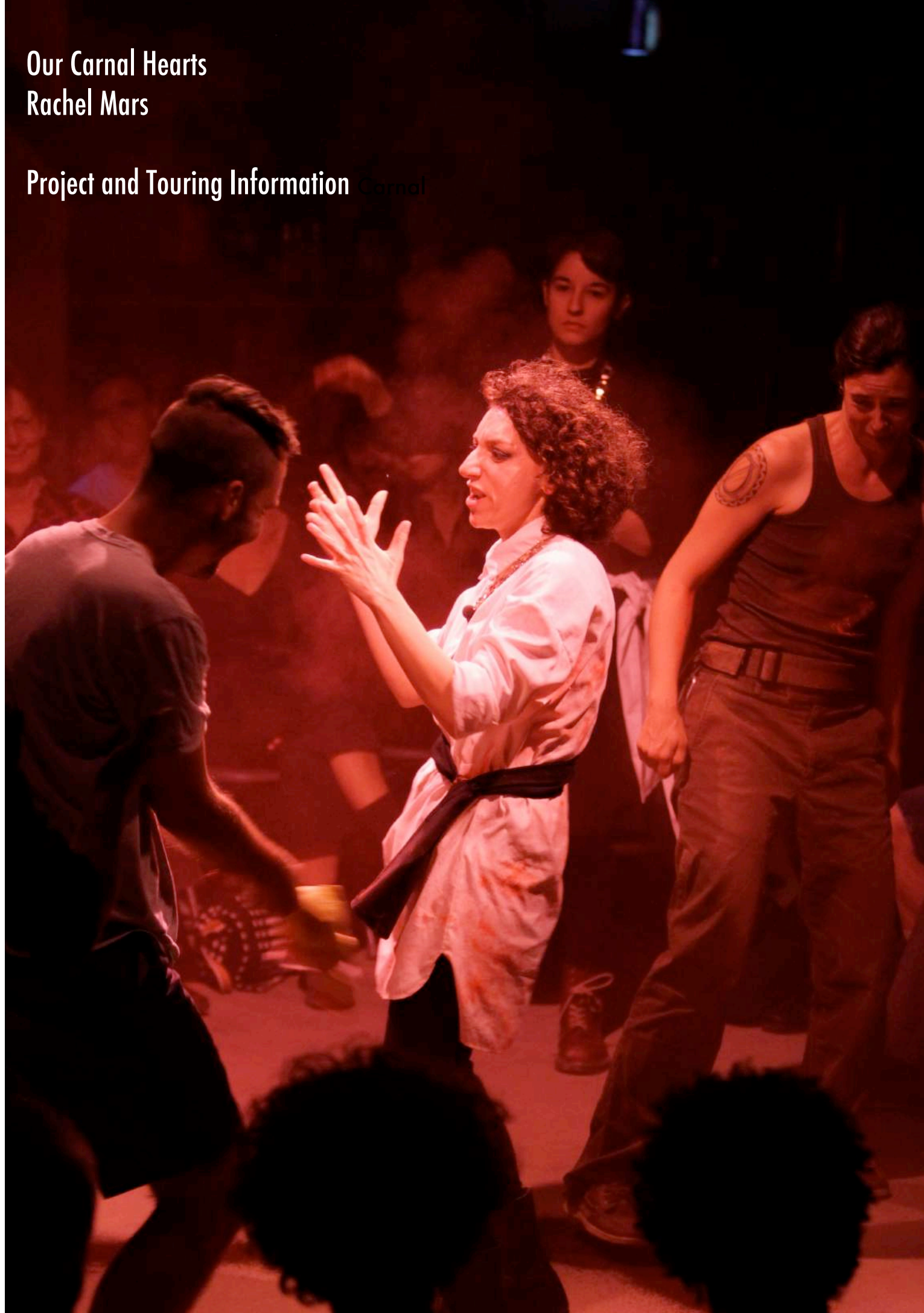


**Our Carnal Hearts**  
**Rachel Mars**

**Project and Touring Information** Carnal



## About the Show

*Up there with my best of the fest.*

Lyn Gardner, THE GUARDIAN, Edinburgh Coverage 2017

***Our Carnal Hearts*** is a performance about envy and competition by Rachel Mars, with an original surround-sound live score for 4 female singers by Louise Mothersole (Sh!t Theatre). It is very funny, very dark and feels a bit like a symphony and a bit like an exorcism.

It is performed on a square stage with audience on 4 sides, and a singer centrally placed in each audience block.

It is **part capitalist satire and part emotional vivisection**, an exploration of envy and our inner most desires. It is **provocative, cathartic, very darkly humoured and unique in form.**

The show weaves together:

- the live audience-performer space which examines the current state of envy and competition through spoken and sung texts and darkly comic ritual actions. It is direct address, satirical and religious in feel.
- a Hungarian folk story of a fairy who visits you bearing a wish, but whatever you wish for, your neighbour gets double.
- the story of an arsonist as she destroys larger and larger institutions
- a choral score that runs all the way through performed by 4 female singers.

The show also invites communal singing with the audience in the manner of a religious service [for example, the first hymn of the invocation of the spirit – ‘Gold’ by Spandau Ballet]. It makes us sing the unspeakable, disrupting the individual and solo nature of envy with the [illusion of] a community of harmonious voices.

## VIDEO

Full video of the show - <https://vimeo.com/rachelmars/ourcarnalheartsfullshow> password: carnal

Trailer - <https://vimeo.com/178337349>

## AWARDS and PRESS, Edinburgh Festival 2017

**Winner** - Total Theatre Award – Innovation, Experimentation and Playing With Form, 2017  
**Shortlisted** – Carol Tambor: Best of the Festival Award, Edinburgh, 2017

**Sold Out Show**, Summerhall.

### [4\\* Review, The GUARDIAN, Lyn Gardner](#)

*A hilarious dissection of envy...Up there with my best of the fest.*

*It is the sticky and spiky hidden parts of ourselves that are displayed in Rachel Mars' entertainingly nasty interrogation of the competitive spirit – which comes laced with song, arson and a large dose of envy.*

### [4\\* Review, The STAGE](#)

*The writing is wry, the songs are wickedly funny and the inventive choral format has the effect of making the whole thing feel soothing and sharp-edged at the same time.*

### [4\\* Review, FEST](#)

*A mischievous and humorous hour, but a caring and cathartic one too.*

### [5\\* Review, BROADWAY BABY](#)

*A wicked and totally absorbing cathartic purging experience.*

*If you want a piece that pushes your expectations about form, modernity and your innermost desires, Our Carnal Hearts is for you.*

### [Review, EXEUNT](#)

*Our Carnal Hearts is something quite new and unique and fascinating.*

*We laugh, we think, we question, we sing, we admire, we envy, we make confessions, we congratulate our rivals on their success (and learn to mean it), we exorcise our own demons, and ultimately we emerge out of this show lighter and with a spring in our step.*

### [Edinburgh Festival in Pictures – The GUARDIAN](#)

### [Shows We Recommend – THE GUARDIAN](#)

### [Best Theatre Shows, Our Critics Picks – The STAGE](#)

## Audience Tweets

Just saw 'Our Carnal Hearts'. Possibly the best thing I've seen this fringe. Insightful, brutally honest and hilarious.

@Eva\_OConnor

#OurCarnalHearts brilliantly dissects human condition & our true inner thoughts/desires

@ChrisK1906

Blown away by the talent of @rachelofmars &co bringing our dark sides to light. Perfectly, deliciously told.

@graham\_vicky





## What are the guts of the project?

Rachel:

I've been obsessed with the state of envy across the personal and the political for the past few years. It remains a shamefully taboo emotion. Whilst in some societies there are rituals to cope with envy, in the West, we are without. With ***Our Carnal Hearts*** I am riding our current - very perfect - [shit]storm of envy: a culmination of fears of scarcity, isolation born from technology, the move from collectivism to individualism and status anxiety derived from consumerism. It is a passionate act of exorcism, reimagining envy aside from the humiliation and guilt that it has been imbued with by religion, and the contortions through which politicians mangle envy to serve agendas of wealth accumulation.

At its guts the show continues the line of questioning I pursue across my work – how do we cope? How do we cope with being bombarded with language and imagery that aims to inspire us to comparison? What are the social protocols involved in navigating these evaluations? Where is the space of resistance?

**One singer is placed centrally in the front row of each bank.** By experimenting in this set up we invoke and trouble: a surround-sound live choral score; the atmosphere of AA meeting; a shape-note singing convention; a 70s performance happening. This audience face-off set-up invites a comparison - a personal and collective showdown- both imagined and played out in the piece, which speaks to the comparative direction of envy. The central role is a departure from Rachel's previous work where she performs a 'version' of herself. In this project she is rupturing modes of character – trickster priestess, ideological frenzy-whipper, threatening charismatic leader and finally the flick-knife wielding fairy of the Hungarian folk story.

## Information for touring

The show is available for touring from 2019 onwards.

### Performances to date:

US Fusebox Festival, Austin | Oberon, A.R.T Boston | On The Boards, Seattle

UK London: Shoreditch Town Hall | CPT | The Albany | CHORUS festival Southbank Centre;  
Around the Country: Watch Out Festival Cambridge | Royal Exchange, Manchester | Theatre  
Royal Margate | Norwich Arts Centre | Harlow Playhouse | The House, Plymouth | LAB Leeds |  
Chapter, Cardiff | Summerhall, Edinburgh | Pulse |

AUS TheatreWorks, Melbourne | Theatre Republic, Brisbane

### People:

7 People - 5 performers, SM/technician & producer/company manager on the road

Or

### Alternative International touring model:

4 People - 2 Performers, SM/technician & producer/company manager on the road and 3 local singers  
rehearsed for 2 days in situ prior to the show

### Running time:

1 hour

### Space:

Minimum 3 x 3m square flat stage, audience on 4 sides. This can be in a traditional theatre space or a  
disused church, community hall, historic building.

### LX:

Company tour their own LX desk. Generic rig plan available on request.

### Sound:

Operated on Qlab on Company Laptop

3 standing mics and 1 lapel mic

Get in: 1 day with pre-rig, 2 days without.

Get out - 30 mins

## ***Sing It! Spirit of Envy! Associated Participatory Project.***

*Sing It! Spirit of Envy!* is a participatory singing project, which forms a new choir with each appearance. The melodies and harmonies are set and the lyrics are rewritten every time - made up of a list of the participants' envies. It is a chance to bring a group of people together to learn a new composition featuring their experiences. It has been performed across the UK and in Austin, with pre-existing choirs or groups put together specially for the project.

You can see footage of the piece here : <http://www.rachelmars.org/sing-it-spirit-of-envy>

You can listen to a BBC Radio 4 Feature about it here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05sz8z7>

*Sing It! Spirit of Envy!* can tour alongside *Our Carnal Hearts*.



## **Who helped it happen**

*Our Carnal Hearts* is co-commissioned by The Junction, Cambridge, CPT London with additional support from Shoreditch Town Hall, Ovalhouse and ART, Boston.

It is made possible through a grant from Arts Council and South East Dance in partnership with Jerwood Charitable Trust. It was developed at The Royal Court Tottenham Residency, The Orchard Project, NY and





### More Critical Writing

<http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/review-carnal-hearts-shoreditch-town-hall/>  
<https://www.fuseboxfestival.com/blog/rachel-mars-wants-to-trick-you>

*Both joyful and delightfully painful. Moved me to celebrate what is terribly human with song and revelry, delivered masterfully.*

Ari Barbanell, Theatre Producer, American Repertory Theatre

*Our Carnal Hearts is a magnificent ode to our fucked up times.*

Mattieu Goeury, Vooruit, Belgium

*A show of wit and verve that -aptly- hides a dark heart. It made me question my own relationship to envy and how the pace of our online lives is overtaking our emotional capacity to connect with our own interiors, never mind other people.*

Louise Stephens, Deputy Literary Manager, Royal Court Theatre, London

### CONTACT

www.rachelmars.org | [Rachel@rachelmars.org](mailto:Rachel@rachelmars.org) | +44 (0) 7855 776 991  
Producer (UK & Europe): [Rebecca@arch468.com](mailto:Rebecca@arch468.com) | +44 (0) 7973 302908  
Producer (US & International): [Lucy.jackson@gmail.com](mailto:Lucy.jackson@gmail.com) | +1 917 565 5097



### Artist Profile

Rachel Mars is a performance maker borrowing from theatre, live art and comedy.

She has been making work for 7 years and has performed across the UK, including at the Southbank Centre, Brighton Festival, Barbican, Tate Modern, Forest Fringe and Summerhall. Her company Mars.tarrab is the 2017 winner of the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award.

Most recently she has been commissioned by Fuel Theatre, Ovalhouse London, Wellcome Trust and undertaken residencies at The Orchard Project and Asylum, New York; Playwrights' Workshop, Montreal and Cove Park, UK. She has shown work at festivals internationally including at Fusebox, Texas; Wildside, Montreal and Hot! NYC. Rachel is a regular on BBC Radio's 'Pause for Thought' and has written for The Stage, The Guardian and The Jewish Chronicle.

Rachel is an artist fellow of Birkbeck University. She has taught at various universities and artist development courses around the UK.

Rachel's work is supported by producer Rebecca Atkinson-Lord in the UK and Lucy Jackson in the US.

[www.rachelmars.org](http://www.rachelmars.org)