# Show Pony boldly confronts ageism in circus performance at Norfolk & Norwich Festival



The performance of "Show Pony" at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival audaciously challenges the conventional narratives surrounding the circus industry, particularly as it relates to women. As the three performers—an aerialist, a contortionist, and a strap acrobat—grace the stage, they don feathery headdresses emblematic of show ponies while delivering a stark message about aging in a profession often obsessed with youth.

From the onset, the atmosphere is charged with both humour and a stark seriousness. “By 50, you are dead,” they proclaim, a statement punctuated by an exaggerated fall to the sound of a gunshot—a visceral moment that resonates with the audience. Their commentary on aging, coupled with the revealing of the mechanisms behind their stunning aerial tricks, pushes back against the industry’s portrayal of female performers as ethereal and weightless. Instead, they expose the often unseen reality of their craft, including the intricate system of pulleys and carabiners that empowers their performances.

The narrative of "Show Pony" intertwines personal stories with professional struggles. For each performer, the circus represents much more than a career; it is a lifeline to freedom and self-expression. The aerialist recalls thrilling childhood dives while the contortionist reminisces about the enchanting blend of costumes and sawdust. This juxtaposition of nostalgia against the reality of an uncertain future creates a poignant backdrop, reminding the audience of the sacrifices and dreams that underpin their art.

While similar themes of aging and femininity have been explored in the arts, "Show Pony" stands apart for its raw honesty. It is a bold statement against ageism in the performing arts, revealing the absurdities and challenges faced by women as they navigate an industry that often sidelines them. In a review from the Edinburgh Festival, contributing writer Bryony Kimmings noted that the show "deconstructs and satirizes the circus industry," extending an invitation for audiences to reflect on broader societal norms regarding relevance and value as one ages.

The ongoing cultural significance of such performances is further highlighted by the Norfolk & Norwich Festival's commitment to showcasing diverse talents and narratives. With the festival offering a broad array of events—encompassing music, theatre, and more—the inclusion of "Show Pony" signifies a proactive approach towards engaging with pressing social issues.

Moreover, as part of the festival’s 2025 programme, "Show Pony" continues to generate discussion about resilience and community. The three women, portrayed with a remarkable blend of vulnerability and strength, embody the spirit of solidarity, demonstrating that art can not only entertain but also provoke critical dialogue.

In an age when the circus remains an emblem of wonder, "Show Pony" compels us to reevaluate what we celebrate in the arts. It exemplifies a shift towards more inclusive storytelling that values the experiences of those often left in the shadows, especially women confronting the realities of age. As they confront their fears and societal expectations, their performance resonates long after the lights dim, challenging audiences to reconsider the connections between identity, age, and performance.

The journey of "Show Pony" and its performers is emblematic of a larger movement within the arts—a persistent call for recognition, respect, and representation in every age and phase of a person’s life. By turning the spotlight on the struggle against ageism in the circus and beyond, this production not only entertains but also beckons society toward a more inclusive future.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1, 6
2. Paragraph 2: 1, 6
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170997.show-pony-norfolk-norwich-festival-reviewed/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/article/2024/aug/22/show-pony-review-bryony-kimmings-still-hungry-circus> - A review of 'Show Pony' by the German circus company Still Hungry, in collaboration with Bryony Kimmings, performed at the Edinburgh Festival 2024. The article discusses how the show deconstructs and satirizes the circus industry, focusing on the experiences of three women confronting ageism and the challenges of remaining relevant in a youth-centric industry. The performance blends personal narratives with circus acts, offering a candid look at the realities of aging in the performing arts.
3. <https://www.theatreweekly.com/norfolk-and-norwich-festival-2025-announces-full-programme/> - An announcement detailing the full program for the 2025 Norfolk & Norwich Festival, including the performance of 'Show Pony' by Still Hungry and Bryony Kimmings. The article highlights various events and performances scheduled for the festival, emphasizing the diversity and richness of the cultural offerings. It provides insights into ticket availability and the significance of the festival in showcasing both international and local talent.
4. <https://www.visitnorwich.co.uk/article/the-music-of-the-norfolk-norwich-festival/> - An overview of the musical events at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival 2025, featuring performances by artists like Arooj Aftab and Gilles Peterson. The article provides details on the festival's schedule, highlighting the variety of musical genres and artists participating. It also offers information on ticket prices and the significance of the festival in promoting musical culture in Norwich.
5. <https://www.visiteastofengland.com/post/highlights-of-norfolk-norwich-festival-2025> - A highlight of the Norfolk & Norwich Festival 2025, focusing on the performance 'Show Pony' by Still Hungry and Bryony Kimmings. The article discusses the themes of the performance, including aging, femininity, and the circus industry. It also provides information on other festival events and the overall cultural significance of the festival in the East of England.
6. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25170997.show-pony-norfolk-norwich-festival-reviewed/?ref=rss> - A review of 'Show Pony' performed at the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, discussing the themes of aging, femininity, and the circus industry. The article provides insights into the performance's content, including the use of aerial acts and contortion, and the personal stories of the performers. It also reflects on the audience's reception and the cultural impact of the performance.
7. <https://norwichtheatre.org/whats-on/show-pony/> - Information about the 'Show Pony' performance at Norwich Theatre Playhouse, including dates, times, and ticket prices. The page provides details on the collaboration between Still Hungry and Bryony Kimmings, the themes explored in the performance, and the circus disciplines featured. It also offers practical information for attendees, such as age guidance and access requirements.