

**Education Resource**

by Claire Wearne for Arts Centre Melbourne | Creative Learning

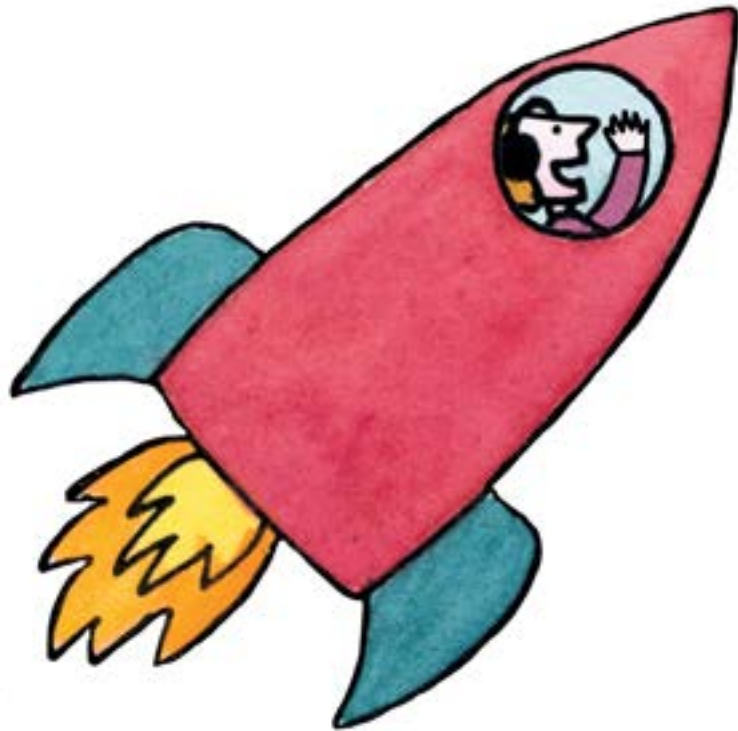


# Girls with Altitude



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## *Ordinary Kids doing Extraordinary Things!*

Australia's Flying Fruit Fly Circus is one of the world's premier youth performing arts companies. In 1979, it began as a local circus project for school kids. Since then 'the Fruities' have tumbled their way into the hearts of millions of people throughout Australia and the world. They combine energy, expertise, and commitment to demonstrate in a most spectacular and joyful way, the limitless potential of young people.

Based in Albury-Wodonga, the Fruities not only perform, but also attend school at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus School, and train up to 20 hours a week at their state-of-the-art training facility. The full-time select-entry training program caters for children aged 8 – 18 years old, and includes dedicated circus skills development and creative classes, as well as bespoke fitness and conditioning programs. Training together, the Fruities have a developed sense of group pride, self-confidence, and achievement.

Today the Flying Fruit Fly Circus is an institution of national and international significance, touring acclaimed circus productions all over Australia and the world.

Come on a virtual tour of the circus school [here](#):



## About the Show

*Girls with Altitude* is a brand-new show from the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. You will be amazed by the skills, courage and strength of the fully female cast, who are all aged between 12-19. The audience sees this astonishing troupe's dazzling tricks layered with the clever animated cartoons of renowned artist, Judy Horacek. Whether we are watching the circus artists performing, the cartoons themselves or both combined together, we are challenged to think about how we see women and girls, as well as how women and girls see themselves.

*Girls with Altitude* is a modern and engaging performance, for a modern and engaged audience. Full of wit and warmth, this show inspires a whole new generation of young people who want to make a difference to the world around them.

*"Family circus at its very best"* Sydney Morning Herald

Running time: 70 minutes, no interval

Central Themes:



Feminism



The power  
of teamwork



Climate change



Resilience



Existentialism

## Definitions:



**Altitude:**  
How high something is from the ground.



**The glass ceiling:**  
this is a metaphor for an invisible barrier which stops certain people from getting promotions at work, or from being given more power in their jobs. This phrase was created by feminists to describe the fact that it's possible to see through 'the glass' to men above them in power, just not to actually rise above 'the ceiling' itself.



**Feminism:**  
the understanding that women should be given the same rights and treatment as men. The understanding that men's ideas and opinions are heard more often than women's and that this imbalance needs to stop. Feminism is a major theme in *Girls with Altitude*, and it is explored through the strength and skill of the female performers, the lines they say on stage, and the cartoons, too. Can you notice any other ways that this show looks at Feminism?

## Definitions:



### Existentialism:

a way of thinking which asks the questions: why are humans here on earth? What is the meaning of life? How should we really live? These questions are considered by members of the cast and the audiences of *Girls with Altitude* when thinking about the environment, the ways women are expected to behave, and the point of being a person at all!



### Thinking outside the box:

this saying is another metaphor meaning to think differently or from a new point of view. In this expression, the 'box' is full of all the old, comfortable, and familiar ways of thinking about things. So, when ideas are described as 'outside the box' it means they are new, and unique and creative.

# Meet the Creatives





**Director:****ANNI DAVEY (She/her)**

Anni Davey OAM is the Artistic Director of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. That means she helps to lead the whole company with its creative decisions, like which kind of shows to put on and who will do which jobs in each show. She joined FFFC just before COVID struck the world, and has helped look after everyone during this difficult time when a lot shows have been cancelled. It makes sense that she was able to do this so well, because she has worked in lots of different circuses and in musical theatre and cabaret, both in Australia and overseas, for about three times as long as most Grade 6 kids have been alive! Anni says that she is both 'thrilled and humbled' to work at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, and describes this company as 'the mothership of contemporary circus!' Well, if the Flying Fruit Fly Circus is the mothership, that would make Anni the chief alien pilot!!

**Cartoonist:****JUDY HORACEK (She/her)**

Judy became a cartoonist because she loved both drawing and writing and somebody suggested she give it a go! From that point, she realised that she could use her simple, lovely pictures and her sense of humour to make interesting points about complicated problems in the world, like how women aren't always treated equally to men, and the fact that the planet is in a bad situation right now. Judy's cartoons in *Girls with Altitude* may seem familiar to you. That's probably because they appear in books and in magazines and galleries all the time, but also because your cousins' parents probably have her work on a tea towel or a coffee mug. You might even still have a copy of one of her most famous picture books at home: *Where is the Green Sheep?* which she created with Mem Fox. Keep your eyes peeled in *Girls with Altitude* for some familiar sheep who turn up in the most unexpected places!

**Lighting Designer:****RICHARD VABRE (He/him)**

Richard is the clever guy who decided which colourful lights would be used to show off the tricks and performers in the show, and how bright those lights would be. The other thing that lighting designers play with is darkness! And shadows... how cool is that? Richard also had to work out how the projections of Judy's cartoons would still be clearly seen with all that bright and colourful lighting. And he came up with the cool idea of putting fairy lights in the unicycle wheels! Or did he? He's not sure now... it could have actually been Anni's cool idea... He is confused...

**Composer & Sound Designer:****ANIA REYNOLDS (She/her)**

~~Replace this with:~~ If you do nothing tonight after seeing *Girls with Altitude*, (other than tell your family all about the bit with the trampoline and all the girls bouncing off the staircase), then make sure you check out [the artist who designed the sound and wrote all the music for the show, Ania, performing with her huge baritone saxophone in city laneways](#). Or, listen to the wild music she creates under her secret alter-ego name: *Synthotronica*. Do you prefer the song about the *Elephant* or the *Donky*? (While it sounds like it might be about an animal, this song actually describes a circus soundtrack - there are lots of sounds that go 'Donk!' - so it's Donky!) Ania's music is so 'out of this world', that she once played at a party at the Planetarium! What better musician to create the soundtrack for Anni's circus mothership!?

**Set Designer:****BOSCO SHAW (He/him)**

Bosco is the guy in charge of designing the set for this show. The set is all the stuff that the performers stand and sit on, the constructions that help to create the 'world' of the show. Yes, that means BOSCO IS THE ONE WHO DESIGNED THE AMAZING TRAMPOLINE STAIRCASE! He says that he always dreamt of having something similar as a kid; can you imagine how cool that would be? Bosco is most proud of how the set can move and change shape, and the way this helps the animations come to life. Strangely, Bosco doesn't like cheese in his food, but he is partial to a fried dim sim. But aren't we all..?

**Costume Designer:****APRIL DAWSON (She/her)**

So, if you were going to create your own costume design company, what would you call it?? Because April called hers 'GlitterFart' (she is hilarious). And guess what? She makes all her costumes by hand! And because she is also a circus performer herself, April knows from her own experience that the cool, brightly-coloured, stretchy costumes from *Girls with Altitude* would make the whole cast not only look and feel like superstars, but that they would need to be trampoline, acro, unicycle and tumble proof! And also look extra-cool in the underwater scenes.



## Cast list

**ABBEY SZAKAL (She / Her)**

**Age: 17**

**ABIGAIL SANDRAL (She / Her)**

**Age: 12**

**AVA PAYDON (She / Her)**

**Age: 18**

**BIANCA HALL (She / Her)**

**Age: 16**

**CHLOE PIRIE (She / Her)**

**Age: 15**

**CLAIRE BRAUNACK (She / Her)**

**Age: 15**

**ELLA SAABEL (She / Her)**

**Age: 19**

**EMMA GIASOUMI (She / Her)**

**Age: 13**

**ERYN BEATTIE (She / Her)**

**Age: 19**

**MAYA CHYNOWETH (She / Her)**

**Age: 15**

**MONIQUE BLACKIE (She / Her)**

**Age: 14**

**NATASHA HALL (She / Her)**

**Age: 16**

**NATASHA MEANI (She / Her)**

**Age: 13**

**RACHEL PHILLIPS (She / Her)**

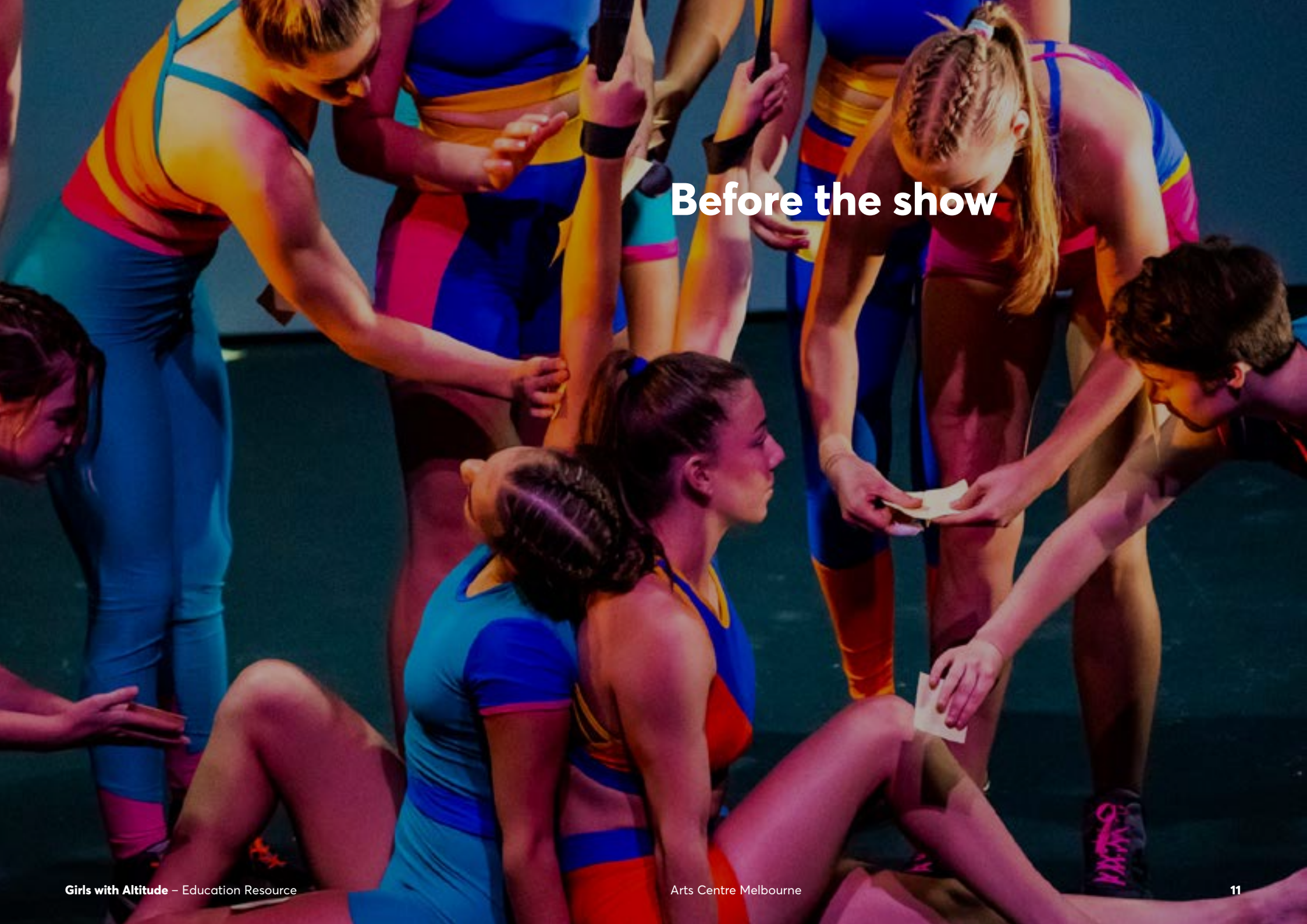
**Age: 16**

**TARIA O'CONNOR (She / Her)**

**Age: 15**

**TESS SPRY (She / Her)**

**Age: 19**



## Before the show



## **First Nations Acknowledgement of Country**

**Wominjeka to Arts Centre Melbourne. Naarm, the land on which the Fairfax Theatre and Arts Centre Melbourne sit, has long been a place of gathering, storytelling, song, ceremony, celebration and commemoration for First Nations people. The People of the Kulin Nations have gathered on the site for thousands of years and continue to do so today. We pay our respects to Elders – past, present and future.**



## Theatre Etiquette



- » Arrive early - Please try to arrive at least 20 minutes before the show starts to find the closest door to your seats and to use the bathrooms- You don't want to miss this show!
- » Be Aisle Kind- Be aware of people who may already be seated in the row where your chair is, and kindly thank them for making room for you to pass
- » Don't Kick Seats- the rows between chairs can be might skinny, so please be aware of the people seated in front of you
- » No Food in the Theatre- please eat before or after the performance, and note, there is no interval in Girls with Altitude
- » Switch off Phones and Digital Watches- be here, with us, in the theatre!
- » Don't Talk During the Performance- wait until afterwards to share your thoughts about it
- » Give Back to the Performers- feel free to laugh when the show is funny and make sure you clap loudly when you are impressed, especially in the curtain call when the performers take a bow

## Footage Suggestions

Here are some links to footage which will set the stage in your mind for what's to come:

[Show Promo](#)

[Rehearsals](#)

[Tour Trailer](#)

# Vocabulary



## Circus acts and skills used in Girls with Altitude:

**Tumbling** – combinations of ground based acrobatic tricks including cartwheel, round off, somersault, backflip, handspring and can include multiple rotations and twists.

**Teeterboard** – is the see-saw like apparatus, where performers bounce on a plank pushing each other in to the air with great force and height to perform twisting and rotating shapes in the air, this act is incredibly difficult – each bounce on the board requiring complete precision.

**Handstands** – performers balance on their hands, and sometimes only one hand. They can also include contortion skills. The beauty of this act is the combination of strength, flexibility and sensitivity.

**Straps** - an aerial apparatus consisting of two narrow bands made of close-woven material fastened to the truss. By wrapping the strap ends around hands and wrists, the performer performs holds, twists, rolls and manoeuvres, requiring extreme strength and precision.

**Tramp Wall** – is a wall with open window spaces and a high platform that performers jump on and off using a trampoline. They walk and run up and down the wall, propelled by the bounce of the tramp. It's a spectacular act using strength and acrobatic techniques.

**Hula Hoops** – a circular hoop that is manipulated and moved by the body, rolling, throwing and manoeuvring the object by spinning it around your body.

**Unicycle** – balancing and manoeuvres on a single wheeled bike with a seat. The skill of this act is to balance, peddle and swivel the apparatus whilst jumping and tumbling.

**Aerial Cube** – an aerial apparatus comprised of thick-walled steel pipes welded together in the shape of a box. This act can be performed by a single aerialist or two aerialists using each other's body weight to balance the cube. Performers use strength and grace to manoeuvre around the pipes.

**Silks** – An aerial apparatus comprised of a long piece of fabric hanging in two lengths. This delicate looking apparatus can hold the body weight of a performer while they swing, climb, and drop in various movements.

# Interview Questions:







**Name:** Tash Meani

**Age:** 13

**What is your favourite food:** I like M&M's and watermelon!

**What do you do in your down time:**

On the weekends, me and my dad like to ride our skateboards together, so we find a less crowded skate park. I like baking too and I have a sewing machine. I think my grandma's gonna teach me how to make a dress for my formal one day!

**Who is your favourite singer:**

OK, I'm into Detroit rap style music, upbeat and motivating kind of stuff and my favourite musician right now would be Eminem. But, if I was doing show stuff, I met a guy called [Simon Mavin](#) (he plays piano) and if I got the chance to choose what [kind of music I would perform circus stuff to](#), then he would be the first person I would ask.

**Do you have any pets:**

I've got a brown Border Collie, called Millie.

**Tell us about life at Flying Fruit Fly Circus School:**

I started when I was in Year 5 and loved it. It definitely took me a long time to like get into my comfort zone, and where I was actually feeling challenged as well. Gymnastics was a lot more fierce, circus is more like: 'Be yourself! Show your character!' You still fight for your position in shows and stuff, but like it's like a lot more important to have fun in circus.

**Do you have a favourite trick to perform?**

I really enjoy flying, getting thrown around and stuff, but obviously I'm getting bigger growing older and there's a point where you have to stop. I find unicycle is really nice to perform with because you can get the crowd with you. I also like this one trick on stirrups; it's called 'Chopsticks'.

**How do you feel when you're performing?**

Focused and powerful!

**What is your favourite Judy Horacek cartoon from the show?**

I like the glass ceiling one. A lot of girls I know that don't have as much of a head start in life as other people. The cartoon representing a feeling that's diminishing and the cartoon itself is quite powerful.

**What is the best compliment you have ever received as a performer?**

My favourite compliments are always the ones from the Circus Trainers. When we're finished a dress rehearsal and they start clapping and saying, 'Yes, I was really feeling it that time..!' For someone at that high a level of performance skill and they're telling us that they're proud of us... it's really moving.

**What do want the audience to think or feel when they see the show? Is there a particular message?**

I hope it gives a message to everyone watching that you can be whoever you wanna be, regardless of gender. I also hope that when people leave the show they never say 'you throw like a girl' as an insult again, it's diminishing.

**Do you have any advice for people who would like to join the circus?**

If you get into a group, don't rush trying to blend in or fit in with your peers. You need to take the time to get to know people, and then be yourself.

**What would you like to do when you grow up?**

I have a dream to join the [nitrocircus.com](#) and ride my skateboard down mega ramps into the crowds. I'd maybe live in the Gold Coast or Sydney or Melbourne even that would be really cool. I would also like to study architecture one day!

**If you could change one thing about the world right now, what would it be:**

I would also want to change how specific people have all the power. There has to be a way where we can even out power and decision making a little bit more because obviously there's a lot of people that don't have that don't agree with the leaders of the country. Instead of just one person's idea, it could be shared, so everyone could reflect on each other's ideas and decide what the right choices could be.



**Name:** Emma Giasoumi

**Age:** 13

**What is your favourite food:**

*I'm a big foodie! I really like baklava for main meal I like lasagne, and pasta is great too!*

**What do you do in your down time:**

*I love baking and cooking, but also recently I've been trying to make my own jewellery.*

**Who is your favourite singer:**

*I like Pop but I also like Classical. I think pop is just really easy to have in the background while you do something else, but violin, well, it can be like really emotional. It can just move you.*

**Do you have any pets:**

*I have a dog named Elvis and a cat named Misha.*

**Tell us about your life at Flying Fruit Fly Circus School:**

*I started in Grade 3, doing classes, like my older brother. When you are at the actual school, there are three circus groups: there's Preppies, just where you're getting the strength and the basics. Then there's Foundation where you find your particular area more, and this is where Tash and I are now. Then in Development, you train that special area, spending a little bit more time on those particular skills.*

**Do you have a favourite trick to perform:**

*I really like handstands yes less like hula and aerials. I do like riding unicycles and I obviously love my acro tricks, because they amaze the crowd.*

**How do you feel when you're performing?**

*There's this one trick where you step on people's heads! There's three of us stacked on top of each other, and you just feel like you're floating.*

**What do want the audience to think or feel when they see the show? Is there a particular message:**

*I'm just hoping that all the little girls and women in the crowd just leave feeling empowered yeah right I wanna spread the message*

*that we can do anything that we put our minds to.*

**Which is your favourite Judy Horacek cartoon from the show:**

*At the start of the show, there is a cartoon of a girl was in a shop and there's all these T shirts that say 'Princess Princess Princess Princess', and she says 'Do you have anything that says person?' I love that one; it just it makes a lot of sense to me. I'm not gonna be just a Princess, I want to be a person.*

**What would you like to do when you grow up?**

*I would definitely like to stay in the performing arts industry, but when I get a bit old and probably a bit sore and can't do circus anymore, I would love to be a scientist. I'd love to work on improving the neuroplasticity of our brains. I just think the brain is absolutely amazing and we don't even know the half of what our brains can do now.*

**What is the best compliment you have ever received as a performer?**

*After one performance, we had a Question-and-Answer session, and there were some little 5 or 6-year-old girls that all came for a birthday party. Their mother said 'Thank you so much; these girls feel so empowered.' and it was so emotional to hear that we had made an impact on young girls; it was just amazing.*

**If you could change one thing about the world right now, what would it be:**

*Young people are going to be the ones inheriting the earth, so I believe that we should have young representatives on the boards who make decisions. Obviously not like 2-year-olds, educated young people!*

**When you think of influential and powerful strong women in your life, who comes to mind?**

*Probably my mum. She's a teacher so every day she's just teaching young kids and raising the future. She's just amazing. Also, she's always taught me that it doesn't matter what gender you are, you're capable of whatever you feel like.*

**Do you have any advice for people who would like to join the circus?**

*I think just keep working hard, building strength and skills and knowledge and just enjoy it!*

# After the Show



# Running Away to the Circus!

## Activity 1

### Synthesize & Suggest

If you were going to pack your bags and run away to the circus, you would need to audition first! At least, for Flying Fruit Fly Circus, anyway! Watch the following news story about three kids who secretly auditioned and were ALL accepted. By the way, you'll never guess what their parents said:

#### Circus Runaways

Now, list three skills or talents that you might be able to offer FFFC, and draw a cartoon of yourself undertaking them in the boxes below:

**CLUE:** *These skills don't necessarily have to be circus tricks...*

**REMEMBER:** Many people contribute to the world of circus - maybe you could do the catering for Emma and Tash, turn the lights on and off for Richard the lighting designer, or volunteer to draw costumes for April the costume designer from 'GlitterFart'!

WANT TO AUDITION FOR THE SCHOOL YOURSELF? HERE ARE THE REQUIREMENTS:

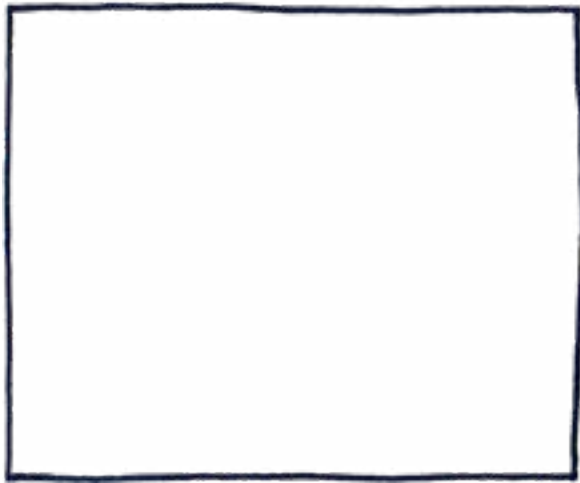
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYrumsI2yWE>

<https://fruitflycircus.com.au/auditions/>

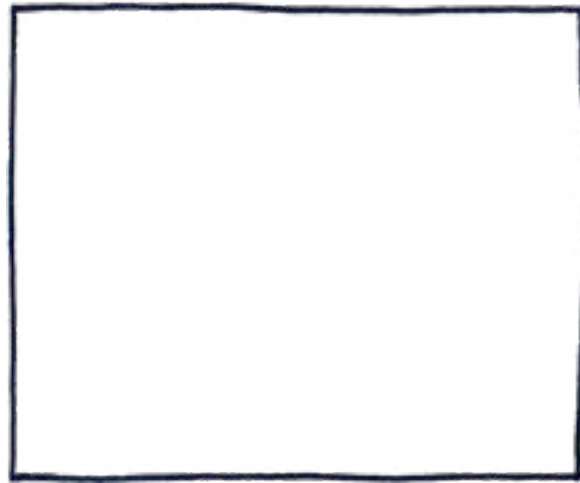
OR PERHAPS JUST TAKE A CASUAL CLASS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkscVzBbaFE>

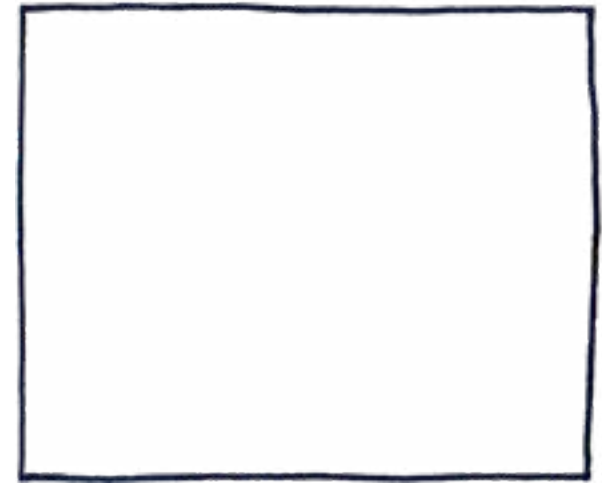
<https://fruitflycircus.com.au/learning/public-classes/>



1 .....



2 .....



3 .....

# THE GREAT DEBATE

## Animals in Circuses

### Activity 2

### Investigate & Justify

Circuses have been running all around the world for hundreds of years, and traditionally, many have featured animals as part of the entertainment. You may have seen circuses with lions and bears, and ponies for example, but the Flying Fruit Fly Circus doesn't use real animals in their shows. As a class, watch the footage at the link below to hear two sides to the debate about whether animals should be used in circuses or not:

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/circus/390586>

NOW, PICK A SIDE!

**Affirmative:**

*'I believe that live animals should be used as part of circus entertainment.'*

**Negative:**

*'I believe that live animals should not be used as part of circus entertainment.'*

Next, use the 'OREO' structure to write about whether you think it is ok for animals to perform in circuses. Make sure you give reasons for your answer. *CLUE: Sometimes it helps to consider your own pets, and how they may feel about performing.*

Now, share these points with a partner whilst your teacher walks around the class and listens to everybody's ideas. Next, your teacher will identify 3 students who are FOR animals in circuses and 3 students who are AGAINST animals in circuses and split them into separate teams. Each team will present their argument to the rest of the class ONE SPEAKER AT A TIME, swapping between teams after each speaker. After all six speakers have presented their arguments, the rest of the class will vote to decide which team wins THE GREAT DEBATE!

### O. (Opinion)

I believe that animals .....

.....

.....

.....

### R. (Reason)

because .....

.....

.....

.....

### E. (Evidence/Explanation)

An example of this is .....

.....

.....

.....

### O. (Opinion)

Therefore, that is why .....

.....

.....

.....

# A cartoon tells a thousand words

## Activity 3

### Identify & Analyse

The title of this show, *Girls with Altitude*, is a pun. This is the type of pun where two words that sound alike are swapped, which creates a new, funny and fresh meaning. The phrase 'a woman with attitude' was originally meant as an insult, because in the past, women have been expected to be obedient and quiet. To either speak up or think for yourself when you are in a female body breaks this rule!

By swapping out a 'T' in the word 'attitude', for an 'L', Judy Horacek cleverly changes the meaning of this whole insult, and the person looking at the brilliant cartoon now admires this brave and independent woman, who has climbed to great heights.



You may recognise the eye-catching second image from the poster and the opening scene of *Girls with Altitude*. It's just as cool as the original image, but there are some important differences between the two. Work with a partner or in a small group to list 4 observations about how the 3 girls standing on top of the mountain are different to the woman alone on the left:

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....

Now that you have identified some differences, see if you can work out what the meaning behind this second cartoon is. Once you have explored this together, write down a clear sentence explaining it, and then share your interpretation with the class:

.....

.....

.....

.....

# Calling all performers!

## Activity 4

### Collaborate & Perform

Your class is going to create and present a series of small circus acts for each other. Using nothing but your amazing mime skills, your dazzling imaginations, and some very special circus music, you will create a short scene and present it to the rest of your class. Follow these instructions:

1. Firstly, your teacher will divide you up into pairs or small groups based on the following circus acts or characters:

A team of trapeze artists

A tally of tight rope walkers

A jumble of jugglers

A lion tamer and their beast

A ringleader and their audience

A cohort of clowns

2. Take two minutes to brainstorm ideas for your special act and make sure everyone is included and comfortable with their role.
3. Take five minutes to rehearse the act, making sure everybody has a turn being the focal point, and that everyone's mime and facial expressions are very clear to the audience.
4. Decide which of the following circus music suits the mood of your performance best:  
  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5csNO3oMrQ>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jr9JVhr4R5Q>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW-bkbSWb4A>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slMub4NtrSk>
5. Rehearse once more, with the music, remembering to face your audience throughout your whole performance
6. Present your whole piece to the rest of the class, remembering to demonstrate the theatre etiquette you learned before your visit to Art Centre Melbourne
7. Be sure to give each group 'Two Stars and a Wish'; two moments that were really great and one area that could be improved.



## Reviews:

<https://www.artshub.com.au/news/reviews/circus-review-girls-with-altitude-flying-fruit-fly-circus-2533475/>

*"Australian circus is some of the best in the world and a fair share of that talent can be traced back to the Flying Fruit Fly Circus... quality family theatre that hits the mark and never compromises circus technique... Fruit Flies, you rock!"*  
Herald Sun

*"Flying Fruit Fly Circus was Australia's first world-famous youth circus – and it's still the best... the circus we know and love for its young performers (aged 8-18), rural base, clever ideas, expertise and sense of humour."*  
Arts Hub

*"Dazzling and lyrical. Quick, book and treat the whole family."*  
Sydney Arts Guide

*"Gasp inducing acrobatic feats... the performers captivate and inspire, and seem destined to join the ranks of the grown-ups."*  
Daily Telegraph





## Websites

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[www.nla.gov.au/](http://www.nla.gov.au/)

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[glitterfart.com](http://glitterfart.com)

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[aniareynolds.com](http://aniareynolds.com)

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[additive.lighting](http://additive.lighting)

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[bernadettett.com](http://bernadettett.com)

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[artsontour.com.au](http://artsontour.com.au)

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[horacek.com.au](http://horacek.com.au)

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[fruitflycircus.com.au/](http://fruitflycircus.com.au/)

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**Imagery:** Cartoons by Judy Horacek cartoonist,  
photography by Ian Sutherland.

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