



Sadler's Wells in Angel  
**Lilian Baylis  
Studio**

# Charlotte Spencer Projects

# Written in the Body

3 – 4 November 2022

Welcome to this evening's performance of *Written in the Body*, a duet exploring memory, touch and consent. This theatre work follows a decade of creating outdoor participatory works, most notably, *Walking Stories* and *Is this a Waste Land?* - both immersive performances through headphones. Today we are inviting you into a smaller-scale experience, paying attention to the intimacy of small encounters that we have with ourselves and with others.

*Written in the Body* journeys through memories of touching and being touched, literally and metaphorically. The work explores touch both as something we use to locate ourselves in the present moment, and also as something that can leave a residue in our body's memory. As the two performers, Petra Söör and Louise Tanoto move through a web of memories and tactile interactions, we are invited to consider consent as constantly shifting; often lingering in the space between yes and no.

The work explores whether language can be as penetrative as touch. The performers often use the second person form of 'you' rather than 'I' or 'they'. In doing this, they're inviting you, the audience, to be touched by their words. Sound, lighting, set and costume draw out additional sensory, tactile layers to the performance, literally bathing you in sensation. You are invited to lean into your own tactile experience, both in the present moment and in memory.

*Written in the Body* centres embodied experience as the site of political action, radical care and protest, we hope it encourages you to consider the power of your own body.

## From Director Charlotte Spencer

*Written in the Body*, had many starting points. At the centre of each was a curiosity connected with touch. Through the process of pregnancy, birth and the early years of motherhood, I experienced very little separation

between my body and another. This witnessing of the innate need for touch was in striking contrast to the general lack of touch in the rest of (my) life. As #metoo erupted I moved between feelings of outrage, recognition and deep sadness: touch as fundamental to human communication and connection; as potential exploitation, violation, something to fear. Consent (or lack of) always in the mix. It is complicated. How can we maintain healthy touch encounters if we don't practice? How can we keep soft and receptive bodies?

I have an immense sense of gratitude and privilege in my experiences training and working in dance - spaces where I get to practice giving and receiving touch outside of familial or romantic relationships; spaces where there is time and importance given to noticing how my body meets with the ground, the air, another body.

Through this performance, I hope that you find Petra and Louise's histories of tactile experience as celebratory and vulnerable as I do, and that in their sharing, you feel like you are given the space to connect with your own stories.

Despite the slippery nature of touch, *Written in the Body* is ultimately an uplifting experience: one that offers you space to process your own joy, sense of aliveness and collective healing in an increasingly divided, disembodied world.

Please make yourselves comfortable and enjoy the evening. Thank you for being with us this evening.

## About Charlotte Spencer Projects

Charlotte Spencer's work is motivated by interests to engage with important social and ecological questions and to find ways to express those enquiries through intimate live encounters with audiences. She often makes work for unusual spaces, inviting people to re-encounter their bodies and their environments through

action and participation. Making processes are deeply collaborative, involving long immersive residency periods which have included 3000 Km cycle rides and building camps in forests.

Charlotte is perhaps best known for her performances through headphones: *Is this a Waste Land?* (2017), made for vast disused urban spaces; and *Walking Stories* (2013), a group audio walk for parks. She has made performance work with young people, older adults, community groups as well as professional artists.

Her work has been presented nationally and internationally with a wide variety of partners, in lots of different kinds of spaces including *Dance Umbrella* (2015 & 2017), Brighton International Festival, Sadler's Wells, Greenwich Dance, Tramway - Dance International Glasgow, Siobhan Davies Dance, South East Dance, Coastal Currents - Hastings, Turner Contemporary - Margate, Jerwood Gallery - Hastings, Salisbury International Festival, Festival DDD - Portugal, Deep Roots Tall Trees - Corby, Festival Plages Des Danse - France, Dance North, The Place, Wellcome Collection.

Charlotte was recipient of a Bonnie Bird Choreographic Development Award in 2020. She was a Sadler's Wells Summer University artist 2015-18 and an Artist Activator for Greenwich Dance 2014-17. She trained at London Contemporary Dance School. Charlotte is a mother and has been building a house in Brighton for the past few years with her husband.

## Performer Biographies

**Petra Söör** is a dancer, maker and facilitator, working in a range of contexts including with *Fevered Sleep*, Charlotte Spencer Projects, Simone Kenyon, Robert Clark, Robin Dingemans, Carrie Cracknell and the National Theatre. Alongside solo work her own practice often proposes collaborative processes within a diversity of environments, projects include *Sleeping a Walking Mountain* and *Undanced Dances*, currently evolving interests in person-centred approaches to movement, tactile pedagogy and different modalities of touch to support health and wellbeing.

**Louise Tanoto** is a dance-artist based between Belgium and the UK. She trained at Laban and was a member of *Transitions 2007*. Louise is currently touring with Oona Doherty and Daniel Linehan as well as Charlotte Spencer Projects. Her performance credits within the UK include; *Gecko*, Janine Harrington, Requardt & Rosenberg, Tilted Productions, *Lost Dog*, Damien Jalet and Hussein Chalayan. In Europe she has performed for *Kabinet K*, Eszter Salamon, Thierry de Mey, Ugo Dehaes, T.R.A.S.H (Netherlands) and was a member of *Fabulous Beast*.

## Artistic Team & Credits

**Concept & Direction** Charlotte Spencer  
Created in collaboration with the company

**Performance and Voice Over** Petra Söör and Louise Tanoto

**Sound** Alberto Ruiz Soler

**Dramaturgy** Orrow Amy Bell

**Lighting Design** Marty Langthorne

**Costume Design** Shanti Freed

**Design** Bethany Wells

**Producing Support** Pip Sayers, Lou Rogers

**Photography and Videography** Rosie Powell

**Audio Description** Shivaangee Agrawal

**British Sign Language Interpretation** Katie Fenwick

**Performer and Collaborator involved in the research phase of this project** Dan Daw

**Written in the Body was funded** using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

**Co-commissioned by** Brighton Festival, Sadler's Wells and South East Dance

**Research funded by** The Place, Wellcome Collection, Siobhan Davies Studios, Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund and Arts Council England

**Rehearsal space supported by** University of Sussex, Drama Department

**Special thanks to** Dan Daw for his presence and creative contribution to the development of this work in 2020 and 2021. Thank you to Robyn Cabaret and Ciara Lynch at Sadler's Wells. Huge gratitude to Petra and Louise for offering themselves so openly and honestly into this process and to little Tom for teaching me so much about touch these past four years.

Memories shared in *Written in the Body* can bring into focus past experiences based on our individual life journeys. We want to acknowledge that there is the potential for this to be triggering for some and as such, we would like to signpost you towards organizations that can offer ongoing support:

**The Survivors Trust** provides support to empower survivors of rape, sexual violence, and childhood sexual abuse. Helpline: 080 8801 0818 / [www.thesurvivorstrust.org](http://www.thesurvivorstrust.org)

**Mind UK** provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Helpline: 030 0123 3393 / [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)