mental health and wellbeing support by offering access to counselling, coaching, workshops, mental health first aid training, supervision, and more.
- **A Tour Parent Scheme:** the Tour Parent will be responsible for managing company wellbeing on tour, and will include managing company breaks, liaising with the venue around specific access requirements, being a mediator between the venue and company members, and chaperoning company members if required.



Technical Information

 The latest technical information can be found here



Credits

Credits from Little M R&D 2023

Choreographer & Co-Director: **Anders Duckworth**

Writer & Co-Director: **Luke Skilbeck**

Designer: **E. M. Parry**

Lighting Designer: **Joshie Harriette**

Composer: **NikNak**

Puppet Maker: **Scamp**

Dancers: **Alethia Antonia, Áine Reynolds, Tylee Jones, Claud Tonietto** and **Sorca Gillies**

Consultant Dramaturg: **ShayShay**

Puppet Master Consultant: **Sue Buckmaster**

Project Facilitator: **Orrow Bell**

Producer: **Reece McMahon**

Photography Credits: **Camilla Greenwell**

Graphic Designer: **Louise Richardson**

THE PLACE



Contact

To find out more, or to support or programme **Little M**, contact **Hayley Miranda**, Projects Producer:

hayley.miranda@theplace.org.uk

About The Place

The Place, London's creative powerhouse for dance development, has been leading the way in dance training, creation and performance for 50 years. In a changing landscape, our vision for the future remains steadfast: We are powering imagination through dance, championing new ideas, embracing risks and creating a dance ecosystem unlike any other in the world, with optimal conditions for dance artists and enthusiasts to realise their full potential. The Place is home to London Contemporary Dance School, an extensive theatre and artist development programme, education projects, a range of classes and courses and a nationwide touring model. As a pioneering dance organisation, we are committed to creating no-barriers access to exciting dance experiences and opportunities for everybody, offering a diverse and dynamic theatre programme for audiences, empowering artists and dance makers and giving young people access to the highest quality opportunities to touch their lives with dance.

theplace.org.uk

