

## BRAVE SPACE PRESS QUOTES AND LINKS

### **The Guardian “No False Moves in this wonderful up-close circus.”**



You have heard how it takes a village to raise a child. It takes an audience to help build this astonishing, often rapturously beautiful circus show from Chicago company [Aloft](#). Step by step, we assist in creating a makeshift circus tent for the tricks that follow. The sheet becomes a canopy and, an arm’s reach from where we sit, a spellbinding Cyr wheel solo grows into a duet. The mat squeaks, the slightest breeze hits us, and after an initial flinch or two – is that coming straight for me? – an up-close four-hula-hoop act is gently intoxicating. The tricks never feel flashy and are performed with an easy humour, direct eye contact and a bond of confidence that blooms quickly between audience and performer. The proximity of their dusty soles and bandaged joints lets you sense, however briefly, a circus company’s close-knit nature, and soon the audience is helping again, holding poles for the next act. Brave Space is delivered with care and charisma. It’s an astonishing hour that leaves the audience as aloft as the company.

### **Broadway Baby**



*Brave Space* isn’t art created from strife, but art created from joy and defined by teamwork. From the very beginning, you are warmly welcomed into the venue and politely informed of the ground rules. From here on in we become part of their community and are invited into their intimate blanket created space. Everything the troupe performs, from spinning in a cyr wheel, to duo trapeze, to balancing on the very ends of poles, is completed with love and support. The performers smile broadly throughout, radiating joy, and in between movements there are hugs: are the women lovers, sisters, friends? The specifics don’t matter, the love displayed is pure and unconditional. In a world that feels more divisive and separated and full of worry than ever, sitting under a blanket next to strangers whose eyes are lit up with wonder is a beautiful thing. The ultimate message of *Brave Space*? Danger and fear exist, but love can conquer all.

### **Everything Theater**



Inside a white tent that looks like several bedsheets stitched together, I am lying on the floor, surrounded by people I have never met before. My eyes, wide open, stare for a second at those of the aerialist who is hanging upside down from the silks no more than two feet above me. In fact, there are two, entangling limbs and flying over us. It’s a transcendental experience. Especially in acrobatics, the stage must be a safe place to perform and I am in awe of how gracefully they handle our presence in such close proximity. Each act, whether Cyr wheel, aerial, hula hoops, balancing or juggling, is carried out with flawless elegance. In all my years of watching circus I have never seen something so empowering and charged with meaning. What you’ll see you’ll never forget.

### **The Scotsman**



The show itself has an ethereal quality with the all-female cast dressed, like their surroundings, entirely in white. They smile beatifically at one another before executing each maneuver, gently instructing us where to wriggle ourselves next. Often this involves sitting down or standing up, but on one occasion – by far the highlight of the show – we’re asked to lie down and peer up, “as if watching the stars”. Space is tight, but as you lay your head back and relax, looking at the two acrobats on the swing above, it’s truly magical. Rarely, if ever, are we afforded this view of aerial circus work and this brief but beautiful moment is unforgettable.

## The Stage



Contemporary and ethereal circus containing moments of total transcendence, contained in a collaboratively constructed space.

## The List



It's been many years since companies like Casus, Circa and Gravity & Other Myths began bringing pared-down, intimate performances of strength and beauty to the Festival, replacing the big-top circus tradition. You'd think by now that the Fringe would have seen it all, and that coming up with small-scale circus that is genuinely original would be an impossible task. Enter then, *Brave Space*, with its dream-like atmosphere and inventive ideas. It's beautiful, dizzying and unforgettable.

## Edinburgh for Kids



Playful and immersive, the international premiere of all-female Brave Space from Chicago-based Aloft Circus Arts company is a bold yet delicate community experience for all ages. The close-up nature of the show means that tiny moments of intimacy that might go amiss in larger-scale acrobatic productions sink into the hearts of the onlookers; tender embraces between the performers and knowing smiles exchanged after a two-hander trapeze keep the audience feeling more than witnesses but partakers in the performance, left feeling like they've been let in on a secret between friends.

## The Circus Diaries

This beautiful and thoughtful piece is overflowing with talent and skills, but never feels cluttered. This is some of the most breath-taking circus I have ever seen, a huge part of that is the way we are invited to view it. Sitting mere centimetres from a Cyr wheel twirling and spinning. Being amongst a juggling routine. Then lying on our backs, looking up at a duo cloud swing act from below. A whole new perspective on popular acts. We are so close to the performers you could reach out and touch them. The acts are full of the big tricks and strength expected from a heavily acro/aerial troupe, but they feel much more intense up close. The finale act, where a tangle of a hundred elastic strings are shared between the cast and they all spin and twirl together and around the audience is a stunning end. The interesting kit is in fact the inside of a corde lisse, burst open to reveal its many inside parts that go into making it such a strong, reliable piece of equipment. A single thing, revealed to be made up of hundreds all working together. A wonderful representation of the show's themes.

## Wendy Arons, [The Theater Times](#)

"The intimate and mesmerizing Brave Space is a circus performance unlike any other you may have experienced...Where most circus performances seek to dazzle with superhuman feats of credibility-defying Nacility and power and flexibility and daring, Brave Space has an altogether different allure: this is a circus without ostentation and showiness, one in which the performers seem interested in creating and sharing an experience of precarity, courage, and other-directedness rather than simply wowing an audience. Indeed, at the end of a few of the routines the audience forgot to applaud—not because we were unimpressed, but rather

because the performers finished with such humility and calm that applause felt out of place; it would have been like applauding someone who had just humbly handed you a gift they had carefully crafted just for you...”

**Casey Cunningham, [PGH in the Round](#)**

“It’s an experience that can only be relayed in impressions, as a literal description of it would be an unforgivable act of reductionism. *Brave Space* is a wonderful piece. It is daring, beautiful, whimsical, profound, simplistic, complicated, safe, scary, beautiful thing, and I very much hope it sticks around. Be Brave, go see it, and support these supremely talented artists. Their skill and commitment are an example to us all. Be inspired.”

**Adam Lubitow, [Rochester City Newspaper](#)**

“That closeness and intimacy between the artists and the audience is what the show is all about: creating a unique experience that’s unlike any other I’ve experienced at Rochester Fringe. It’s one that I overheard several members of Thursday night’s 7 p.m. audience aptly describe as “magical”...The immersion transforms the experience into something wholly wondrous, unexpectedly emotional, and just really fucking cool.”

**Victoria Gomez, [University News](#)**

“Beauty unfolded in many different forms as the cast moved in tiny, intricate movements to collectively create a breathtaking, single-living art piece. Swanson created an environment which was all inclusive without any forcible drive. From the time the act started up until the end, the audience felt a rush and release of emotions from pure excitement to power, physically and mentally supporting the cast as they performed artistic acts. An outstanding performance, and well done to the team, audience included.”

**Nicole Blackwood, [Chicago Tribune](#)**

During the opening of the show, while Tapper walks on poles, a recording plays. “You will be safe,” a voice says. Then: “You will be cared for.” As Tapper’s arms flail back and forth, begging the air for balance, the audience can see that these things aren’t the same. Real safety would mean putting the pole away, walking the stable ground instead. But there, the cast holding the poles like a lifeline, allows Tapper to feel brave enough to take one step forward, then another. Sometimes, inevitably, she stumbles. It’s not beautiful to watch; it’s harrowing. But when she finally lies down, doubt has been beaten — and the audience, standing in a circle, can breathe more fully than before.

**Mackenzie Chase, [Arizona Daily Sun](#)**

It’s not quite a safe space, although all are welcome. It’s also not a specific, tangible place. Rather, Aloft Circus Arts’ *Brave Space* brings audiences face to face with their fears and shortcomings, all the while imagining how they can be more open to trust and acceptance

**Becca Most, [Minnesota Daily](#)**

Removing the barrier between audience and performer, the crowd sat knee-to-knee, just feet away from suspended acrobats, saucer jugglers and daring high-walkers. Here, performers are close enough to the audience that the crowd can see beads of sweat on the acrobats’ faces and note the quiver of limbs as the base strains to lift four of her associates on her shoulders.

**Caitlyn Fowlkes, [The Ashland Tidings](#)**

About halfway through the performance, everyone was instructed to lie down in the middle of the tent as two female trapeze artists swung about inches from their faces. A collective gasp escaped from the crowd as Larson flipped the other woman like a pancake. For a split second, it looked as if she would fall on the audience lying underneath her, but the woman caught the flier. As the audience exhaled with relief, smiles plastered the performers' faces in a knowing way, as if that moment is why they do what they do.

**Elisa Shoenberger, [Not Without My Bowler Hat](#)**

“Simply put, I was impressed with the show. It’s unlike any other circus show I’ve seen (and trust me, I’ve seen a lot) in both its execution and its feeling. In addition to the sense of space and community, I was struck by how intimate and how vulnerable the circus felt. To be clear, there were amazing feats to be seen: a beautiful double trapeze act, a pole stepping act, and more. But there was an openness to the performers that I haven’t experienced before. The atmosphere certainly helped in creating that feeling with the intimacy of the tent, the music and sound, and the lighting but I was struck by how each performance felt very raw and exposed. It’s not something that happens in circus often to have that feeling of vulnerability and intimacy. Most of the time it is: on stage there are humans doing superhuman things, we mere mortals stood aside and watch. That wasn’t this show.”