**The Alchemy of Chaos**

**Project Overview**

The Alchemy of Chaos (*Alchemy*) puts the involuntary movements and sounds of Tourettes Syndrome, centre stage, using them to generate an entirely new and unpredictable dance performance in real time.

Bringing together sound, light, movement and digital technology, *Alchemy* will uncover the creative potential of a frequently misunderstood neurological condition to engage new audiences and push the conceptual boundaries of improvised performance.

Touretteshero co-founder Jess Thom, a performer with Tourette’s syndrome, will break new ground – challenging form, technology, audiences, and assumptions through a completely new area of creative exploration.

The name of the project, itself an involuntary utterance, captures the essence of the endeavour; *Alchemy* turns everyday tics into springboards for creativity and offers opportunities to develop new collaborations. Out of chaos something beautiful will emerge.

**Innovation and Ambition**

* To our knowledge, this will be the first project that uses involuntary movements and sounds to conduct a multimedia performance
* Transdisciplinary expertise and the unpredictability of Tourettes will combine to create a genuinely original performance experience
* Audience and performers will be challenged to embrace the unexpected in every performance, each of which will be different

**About Touretteshero**

Founded in 2010, Touretteshero has a singular ambition, to change the world one tic at a time. This simple, yet radical proposition, informs our philosophical, artistic and practical approaches to making work and engaging the arts sector as a whole.

By using neuro-diversity as a creative catalyst, we seek to reimagine and redefine the role of disabled performers and producers to engage new audiences in a broadened framework of understanding and expectation. Touretteshero has an established track record for high quality creative work across disciplines.

**Project Background**

The project will bring together Touretteshero artists Jess Thom and Matthew Pountney, choreographers, dancers, sound artists and digital collaborators. The resulting piece will be performed at disability arts festivals and in mainstream arts and dance venues. The focus on movement and sound means it will be accessible in a wide range of international linguistic and cultural contexts, stimulating discussion and capturing the imagination of new audiences.

The concept of *Alchemy* has been in existence for several years, but the success of Touretteshero’s debut show Backstage In Biscuit Land (*BIBL*) and the growing reputation and reach of the company means that now is the right time to develop this project.

In Spring 2011 Touretteshero held a workshop with a dancer and a filmmaker at the Siobhan Davies Dance Studios. The aim was to build [an archive](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xETx2GTnIBE) of Jess’s repertoire of ticced movements to explore their creative potential. At the time Jess wrote:

“*I haven’t done much dancing before, and I wasn’t consciously dancing today but I enjoyed having the space and time to explore how I move.*”

This was the first time Jess allowed herself to reflect on and enjoy the unusual movements of her body. It enabled her to appreciate the complexity and variety of those movements. The ideas and questions central to *Alchemy* have their roots in this workshop.

*Alchemy* asks the following creative questions:

* What can we learn from a performance that blurs the lines between the involuntary and the intentional?
* What would happen if we utilised the movements of tics using digital technology and made them central to a performance?
* What if involuntary movements could control the sound, audio and choreography of a performance in real time?
* How can transdisciplinary collaboration produce entirely new forms of performance and engagement?

**Project Schedule**

We propose a research and development (R&D) phase in Hull during April 2017. This will consist of six days of intensive work, experimentation, collaboration and discussion. We hope to work with a venue such as The Hull Truck Theatre in the initial stages and identify more specialist venues if necessary as the work develops.

The R&D will bring together the two lead artists, a digital collaborator, a choreographer and two professional dancers. In addition to the six core collaborators this phase will also include input from visiting specialists who could include: musicians, video artists, lighting designers, youth dance companies, or other professionals with a specialism that feels relevant to the key themes being explored.

These creative encounters will allow the R&D team to experiment, test and explore the resulting ideas and concepts. The R&D will seek to answer the following questions:

* What is the most effective way of generating data from tics using technology, and how can this trigger and influence creative outputs – music, movement, visuals, and lighting?
* What is the range and frequency of tics? How do these change and evolve and what are the characteristics of these movements and noises? How can tics be used as inspiration for choreographic expression?
* What are the possible relationships or conflicts between tics as the conductor, the audience, and other performers?
* How does the suggestibility and excitability of tics impact on experimentation, and how can this be used creatively and playfully?
* How do we describe and contextualise the performance process across disciplines?
* What existing work around feedback loops, contact improvisation, and the aesthetics of involuntary movement is relevant to our exploration?

**Sharing and Shaping**

The R&D will take the form of workshops and discussion sessions. It will draw on elements of the ‘Open Space’ approach, which was used successfully during the creation of *BIBL*. This could include using digital technology platforms to connect with artists or other professionals from across the UK and beyond.

There will be three opportunities for performance and sharing of the R&D work, these are described below:

**Invited Live Performance Moment**: This will take place halfway through the R&D phase and will be an opportunity to share and reflect on what has been achieved so far with a small invited audience of collaborators and stakeholders.

**Live Performance Sharing**: Towards the end of the R&D a more open sharing of the emerging work will take place. We would aim for an intergenerational audience including a mix of disabled and non-disabled people from varied professional and creative backgrounds in addition to some members of the public. This sharing would take a ‘scratch’ approach enabling us to ask questions of the audience and consider their feedback.

**Digital Performance Record**: Live-streaming, video and sound recordings will capture the performance moments and discussions. These can then be shared across diverse professional contexts. The emerging archive will support reflection and development beyond the initial R&D week allowing the work to progress and strengthen.

At the end of the R&D we will produce a more refined vision for the future of the piece. A timetable and plan for the creation and production phase of the work will identify additional resources, expertise, input and time needed.

**R&D Budget**

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| **Item** | **Description** | **Total £** |
| Pre R&D Planning | 0.5 days x4 people @£100 & x2 days @£120 | 640 |
| Touretteshero | 8 days x2 people @£200 | 3200 |
| Dance Collaborators & Choreographer | 6 days x3 people @£250 | 4500 |
| Digital Collaborator | 6 days x1 people @£250 | 1500 |
| Venue Hire | x6 days @ £100 | 600 |
| Equipment & Resources | Technology, costume etc. | 3000 |
| Visiting Collaborators | Specialist collaborators x3 @£350 | 1050 |
| Collaborator Accommodation | x7 people x8 nights @£80 | 4480 |
| Collaborator Per Diems | x7 people x 8 days @£20 per day | 1120 |
| Collaborator Expenses | £150 x 11 people | 1650 |
| Contracts and legal | R&D Collaborator agreement | 500 |
| Documentation | Videographer x 2 0.5 days | 600 |
| Contingency |  | 1500 |
|  | **Total** | **24340** |
| Producer and Management Time | **10%** | 2434 |
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|  |  | **26774** |