



SKIN HUNGER

BY DANTE OR DIE

The Covid-19 global pandemic has affected us all in profound ways that will continue to alter how we live with each other. The simple act of touching someone has never had so much power. Brushing past someone on the bus, a casual squeeze of a friend's arm or an embrace with a loved one that you haven't seen for months, all come with risk assessments.

When we saw photographs of the plastic hug tunnels in Brazilian care homes last summer, the images struck a nerve. Hug tunnels are plastic curtains with attached plastic arms, which allow two people to hug one another safely. They enabled elderly people to hug their loved ones during the pandemic. We immediately said "There's a performance in that." We shared stories from friends and relatives about people affected by lack of touch in their lives, as we set about creating a performance that could open up conversations, with and without words, around the power of touch.



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We started delving into the biological phenomenon of skin hunger; learning how vital touch is to humanity. The way we are touched from infancy, sets us up to receive and give touch in particular ways for our entire lives. Thank you to neuroscience Professor Francis McGlone at Liverpool John Moores University for enlightening our process.

For those of us who create live performances, our ability to share stories has been challenged in ways we could never have imagined. As in-person experiences ground to a halt and culture began to create new digital forms, we continued to crave reconnecting in a shared space. The creation period began in September with the plan being to perform it in November – the quickest development process we'd ever undertaken. But we felt the need to get this experience out into the world as soon as we could. We invited writers Ann Akinjirin, Tim Crouch & Sonia Hughes to respond to the idea of touch and integrate the physical act of touching into their pieces. They responded with such passion to the stimulus. Each piece of writing is multifaceted and knotty, with some drawing on autobiographical experiences. Crucially, each piece of writing simply cannot be performed without an audience member sharing the space with a performer. Owing to November's sudden lockdown, the production was shut down two days before we were due to build Khadija Raza's plastic-filled, site-specific design.

Seven months later, and we've all lived through a winter of isolation, of being tested, of risk assessing all human contact. And we're *finally* about to meet you. Thank you for coming back. The world of Skin Hunger is wipe-clean and sanitised, not unlike our last year of existence. With safety measures embedded into every single artistic choice, we hope that the physical experience gives you confidence to journey through the space and enjoy a moment of reflection. To hold hands now. To reconnect now.

Thank you for joining us,

**Daphna Attias & Terry O'Donovan,
Co-Artistic Directors of Dante or Die**

@danteordie
www.danteordie.com

Dante or Die in partnership
with Stone Nest presents
SKIN HUNGER

Created by Daphna Attias & Terry O'Donovan

Monologues written by:

Ann Akinjirin (Our Hands)

Tim Crouch (The Sessions)

Sonia Hughes (Touch The Flesh)

Directed by Daphna Attias

Cast: Rachel-Leah Hosker, Oseloka Obi, Terry O'Donovan

Understudy: Deshayé Gayle

Design by Khadija Raza

Additional Design by Jemima Robinson

Music & Sound Design by Yaniv Fridel & Ofer OJ Shabi

Lighting Design by Zia Bergin-Holly

Movement Direction by Ayse Tashkiran

Produced by Sophie Ignatieff

Production Management by Keegan Curran

Acting Production Management by Danny Cunningham

Stage Management by Jenefer Tait

Assistant Stage Management by Stefy Barton

Additional Music Credits

Cello by Yoed Nir

Mixing by Dom Feil-Roots from Soho Sonic

Marketing Management by Vic Shead

PR Consultancy by Cliona Roberts

Production Photography by Justin Jones

Placements

Anna T. Stenberg, Sophia Enderby & Maoliosa Phelan

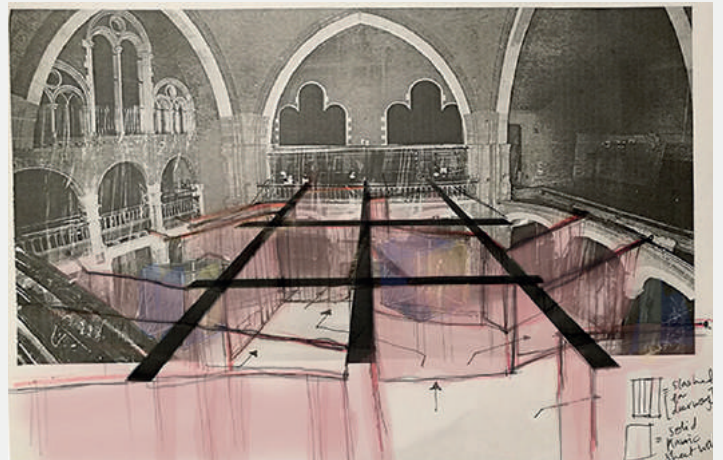
Stone Nest

Inna Schorr, Hannah Myers, Richard Williamson

Thanks to

Professor Francis McGlone. Maksym Demydenko.

All our dedicated Board Members.



ABOUT DANTE OR DIE

Dante or Die is an award-winning, independent theatre company, led by Daphna Attias & Terry O'Donovan, that has been creating new performances in unexpected places since 2006. You could experience one of our shows in your local leisure centre or café, the self-storage unit down the road, or on your mobile phone. We collaborate with local people, academics and experts to create a distinctive Dante or Die world, telling stories that grapple with knotty topics through intimate, witty and poignant experiences.

www.danteordie.com

ABOUT STONE NEST

Whilst we work towards the redevelopment of the building, Stone Nest is delighted to offer a home to artists and audiences in these exceptionally challenging times. Our need for culture is greater than ever; creativity must continue. We are delighted to be collaborating with Dante or Die on Skin Hunger and look forward to opening our doors to the public for this timely new work.

www.stonenest.org

Skin Hunger is presented in partnership with Stone Nest and is funded by Arts Council England



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE TEAM



Daphna Attias (Co-Creator & Director)

Daphna Attias is Co-Artistic Director of Dante or Die & has directed all the company's work to date. She is also Artistic Director of Peut-Être Theatre, where she creates unforgettable early theatrical experiences. Her work with Peut-Être includes *Tidy Up*, *Shh...Bang!*, *The Tin Soldier*, *Dare to Sea*. In 2017 she received an Action for Children's Arts Members Award for her prolific international touring productions. Her work has been presented nationally & internationally at Roundhouse, Royal Albert Hall, Brighton Festival, Lincoln Centre NYC, BAM New York & ASK China, amongst others.

Terry O'Donovan (Co-Creator & Cast)

Terry O'Donovan, as Co-Artistic Director of Dante or Die, has co-created all productions and performed in most, including the solo performance *User Not Found* which has toured nationally & internationally including New York's BAM. He has directed two new site-specific productions in Ireland: *Bread Not Profits* (winner of Irish Times Theatre Audience Award 2020) and *On The Wire* (nominated for Best Production in Irish Times Theatre Awards 2015). In 2012 he co-founded TOOT who make interactive, devised performances. For TOOT he co-authored and performed in *Ten Out of Ten*, *Be Here Now* and *Focus Group*, all of which toured the UK.

Ann Akinjirin (Writer)

Ann Akinjirin is an Actress, Writer, Director & Movement Director. As an actress, Michaela Coel's *I May Destroy You* (BBC2), *Trigonometry* (BBC2) written by Duncan McMillan & Effie Woods, Series 1 & 2 of JK Rowling's *Strikes Series* (BBC1/HBO), *Brave New World* (Amblin/Dreamworks). Passionate about creative accessibility within theatre, she is currently movement director for Deafinitely Theatre and working with NYT creating shows for an inclusive audience. Ann set up the company Harts and was Artistic Director for 7 years. She produced two annual festivals, Young Harts Writing Festival, nurturing emerging writers & Sound of Mind, an audio-visual arts mental wellbeing festival. Harts championed new writing and most recently produced *Funeral Flowers* by Emma Dennis Edwards and *Little Miss Burden* by Matilda Ibini.

Tim Crouch (Writer)

Tim Crouch is an Obie-award winning writer and theatre-maker. His plays include *My Arm*, *An Oak Tree*, *ENGLAND (a play for galleries)*, *The Author*, *I*, *Malvolio*, *Adler & Gibb*, *Beginners*, *Total*

Immediate Collective Imminent Terrestrial Salvation and (with Andy Smith) *what happens to the hope at the end of the evening*. Directing credits include *The Taming of the Shrew*, *King Lear* and *I, Cinna (the poet)* (RSC), *PEAT*, (Ark, Dublin) *Jeramee*, *Hartleby* and *Ooglemore* (Unicorn Theatre) and *The Complete Deaths* (Spymonkey). Tim created and co-wrote *Don't Forget the Driver*, a six-part series for BBC2 which won Best TV Comedy at the Venice TV awards, 2019.

Sonia Hughes (Writer)

Sonia Hughes is an artist, writer, performer. She has made a number of shows with contemporary theatre-makers Quarantine including their award-winning *Susan & Darren*, the epic *Summer. Autumn. Winter. Spring.* and *Wallflower*. She currently works alongside Jo Fong on their multi-faceted conversation project *Neither Here Nor There*. She wrote the award-winning *What is the City, but the People?* led by Jeremy Deller for Manchester International Festival. She is Associate Artist at Festspillene i Nord-Norge/Arctic Arts Festival. Her new project, *I am from Reykjavik*, exploring race and belonging is set to tour UK and European festivals from summer 2021.

Rachel-Leah Hosker (Cast)

Rachel-Leah Hosker is an actor and movement director. She trained at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, co-runs award winning theatre company The Pappy Show & is an Associate Artist of National Youth Theatre. Recent Acting Credits include: *Holby City* (BBC), *Antigone* (New Diorama), *The Butterfly Lion* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *GIRLS* (Vault Festival, HOME, Latitude), *Doctors* (BBC) and *Philip Pullman's Grimm Tales* (Unicorn Theatre). Recent Movement Director Credits include: *Pity* (LAMDA), *The Last Harvest* (NYT), *The Mikvah Project* (Orange Tree Theatre), *Omelette* (Vault Festival) & *STORM* (Vault Festival).

Oseloka Obi (Cast)

Oseloka Obi is a London-based actor, whose theatre credits include *The End of Eddy* (BAM New York City), *One Night In Miami* (Bristol Old Vic/Nottingham Playhouse), *The Son* (Kiln Theatre), *Victoria's Knickers* (Soho Theatre), *Macbeth* (The Garrick), and *Timbuktu* (Stratford East). He has also appeared in the pilot for Armando Iannucci's *Avenue 5* (HBO).

Deshaye Gayle (Understudy)

Deshaye Gayle trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Acting BA) on the CDT course (Collaborative and Devised Theatre). Theatre credits include *Lost Unfound* (White Bear; @SIMCOS3000), *In Full Consent to Speak On My Behalf* (Edinburgh Festival / Good Wolf People), *Future Bodies* (HOME, Manchester) *Jude Starbeam* (On The Button Theatre), *The Words are Coming* (Theatre 503), *A Place to Be* (Salon, The Vaults), *Dare to Dream* (Arcola Theatre), *Hansel & Gretel* (Iris Theatre). TV credits include: comedy series *Trying* (Apple TV).

Khadija Raza (Designer)

Khadija Raza is a performance designer based in London. She was one of the winners of the Linbury Prize 2017 and won the Stage Debut Award for Best Designer, 2018. Selected credits as Designer include: *Augmented* (Royal Exchange and tour), *Bee in Me* (Unicorn Theatre), *History of Water in the Middle East* (Royal Court Theatre Upstairs), *The American Dream 2.0* (Young Vic), *Dido* (Unicorn Theatre), *My White Best Friend (and other letters left unsaid)* (Bunker Theatre), *Cacophony* (Almeida Theatre and The Yard), *Spun* (Arcola Theatre), *Hijabi Monologues* (Bush Theatre).

Jemima Robinson (Associate Designer)

Jemima Robinson trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. She is a former resident artist at Kenya's Kuona Arts Trust in Nairobi and resident designer for Istanbul's Talimhane Theatre.

She won the Linbury Prize for Stage Design in 2011 and was awarded the Max Rayne Design Bursary at the National Theatre in 2018. She has been nominated for Best Set Design OFF WEST END awards for *Br'er Cotton* (Theatre 503) and for *Thebes Land* (Arcola Theatre). Forthcoming work includes *Much Ado about Nothing* for the RSC directed by Roy Alexander Weise.

Yaniv Fridel & Ofer OJ Shabi (Music & Sound Design)

Yaniv Fridel, with his partner Ofer OJ Shabi, has 15 years of experience writing, producing and engineering music internationally for both established and emerging artists and to accompany film, TV and theatre productions. They have amassed an impressive client list between them of Idris Elba, Louis Theroux, Diplo, Usher, Lethal Bizzle, Arrow Benjamin, Lisa Stansfield, BBC and The National Theatre. Together they formed a production team of young talented producers working from their creative hub at Soho Sonic studios London.

Zia Bergin-Holly (Lighting Designer)

Zia Bergin-Holly is an award-winning lighting and set designer working internationally. Zia designed the lighting and set for Dante or Die's recent production *User Not Found*. Other set and lighting designs for theatre include: *EMBARGO* (Fishamble), *Solar Bones* (Rough Magic and Kilkenny Arts Festival), *The Misfits* (Corn Exchange), *They Called Her Vivaldi* (Theatre Lovett). She also designed the set for the Olympia Theatre, Dublin performances of Grace Jones' concerts for *Bloodlight and Barni* by Blinder Films. Recent lighting designs include: *Two* (HullTruck Theatre), *Flights* (One Duck Theatre), *Promises Promises* (Centrál Színház Budapest), *Top Hat* (Silver Blue Entertainment) and *Bread Not Profits* (Gúna Nua).

Ayse Tashkiran (Movement Director)

Ayse Tashkiran is a movement director, teacher and researcher in movement direction and actor movement. Recent productions as Movement Director include: *Europeana* (Royal Shakespeare Company, the Swan, 2020), *BLANK* (Donmar Warehouse, 2019), *As You Like It* (RSC, The RST, Barbican & National Tour, 2019–20), *The Provoked Wife* (RSC, The Swan, 2019), *The Wolves* (Theatre Royal, Stratford East, 2018), *Shakespeare in Love* (National Tour, 2018), *The Duchess of Malfi* (RSC, The Swan, 2018), *Romeo and Juliet* (RSC, The RST, Barbican & National Tour, 2018). Associate Artist: Royal Shakespeare Company and Lightwork. Recent Publications: 'Movement Directors in Contemporary Theatre: Conversations on Craft' (2020) and Introduction in Litz Pisk, 'The Actor and His Body' (2018), both for Bloomsbury, Methuen Drama.

www.aysetashkiran.com

Sophie Ignatieff (Producer)

Sophie Ignatieff joined Dante or Die in April 2018 and collaborates across all projects, including UK & international dates of *User Not Found* & the large-scale touring community production, *Take On Me*. She began her career producing participation projects at the National Theatre. Her in house experience continued at Leeds Playhouse, programming & producing productions across all spaces. Prior to Dante or Die, she worked with independent touring companies Look Left Look Right & tiata fahodzi, as well as developing a new cabaret with emerging artist Miriam Sherwood. Her festival experience includes Manchester International Festival, where she was Assistant Producer on the large-scale international touring production, *Tree of Codes*.

Keegan Curran (Production Manager)

Keegan Curran has worked in theatre and live events for the past 9 years, from production managing open air music festivals with The White Horse Project in East Lancashire to being an audio engineer and sound designer on an array of events & productions. Keegan graduated from Bristol Old Vic Theatre

School as a Sound Designer, worked as an in-house tech for Tobacco Factory Theatres & as Theatre Projects Manager for SFL Group for 4 years. Theatre includes: *Baby Reindeer* (Francesca Moody Productions), *Our Country's Good* (Tobacco Factory Theatres), *140 Million Miles* (Tobacco Factory/The Traverse), *Where we are* (Theatre Royal Bath), *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (The Redgrave).

Danny Cunningham (Acting Production Manager)

Danny Cunningham is a Production Manager and Production Electrician, who has been working in Theatre and the Entertainment industry for over 10 years and has worked for numerous companies including the Royal Opera House, Dubai Opera, Gilded Balloon and Northern Irish Opera. Danny has recently joined Rose Bruford College as a Lecturer in Lighting Technology where he is running the Creative Lighting Control BA (Hons) Degree Course. This is his first time working with Dante or Die.

Jenefer Tait (Stage Manager)

Jenefer Tait has worked in theatre for almost 20 years. She has worked with a wide range of directors and in theatres across London and internationally. Productions include *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* (West End – Original DSM), *The Visit* (National Theatre), *A Very Expensive Poison*, *All My Sons*, *Tree, Sweet Bird of Youth*, *A Flea In Her Ear* (Old Vic), *Richard III*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It* (Bridge Project – BAM/Old Vic), *The Cane*, *The River*, (Royal Court), *Ghosts* (Almeida/ West End), *Hamlet* (Barbican), *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Chalk Garden*, *Parade* (Donmar)

Stefy Barton (Assistant Stage Manager)

Stefy Barton is a freelance actor and stage manager, currently working at Mountview Drama School. She had her professional debut as part of *Handle with Care* for Dante or Die in 2016. *Skin Hunger* will be her fourth show with the company after working with them as a performer, intern, administration assistant, front of house manager and stage manager! Before COVID-19, Stefy toured two shows around the UK with Goblin Theatre including to The Royal Albert Hall, Live at Zedel, and Theatre by the Lake. She trained with The Hunt Academy for Young Actors and Peer Productions.



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