

# DEATH TRAP ACCESS PACK

## Important Information

*Death Trap* is a dance theatre show. It is a double bill of two dance theatre pieces created by Ben Duke - *Cerberus* and *Goat*. *Death Trap* stars the Rambert company dancers.

*Cerberus* is a contemporary adaptation of the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice - a bittersweet reflection on journeys through life and towards death, asking questions about mortality, and the wish to bring people back.

*Goat* is inspired by the music and spirit of Nina Simone, with a live on-stage band performing her iconic songs including *Feelings*, *Feeling Good* and *Ain't Got No/I Got, Life*.

*Cerberus* has a running time of approximately 30 minutes. *Goat* has a running time of approximately 50 minutes. There will be one 20 minute interval.

This production contains themes of bereavement, loss and death, alcohol consumption, partial nudity and strong language. Recommended ages 12+.

## Sounds and Lights

Please note there is loud live and recorded music throughout the performance.

Please note that there are moments of darkness, use of flashing lights and haze effects throughout the performance.

**The following pages contain spoilers.**

## Cerberus

In Greek Mythology, Cerberus is a dog with multiple heads, belonging to Hades, the God of the Underworld. Cerberus guards the gates of the Underworld to prevent the dead from leaving. Orpheus and Eurydice is a Greek myth about how Orpheus travels to the underworld to find his love Eurydice, who has died. Orpheus is told by Hades that he can bring Eurydice back to the living world, on one condition – that he walks all the way back in front of her, without ever looking back. Orpheus looks back at the last moment and loses her forever.

At the beginning, everything is dark, and the voice of a person - Eurydice - is heard. The voice explains that what we are about to see on stage is the story of their life. The journey across the stage represents their life, and their exit from the stage on the other side represents their death. They enter dancing, with a rope around their waist, accompanied by the sound of drums. As they move across the stage, the rope extends constantly, pulled taut. As they exit, they disappear, and we see Orpheus, being pulled on stage, on the other end of the rope.

A group of mourners appear on stage and take their seats. This is Eurydice's funeral. Orpheus begins to give a eulogy, simultaneously in disbelief about the death, and also questioning it - thinking that everyone is only pretending that Eurydice has died. Orpheus speaks in their own language (Sotho, Italian or French, depending on the performer) and a friend - the Translator - translates to English.

Orpheus and the Translator discuss the possibility that the stage left exit is some kind of portal to the underworld and to death. They try to prevent a man from crossing to it – he is walking, blank-faced, slowly but constantly and unstopably, reading Orpheus and Eurydice. They successfully prevent him from exiting and he sits with the rest of the group whilst a folk song is sung (in Danish or Hungarian, depending on the performer).

The two friends try to think of plans to prevent people from crossing to the other side, with the Translator going off to search for a net. Whilst he is looking, they cannot prevent those crossing to the other side – a person walking slowly but surely, alone, and a man falling through the space in his underwear. The voice of the lost Eurydice is heard, saying that they are ‘here’ although they cannot be seen. The Translator returns, with a comically tiny fishing net on a stick. They go to the left of the stage to call after Eurydice but receive no response.

A big group begins an endless crossing of the stage to the other side in a procession of movement (*Music: Moderat - A New Error*). Some become frantic, jump from the line, trying to resist it, and run back the other way. In the end, they slow and all cross together.

The two friends discuss the Orpheus and Eurydice story. They read what they need to do: play a song to enable the dog who guards the underworld to fall asleep, find Eurydice again, and walk back in front without looking behind. To the song *Built then Burnt by A Silver Mt Zion*, a series of pairs duet across the stage, each playing out a

different relationship, a unique connection: each like their own version of Orpheus and Eurydice. One from each pair crosses first to the other side. When they reappear, one of each couple is standing and moving, dragging the other who is attached to them with a rope, lying prone on the floor: they are trying to bring back a lifeless body.

The voice of Eurydice talks about what they have left behind – their journals by the bed, their phone. They ask if the folk song heard earlier can be sung at their memorial service.

A procession of people move constantly towards the other side. They are all connected by a single rope. Some are laughing, some are trying to pull another along, some are reading, some seem lost, some are casual, some living daily life. Each is living a memory from their life as they are pulled towards death, and none can resist. (*Music: Monteverdi - Lament of the Nymphs*)

In their midst, Orpheus pulls the rope the other way, towards life. The rope stretches, taut. Finally, Orpheus looks back. The rope drops to the ground. Eurydice is lost forever.

## Set and Costume

The group are dressed in black, as if for a funeral, but there are also elements of fashion and evening wear. All of the men and one of the women wear black suits, with shirts which are slightly off-white - there are tuxedo shirts, a military dinner jacket, a suit jacket with black velvet braiding, and other formalwear. Many of the women are in black dresses, like a 1950s cocktail gown with sequins, a silk bodice and black jewels on the skirt and straps. They wear elaborate, black fascinator hats and black lace veils. The dresses and suits are dusty and distressed in places - as if they have been on long journeys.

At the back of the stage is a pink velvet curtain with a drummer and drum kit in front of it. At the beginning, everything is dark, and when the journeys across the stage begin, they happen in corridors of white light. White smoke emanates from the side where people disappear into the underworld.

## Goat

A reporter and a camera person are filming live, in a place which looks like a village hall. There are musicians, and a few people preparing for a meeting. The camera person films people very close up, and the reporter asks a woman about what is going to happen. She tells them that people are coming to take part in a ritual, which previously used a living goat and now involves a person instead. The reporter is not quite welcome in the space and is intruding on what is usually a private gathering - as a group of people arrive and take their seats, the reporter explains everything they are doing to the audience. Whilst the mood is sombre and quiet, the reporter continues to speak enthusiastically until they finally realise that pleas for quiet are being directed towards them.

The woman leading the ritual addresses the people gathered, saying that everything is desperate, but there must be something they can do. She invites them to join in a song.

The group dances with the movements which feel good to them, sharing this with the audience (*Music: Feeling Good*).

Each goes to their own space and they begin a series of movements – slow, contorted, private and intimate. The reporter approaches each one and films them up close, intruding to ask what their dance is about. Their dances are about personal injustices they want to lose from their lives - like feeling alienated and stuck. Over time, their dances repeat and turn into a group dance (*Music: Ain't Got No/I Got, Life*).

A person - Fate - emerges from the group, blindfolded. They use their senses, trying to work out who is the right person to choose, sidling up to someone and then moving on, hissing. Eventually, Fate chooses someone for the ritual, and brings them into the centre of the circle. The Chosen One embraces their partner, just outside of the circle, before being brought to a chair with their back to the audience.

The reporter conducts an intrusive interview with the Chosen One, asking in detail about how distressed they must be feeling. The Chosen One is unwilling to speak and be interviewed and it is revealed that they have been selected to dance themselves to death. The reporter wants to record the emotions in the room and be up close to the feeling of them to share with the public, but at what cost to the privacy and feeling of the people being interviewed?

The Chosen One is approached by a person in a white, long-horned Goat mask, moving slowly towards them on all fours and bleating. They point at the Chosen One and put the goat mask on them.

The group form a circle around the Chosen One, menacingly. They speak of all the things they wish they could rid from the world. There is a wild, loud circular dance with a drum beat around the Chosen One, building, faster and faster. The reporter is caught up in the dance, becoming part of the community of the ritual. The group stick post-it notes to the Chosen One, who is like a scapegoat for the ritual and society, of what they would want to purge and sacrifice.

The woman leading the ritual performs *My Way* - a kind of eulogy for the Chosen One. Her movements become more and more erratic and she collapses, whilst the Reporter and others attempt to prop up her lifeless limbs to mimic continuing the performance. She stops the music, and restarts it, speaking over the words, with less and less control and more rage in an outpouring of emotion.

The Chosen One dances to death (*Music: Ballad of Hollis Brown*) scattering the post-it notes stuck to them, exhausting themselves more and more until they collapse.

The group cover the Chosen One's body in a shroud and begin to leave, whilst the reporter asks if it is the end, if there isn't a resurrection. The reporter asks the camera person to stop filming. The Chosen One and their partner dance a duet – a story of what their relationship might have been, with struggles and beauty of what could have happened (*Music: Feelings*). The reporter watches the duet, and at the end, decides to take the place of the Chosen One, covered by the shroud. The reporter sacrifices their own life, so that the Chosen One and their partner leave, alive and together.



## Set and Costume

The ritual is taking place in a space which looks like a community or village hall with a slightly retro feel. The room is made from wooden timber - there are rows of chairs, and two large notice boards. The musicians are on a raised stage. At the back, there is a rusty orange coloured curtain. The reporter is wearing all black - a loose fitting suit with converse shoes, or a shirt, vest, jeans and trainers, depending on the cast. The camera person is wearing a black t-shirt and gilet. The musicians are wearing black too. But the people who have come to attend the ritual are dressed in sensible, coloured workwear which looks neat and tucked in at the beginning. The women are wearing pleated skirts and culottes with blouses in muted, dusky pastels: pink, mustard and forest green, flat shoes, and no make-up. The men are wearing smart casual clothes - shirts and trousers, and some with ties. When the ritual happens, the group take off their shirts and wear vests the same colour as their trousers - their clothing feels less individual and more dishevelled and they are barefoot: they become part of the community taking part in the ritual together. The space darkens, the ritual forms a circle of white light until the Chosen One collapses in their own square of light, wearing a white vest and underwear: different from the rest.





Rambert dancers for Ben Duke's *Death Trap*

# THANK YOU.

RAMBERT

It's Your Move

[rambert.org.uk](http://rambert.org.uk)

[rambert.org.uk/rambertplus](http://rambert.org.uk/rambertplus)

