

NO WASTE NO FUN

contemporary
circus
as weird
as the
world
we're
living in

PROGRAM

Turn phone horizontal
for best view

June 12 & 13
8:30pm

Aloft Circus Arts
3324 W Wrightwood Ave



events.ticketleap.com/tickets/aloftcircusarts

DIRECTED BY

Laura Stokes

Raised by back-to-the-land hippies in the western USA, Laura was primed from a young age to follow a path of radical expression. In 2004 she co-founded The Ricochet Project with Cohdi Harrell. Their production *Smoke and Mirrors*, received the 2015 Total Theater Award for Best Circus (Edinburgh Festival Fringe) and played at Cirko Festival, Montreal Completent Cirque, and Festival du Cirque Actual Circa. In 2020 her duo hair suspension act with Francesca Hyde, was the recipient of the Médaille d'Argent, the Dragone Award, and Cirque du Soleil Award for Innovation at the Cirque du Demain Festival in Paris (FR). For the past 10 years, Laura has been based in Berlin, Germany, where she developed her solo show, *CALL ME A PUSSY*, and regularly collaborates with other artists such as Florentina Holzinger, Matthew Barney, and Meret Becker. Laura jokes that circus is her career and improvisation is her religion and is honoured to have worked closely with contact improvisation pioneers, Steve Paxton and Nita Little for the past 25 years.

Laura's work is based in an enduring curiosity regarding the nature of perception and the possibilities within live performance for collective absolution and renewal. She believes that the body has access to ways of imagining and storytelling that differ from the parts of ourselves that construct and process verbal language. Through the body there are opportunities to present ideas with respect to their contradictions or transgressions. Her goal is always to construct works that are simultaneously specific enough to be evocative, and at the same time unbound enough that each audience member can construct their own meaning. She says, 'I try not to resolve issues but rather present them in their nuanced embodied complexity, to highlight the questions of our times and reside within their contradictions.'



SOUND DESIGN

Laura Stokes

ASSISTANT SOUND DESIGN

Emily Hayman

SOUND OPERATOR

Greta Humphrey

SET, PROP AND COSTUME DESIGN

Cast and Laura Stokes

LIGHTING DESIGN

Laura Stokes

Kristi Alyssa

LIGHTING OPERATOR

Kristi Alyssa

PHOTOGRAPHY

Michelle Ried

VIDEOGRAPHY

James Jeremey

HOUSE MANAGER

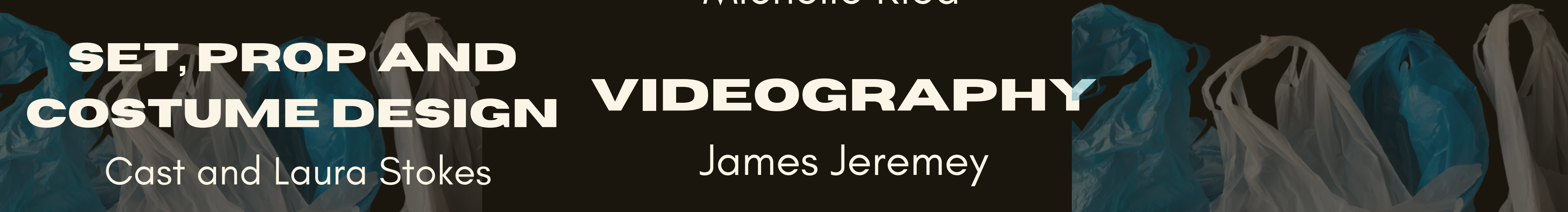
Zoe Sheppard

PRODUCTION

Aloft Circus Arts

PROGRAMS

Kristi Alyssa



COACHES OF THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

Thank you coaches of the 2025-2026 Year 2 Pro Program:

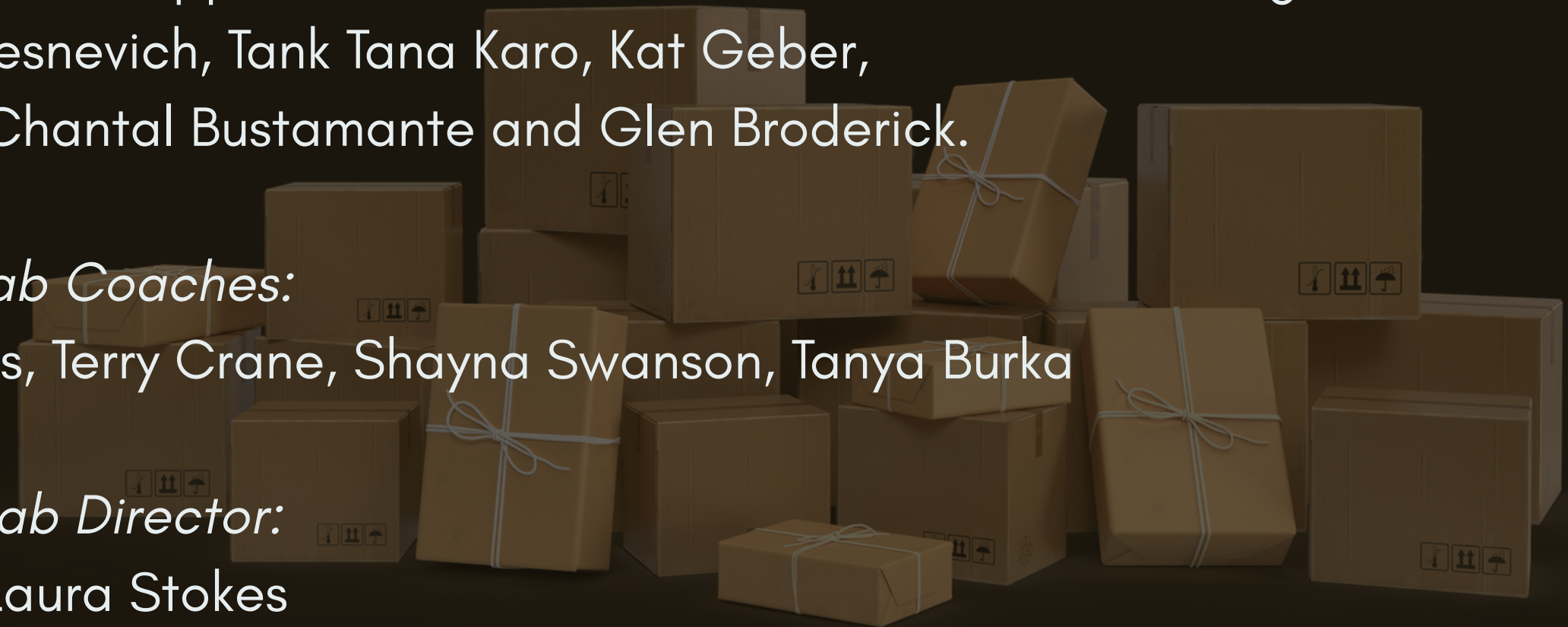
Britt Anderson, Hayley Larson, Zoë Sheppard, Camille Swift, Kristi Alyssa, Scott Dare, Luke Virgilio, Megan Mallouk, Eric Sipos, David Chevrony, Sarah Tapper, Dalia Shafie, Michele Stine, Kevin Flanagan, Sierra Rhoades, Rachel Nesnevich, Tank Tana Karo, Kat Geber, A Hermanson, Dhalia Fatale, Chantal Bustamante and Glen Broderick.

Lab Coaches:

Rain Anya, Liz Williams, Kyle Driggs, Terry Crane, Shayna Swanson, Tanya Burka

Lab Director:

Laura Stokes



DIRECTOR OF THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

Kristi Alyssa

Kristi Alyssa will be celebrating her 20th year in circus in 2027! This is her second full cycle as Director of the Professional Training Program.

She first found circus by joining the Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State University. She later went on to graduate from NECCA (2012) and Aloft Circus Arts (2015) professional training programs.

Kristi is a highly in-demand instructor, director and choreographer in the Chicagoland area. She is the Director of the Professional Training Programs, Director of the Youth Program, Director of the Aloft Youth Ensemble, an instructor, performer, lightning designer, and photographer at Aloft Circus Arts in Chicago, IL. Kristi is known as a director and choreographer who brings strong ensemble, narrative-based storytelling to the stage. Her work is rooted in emotion, story and character. She is the founder and director of Reminiscent Circus (@reminiscentcircus) who are the creators of the contemporary circus show "Way Home" (premiered July 2024). She also co-directed "Somewhere Out There" (May 2023) and "All in Good Time" (May 2024). "From the Ground, Up" (June 2025) and "What Came with the House" (May 2026). She is currently writing her second Reminiscent Circus show, centered around the experiences of aging, set to debut in 2027.

Kristi has a masters degree in clinical mental health. Alongside her circus career, she is a professional photographer (@kristialyssaphotos). She enjoys film acting (and was in AMC's Interview with the Vampire, 2022), being anywhere her girlfriend is, traveling, her cats and Taylor Swift.

@kristialyssa @reminiscentcircus @kristialyssaphotos



CAST

ALOFT PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM CLASS OF 2026



CAST

Scarlett Abrams

Scarlett is the people's favorite redhead primarily seen flying around in aerial silks. In addition to aerial work, she is pursuing ground skills such as hula hoops, juggling, and acro. Born and raised in New Orleans, she began her aerial career at Louisiana State University while studying theatre performance and even got the opportunity to take an ensemble piece to Scotland to perform in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival while she was with the university. Scarlett hopes to continue performing in Chicago as well as across the globe post the Aloft Program. She is very grateful to create her final program piece with the renowned Laura Stokes.

MAJOR: Silks

Coached by: Hayley, Zoe and Camille

@scarlettaerial



CAST

Maya Anuligo

Maya is a multidisciplinary artist, poet, dancer, and aerialist whose work seeks to bring poetry into form. Guided by authenticity, experimentation, and human connection, she explores how form, music, timing, and atmosphere can communicate experiences that are often difficult to put into words. Her work aims to create intentional, embodied experiences that ignite response, foster dialogue, and invite audiences into moments of captivation, wonder, and recognition.

After graduating from the Aloft Circus Arts Professional Training Program, Maya is excited to continue developing work that is both deeply personal and community-minded. As the founder of The Observed Observer, an emerging contemporary circus and performance production company, she is passionate about creating opportunities for artists to experiment, collaborate, and share meaningful work with wider audiences. She also just likes having fun!

MAJOR: Rope

Coached by: Dalia and Luke

@movementbymaya @theobservedobserverevents



CAST

Zach Anthony

Zach found circus through his partner Kat bringing him to an aerial dance class and rigging as an Arborist in Austin when he was hired to set aerial points for an outdoor show. Seeing what people were doing in the air and how expressive it could be made him want to jump in! He thought his experience as an arborist would lend itself well and his first aerial discipline was rope. After heading out on a "3 month summer trip" to Vermont for circus...2 years have gone by he got a different job so he can train full time, moved to Chicago, and now he is graduating from the Aloft full time program.

MAJOR: Duo Acro

Coached by: Sierra, Kevin, Chantal and Britt

@zdale13



CAST

Milenka Arce

Milenka Arce is a Bolivian circus artist who began her circus training in the United States. She specializes in aerial acrobatics, hand balancing, tumbling, and diabolo, combining technical skill with expressive performance. She also enjoys partner acrobatics, foot juggling, and stilt walking. Her work focuses on creativity, movement, and connecting with audiences through circus arts. Milenka is passionate about continuous growth as both an artist and performer.

MAJOR: Lyra

Coached by: Kristi and Kat

@milenkafa



CAST

Maria Carvajal

Maria found circus a few years back in her home country, Costa Rica. Ever since then, she has continued to develop her passion for performance. While rope is her main discipline these days, Maria is also a huge handstands, silks, dance, partner acro and straps enjoyer. Maria is grateful to the Aloft community for the support and encouragement she has received over the last two years. She is proud to be graduating alongside an incredible group of talented and passionate artists.

MAJOR: Rope

Coached by: Dalia and Glenna

@marmosett62



CAST

Kat Fowler

Kat Fowler (they/she) is a multi-disciplinary movement professional based in Chicago, IL. They are currently involved in partner acrobatics (with Zach Anthony), prop manipulation (poi, clubs), aerial pole, handstands, and dance in addition to practicing as a licensed massage therapist. After graduation, they are excited to guest teach at Leviathan Poi Camp (playpoi.com) in Canada before returning to train and work in Chicago.

MAJOR: Duo Acro

Coached by: Sierra, Chantal, Kevin and Britt
@pepinsomniac



CAST

Allison Gast

Allison (or The Lovely Luna, if you're lucky) is a Chicago-based performer specializing in aerial silks, lyra, and juggling. She loves creating acts that tell a story and connecting with the audience. With a background in cabaret-style shows, and a lifetime of being a goofball, her acts range from sexy to silly to serious. Whether the act is goofy and lighthearted or dramatic and brooding, the audience will be left in awe. Combining high-level circus skills with character and story is where her passion lies. Allison dreams of working in ensemble shows and creating art that can't be made alone. Catch her around Chicago at juggle / pacro jams and coaching at Aloft this summer or follow Allison's blog (The Lovely Luna on Buy Me a Coffee) to keep up with her journey!

MAJOR: Silks

Coached by: Zoe and Michele

@the_lovely_luna__



CAST

Margaret Holton

Margaret is a dancer who never dreamed her feet would ever leave the ground. Now she can't get enough time in the air on my Cloud Swing!

Thank you Aloft for making dreams come true. Your kindness, patience, and expertise are deeply appreciated. I will never forget my circus journey and the amazing people I met along the way.

MAJOR: Cloudswing and Juggling
Coached by: Megan, Luke and Eric
[@dizzycowcandy](#)



CAST

Shelley Miller

Shelley Miller (they/them) is a Chicago based aerialist, musician and educator. An award-winning songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, they came to circus in 2019 after years of touring, recording and teaching music. In 2025, they wrote and performed their first original musical circus show 'The Amazing Adventures of 2NBs' (with cohort member Maria Tate). When not hanging upside down with a foot behind their head, they can often be found tending their garden and succulents, cycling around Chicago, and telling their cats that they are very good boys.

MAJOR: Lyra

Coached by: Megan and Luke

@softledges



CAST

Maria Tate

Maria Tate (Elle/they/them) is a mid career circus artist and creative known around the world for their charisma and bringing joy. Maria has performed in several circuses including Phare the Cambodian Circus, The Great Benjamin's Circus, Secret Circus the Musical and Spark! Circus. In April 2026 Maria was invited to perform at Les Festival Des Clowns De Montreal, featuring an act elle created for the Bad Ass Joy fundraiser show at Aloft. Maria is also an opera singer and actor, a choreographer, a song writer, a producer, and a professional dancer. Maria has several projects lined up for after graduation and is excited to get this show on the road!

MAJOR: Spanish Web and Juggling
Coached by: Eric, Michele and Kaitlyn
@calliopecolabthecrown



@kristialyssaphotos



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

Stay after the show on Saturday June 13th to
celebrate our graduates with a brief
graduation ceremony.

Follow them on social media to watch their progress
into the circus world!

20
26

UPCOMING EVENTS AT ALOFT:



Trans Movement Fest and Queer Pride Cabaret returns on July 17-19 at Aloft Circus Arts for a weekend of radical unapologetic Queer AF art led by some of Chicago's most renowned TGNC artists. We're serving community workshops, jams, resource shares and the long-awaited return of the one and only CTMF Queer Pride Cabaret!

All for love, All for art, All for radical Trans joy
Register for workshops now: such-creatures.com

Follow @such_creatures and @reminiscentcircus for ticket announcements for the Queer Pride Cabaret very soon! The Trans Movement festival and Queer Pride Cabaret is presented by Such Creatures (Luke!), Reminiscent Circus (Kristi!), Synapse Arts and Karma Carnelian.

Tickets at
<https://events.ticketleap.com/tickets/reminiscent-circus>



ALOFT MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Shayna Swanson: Director

Zoe Sheppard: Studio Manager, Adult Program Director

Kristi Alyssa: Youth Program and Professional Training Programs Director

Kelly McDowell: Finance Manager

Sarah Tapper: Administrative Manager

Valeria Rosero: Events Manager



**FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL
MEDIA:**



@aloftcircusarts



WELCOME TO THE INCOMING PRO PROGRAM CLASS OF 26-28:

Patrice, Sabrina, Elisabeth, Shira, Belle, JoyAlaia, Jessica, Riley, Peggy, Anya!

Interested in applying to join the Professional Training Program?

Have questions on what goals you should aim for to be eligible to audition?

Email Pro Program Director Kristi: Aloftkids@gmail.com





**MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE AT:
ALOFT-CIRCUS-ARTS.CREATOR-SPRING.COM**

