BACKSTAGE IN BISCUIT LAND
BY TOURETTESHERO

TITLE AND CREDITS

Co-Creators - Jess Thom, Jess Mabel Jones, Matthew Pountney
Produced by Jolie Booth and Matthew Pountney
Supported by Unlimited, Graeae & Battersea Arts Centre

COMPANY INFORMATION

Jessica Thom
Jess is co-founder of Touretteshero and may or may not lead a secret double life as a superhero. Artist, playworker, and expert fundraiser, Jess currently helps coordinate a large play project in South London. Jess has had tics since she was a child but wasn’t diagnosed with Tourettes until she was in her twenties. With some encouragement from her friends, Jess decided to turn her tics into a source of imaginative creativity and the Touretteshero project was born.

Jess Mabel Jones
Performer, puppeteer and co-creator of the award winning Backstage In Biscuit Land, Jess, AKA Chopin, has become an integral part of the Touretteshero family. Jess is also Associate Director of Finger in The Pie and programmer of their prestigious Finger in The Pie Cabaret.
**Matthew Pountney**

Matthew is co-founder of Touretteshero and rumour has it he might be a Leftwing Idiot. He’s been friends with Jess for over a decade and they’ve worked together on a large number of creative projects for children during that time.

**Jolie Booth**

Producer, performer and Essex girl Jolie works with a portfolio of companies that includes Tangram Theatre Company, Hertford Theatre, Harlow Playhouse and, of course, Touretteshero. If you’re lucky you might just catch her dressed as a cat (dressed as a nun).

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**COPY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company / Credit</th>
<th>Touretteshero presents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Show title</strong></td>
<td>Backstage in Biscuit Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tag line</strong></td>
<td>Jess’s Tourettes means she is neurologically incapable of staying on script, and that’s when the fun begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long copy</strong> (150 words)</td>
<td>Jess Thom has Tourettes, a condition that makes her say ‘biscuit’ 16,000 times a day. Her unusual neurology gives her a unique perspective on life; one she's about to unleash on the world. This two-woman show weaves comedy, puppetry, singing, and incredible tics to explore spontaneity, creativity, disability, and things you never knew would make you laugh. Geranium bashing may or may not feature - no two shows can ever be the same. Jess is neurologically incapable of staying on script, and that's when the fun begins. ‘Delightful’ Stephen Fry ‘Extraordinarily entertaining’ The Guardian ‘Poignant and vibrantly instructing [about] the healing power of art and the right of everyone to access it without fear’ Scotsman Total Theatre Award Winner 2014 Supported by Unlimited, Graeae &amp; BAC. This tour is presented by house.</td>
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‘Delightful’  *Stephen Fry*

This tour is presented by house

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<th>Short copy (50 words)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jonathan Birch</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age suitability</th>
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<td>14+</td>
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Warning: Jess is one of the 10% of people with Tourettes Syndrome who has swearing tics, so this performance may include the involuntary use of words that some people may find offensive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running time</th>
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<tr>
<td>60min, no interval</td>
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All performances are relaxed. This means you're welcome to move around and make noise during the show. This adds a whole new dimension, which is why Touretteshero likes to call it 'Extra Live'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online links (Twitter, hashtag, website, Facebook)</th>
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| Twitter username:  [@touretteshero](https://twitter.com/touretteshero)
Facebook page:  [/touretteshero](https://facebook.com/touretteshero)
Blog:  [www.touretteshero.com](https://www.touretteshero.com)
Video link:  (Also includes interviews with the creators)
https://youtu.be/7JbYydxzMIs?list=PLdiB3YQ6fPnkwxzBYk_sLk3dKFruCZLs |
MARKETING TOOLS

DIGITAL

Touretteshero website: http://www.touretteshero.com/

@touretteshero #BIBL Facebook: /Touretteshero Blog: www.touretteshero.com

SUGGESTED TWEETS

Watch the hilarious @touretteshero on @russellhoward before she comes to <YOUR HANDLE> http://bit.ly/1Q7P9yB

Touretteshero of BBC fame is coming to <YOUR HANDLE> on <DATES> Get tickets now!

#BackstageInBiscuitland is coming to town, grab a custard cream and join us on <DATES> <YOUR HANDLE>

ONLINE CONTENT

British Council Edinburgh Festival Showcase 2015 Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JbYydxzMis

Embed code: <iframe width="560" height="315"
src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/7JbYydxzMis" frameborder="0"
allowfullscreen></iframe>

Jess Thom on Russel Howard’s Good News: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8gOcbneQRQ


Jess’ TED talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jmTlQld2Z8
PRESS QUOTES AND REVIEWS

“Jess Thom's condition lends her show an absurdist edge Samuel Beckett would be proud of”
★★★★ Guardian

“You’ll definitely laugh, you may cry, you’ll probably get a biscuit”
★★★★★ The Public Review

“a fantastic production that has been well crafted into an immensely entertaining hour.”
★★★★★ Everything Theatre

“Delightful” Stephen Fry

“A celebratory show“
★★★★ The Stage
https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2015/backstage-biscuit-land-review-barbican-pit-celebratory-show/

“Hugely uplifting and entertaining” Exeunt Magazine

ACCESS INFORMATION

All Touretteshero's performances are relaxed. This means you’re welcome to make noise during the show. This adds a whole new dimension, which is why Touretteshero likes to call it ‘Extra Live’.

The show has audio description built into the actual script and there will also be a BSL interpreter (delete if not appropriate).

Audio described flyers will be available upon request and we are happy to also provide touch tours and any other preparation support that might be helpful.
TARGET AUDIENCES

- Tourettes groups and networks
- Disability groups and networks
- Secondary schools
- Politically engaged theatre goers with an interest in social change
- Audiences for quirky comedy, cabaret, risqué, liberal and alternative events
- Audiences for live art
- Audiences for autobiographical shows
- Audiences for comedy

This show should be targeted to local disabled/autistic/deaf/learning difficulty groups, as well as schools and the general public at large.

For the general public this is an important introduction to the idea of relaxed performances, if the venue has never had one before, and for many people it is the first time they will have faced disability head on.

In regard to local groups, it is important to make contact as Jess is an incredible role model, for young people and for people with disabilities, so this show is a great way of making contact with new audiences and also opening up possibilities for future work and initiatives around encouraging young disabled people into jobs in the arts, as performers and producers.

As part of a greenhouse fellowship, Jolie Booth, the producer has paid time to also support you with finding these groups in your area. There will be a relaxed performances press release arriving in January.

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

Backstage in Biscuit Land tells a powerful story about the nature of theatre itself. Having loved it as a child, the intensity of Jess’s tics made it increasingly difficult to attend, culminating three years ago when she was asked to sit separately during a performance. For a long time Jess couldn’t face going back, as she explains: ‘I used to joke that the stage was the only place in a theatre I wouldn’t be asked to leave. Now I get to put that to the test!’.

Writer, artist and part-time superhero, Jess Thom co-founded Touretteshero in 2010 to celebrate the creativity and humour of Tourettes, in particular working with young people. She has since performed at Glastonbury, held an improvisation workshop with Nina Conti, given a TEDx Talk at the Royal Albert Hall, and co-curated events with Tate Britain. She regularly works as a continuity announcer for Channel 4 and has appeared on Stephen Fry’s BBC TV series Planet Word. In her own words: ‘Tourettes is pretty much the only superpower I’ll ever need’.

Jess’s physical and verbal tics have intensified over time, and now include ‘ticcing fits’, which she has most days. As a result she needs a support worker with her at all times.
For Backstage in Biscuit Land, this role is partly filled by co-performer and puppeteer Jess Mabel Jones. Mabel Jones helped develop the show, and is an award-winning performer in her own right.


Since its creation in 2014, the show’s impact in the last year went well beyond awards and acclaim, setting a new benchmark in accessible theatre and inspiring others to follow. At the forefront of the UK’s ‘relaxed performance’ movement, Jess’s work led directly to premier relaxed performances from artists including Daniel Kitson (Tree, Old Vic), Mark Thomas (Cuckooed, Tricycle), Nina Conti (In Your Face, Tricycle) and companies Tangram Theatre and London’s Old Red Lion Theatre.

This year Jess has added performances at the Southbank Centre’s WOW Festival and international tour dates in Canada and Norway to her already impressive CV. Broadcast from Biscuit Land was also the grand finale in the BBC4’s Live from Television Centre night of live theatre, which aired in November 2015.
SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

BACKSTAGE IN BISCUIT LAND

AWARD WINNING PRODUCTION WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY JESS THOM, WITH JESS MABEL JONES

Touretteshero is coming to XXXXXX with a show about living, laughing and ticcing

Jess has Tourette’s Syndrome, a neurological condition that makes her say ‘biscuit’ 16,000 times a day. She’s literally incapable of staying on script, and that’s where the fun begins. Frank, funny and fearless, BACKSTAGE IN BISCUIT LAND is her first ever live show, which premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2014 to huge critical acclaim, winning the Total Theatre ‘Emergent Company’ Award, and will be performing at XXXXXXXXXXXX.

Combining storytelling, comedy and puppetry – with the promise that no two shows are ever the same – it offers an intimate, life-enhancing glimpse into Jess’s unique perspective on life, love and laughs. Based in part on her acclaimed book Welcome to Biscuit Land, the show is supported by pioneering disabled-led theatre company Graeae and mentored by artistic director Jenny Sealey.

Writer, artist and part-time superhero Jess Thom created Touretteshero to celebrate the creative side of Tourette’s, in particular working with young people. She has since performed at Glastonbury, held an improvisation workshop with Nina Conti, given a TEDx Talk at the Royal Albert Hall, curated events at Tate Modern, been a continuity announcer for Channel 4 and appeared on Stephen Fry’s BBC TV series Planet Word. As Jess puts it: ‘Tourette’s is pretty much the only superpower I’ll ever need’.

Jess’s physical and verbal tics have intensified over time, now including ‘ticcing fits’ most days and requiring a support worker to accompany her at all times. For BACKSTAGE IN BISCUIT LAND, this role is partly filled by co-performer and puppeteer Jess Mabel Jones. Mabel Jones also helped develop the show, and is an award-winning performer whose work includes Improbable’s Beauty and the Beast, Blind Summit’s The Table and Carol Tambor Edinburgh Award winner Ovid’s Metamorphoses.

The show also tells a powerful story about theatre itself. Having loved theatre as a child, the intensity of Jess’s tics made it harder to attend, culminating three years ago when she was asked to leave a performance. For a long time she couldn’t face going back. Jess explains: ‘I used to joke that a seat on stage was the only place in a theatre I wouldn’t be asked to leave. Now I get to put that to the test!’

‘The blessed Jess Thom... open, funny, frank, intelligent and enchantingly entertaining’ - Stephen Fry

“If Monty Python ran disability awareness training with a feminist twist, this would be it.” - Disability Arts Online
“Thom is a delight to watch in this unexpected, inspiring glimpse into her weird and wonderful world.” - The List 4/5

“Extraordinarily entertaining...An adventure in every way.” - The Guardian 4/5

“Unlike anything I’ve ever seen...fearless and essential – a show everyone should see.” - BroadwayBaby 5/5

“Like the best comedy, it makes you look at the world in a different way. Remarkable.” - The Independent

“You’ll definitely laugh, you may cry, you’ll probably get a biscuit.” - The Public Reviews 5/5

“Poignant and vibrantly instructive.” - The Scotsman 4/5

www.touretteshero.com | @Touretteshero | #BIBL

CONTACT: Jolie Booth  |  Producer  |  07843 560 139  |  producer@touretteshero.com

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Touretteshero presents BACKSTAGE IN BISCUIT LAND

Venue  XXXXXXXX | XXXXXXXXX

Dates & times  XXXXXXXX | XXXX pm | 1hr

Tickets  £XXXXXX  |  Tel XXXXXXXX  |  www.XXXXXXX

Originally written by Supporting Walls 2014
INFORMATION FOR JOURNALISTS

General

Touretteshero co-founder Jessica Thom (b. 1980) was diagnosed with Tourettes Syndrome in 2006.

Although some aspects of the condition are challenging, Jess does not describe herself as a “Tourettes sufferer” under any circumstances. Instead she likes to be referred to as a “person with Tourettes” or as simply as “having Tourettes.” She is “brave” for all sorts of reasons, but not because she is disabled.

Only 10% of people with Tourettes have Coprolalia, the technical term for obscene tics. Jess is one of them but for her, such tics make up a tiny proportion of what she says involuntarily. Jess considers these tics to be part of her condition and as such views any attempts to remove them as editing out her disability. However, Jess understands that under some circumstances this cannot be avoided.

Her preferences for radio/TV interviews are as follows:

Most preferable: Give a clear explanatory warning at the start of the piece about the possibility of obscene language that puts it in the context of being an involuntary aspect of a neurological condition. There is an editorial precedent for this with broadcasters such as the BBC.

Acceptable: Remove potentially offensive language by dipping the audio

Least acceptable: Beeping out potentially offensive language – this gives the impression that such language is deliberately intended to cause offense. This editorial decision should only be taken with direct consent from Jess.

Additional Information

Several times a day Jess’s tics intensify to the point where she completely loses control of her body and speech. These episodes, which she calls “ticcing fits” look seizure-like and require similar management. They generally last for only a few minutes but can last for several hours. If this happens during an interview, the interview will need to stop until the fit has finished. If the interview is being recorded for television, the camera will need to be switched off. Jess does not consent to being filmed during these episodes under any circumstances.

Jess will be able to continue the interview as soon as the fit has finished. She will have a support worker with her at all times, and unless a specific request is made there will be no need to call an ambulance.

In case it is relevant, Jess is a “wheelchair user” but is not “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair bound.” Any interview locations need to be wheelchair accessible and will preferably have an accessible toilet as well.

Tourettes Syndrome is a neurological condition, not a mental health disorder. An FAQ page about Tourettes and Tourettes can be found here.

Jess is author of Welcome To Biscuit Land, A Year in the Life of Touretteshero which includes a foreword by Stephen Fry.
SAMPLE EMAIL FROM JESS ABOUT THE SHOW

Hello,

My name’s Jess. I’m a writer, artist and part time superhero. I also have Tourette's Syndrome, a neurological condition that means I make noises and movements I can’t control, called tics.

Backstage in Biscuit Land is my first live show. Combining storytelling, comedy and puppetry — with the promise that no two shows are ever the same — it offers an intimate, life-enhancing glimpse into my unique perspective on life laughter and lamp-posts.

My show tells a powerful story about the nature of theatre itself. Having loved it as a child, the intensity of my tics made it increasingly difficult to attend, culminating three years ago when I was asked to sit separately during a performance. For a long time I couldn’t face going back... I used to joke that the stage was the only place in a theatre I wouldn’t be asked to leave. Now I get to put that to the test!

I would love for your group to come along and see my show, which we will be performing at XXXXXXX on XXXXXX.

All of our performances are relaxed. This means you’re welcome to make noise during the show. This adds a whole new dimension, which is why we like to call it ‘Extra Live’.

The show has audio description built into the actual script and there will also be a BSL interpreter (delete if not appropriate).

Audio described flyers will be available upon request and we are happy to also provide touch tours and any other preparation support that might be helpful.

Please feel free to call the venue on XXXX if you would like further information or to book your visit.

Best wishes,

Jess Thom
## TOUR SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Website</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue 15 March</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Farnham Maltings</td>
<td>famhammaltings.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 16 - Thu 17 March</td>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>The Marlowe Studio, Canterbury</td>
<td>marlowetheatre.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 22 March</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Quarry Theatre, Bedford</td>
<td>quarrytheatre.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 23 March</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury</td>
<td>themillartscentre.co.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 24 March</td>
<td>7.45pm</td>
<td>Chipping Norton Theatre</td>
<td>chippingnortontheatre.co.uk</td>
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<td>Sat 26 March</td>
<td>7.45pm</td>
<td>New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich</td>
<td>wolseytheatre.co.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 30 March</td>
<td>7.45pm</td>
<td>Hertford Theatre</td>
<td>hertfordtheatre.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 31 March</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Thameside Theatre, Grays</td>
<td>thurrock.gov.uk/theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 1 April</td>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>Colchester Arts Centre</td>
<td>colchesterartscentre.com</td>
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<td>Sat 2 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Norwich Playhouse</td>
<td>norwichplayhouse.co.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 5 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Arts at the Old Fire Station, Oxford</td>
<td>oldfirestation.org.uk</td>
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<td>Wed 6 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham</td>
<td>ashcroft.org.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 7 April</td>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>The Spring, Havant</td>
<td>thespring.co.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 8 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Cornerstone, Didcot</td>
<td>cornerstone-arts.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 9 April</td>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>South Street Arts Centre, Reading</td>
<td>readingarts.com/southstreet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 12 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Cambridge Junction</td>
<td>junction.co.uk</td>
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<td>Wed 13 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>Dorchester Corn Exchange</td>
<td>dorchesterarts.org.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 14 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>The Point, Eastleigh</td>
<td>thepointeastleigh.co.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 15 - Sat 16 April</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>artsdepot, London</td>
<td>artsdepot.co.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 19 April</td>
<td>8pm</td>
<td>Harlow Playhouse</td>
<td>harlowplayhouse.co.uk</td>
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