

the **WITNESS**

his story became **HISTORY**
her story became **HERESY**

Touring May-Sept 2024

Contents: Intro/Copy. | Team & Background |
Audiences & Marketing. | Technical | Workshops | Finance

Photo credit: Rosie Powell

Photography: Ali Wright / Rosie Powell (Cover)



The Witness

by Jo Blake

His story became History. Her story became Heresy.

The sacred and profane collide in a new performance by interdisciplinary artist Jo Blake, inspired by the Gospel of Mary Magdalene.

Three copies of the gospel have been found – all of them with missing pages. As the only gospel written in the name of a woman, it reveals Mary Magdalene as a most formidable and courageous spiritual leader, confidante and companion of Christ.

Moving through humour, bold physicality and intricate storytelling; *The Witness* reveals how one woman's 2000 year old testimony comes clattering into the life of a contemporary woman, initiating a reckoning and demanding that the missing pages be written anew.

[Watch the Teaser](#)



Duration: 70 mins
(no interval)

Age Guidance: 14+

Content Warning:
Contains depictions
of religious imagery
and some strong
language.

[Watch the show](#)

Password:
MM1995



For all enquiries, please contact Courtenay Johnson at courtenay@carbontheatre.org.uk or 07720 445456



Jo Blake

Jo Blake is a performer working across the disciplines of storytelling, theatre and dance. Her dynamic, poetic performance style draws upon traditional and contemporary practices, exploring current cultural and personal questions through the lens of the mythic. Jo has a PhD in Emergent Storytelling Practices from the University of Chichester, an MA with Distinction in Dance Theatre from Trinity Laban and a First Class BA (Hons) in Performing Arts from the University of Winchester.



Creative Team

Performers | **Jo Blake** and **Robert Clark**
Director | **Jo Blake**
Movement Director | **Ben Duke**
Lead Dramaturg | **Lootie Johansen-Bibby**
Visiting Dramaturg | **Sheila Ghelani**
Collaborative Devisor | **Georgia Tillery-Randak**
Designer | **Ruth Stringer**
Lighting Designer | **Adi Currie**
Sound Designer | **Patch Middleton**
Producer | **Courtenay Johnson**

Production Manager | **Fiona Scott Lockyer**
Stage Manager | **Emma Drostby**

Background

The show was developed over the last four years but premiered as part of a multi-stranded arts project by Jo Blake inspired by the rediscovered Gospel of Mary Magdalene, titled [Heresy](#). Through performance, talks, workshops, installation and exhibition, this project reframes heresy as a courageous and life-giving act of transgression, that affirms a long-denied and particularly female lineage of spiritual knowledge. What does such knowing offer us now in this time of deep ecological and societal crisis?

[Find out more about the Heresy project](#)



Audiences

The performance is a hybrid between storytelling and dance. The focus on the humanity of Mary's story will be relevant to and enjoyed by a wide audience as well as our target audiences:

- contemporary theatre, dance and storytelling audiences
- Christians, Atheists and those interested in religion and/or theology
- Academics, in either drama and theology
- those interested in Mary Magdalene, of which there is a wide international following
- those interested in feminism & women's rights

We have a full [Marketing Pack](#) which contains links to rehearsal photos, short social media videos and longer team interviews plus all copy and information.



[Click to
view all
videos](#)





Technical

The piece can be scaled up and down to small spaces, studio and mid-scale theatres. Minimum height dimensions are: 5m. Width and depth are more flexible but estimated minimum are 5m x 6m.

Lighting: Design can be sent over in advance, on the day we will focus side lights and the ladder light and input cues into the desk. Can be performing in non-theatre spaces without lighting or with hired lighting.

Sound: Programmed on QLab, we will need to connect it to your sound system or hire speakers.

Set: We have a ladder unit which our SM will need assistance to load in/out and construct/deconstruct. It's just a case of steadying the ladders as they are bolted into the base unit. The unit needs to be set on a flat, even surface.

Props: We have a minimal amount of props which will be pre set in the performance space. No need for any additional storage off stage. The bottles and cups will need to be rinsed after the show.

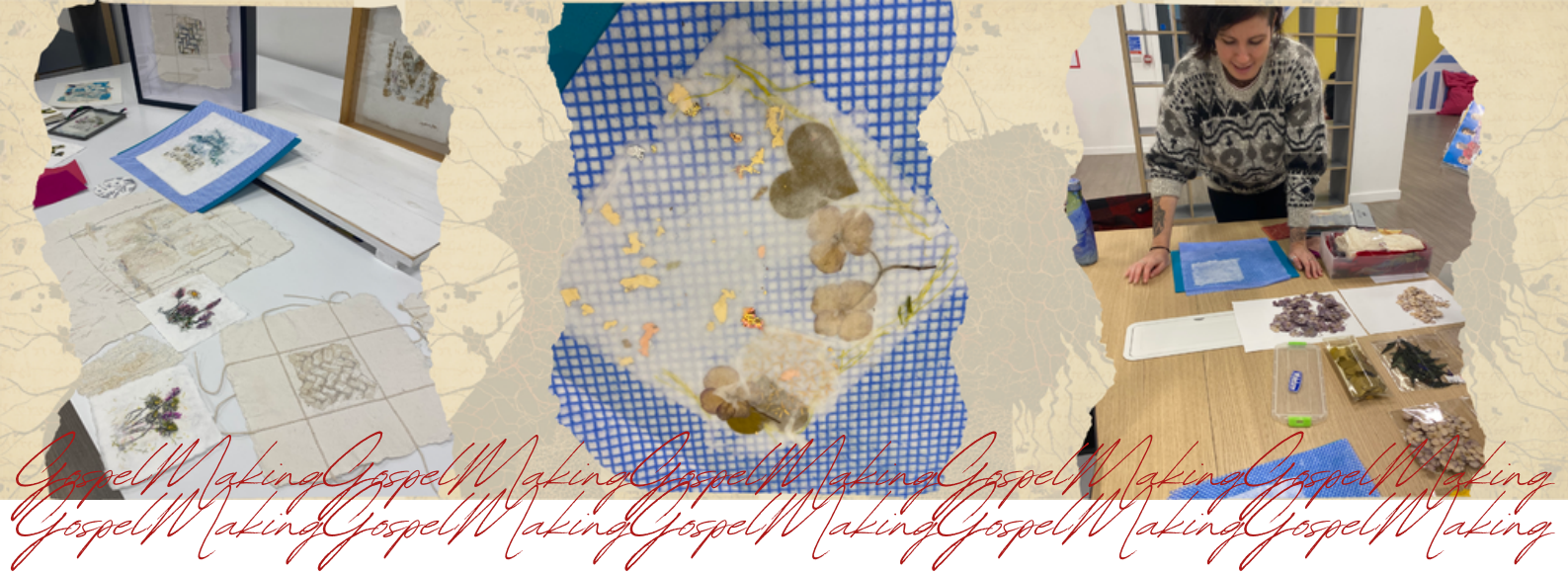
Costume: Very minimal, but if an iron and ironing board is available that would be useful.

Dressing rooms: We have 2 performers, one male, one female. If they could both have a secure room to use that would be great, but they are willing to share if this is not possible.

Warmth: The piece includes a lot of physical movement so both the space and the dressing rooms will need to be warm.







Gospel Making Workshops

Inspired by the rediscovered Gospel of Mary Magdalene, these workshops will explore the gospel-making process and help you to **create your own**. Through this two-part workshop, you will learn about the heritage and meaning of the word 'gospel' to **explore writing** your own text to then embed into your **own handmade paper**, embellished with wild flower seeds and other natural materials.

Creative Writing with Jo Blake

The Old English word 'spel' means to speak or tell - to weave magic with words, or cast a 'spell'. The word 'gospel' translates as 'good story', or 'good spell', and is viewed as sacred text - scripture. However, many heretics followed a path of gnosis, or direct experience of 'god', rather than canonical scripture. So where does sacred text meet personal experience? What words make up our personal gospels and experience of 'the mystery'? What spells are we ready to cast or re-weave? Inspired by scriptural form, we will work to write new, personal gospels, or 'good spells'.

Paper-Making with Trish Hughes

Paper artist Trish Hughes will then lead you through the process of hand-making two paper sheafs on which our gospels will be written. Wild flower seeds, and other organic matter, will be embedded in the paper - one sheaf to keep, and one to be given away, planted or offered, wherever your 'good spell' wishes to be cast.

Workshop Information

- These workshops work best with groups of 4-8 people.
- They run for 3-4 hours with a short break in the middle.
- All materials provided by facilitators for participants.
- Equipment provided by facilitators, we need the venue to provide chairs and tables and access to a sink.
- Participants can take home their work after 1 week of drying, we can post them or they can be collected.



A photograph of a person climbing a tall wooden ladder. The ladder is covered in red string or yarn, which is draped and tangled around it. The person is wearing a white t-shirt and dark trousers, and is reaching up with their right arm. The background is dark, and the scene is lit with a warm, orange-red light. The overall mood is one of struggle and reaching for something high.

Finance

We will be applying for further funding from Arts Council England (submitting mid-October 2023) to subsidise the tour. If we can confirm a deal before then we can work into our fundraising strategy.

Full cost of an isolated show is £2,000-2,500+VAT but can be reduced by booking multiple shows & will vary based on location, resource or further funding.

courtenay@carbontheatre.org.uk | 07720 445456