

PROTEUS

presents

THE LAW OF MAYHEM

by Tabby Lamb





“It’s extraordinary, isn’t it? That we should find each other.”

The year is 1949, and Roberta Cowell; racing driver, RAF pilot and ‘It’ girl, meets Michael Dillon; a ship’s doctor who pursued Buddhism into the high Himalayas. Together they will change the course of British transgender history. Yet after just three short years, they never speak again.

Separated by time and space, Michael and Roberta meet for one last impossible encounter, to find out if the thing that brought them together was the same thing that broke them apart - The Law of Mayhem.

Joyful, uplifting and full of heart, Award-winning Basingstoke theatre company Proteus, and acclaimed writer Tabby Lamb bring the extraordinary lives of trans-trailblazers Michel Dillon and Roberta Cowell to the stage for the first time.

Using circus as a physical vocabulary, *The Law Of Mayhem* tells the story of two lives, inextricably entwined, that made their mark in history and forged a path for generations to come.

I love you I love
you I love
you

Send for my Bobbie make me of yourself + of the
town better of yours.
Michael

Creative Director’s Note

I first heard the story of Michael Dillon and Roberta Cowell over ten years ago and knew Proteus must one day stage this remarkable slice of history. The fact that Sir Harold Gillies chose Rooksdown to establish his hospital, moving wholesale from Queen Mary’s Hospital in South London (incidentally where I was born!), is a fact Basingstoke should be proud of. He needed a place where those undergoing surgery with him could return over several years - Michael would come in the term holidays from Trinity College Dublin to complete his surgeries with Gillies, and so would have spent a significant amount of time in the town.

We also wanted to ensure there was a legacy to this work beyond the show; so we are working on two projects connected to the piece. One is the creation of a website, which will go live in early 2026, which will tell the factual history of Michael and Roberta, placing their lives into the context of wider British Trans history and will give academics, historians and anyone interested the chance to read Michael’s unedited letters to Roberta for the first time - we are grateful to Liz Hodgkinson for loaning the letters so they could be digitised for this purpose. The other project will run alongside the planned tour in Autumn 2026 and will comprise a series of ‘happenings’, in locations where the tour will visit, where Artists from the LGBTQ+ community will reflect the contemporary Trans experience.

Proteus’ central mission is to engender empathy in audiences for those ‘othered’ by society and at this moment we are so proud to stand with our Trans brothers and sisters. The entire cast and Creative team have been wonderful, and I have particularly loved working with the insanely talented Amber Sinclair-Case in the rehearsal room, supporting them to bring Tabby Lamb’s incredible script to life. It has been a long process for Tabby and me from initial conversations through commissioning her and developing the piece with the brilliant Jo Tyabji. All of it has been an absolute joy; and that is what Michael and Roberta’s story should inspire - joy - at two people finally able to live as their authentic selves and blazing a path that has saved countless lives ever since.

Director’s Note

Theatre should be collaborative, I am passionate about celebrating the individuality of each performer, so they feel seen, heard, and have ownership over their characters. Working together to carve out these narratives with the same shared goal is where the magic lies, in my opinion. Without a strong team this show would be impossible to achieve, and luckily the performing company, our creative, production, technical and the entire team at Proteus are the strongest you could ask for. It’s been a privilege to work with all of them as they create their magic.

Working with the tour-de-force Daniela Essart to create the circus language as another layer for this piece has been a rewarding, fun and fruitful experience. Our artists are masters at their craft, and circus blends seamlessly with Tabby’s writing to become an extension of the emotions felt by Michael and Roberta. Everyone on the team has worked so hard to ensure that both individually and collectively, they shine as brightly as this story does. Being in a room with predominantly trans artists, held with care by Mary Swan and the team at Proteus, has allowed us to delve into the worlds of Roberta Cowell and Michael Dillon with a true sense of community and collective effort.

This piece could not come at a more pertinent time, as our rights as trans people are actively being stripped away, accessing healthcare is increasingly difficult, and our safety in daily life is at greater risk by the second. I hope audiences see the importance of telling our stories on stage - stories of resistance, care, love, and history that society has denied. I would encourage audiences to look to the lives of Roberta and Michael, and to those of Frances Thompson, Mary Jones, Lucy Hicks Anderson, Joseph Loddell, Georgia Black, Billy Tipton - trans people have existed throughout history across the world, before there were words to identify us. Roberta and Michael are trailblazers of British history, and the community they paved the way for can look to them in this production, and witness the complicated, messy, and beautiful relationship they had with, and without each other.

I invite people to extend the community we have built in this show to the trans people in their lives, who are being targeted and demonised across the world.

Writer’s Note

When I began writing *The Law of Mayhem*, I thought I was simply telling a story about the past. About two extraordinary, complicated trans lives – Michael Dillon and Roberta Cowell – whose names flicker in and out of the footnotes of history. Lives that, at first glance, seemed far away from my own.

But as I dug deeper, I realised I wasn’t writing a history play at all. I was writing about the present. About the impossible choices trans people are still forced to make, the ways our bodies are legislated over, the endless (aerial) hoops we are told to jump through in order to be ourselves. Reading Dillon and Cowell’s words, I found not just echoes but near repetitions of the same conversations trans people are still having today: the waiting, the proving, the endless fight to be treated with dignity.

I am about to undergo my own surgery, and so the writing has never been abstract. It has been embodied. Every draft has been shaped by my own anticipation, my fears and my hopes. To write about Dillon’s pioneering medical transition, or Roberta’s public reinvention, while preparing for my own – that has meant holding the past and present in dialogue inside my body. What I’ve learned is that progress is not linear. We like to imagine that history steadily improves, that each generation paves the way for the next, but the truth is more jagged. For every breakthrough there is backlash. For every door opened, another slammed shut. And yet – we are still here. We have always been here.

That is what this play celebrates: not a tidy story of progress, but the messy, dazzling, contradictory lives of trans people who lived boldly in impossible times. It does not ask us to choose heroes or villains, but to witness the whole spectrum of their humanity – their brilliance, their betrayals, their longing.

For me, writing *The Law of Mayhem* is an act of remembrance, but also of resistance. It is a way of honouring those who came before, while refusing to let the world forget that we are still here, still fighting, still loving, still swimming towards the light.

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Kit Green – Roberta

Kit Green is an artist. Her work covers theatre, music, cabaret, comedy and broadcast. Amongst many other awards, Kit has won an Olivier. This year she was nominated for Best Supporting Actress at the National Film Awards for her role as Tinkerbell in the film Peter Pan's Neverland Nightmare. You might know Kit for her comedy creations, Nashville legend Tina C, and Artificial Hip Hop star, Ida Barr, or for her extensive work on BBC Radio 4. She was one of the founder members of the Duckie Collective. Kit is the creator of multiple influential "experiential entertainments" including Prurience, Office Party, VIP, Music Hall Monster, and The Home.



Current work includes:

The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions. This contemporary classical piece by Ted Huffman and Phillip Venables has toured extensively internationally. It will conclude with a landmark season at The Park Avenue Armory in New York later this year. Sex Strike. Kit's modern trans retelling of Lysistrata by Aristophanes.

Mrs Dalloway, after Woolf. A collaboration with theatre/film director Jen Heyes touring through 2026

Entertain Us. A hybrid memoir / novel about Kit's life as a TV music producer in the early 90s.

The release cycle for Kit's second solo album of original songs, Four Letter Words, will roll out throughout the autumn. The full album is coming in early October. It is a collaboration with astonishing classical musician Yshani Perinpanayagam. It will be available through all the streaming services. Four Letter Words is the follow up to Kit's 2023 album Always Here, a collaboration with singer-songwriter, Kathryn Williams, produced by Ed Harcourt. This is a concept album of pop songs from different periods about being trans.

Pete MacHale – Michael

Pete MacHale is a transmasculine actor and writer from Bristol and trained at Arts University Bournemouth. Pete's theatre credits include the Whatsonstage nominated Dear Young Monster (Bristol Old Vic, Soho Theatre); Let The Right One In (Manchester RXT); and Dear Elizabeth (Gate Theatre). Selected screen credits include Doctor Who (BBC) Choose Or Die (Cursor Films/Netflix), Gangs of London (Sky Atlantic), and NĀNT (Ffilm Cymru, Welsh BAFTA nominee). His most recent short Purebred is one of five shorts to have been nominated for Screen Ireland's Emerging Directors awards 2025.



Mos Bain – Echo Roberta

Mos Bain is Welsh actress and dancer from south Wales who multi-roles as both Echo Roberta and Showgirl in The Law Of Mayhem. Mos trained at The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and worked on several projects and productions while in training. When not creating, making or moving, she can be found walking, drawing or being a vault of pop culture references from the 2000s. This production marks a return to the theatre industry for Mos, having more recently been working in education. She is excited by the possibilities of combining aerial with text and movement to bring this trans story to life on stage and feels privileged to be part of telling such an important story as a trans-woman.

Oran Longmuir – Echo Michael

Oran is a transmasculine dancer, aerialist and acrobat from Scotland. Originally from Aberdeen, he trained in ballet, jazz and contemporary dance and relocated to Edinburgh in 2013 after gaining a place on the Dancer's Emerging Bursary Scheme at Dance Base, mentored by Matthew Hawkins. He got into circus after a dance job with Bright Night International led to him learning stilts, and he soon found himself taking up partner acro, aerial and vertical dance. They perform with companies such as All or Nothing Aerial Dance Theatre, In-The-Making, Skylarks and Eowyn Emerald and Dancers. Oran is particularly passionate about creating work that relates to real life experiences and highlights social issues. He is the co-creator of Q-fforia, a dance theatre show about growing up queer, which is performed in schools and theatres throughout Wales and Scotland and tells real stories from the performers' lives. He also creates solo performances and duo acro acts, and his work has been shown at pride events, arts events and festivals, as well as in theatres and corporate settings. Oran loves sharing their passion with others and teaches dance and circus to a wide variety of participants.

Milton Lopes – Dr Gillies / Lisa and other characters

Milton Lopes - Milton Lopes is a theatre and screen actor, aerialist, musician, writer and director. He was born in Cape Verde Islands and grew up in Portugal where he appeared in several TV programmes, feature films and theatre shows.

Able to speak French, Spanish, English and Portuguese, Milton has worked as a performer in France, Angola, Brazil, Mexico, the UK and Portugal. He has been based in London, England since 2007. From 2009 he has studied and performed in various aerial circus disciplines such as aerial hoop, Chinese pole, sway pole and aerial harness. Milton is a self-taught electric and acoustic guitarist and a singer, whose voice ranges are bass, baritone and tenor. He is also learning to play drums.

Most recent Credits include:

Theatre: The Burnt City, Felix Barret and Maxine Doyle, Punchdrunk (2021-2023)

Film: The Fortunate Ones, Jeanne Waltz, Box Productions (2023)

TV: Mobland, Guy Ritchie, Paramount + (2025)

Mary Swan – Creative Director

Mary's work as a Director has been seen the length and breadth of the UK and beyond, in all sizes of spaces from Village Halls in the Highlands of Scotland to the Royal Festival Hall in London, including theatres off Broadway in New York and in London's West End. She has created almost 50 shows for Proteus and several large scale participatory projects bringing professional Artists into contact with communities to create work in response to lived experiences. This has included work with survivors of domestic abuse, military personnel suffering with PTSD and homeless communities amongst others. Most recent UK wide touring work has been the circus infused adaptation of Angela Carter's feminist classic "The Bloody Chamber" working with the Artistic Directors of award winning circus companies Ockhams Razor and Mimbire and last year's "Indestructible" working with Paula Varjack and RedCape Theatre. She began her career as an actor and was Associate Director for Solent Peoples Theatre in Southampton and The New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich before joining Proteus in 2005.

Her work in Kinaesthetic Theatre practice was the subject of an academic study in the American journal of Drama and Theater Criticism and is used in teaching at the University of Tennessee in the USA. In 2017 she was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in recognition of her work in touring theatre.



Amber Sinclair-Case - Director

Amber is a neurodivergent director, writer and PHD researcher, whose work centres on radical and innovative explorations of identity. Lucy Hicks Anderson, Frances Thompson, Mary Jones, Georgia Black and all of the other Black trans people throughout history whose stories we are yet to discover, underpin every piece of work they make.

Recent theatre credits include:

As Director - Kinky Boots (Chester Storyhouse); Follow Suit(cases) (Writer/Director), (Spider's Web R&D (Writer/Director), (Wo)man monster (Writer/Director); Extrem(IS)t R&D (Writer/Director)

As Associate/Assistant Director - Pig Heart Boy (Unicorn Theatre/SheffieldTheatres/UKTour), Bronco Billy (Charing Cross Theatre), I'm Every Woman: The Chaka Khan Musical, SIX The Musical (NCL/West End/UK & International Tour), Legally Blonde (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), Hungry (Soho Theatre/Roundabout - Summerhall); Overflow (Bush Theatre); Leopards (Rose Theatre Kingston); The Mother Load (Lyceum Theatre); Undetectable (King's Head Theatre); Kiln Young Writers Programme (Kiln Theatre); Since U Been Gone (Vault Festival); Anna Bella Eema (Arcola Theatre).

Thanks, and endless love always to Mum, their forever Ruby, Lenny, Louie, Floki and their wonderful support system that hold them up and make their world infinitely bright.





Tabby Lamb – Writer

Tabby Lamb is a trans writer and performer based in East London and a graduate of the Theatre Directing course at Dartington College of Arts. Similarly inspired by Carly Rae Jepson and Tennessee Williams, she strives to tell stories that explore the intersections between popular culture and politics.

Tabby won a Scotsman Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2022 for her joyful, queer rom-com HAPPY MEAL (Roots Touring) which played at the Traverse Theatre before completing a short UK & international tour. The play was also longlisted for the BBC Writers room Popcorn Award. Her debut solo show SINCE U BEEN GONE, which Tabby wrote and performed, premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2019, after previewing at the Gate Theatre. The show was spectacularly received by audiences and garnered a glowing 4* write up from the Guardian who called the play “bold, honest and swollen with love”. In 2023, her short play A GRIEVANCE OF WITCHES was the first play by a trans woman ever performed at Shakespeare’s Globe. Her latest play TUESDAY,

commissioned by Pegasus, is a family play exploring gender from a child’s point of view. Tabby is also developing new work for television under commission with some top UK Indies.

Tabby is a BFI Flare x BAFTA Crew member 2021, an artistic associate for the Sky Arts Bursary at Stratford East, an associate writer with Middle Child, she’s on attachment at the Oxford Playhouse via their Playhouse Playmaker scheme 2021 and she’s developing new work on the Wild Child’s Oli Lansley mentor scheme, mentored by Sarah Solemani. She has previously been part of the Soho Theatre Writers Lab and the LGBTQ Arts Review #RaisingOurVoices scheme for queer and trans writers. Alongside their passion for writing, Tabby is a facilitator and runs creative arts projects for young people from the LGBTQ+ community.

Jodie Underwood – Lighting Designer

Jodie Underwood is a Lighting Designer with work spanning theatre, opera and dance. She graduated from RADA in 2021 with first class honours and is particularly interested in new writing and more unconventional theatrical forms.

Her recent Design credits include: Our Cosmic Dust (Park Theatre); Worn Out (Lowry Theatre); Community (Birmingham Rep); After The Act (Royal Court and UK Tour); My Life As A Cowboy (Omnibus Theatre); Wormholes (Omnibus Theatre); Love & Rebellion Festival (Birmingham Rep); English Kings Killing Foreigners (Camden People’s Theatre); A Monster Calls (Omnibus Theatre); Jab The Play (Finborough Theatre); A Christmas Carol (Taunton Brewhouse); Cheeky Little Brown (UK Tour); The Life Sporadic of Jess Wildgoose (Pleasance, Islington and Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh); DNA (Tara Theatre); After The Act (New Diorama Theatre and Traverse, Edinburgh); Blow Down (Theatre Royal Wakefield and Leeds Playhouse); The Boys Are Kissing (Theatre 503); and Horse-Play (Riverside Studios).

Her recent Associate credits include: Ruckus (Associate to Simeon Miller, UK Tour); The Book Of Will (Associate to Simeon Miller, Shakespeare North Playhouse); Ride (Associate to Jamie Platt, Leicester Curve and Southwark Playhouse); Pigs Might Fly (Associate to Aaron Dootson, Theatre Peckham) and When Darkness Falls (Associate to Bethany Gupwell – UK Tour).

Miriam Nebarro – Set Designer

Miriam is an Australian/ British UK based scenographer, theatre designer, facilitator and visual artist. She is Creative Associate with 20 Stories High, shows regularly with Tin Man Arts and has worked extensively internationally as a humanitarian, artist and activist.

Theatre Credits include: Going Out Out (Home), Stars (Tamasha Theatre/Brixton House/ICA/UK Tour); Lucky Tonight (Home/ Traverse); Please Do Not Touch (China Plate/Belgrade Theatre) K56 Small Forward, King Stakkhs Last Hunt, Dogs of Europe (Specialist design work/ Belarus Free Theatre/Barbican/US Tour); Jane Eyre (GSMD); High Times, Dirty Monsters (20 Stories High/Graeae); At the Forest Edge (RSC); Catch, I am a Theatre, Sweatbox (Clean Break); Bone Sparrow (Pilot Theatre); Aaliyah After Antigone (Freedom Studios); I Told My Mum I Was Going On An RE Trip, Touchy, Buttercup (20 Stories High/BBC); The Little Price (FUEL/ EIF); Processions (Artichoke/Clean Break); The Welcoming Party (Theatre-rites/MIF); Broke N Beat Collective (20 Stories High/ Ruhr Festival); The Great Game, Afghanistan (Tricycle Theatre/ US tour), Palace of the End (Royal Exchange/ Traverse/ Amnesty Freedom of Speech Award), War Correspondents (Abbey Theatre); Bang Bang Bang (Royal Court); Cupboard of Delights (National Theatre)

Mwen – Sound Designer

Mwen is a multifaceted artist, working as a theatre sound designer and composer, music producer, and live performing audio-visual artist. Their creative practice blends the realms of music technology, electronic music, live sound, and performance. Theatre sound design and composer credits include ‘Cowbois’ (RSC & Royal Court), ‘Sonders’ (Daniel Kaluuya’s Centre 59), Much Ado About Nothing (NYT, West End), ‘Dismissed’ (Soho Theatre), Rise (Kiln Theatre), Key Workers Cycle (The Almeida), and numerous others.

Mwen was a 2023/24 grantee of the Sounding Change Artist Residency with the University of Birmingham’s Music Department and is a 2025 recipient of Arts Council England’s DYCP grant.

Mwen has performed on stages from Somerset House and Southbank Centre, to various UK festivals, including Glastonbury, and international tours. Mwen’s compositions and productions have garnered airplay on BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 6, XFM, NTS, Rinse FM and been synchronised with TV and fashion films.

Sam Pine – Costume Design & Design Support

After studying Theatre Design at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Sam has worked in theatre, film and television. She has designed over 20 shows for Proteus, including Indestructible, The Bloody Chamber, Becoming Hattie, 12.10.15, Little Red and the Wolves, Alice in Wonderland, The Little Mermaid, and Merrick The Elephant Man. Sam has also designed for New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich, The Watermill Theatre in Newbury, The Cheltenham Everyman, Show of Strength, ACTA, Tour De Force, Desperate Men and Common Players.

She has also spent time art directing for period drama documentaries including: The Atlantic Cable (WGBH) and Journey to the Centre of the Earth (BBC) as well as working as a costume designer for Edgar Wright’s first feature film. Sam is excited to work with Proteus once again on this important new show.

Daniela Essart – Movement Director

Daniela Essart was born in Italy. She studied physical theatre with Jacques Lecoq, Philippe Gaullier and Monica Pagneux. She trained in aerial skills and acrobatics on stilts at National Centre for Circus Arts UK. She has an MA in Performing Arts from Middlesex University.

Daniela is the co-founder and artistic director of Scarabeus Aerial Theatre since 1988, she has created visually arresting and transformative touring and site responsive performances. Scarabeus work merges aerial skills with visual theatre and choreographed movement. They conjure into existence thought provoking productions dealing with contemporary narratives, aimed at awakening empathy and ethical consciousness in a wide range of audiences. Fearless about experimentation, she regularly collaborates with a wide range of established and emerging artists, filmmakers and scientists from different fields.

Over the years she has collaborated with a variety of companies such as Candoco Dance Company, Emergency Exit Arts, Wildworks, and the National Youth Theatre. She has created site specific commissions on buildings, forests and maritime vessels for the Natural History Museum, Greenwich & Docklands, Bloomsbury and Salisbury Festivals, Cultural Olympiad in London, Paralympics Torch Lighting in Cardiff, Lowry in Salford and on a satellite dish for the British Council in Trinidad. She has directed all of Scarabeus productions and toured nationally and internationally. www.scarabeus.co.uk

Nick Ash – Production Manager

Nick is an actor and puppet & mask maker and has a varied career in film, TV, theatre and radio. In 2006, he co-founded the award-winning Scratch Built Productions creating imaginative and innovative new shows for children and their families

Theodor Spiridon - Company Manager

Theodor Spiridon works across creative, administrative, and production management, combining artistic practice with technical knowledge to support the collaborative process of performance. He is particularly interested in poetic and socio-political work that explores the relationship between audience, performer, and space, and how live experiences influence perception.

Further Credits:

Nick Sweeting – Producer
Felix Moore - Historical Consultant
Rebecca Pitt – Graphic Design
Chuck Douglas - Rehearsal Photography & Programme Design
Nathan Mountain - Concept Trailer
Anvil Arts – Venue Partner
Lighting Hire - PRG

Special Thanks

Felix Moore for guiding Tabby though the history of Michael and Roberta, Liz Hodgkinson for granting access to Michael’s letters, Sam Pine for additional design support and the National Theatre for support during the development of the piece.



ABOUT PROTEUS

We are an award-winning theatre company who believe that the audience is as important as the artist, and that to create truly dynamic and relevant theatre the audience and artist must inspire each other's imagination. Formed in 1981 and based in Basingstoke, Hampshire, we have a long history of creating quality work; producing a programme of events that serves audiences locally, nationally and, since 2009, internationally. We produce touring shows, projects, residencies, and workshops and play a key role in the provision of performance and participatory opportunities for the wider community. Proteus have their home at the Creation Space, a community arts centre in the heart of Basingstoke, run by Proteus for everyone. The Creation Space hosts performances, events and a varied programme of regular classes and workshops. We regularly support and collaborate with artists to create unique performance pieces and make work both for and with diverse communities. Since April 2018 we have been an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation supporting us to create even more ambitious work.

If you have enjoyed what you have seen today and would like to keep up to date with our future work, please do follow on social media, tagging us #thelawofmayhem

f Facebook /proteustheatrecompany

@ Instagram @proteustheatre

Proteus team

Artistic Director, Mary Swan

General Manager, Matthew Dwyer

Marketing Manager, Mary George

Finance and Administration Assistant, Helen Palmer

Finance and Administration Assistant, Janet Sutton

**THE LAW OF
MAYHEM**
by Tabby Lamb

Proteus Creation Space, Council Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 3DH
Tel: 01256 354541 Email: info@proteustheatre.com

PROTEUS



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



supported by
**Basingstoke
and Deane**