

A person in a dark, furry costume is hanging upside down from a thin wire. The background consists of bare, dark trees and a pale, overcast sky. The overall mood is somber and evocative.

# CRY ME A RIVER

Lamentation circus  
Premieres March 2021  
Director Sanja Kosonen

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«Drawing her inspiration from the habits and customs of her native country, Sanja Kosonen has created a kaleidoscopic performance full of flights of lyricism and quirky humour. Driving the audience from laughter to tears, the seven circus artists intertwine the various threads of an absurd and bewitching story. Playing with the specific nature of water (...) and sketching different landscapes, they arouse our imagination and invite us on a journey to let go and accept to open up to others without barriers or concerns about what the others think.»

L'œil d'olivier, March 2021

«Arising from a desire to write about the expression of emotions, Sanja Kosonen's creation is a bewitching performance which peculiar atmosphere is revealed through fragmented tableaux blending song, dance and circus arts harmoniously. (...) This is a piece of authentic contemporary writing. Indeed, instead of showing acts one after the other or displaying a mere narrative dramaturgy, the performance consists in a tiling of scenes that stand out against a background of darkness, as in a dream which surrealistic episodes only make sense on an intimate and symbolic level.»

Mathieu Dochtermann, La Terrasse, September 2021



## ARTISTIC STATEMENT

In Karelia, the country of my forebears, women traditionally knew how to weep. They practised these improvised chants on their own, in the forest, letting go of their emotions, to heal themselves. The poetical power of words associated with a distinctive rhythm and a crying melody provided an atmosphere for abandonment.

During rites of passage (funerals/weddings), professional lamenters used to accompany the participants and help them cry. This universal rite existed throughout the world but has almost disappeared in the Western countries.

In 2007, in Finland, I participated in a workshop on «crying chants» organised by a group of contemporary singers whose aim is to revive and reinvent this forgotten tradition.

Since then, I have integrated to some degree this ancient wisdom.

I am struck by the fact that our «modern» societies seem to have forgotten about rituals of shared emotions. Revealing emotions in public is considered a sign of weakness. At the same time, people are eager to witness and feel the humanity of others. We feel the need for such moments of purification but we have lost the ways of letting go of our emotions.

In 2020, right in the middle of the production, a global pandemic shook our foundations, changing human relationships and our perception of death. In such context, creating an artistic performance with an international cast may have led to second thoughts. Actually, the pandemic made Cry me a river a very contemporary show, its topic taking on a new meaning. Today, it seems to me vitally important to preserve the performing arts, «in person» and emotionally endowed. Cry me a river is a gateway to an artistic vision, but also to images and cultures from elsewhere. Those of my native country and places that have been a part of me for several years.

Sanja Kosonen, February 2018 and March 2021



## WORKING THEME

### Creating a collective language

For this production, Sanja Kosonen has chosen to work with people she admires, artists of various skills and origins.

In order to create a collective language, part of the creative process involved the acquisition of skills - such as singing, butoh dancing or Karelian lament - which most artists weren't familiar with. Each of them was able to create «his/her» own lament, revealing it to the group, playing with the skill or apparatus they usually master, now handling it with a restored fragility.

The music (Sami Tammela), video (Muriel Carpentier) and costumes (Mikael Lecoq) give structure to a visual and sound design, creating an aesthetic unity between the characters.

### Interwining stories

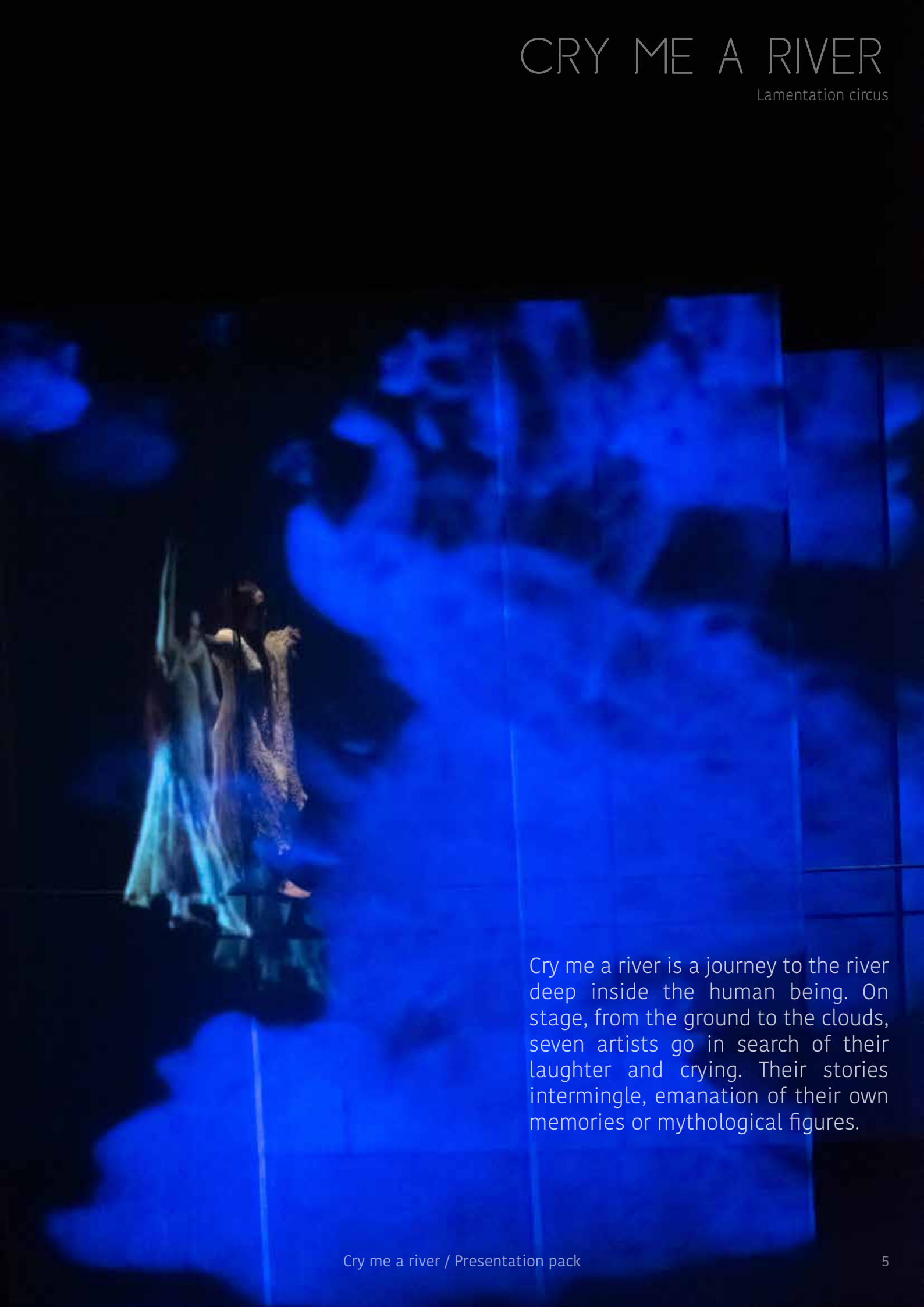
Cry me a river refers to several mythological figures like Mexican ghost Llorona looking for her children near a river.

Other figures come from Finnish folklore, a great source of inspiration for Karelian lamenters. One of them is Metsänpeitto, a phenomenon which can be literally translated by «forest's cover», another one is the black swan Tuonela guiding wandering and hopeless souls by singing death spells. There are also contemporary characters like this female scientist passionate about the chemical composition of tears, never crying herself. There is also a scene depicting a quirky priest celebrating a wedding via zoom.



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A stage performance featuring two dancers. One dancer is wearing a long, flowing, light-colored dress and is captured in a dynamic pose with arms raised. The other dancer is wearing a darker, more textured costume. They are performing on a stage that is bathed in a deep blue light. The background consists of large, translucent panels that create a layered, ethereal effect. The overall atmosphere is somber and artistic.

Cry me a river is a journey to the river deep inside the human being. On stage, from the ground to the clouds, seven artists go in search of their laughter and crying. Their stories intermingle, emanation of their own memories or mythological figures.

## ON STAGE

Sanja Kosonen ( France / Finland ) // Director, tightrope dancer

After studying circus arts in Finland (Arts Academy of Turku) and France (National Center of Circus Arts (CNAC) in Châlons-en-Champagne 2005), Sanja Kosonen started many and various fecund collaborations as a tightrope dancer within contemporary circus companies like Galapiat Cirque, les Colporteurs or Circo Aereo. She also collaborated with Finnish National Opera and created commission works as well as one-shot performances. She has been living in France for ten years but she is strongly attached to Finland and returns there regularly to work.

Defining herself as a “tightrope dancer”, Sanja Kosonen plays with gravity and integrates this feature in her choreographic language by walking on the tightrope in a more or less controlled way. The purpose is to reveal the quest for balance and use the evocative power of the tightrope in order to capture the many metaphors in connection with our lifelines.

Her investigation into the choreographic movement encompasses that of hair hanging, a traditional technique she learnt by herself since the skill is not taught. Shifting from horizontality to verticality, with her head instead of her feet being in contact, Sanja developed a new choreographic language. The body, as if weightless, frees itself from all constraints. A fully fledged artist, Sanja Kosonen soon combined the voice to the more physical aspect of her work. First the voice was singing, shouting and whispering, fraught with the tension of the body balancing on the tightrope. Then talking and performing live music in Capilotractées and Attraction Capillaire which she produced with Elice Abonce Muhonen / Galapiat Cirque.

In order to broaden her creative horizons, she participated in several workshops on «crying chants» organised by contemporary musicians in Finland (2006 and 2016). In 2019, she tried butoh - an art that has much in common with clowning, physical theatre and performing -, an opportunity for her to borrow new techniques and means of expression later used in the writing of this piece. In 2019, she received the support of French Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers (SACD- Beaumarchais) and from the Arts Promotion Centre Finland for the creation of Cry me a river.

Cry me a river is her first production as a director.



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## Nedjma Benchaib Le Coeur (France) : Dancer and acrobat

Having studied at French school of Circus Arts in Rosny-sous-Bois (ENACR) and at French National Center of Circus Arts (CNAC) in Châlons en Champagne, Nedjma is a specialist of acro-dance and Chinese pole. She has a passion for hip hop and contemporary dancing, singing and writing. She loves exploring ways of «mixing» disciplines. Nedjma works as a performer, dancer, choreographer, singer and as an author with various artists and companies. She also leads research labs dealing with circus ground acrobatics and dance.



## Jérémie Bruyère (France) : Actor, stage manager

A technician, manager, builder, jack of all trades, cook, Jérémie collaborates with several companies such as Galapiat Cirque, Makadam Kanibal, Les Trottoirs du Hasard and Cirque des Oiseaux Fous among others.

In Cry me a river, he goes from the wings to the stage.



## Muriel Carpentier (France) : Actor, set designer, plastic artist, video maker

Trained at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Arts in Dijon, she works on her own projects or together with other artists (Mulupam, A4Designers, CMS Company, Kino Moutarde, Ces Messieurs Sérieux among others), drawing, making photographs, videos, installation art or performances and designing sets.



## Sampo Kurppa (Finland) : Clown and juggler

After studying circus at the Arts Academy of Turku (Finland), Sampo specialised in physical expression at the Jacques Lecoq International School of Theatre in Paris. He is a founding member of collectives Agit Cirk (circus and music) and Kallo Collective (physical theatre and clown). He currently works as a circus artist and actor, a director and performer.



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## Inka Pekkonen (Finland) : Aerial artist

An aerial artist (Washington trapeze and corde lisse) and an acrobat, Inka trained in Sweden at DOCH at Circus Artist Education of Salpaus in Finland. Since 2017, she has been touring all over Europe with SISUS, a 100% female Finnish company she co-founded.



## Olli Vuorinen (Finland) : Juggler

After graduating from French Académie Fratellini in 2011, Olli returned to Finland to start up Nuua company together with Luis Sartori do Vale in 2012. That same year, their production Lento was the winner of Circus next and Cirque de Demain Festival. Olli is also a member of French company Les Objets volants. Over the past years, he has been touring more than 21 countries, adding to his experience as an artistic advisor, director and performer.



The production benefited from the input of kind artists and personalities, in particular during the lab period at the beginning of the creative process. Special thanks to Iris Bouche, Otso Bruyere, Ilias Bruyere, Gilles Charles Messance, Stephane Common, Hervé Guillonard, Jeremy Jouin, Riikka Kosola, Emmi Kuittinen, Béatrix Lalanne, Violaine Lochu, Mirva Mäkinen, Sakari Männistö, Manuel Moreau, Gabriela Munoz, Mira Raval, Viivi Roiha, Maruska Ronchi, Arthur Sidoroff, Fanny Soriano, Emi Sri Hartata Combet.

## IN THE WINGS AND IN THE BOOTH

Light : Julien Poupon

Lighting manager: Julien Poupon or Lila Burdet

Music : Sami Tammela

Sound manager : Geoffrey Daguet

Video: Muriel Carpentier.

Costume design: Mickaël Lecoq

Set design: Sanja Kosonen, Muriel Carpentier

Assistant director: Marylou Thomas

Artistic advisor: Minja Mertanen

Building and design: Jeremie Bruyere, Muriel Carpentier, Alice Carpentier, Michel Carpentier

Production, touring and office management: L'Avant Courier / Nolwenn Manac'h, Louise-Michèle

You and Emmanuelle Nonet



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## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Skills: Tightwire, Washington trapeze, juggling, clowning, singing, visual arts, dance, theatre  
Auditorium, end-on, 7 artists on stage

Arrival 2 days before and fit-up one day before the first performance.  
It is not possible to schedule more than one performance on the same day.

Audience capacity: maximum 900 / preferred capacity 500

Running time 70 min

From 10 years on

### Required stage dimensions

Stage: 10m x 10m

Stage + wings: minimum 14m (wall to wall) x Depth 12m

Minimum height to the grid: 7m + height for rigging aerial apparatus



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## PARTNERS

Delegated production : L'Avant Courier

### Co-productions and residencies :

Le Prato, Théâtre International de Quartier, Pole National Arts Cirque- Lille (France)

La Plateforme 2 Pôles Cirque en Normandie - La Brèche in Cherbourg and Cirque Théâtre d'Elbeuf (France)

CCN2 Grenoble - Centre Chorégraphique National de Grenoble - Directors Yoann Bourgeois / Rachid Ouramdane (France)

Carré Magique Lannion, Pole national cirque en Bretagne (France)

La Verrerie d'Alès / Pôle National Cirque OCCITANIE (France)

Théâtre ONYX, Scène conventionnée de Saint-Herblain (France)

### Residencies :

Cirko - Center for New Circus - Helsinki (Finland)

AY-ROOP - Scène de territoire pour les arts de la piste, Rennes (France)

La Grainerie Fabrique des arts du cirque et de l'itinérance (France)

Le Monfort théâtre (France)

Cité du Cirque pour le Pôle régional Cirque Le Mans en partenariat avec la Fonderie (France)

Le théâtre du peuple, Pierre Bénite (France)

Le Cheptel Aleikoum (France)



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## Supports :

French Government - Direction régionale des affaires culturelles (DRAC) des pays de la Loire et Direction Générale de la Création Artistique (DGCA), Département of Loire Atlantique, Région of Pays de la Loire, Finnish cultural fondation (Suomen Kulttuurirahasto), Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taiteen edistämiskeskus), SACD – Bourse Beaumarchais.

## Contact

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