

## Interview with Lina Johansson Artistic Director at Mimbre



### What is Mimbre?

It's an acrobatic theatre company based in Hackney but we travel around the UK and Europe performing acrobatic shows.

### How are you inspired and who inspires you?

I get inspiration from lots of shows that I see. Me, Silvia and Emma started Mimbre 13 years ago. We went and trained in Cuba where the acrobats really inspired us by their energy and tricks. I take inspiration from paintings, music, dance and sometimes from walking down the street. The next show we're working on is called 'Bench'. It was choreography inspired by people sitting on benches.

### Who is your favourite acrobat?

Maybe Charlie Chaplin or Keaton.

### When did you start doing acrobatics?

I started quite late, I was 18 years old when I started training at circus school. You don't have to start when you're young, but it makes it easier.

### Where do you come from?

Malmö in Sweden, but I've lived in London for 17 years.



**Mimbre at Dalston Square**  
**Saturday 22 July 2013**  
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### **How many adults are you in the company?**

In Falling Up there's four acrobats. I'm the artistic director who came up with the performance together with the performers. Three people help in the office and there's a teacher. In total were about 10 people involved in the show.

### **Do you like boys being in it as well?**

We have loads of boys who are part of our youth programme. At the moment we have more boys than girls, but we have one group just for girls. It's nice for girls to be on their own and show they can do everything. Some people in acrobatics think girls can't be strong and do the lifts, they think girls can only be lifted. When Mimbre started we were proving girls can do it all, but now now we have both boys and girls in our groups.

### **What is the 'Falling Up' performance about?**

It's about our bodies. For example if you trip up and fall over, instead of lying on the floor and being upset about it, 'Falling Up' is about keeping on rolling and it could become better and beautiful. If something is hard and you still carry on it can become something different to make it better.

### **Do you think children will like it? If so why?**

We have performed this show for the last two years and lots of children have watched it and like it. They've sent us little cards saying they like the acrobatics, they think it's impressive and funny. They also like the connection with the performers when they perform close to the audience.

### **Have children ever got involved in your big performances?**

We've done big performances with our young people from Mimbre Youth Company. They are 8-13 years old and performed at Discover Young Hackney opening event at Hackney Empire in front of 1000 people. At Sadlers Wells Theatre they performed in front of an audience of 1500 people on the main stage. They performed together with babies, mothers, teenagers and the oldest was 90 years old!

### **What's your hardest acrobatic trick?**

In Cuba mimbre is a technique where two people weave their hands together to make a platform. A third person stands on the platform and make a somersaults. You can do different tricks with this move, but they are all very hard. You have to work together to make it strong, otherwise it doesn't work.



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## What's your most extreme trick?

In our show Triptic, a girl was swinging on a bar on 4 metre high tower. She let go and flew down – me and Emma had to catch her. Even though it was safe it still made the audience and us go ooooh everytime we did it. I also did a handstand on two thin bars 4 metres high up. That felt quite extreme as there wasn't a safety net.

## What's your favourite trick?

My favourite tricks are the hardest because when you achieve it you feel so pleased that you've managed to do it.

## How much and how do you practice?

When we are creating a new show the performers practice at least 5 days a week with 8-hour long days. During the show you still need to practice to stay flexible and to practice the tricks and then it's 3 days a week for 3-4 hours.

## What's your easiest trick to learn?

In terms of pyramids using people to counterbalance.

## What's the tallest people tower you've made?

A 5 people high tower and lots of people around. In total there was 15 people in the picture. I wasn't necessarily the tallest tower sometimes a tower of 3 people can be higher.

## Where was your best performance and why?

In Spain we were performing at a festival during a thunderstorm. The audience of around 800 people was fantastic and supported us in the heavy rain and wind. They were clapping the whole way through. We kept going because of the lovely audience. They made us 'fly' and we felt special. Sometimes the hardest things can become the best things.



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## Do you have a classes for children and how do you join?

We have a classes for 5-7 year olds and 8-13 year olds. Committed children can audition for Mimbre Youth Company to take part in bigger shows and exciting projects. The best thing is to look at our website [mimbre.co.uk](http://mimbre.co.uk) or send us an email at [education@mimbre.co.uk](mailto:education@mimbre.co.uk)

## Where are your classes?

At Milton Garden Estate close to Newington Green and the Mimbre Youth Company is in Stoke Newington at the George Downing Estate. All over Hackney.

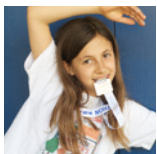
## What will you be doing at Dalston Square for the Dalston Children's Festival this coming Saturday 22 June?

The young people from our programme will perform the work they have created themselves. Mimbre Youth Company will perform an adaptation of the piece that they performed at the Hackney Empire. 'Falling Up' is performed by the professional adult acrobats. It's about bodies and how you make the best of what you are and how everyone is different but everyone is brilliant. If you feel inspired there's free street dance and acrobatics workshops. Parents can join in together with their kids.

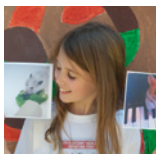
## Thank you!

You can also see Mimbre Youth Company and Mimbre perform 'Falling Up' during the **Narrow Way Festival** in Hackney on **7 September**. There will also be performances by Betty Brawn [stronglady.com.au](http://stronglady.com.au) [singalongsongs.co.uk](http://singalongsongs.co.uk) and [otherhalf.org.uk](http://otherhalf.org.uk) productions; there will be dance, acrobatics and circus skills workshops and other fun things to do, like bouncy castles and a cycle obstacle course.

It's going to be a great day. Come along and try out dare devil tricks for free. It is very creative and fun. It will be a good treat for all ages!



Kitty COX AGE 9



ALMA Hartis, Age 9

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