

# TANGLE

...in the womb of a juggler



# **“TANGLE”**

## **..in the womb of a juggler**

“An Anthropological juggling project” by Francesca Mari.

**Company name:** Francesca Mari Juggling

**Choreographer:** Francesca Mari

**Title:** Tangle...in the womb of a juggler

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## **PRESENTATION OF THE COMPANY**

### **FRANCESCA MARI JUGGLING**

#### **ARTISTIC GUIDELINES, AREAS OF INTEREST, AND PHILOSOPHY**

Francesca Mari Juggling is a circus theatre company founded by Francesca Mari, a juggler and street performer with 10 years performance experience. She tours her own work alongside performing internationally with a wide range of critically acclaimed circus companies, directors and choreographers. Francesca draws from this experience, working with an extensive variety of physical disciplines and teachers in a range of environments, to make personal and innovative work.

‘Tangle’ is her newest solo work and stems from the desire to push herself as a juggler and circus maker with an idea closely linked to her uncommon specialism in antipodism. It relates to her Anthropological studies at university and is inspired by the touring life of a female performer and the thousand facets of the juggling discipline. Francesca aims to combine cross-discipline research to create an intimate, thoughtful, refreshing and original piece of circus theatre.

#### **FRANCESCA MARI’S BIO**

Francesca’s passion and commitment for juggling begin when she was 16. Always finding the way to combine her circus practice with academic study, she graduated in Geographical Sciences, at the department of literature and philosophy at Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna. She went on to graduating from Flic Circus School with a specialisation in juggling and antipodism.

She began working with Gandini Juggling Company in 2013 performing in “Clowns and queens”, “Smashed”, “8songs” and “Meta”. She was a juggler in the Opera “Akhnaten” ENO production at the London Coliseum, winner of the Olivier Award. In 2017 she performed at the GOP Varietè theater in “Metropolitan”.

Francesca is also a street performer. Working in the outdoor-arts scene since 2008, she has performed in numerous street arts festivals internationally and her one woman street show “Circo at Pois” is still touring.

Francesca collaborates with and is part of various companies including Upswing Aerial (UK) for the new production “Seasons”, CircusMash (UK), Area 51 (UK), Debordement (FR) (project by Nicanor de Elia), Circo In Zir (IT), Arterego (IT), Steampunk Parade (IT). With Chris Patfield she founded the company PaMa’s. Their show “NON SONO” presented at “Festival due Mondì” di Spoleto. They teach their juggling workshop “The Juggling Body”.

Always looking to attend workshops in Italy and in Europe with international dancers and actors, she takes classical and contemporary dance lessons, loves to travel and hopes to integrate her anthropological studies into her shows.



**Title:** Tangle...in the womb of a juggler

**Written and Devised by:** Francesca Mari

**Performed by:** Francesca Mari

**Length:** 25 minutes

**Cultural Advisor:** Losalia Milika Pusiaki

**Outside eye:** Piergiorgio Milano

**Juggling consultant:** Christopher Patfield

**Film maker and collaborator, advisor:** Connie "Paprika" Leaverton

**Lighting Designer:** Luca Carbone

## DESCRIPTION

The atmospheric new contemporary circus show from Francesca Mari 'Tangle...in the womb of a juggler' explores movement in an abstract dream, freely inspired by the myths and legends of Tonga, femininity, and juggling. A tribute made by an Italian juggler to a traditional culture which unites women with the immense joy brought by the simple act of throwing objects.

Made through conversation with many different people met whilst travelling throughout Tonga, Tangle is inspired by the game "Hiko" of the Tongan islands. A game in which ball-shaped fruits (tui-tui nuts) are thrown into the air in a circular pattern. A dance made only by young women through dance, song and juggling.

In combining her own practice with that of Hiko traditions, Francesca aims to highlight femininity and what brings women together in differing cultures, using object manipulation, dance and antipodism.

## INSPIRATION

In the Kingdom of Tonga there is an ancient tradition of women juggling. Almost every schoolgirl will know how to juggle. Traditionally a partly matriarchal society, women are regarded as the ones in charge of business and of families, although currently women are oppressed in many ways, especially since the arrival of Catholicism in the 1800s. From myths and legends to current folklore and the Hiko dance, one can see a strong relationship to juggling and object manipulation in Tongan culture and tradition, particularly for females.

Tongan women use juggling in a game called 'Hiko', where they throw an object always with the same hand and catch with the other, in a circular pattern (a shower), whilst singing a 'counting song'. Although today the meaning of the song may have been lost, it has been passed down through folklore and myth and may be related to counting, to their ancestors or both. Men do not take part in these games but instead play accompanying music. This tradition creates highly skilled jugglers and it is seen as normal to be able to juggle with a high number of objects at once. Skills which in the western world would be seen as extremely technical.

With western invasion many of these cultural activities were changed dramatically. Today with the increase in television and technology, traditions of healthy physical play and interactive game playing are threatened not just in Tonga but all over the world. That such games deserve to survive and the benefits they bring to players, are some of the motivations behind the research and creation of this show.

Another inspiration for this research is the notion we hold in the Western world, that women jugglers are rare, whereas in fact they are many. As in so many aspects of Western society, women are less celebrated, left out, silenced, roles become defined by gender and pre (mis)conceptions are often difficult to break out of. Here in Tonga however, is a culture where juggling is seen as something done only by women.

As a female juggler, I find myself with a personal connection and common ground. In the research I wish to focus on those points of commonality which we may share as a way to respectfully work in collaboration with Tongan women.

I hope the show will bring awareness to the beauty of authentic game playing, like throwing, catching, singing. Through abstract imagery, I aim to, without judgement, explore questions surrounding femininity and what it can mean to juggle.

An exhibition highlighting Tongan cultural heritage and traditions will show alongside the performance.

## THE CREATION PROCESS

Research during the creation process has so far included academic study relating to myths and folklore, study of the present day situation, watching footage of various female and male Tongan dances, listening to music and taking South Pacific dance classes in London.

During artistic residencies so far, my practice has included researching ways of playing and juggling with cultural dance, looking at jumping between a daily juggling practice and one that is more ritual. I like to work with the absurd and aim to find a way to navigate between sense and nonsensical to create dreamlike sequences in a consistent universe. Rather than a precise narrative, abstract coherence and atmosphere are created through the combination of choreography, soundscape and lighting design.

The frame that will create the "artistic landscape" will be light and shadow. The sea, as a metaphor for what appears and what is hidden, something which surprises by revealing itself different, unexpected and ephemeral.

My body is a woman's body, and with it comes all the judgements and notions the female body brings to the stage. To deny what develops in an imaginary world would not see the complete picture, a woman's body is a mother's body, one which generates life. An artistic body, right and capable, fragile and strong, sexual. The work however, is an interpretation of the feminine as a response to Hiko traditional Tongan juggling. It is preoccupied with themes of interaction and play and engages in the importance of live play in an ever increasingly technological world.

A strong personal and technical research in movement, floorwork, antipodism and object manipulation will remain ever present in the creation process.

I am cognisant of the risk of apparent western cultural appropriation of Tongan culture. I am in conversation with both my South Pacific dance teacher, who is from neighbouring Samoa with close cultural and historical ties to Tonga, and Connie 'Paprika' Leaverton, documentary film-maker, who has offered to assist me with introductions to relevant individuals in Tonga during my travels in December 2019. As an anthropological study, by a juggler from a western culture of juggling in a Polynesian culture, this project aims to remain ethical, responsible and aware. All training and research will be carried out with the full awareness and consent of the local collaborators.

### *Example scene:*

*There is a symbolic association between femaleness and chiefliness in Tonga.*

*Female qualities are recognised as restrain, superiority, sanctity, dignity.*

*A term often used for proper female behaviour is "to sit still".*

*While the association between women and chiefs may be empowering for women, some Tongan feminists argue that this association is a male construct, to keep women subservient.*

*My work does not intend to give an answer. My work for this scene will be to create a juggling routine which examines the concept of stillness and it's opposite, and explores the concept of drowning in the demands of the male gaze.*

## **MUSIC**

The music is taken (except for a couple of contemporary pieces) from recordings of traditional Tongan music. There is precisely a version of the Hiko Tau’o longa, and of war drums (Kailao). The work done includes the combining of juggling of traditional tongan “Hiko” dance, The war dance that just males perform, a super electronic cat-walk.

The piece will involve juggling with singing from the performer as well as encouraged from the public.

## **THE EXHIBITION “TANGLE IN TONGA”**

Exhibition “Tangle in Tonga” will be set up at the entrance of the theatre/artistic space to give the public the possibility to have a “short full immersion” in the concepts, myths, and culture that inspired the author in making the piece.

The content of the exhibition will include :

- Short texts about Tongan mythology and culture (with special focus on female conditions)
- Pictures, images and maps
- Credits and Thanks
- Shorts video (if can be technically supported)
- Some “tui-tui nuts” (if possible)
- Document sources

## **COLLABORATORS**

### **Losalia Milika Pusiaki:**

Losalia Milika Pusiaki is the great grand-daughter of Vili Pusiaki and the grand-daughter of Tuila Pusiaki. She worked for Tonga's National Cultural Centre as a tour-guide, information officer, and commentator from 1991-1996.

Milika is a highly sought after teacher and advocate of traditional Tongan Music and Dance. She has a long line of accomplishments ranging from tutoring at the Auckland University Pacific Performing Arts; a judge of Tongan stage at ASB Polyfest, advocate for the Tonga Youth Trust, teaching NZ born children Tongan music and dances. She is also the producer of the National Tongan Radio Show and hosts the Pacific Arts report on 531Pi at the Pacific Media Network. She is translator and interpreter for the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment.

This year she founded a South Meets West Productions with her daughter. South Meets West is committed to exploring how traditional Tongan dance practise fuses with contemporary dance and undertakes to develop the new youth leaders of Tongan music and arts.

### **Connie “Paprika” Leaverton**

“Paprika” is an award-winning producer/ director with Walkabout Productions, her company that she established in 1987 in Los Angeles after working for Steven Spielberg, Disney Studios and Universal Studios. She has produced videos all over the world ranging from the DVD release of ‘Trailblazers: Women Who Juggle’ to music videos, commercials, corporate educational to online YouTube/Vimeo releases.

To this day, she has won over 20 awards for her educational and insightful videos as well as Best Travel Documentary for her most recent film 'Hiko in Tonga'. She is also a comedy juggler and magician traveling the world whenever possible.

Future collaborations including performance showings of Tangle alongside the film 'Hiko in Tonga' are envisioned.

### **Chris Patfield**

After a degree at 'The Circus Space' specialising in Slack Rope and Juggling Chris completed a post-graduate course researching the relationship between juggling and music as part of an MA at the Danshogskolan in Stockholm. In 2009 he took part in the High-wire world championships, crossing a world record breaking distance of 1km, 27m above the Han river in Seoul South Korea) In 2010 he was seen walking above the Streets of Jaipur in the ICC Cricket World Cup TV Commercial. He has toured with No Fit State, Stumble dance Circus, and performed as an Actor/Circus Artist and Stage Fighter in productions at the Royal Opera House in London and Glyndbourne. Chris is currently touring with Gandini Juggling and the Juggling duet 'Gibbon' with Josè Triguero.

### **Piergiorgio Milano**

Italian internationally recognized choreographer and performer.

His background embraces circus, dance, theater and martial arts.

He's based in Bruxelles-Belgium and Turin-Italy but he's constantly moving across Europe to develop his own projects or follows his collaboration with other artists.

His Performances are developed around the body and through the body. He has personally experience being a dancer an acrobat and a performer; he gathers all these experience into a very strong physical language that combines virtuosity in movement with a very clear theatrical esthetics.

His works always run on the borders between arts, categories and discipline; trying to force those borders he finds his personal strength into the creative process.

### **Luca Carbone**

Light designer, technical manager, production manager, stage manager, sound engineer, back-liner, electrician. Graduated in electrical engineering at ITC Carlo Grassi (2003-Torino) and in Sound and Recording at the School of Hight musical specialization" (2004-Saluzzo). Graduate in light design at Atelier Teatro fiasco Philip Radice (2009-Torino).

Technical manager and light designer for numerous companies and festivals, technician at Flic circus school Torino and member of CITA Società Italiana artisti. Creator of the project Parade 78.



## **STAGES OF CREATION (dates and places in chronological order)**

### **Call Surreale Residency 2019**

Tangle is one of the three project winners for Residence in Turin at "Spazio Flic".

First week 15-21 July 2019:

With the "external eye for juggling" Chris Patfield.

Objective: Creating material (juggling and movement)

Second week 12-18 August 2019:

3 days with an external artistic direction by Giuseppe Vetti

Objectives: "Skeleton of the short form" (25 min) : work the lyrics, immersion in the music.

The 20-minute presentation will take place during Flic's Festival on May 16, 2020.  
(postponed due covid-19)

### **Travels and Research in Tonga**

December and January 2019/2010 Trip to The Kingdom of Tonga

Objectives: Documentation for the exhibition "Tangle in Tonga"

### **Murialdo Theater of Turin Residency 2020**

Creative residence from February 25th to March 20th 2020

March 20: First presentation of the work in progress

(residence done but presentation suspended cause Covid-19)

### **Centre de Création "Les Jonc' Alles" residency program**

creative residence from 1st to 5th of June 2020

showing of work in progress 5th of June

(postponed due to covid-19)

New dates from the 5th to the 11th October 2020)

### **Corte Ospitale residencies 2020/2021**

Creative residence from 13th to 15th September 2020 (postponed due Covid-19)

10 days at beginning 2021 (still to define)

### **Dinamico festival Reggio Emilia**

Presentation of the work in progress: tech and setting 16th September, showing 17th September 2020

(Postponed due covid-19)

### **Maeson de Jonglage, Paris**

Creative residence and presentation of work in progress from 20th to 27th November 2020

## PARTNERS

RSDG Flic Circus School of Turin with Call SURREALE.

“Maeson de Jonglage” Paris, residency program.

Centre de Création “Les Jonc’ Alles” residency program.

Murialdo Theater of Turin.

Corte Ospitale of Reggio Emilia and Dinamico festival.

Fish Island Circus: personal studio and rehearse space. @fishislandcircus

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

**Playable stage required:** min. 5mx5m

**Height required:** min. 5m.

**Front on or in the round:** ideally front on

**Length:** 25 mins

**Lighting:** Considering that “Tangle” is still developing it is impossible to give a finished list of technical requirements. During the residency in March 2020 in Teatro Murialdo in Torino, Luca Carbone will create the lighting design.

A simple and minimum lighting plan will roughly include.

- “general juggling lights”
- two “specials”
- “colors effects/atmosphere”

**Sound:** PA system. No mics



## **VIDEO LINKS OF THE PROJECT AND PAST WORK BY THE COMPANY**

“Tangle...in the womb of a juggler”

(small extract of creative residence at Teatro Murialdo Torino)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t4Y\\_\\_mkyBw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t4Y__mkyBw)

(small extracts from the creative residences during Call Surreale in Spazio Flic) :

<https://www.facebook.com/marijuggling/videos/518030368936181/>

<https://www.facebook.com/marijuggling/videos/445910672924019/>

### **Past work :**

#### **PaMa's company (duo Francesca Mari and Chris Patfield)**

Presentation at The Place London, part of Resolution Festival 2019:

<https://vimeo.com/323273326>

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/275498332/b29082efd8>

#### **Street show “Circo at pois, one woman street show”:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfCWPDJrEO8&t=11s>

#### **Clubs Act “Saraghina”**

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/275980168/bc25a31cb9>

Tecniche: [https://youtu.be/u1\\_L3B-k4Lc](https://youtu.be/u1_L3B-k4Lc)

#### **Foot juggling act “Lo spirito delle cose inutili”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dfdt5sRyRIw&t=11s>

#### **Balls (technique):**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_tCuMjX\\_nIA&t=63s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tCuMjX_nIA&t=63s)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGKFvOLk6iA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4uORriW0mw&t=24s>

#### **Articolo IL: collaboration with Lynn Scott**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4uORriW0mw&t=27s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwBoKKTgtB4>

#### **Visual juggling project by Metlili:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG24J9L2MBM>

#### **Led lemon project:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aoh4-n\\_XCik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aoh4-n_XCik)

You can find more videos in my youtube channel: Francesca Mari Juggling



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