

WHITEWASHING



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Rébecca Chaillon & Aurore Déon
Compagnie Dans le ventre

Credits

Conception, Text **Rébecca Chaillon & Aurore Déon**

With **Rébecca Chaillon & Aurore Déon**

Stage management **Suzanne Péchenart**

Translation, Subtitling **Lisa Wegener**

Production, Development **Mélanie Charreton - O.u.r.s.a M.I.n.o.r**

Administration and touring **Élise Bernard et Amandine Lorient**

Rébecca Chaillon is represented by L'Arche - Agence théâtrale. www.arche-editeur.com

Duration : **90 min**

Contains nudity

Production

Production **Compagnie Dans le ventre**

The Compagnie Dans le ventre is supported by the French Ministry of Culture (DRAC Hauts-de-France).

Tour calendar season 2026-2027

SHOW AVAILABLE ON TOUR FOR SEASON 27/28

January 20 and 21, 2027 Scène nationale de l'Essonne





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Whitewashing is a performance conceived by the artists Rébecca Chaillon and Aurore Déon, which, rather than being a variation on *Carte Noire nommée Désir*, a show created in 2021, constitutes its very essence.

At the heart of this performative and poetic work lies a central question: **how do we talk about our conditions as black women in France?** One of the first organic revelations on this performance was the need to work with cliché and fantasy, to let them be deployed onstage and for the work to take place in the eye of those watching. **The only rule here is to question the colonial and sexist subconscious directed at bodies too often made invisible.** The effort on the part of those watching is palpable, they are invited to be patient or on the contrary to become impatience itself, to bring about change. Onstage, and in society.

Performed by **a deeply connected duo with opposite strengths.** One is practically furniture, immobilized, drowning in a floor that is never white enough: She's the one who is manipulated but who is in charge.

The other one is free, powerful and mischievous, she never takes her eyes off us. She becomes lofty height, she is the divinity of (re)construction.

Together, they calmly dissect a history of black women through the suspended images they create and the tragic tales they speak. **How do you exist and care for yourself when for so many years black women have been bound to the mission of caring for the world?** Waiting on people, watching other people's kids and elders, cleaning, doing hair, washing, assisting, protecting, feeding. Without dying.

The angular cold white space sweats, to maintain it is a Sisyphean task. The show uses hypnotic contemplation and pedagogical repetition to reformat those minds that wish to be disalienated from a blinding system. Without ever forgetting the humor and mischievousness that work like oil to make the questions penetrate the deepest layers of dermis.

La Compagnie Dans le ventre



CARING FOR YOURSELF AND CARING FOR THE WORLD

conversation with Rébecca Chaillon and Aurore Déon

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Aurore and Rébecca, the two of you are at the heart of the performance *Whitewashing*, which you describe as a variation on *Carte noire nommée désir*. If it's something like a musical variation on a similar theme, how would you describe this theme?

Aurore – “Whitewashing” normally refers to white actors playing racialized characters. In the show, we begin by taking the term literally, by washing the floor with bleach, and whitening not only Rébecca’s skin, but also her eyes. That allows us to create a thread dealing with the issue of care and hygiene: the way you do your hair, the way you wash, the way you make yourself “look beautiful”...

Rébecca – Starting from the term “whitewashing” is also a way of thinking about the projection of black women’s bodies, of our bodies onstage. And that begins with confronting subconscious racism, since we start by cleaning the stage, with this idea that in theaters, black women are still mostly the ones doing the cleaning.

Aurore – We play with the signs of the white society in which we move by reappropriating the color white. We start from an environment that is initially crushing, overwhelming, but which we twist and transform to make it our own. And the relationship to whiteness is very frontal, nearly brutal.

What is the audience’s place in this process?

Rébecca – In terms of the scenography, we shift between configurations where the audience is on one, two or three sides... But unlike *Carte noire nommée désir*, where we create a separation in the audience, with the racialized women seated on one side, in *Whitewashing* the audience is a whole. And we put spectators in a participatory situation that isn’t necessarily comfortable: For example, some audience members have to hold the strands of hair that Aurore is braiding on my head. These braids then form a washing line on which we hang photographs of black women taken from magazines. It’s as if the audience were forced to participate in the creation of the image that is going to give a place to black women’s bodies.

More generally, we’re looking to create attention in and tension with the room: We start with something very long, very slow, hypnotic, as if to test the audience. The way we draw things out shifts the expectation regarding the images our bodies will produce.

What are your respective roles in these images you create?

Rébecca – For my part, I wear white contact lenses, which means that I see whiter than white, that is to say I don't see much of anything at all. I'm a somewhat obsessional figure of powerlessness: I stay close to the ground, I don't move much, I have little visual contact with the people around me. I'm also the one who gets manipulated, but little by little I embody a form of resistance: I'm the one who holds the line, being manipulated like an object doesn't prevent me from being a figure of power. That's the opposite of Aurore, who moves around, is free in her movements, and makes contact with the audience with her eyes and her smile. While I'm at ground level, she creates a figure of verticality; where I'm in a form of tragedy, she's more in a comedic register.



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Aurore – In my stage work, I've liked working on an ambiguity: the fact that I'm opposite Rébecca in a place of care, without it being clear whether that is good or bad for her. To do her braids, I put her in a very constraining position, which raises the double principle at stake: taking care of yourself, while duly noting that spaces of care can also be oppressive. Going to the hairdresser's means waiting for hours, and it hurts. It isn't easy to manage or to endure. Through my position, I show the blurry uneasiness of the double injunction to care and suffer.

Rébecca – In our society, black women are in maintenance jobs, cleaning, taking care of other people's kids and elderly people, in other words caring for other bodies. There is a colonial organization that prevents us from having the means of caring for ourselves, taking care of our hair and skin, being considered beautiful, accessing mental health care...

What role do words play in this physical performance?

Rébecca – The first words spoken raise the question of the lack of desire for oneself and of the desire projected on us. We do it in a joking manner, by reading personal ads, and by inviting women audience members to tell us their own personal ads in the moment.

But we also both convey a poetic tale in which a character dives into an ocean abyss, discovers what she wants, what she is no longer willing to accept, and proposes to return to land to share it with people.

Aurore – In the text I contribute, I call upon a figure who doesn't land in the right place, who is subjected to a freezing, aggressive, desiccating nature. She then needs to find a nourishing nature, one that makes you grow, both physically and spiritually: What powders, oils, and butters do you need to raise yourself up? That allows us to make the connection between caring for yourself and caring for the world.

Interview conducted by Laetitia Dumont-Lewi, April 2025.



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THE TEAM

RÉBECCA CHAILLON

Rébecca Chaillon is a director, author, performer, member of the collective group RER Q and Scorpio Ascendant Taurus. Activism, debates and performing naked on stage is a second nature. Her artistic work revolves around theatre, performance, poetry and explores the domination-based relationships and the struggle against discriminations. She loves to work around the desires and the violences that act on bodies, with a lot of love, humor and food.

Founded in 2006, her company Dans Le Ventre, seeks to be a platform for artistic exploring of minoritized identities in our society. With a highly personal approach to writing, whose themes are at once intimate and political, she has created works taking various forms, including: *L'Estomac dans la peau* (2011), a solo show about bulimia; *Où la chèvre est attachée, il faut qu'elle broute* (2018), an athletic and artistic piece that explores discrimination through women's football ; *Carte noire nommée désir* (2021), an a performative piece about the construction of desire in black women ; *Plutôt vomir que faillir* (2022), about adolescence to question a world made by and for adults, and, more recently, *La Gouineraie* (2025), a performance co-signed with Sandra Calderan, which deconstruct the myth of the traditional rural family.

She is an associate artist at the TnBA, Théâtre National de Bordeaux en Aquitaine, at the TPM, Théâtre Public Montreuil, at the Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles, part of the Maison de la Culture d'Amiens constellation, and is a satellite artist at the Théâtre Sorano – Scène conventionnée (Toulouse).

She is represented by L'Arche, agence théâtrale. www.arche-editeur.com where Boudin Biguine Best of Banane, including several of her theatrical texts (2023), *Décolonisons les Arts* (2018) and *Lettres aux jeunes poétesses* (2021), collective collections are published.



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AUORE DÉON



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Aurore Déon is an actress, performer, director, and co-artistic director of Cie Comme Si since 2008. She has written and directed shows such as *Cendrillon* and *Baskets Rouges* (a dystopian tale of how to stop counting sheep), blending theater, video, and dance. A multi-disciplinary artist, Aurore trained in theater at Paris III and EDT91 (class I), as well as in Hip Hop/House Dance and Tap Dance, with studies spanning Paris, New York, and Barcelona. In 2004, she won the Juste Debout International Battle in the Hip Hop category, and she continues to explore a hybrid artistic practice that integrates all of these disciplines. For 10 years, she worked with Cie Entrées de Jeu, specializing in forum theater.

She has also performed under the direction of Robert Wilson and the folk group CocoRosie, as well as Julia Vidity, Marie Piemontese, Souâd Belhaddad, and Matthieu Roy. Notably, she appeared in *Prodiges*, which was nominated for Best Cast by *The Stage* magazine at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Additionally, she collaborates with Rébecca Chaillon, writing and performing in the shows *Carte Noire Nommée Désir* and *WhiteWashing*, the latter winning the Zurich Theater Spektakel Festival award.

Aurore also appears in Elisabeth Vogler's film *Années 20*, which won an award at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York. She produces and hosts the podcast *Ça va la vie d'artiste?*, and regularly leads workshops and courses in writing, acting, movement, and performance for a wide audience.

Her written work *Si Ça Ne Tenait Qu'à Moi, Je Raconterais D'autres Histoires* is currently on tour as a performative musical reading.

In September 2025, she became educational director of the Essonne Departmental Theatre School in Évry-Courcouronnes (Ile de France).

SUZANNE PECHENART

Suzanne Péchenart has been working with the Dans le Ventre company since 2017 as a designer and lighting director, stage manager and stage manager. She will become the company's technical director in 2023. She has also collaborated with Cie Artincidence and Dromosphère on lighting design, and with the Grand Sbam orchestra on set design. She plays bass and synthesizer in the post-punk band Tisiphone.



CONTACT

Mélanie Charreton - O.u.r.s.a M.I.n.o.r

Production Director, Development

06 71 07 27 52

melanie.charreton@oursaminor.fr

COMPAGNIE DANS LE VENTRE

4 rue de Chatillon, 60100 Creil

www.dansleventre.com