

Sand Flight

by Ingri Fiksdal and Jonas Corell Petersen



[Link to Teaser](#)

Introduction

Sand Flight is a large-scale site-specific performance featuring 8 performers (including 5 local dancers) and a local choir. The performance is set on a 6m-tall sand dune constructed in urban, public space. Imagining a future where cities dissolve into sand, *Sand Flight* explores the fragility of our environments and the shifting relationship between urban landscapes and nature.

The performance will premiere in June 2025 at Toronto's iconic The Bentway, a public space beneath the Gardiner Expressway, and will subsequently tour internationally to other cities and venues, each time adapting to the unique character of its new location.

Concept

Sand Flight deals with our changing relationship to the natural forces due to global warming. In the Bronze Ages in the Nordics, sun-worshipping was an important part of the culture, as observed through archaeological findings such as the [The Trundholm Sun Chariot](#) (Solvognen) in Denmark (pictured below). In recent history, urban planning and architecture has been celebrated for the ways in which they maximize access to light. But as temperatures are rising globally, the need for shade-worshipping is on the steps, even in the Nordics.

With *Sand Flight*, we aim to create a speculation on how this shade-worshipping could take shape in a near future through a quotidian yet ritualistic performance. The performance will take place outdoors in public space on a 6m high constructed sand dune which partially covers existing structures/architecture. This installation/ scenography is inspired by the Danish phenomenon of sand-flight (sandflugt) where the migrating sand dune [Råbjerg Mile](#) gradually moves north-east with the wind as much as 18m per year. Toronto, where the performance will premiere, is like many major cities located near water. The site of The Bentway is placed on sandy ground on the seabed in front of Front Street, the old shoreline. The same applies to for instance the original sandy shoreline at Gl. Strand (Old Beach area) in Copenhagen.

In *Sand Flight*, the constructed sand dune seems to have emerged from the old seabed under us, as a reminiscent of the early history of the city as well as a speculation into a possible future where cities have been atomized to grains of sand. It highlights how quickly our local environments might change under an ever more scorching sun and such the impermanence of our cities/lives/civilization. The dune hosts atoms of myriads of past lives as well as current ones.

Eight performers and a large choir will be moving and singing on and around the sand dune, where the shade-worshipping takes shape as a negotiation between becoming nature/sand and fighting it. As climate-fiction, the performance speculates on how nature is coming for us now that Modernity's quest to conquer it has backfired.

Collaboration

Sand Flight is a large-scale multi-disciplinary performance that blends live and recorded music, dance, text, scenography/site and costume and where all of these elements are equally important to the artistic expression at large. This means that a close collaboration between the artistic team members coming from Denmark and Norway is central to the development and creation of the project. The creation is commissioned by curators Anna Gallagher-Ross and Alex Rand at [The Bentway](#) (Toronto) which is in charge of production in collaboration with Fiksdal dans stiftelse (NO). Additionally, we will be working with the Toronto-based choir Viva Voices and 5 dancers associated with Toronto Dance Theatre (TDT). Both Viva Voices, TDT and Fiksdal dans focus extensively on diversity in regard to different socioeconomic background, ethnicity, religion, age, or other status both within the extended artistic team, but also in relation to audiences.

After the first edition of *Sand Flight* in Toronto, we will produce several new site-specific editions in other countries and cities. Each iteration will be developed in close collaboration with a new presenting venue (festival/theater/cultural organization) and their staff, local dancers and a local choir. The performance will be tailored to the unique structures and landscapes of each location. This makes the project far-reaching in terms of Nordic and international collaboration and dialogue.

Choreography

When developing the choreography, we will work with how the sand dune offers a play with gravity that a flat surface doesn't. Moving up/falling down and traversing the dune in different ways will be central choreographic building blocks. We will need to develop new ways of moving with the constant risk of the sand sliding away under the performers' feet. One approach could be to resist the sliding and to continuously fight the falling whilst moving. Another could be to let go and follow the sand's lead – letting the bodies "become sand" and create various forms of symbiosis between the human bodies and the dune.

To get a sense of this early in the process, we'll work outdoors as much as possible, seeking out various sand pits, hills, beaches, and even snowy slopes (Oslo in February). Based on the experiences we gather, we'll use the studio as a place to regroup, watch videos of outdoor-testing and practise choreographic and compositional possibilities, to yet again move outside to continue testing.

An overarching compositional idea is that of a fictional shadow-worshipping ritual. Sun-worshipping rituals exist or have existed in many parts of the world and some of these are depicted in the rock carvings from the Bronze-ages which can be seen in Østfold in Norway and in Tanumshede in Sweden. Could we imagine shadow-worshipping as a negation of sun-worshipping? The performers embodying the negative spaces of the sun-worshippers postures and movement? Or do they adhere to some entirely different logic we must develop?

By the end of our 4 weeks with the Oslo-based performers, the composers and costume designer, we will have a rough score of the performance at large. For the last 3 weeks of the creation process, we'll work in Toronto with an additional 5 performers as well as the local choir. Here we will keep developing the work and expand it to this total group of 8 performers, working between the studio and some local, natural sand dunes. The last week leading up to premiere, the constructed sand dune will be ready on site. Here, we will finalize all elements and tweak the performance into its final form.

Music

The music will consist of a recorded soundtrack played on a multichannel sound system as well as a choir performing live with the performance. The soundtrack involves soundscapes that enhance some of the sounds already present in urban space as well as adding to them. It will also include sounds that bear witness to the passing of geological

time, such as the sound of continental drift, earthquakes, volcano eruptions and more. The soundtrack is developed in close relation to the development of the text and choreography and can support ongoing movement and boost it, but also create tension or opposition whenever this seems dramaturgically more fit. Two or three times throughout the performance, the soundtrack is interrupted by the live choir that performs carefully chosen historical choir music as a way of referring to multiple times and spaces also within human history. The choir will perform both far away from the sand dune, audiences hearing them from afar or as they are approaching, but also from the sand dune itself. The choir is such a choreographic component in the performance.

Text

The text will take its inspiration from the figure of shade, which in a number of mythologies is understood as the spirit or the ghost of past times. The text will work with deep history, putting together research and speculation on the past and possible future to a draped mesh. It will be developed in collaboration with the Oslo-based actor and will be integrated into the performance through various means. It can be performed by the actor live or as part of the soundtrack, it could be performed (sung or spoken) by the choir and shouted by the dancers.

We are sensitive to hierarchies of meaning when combining choreography and text/theatre and aim to build a dramaturgy where these elements flow together and add complexity to the total expression rather than the text becoming instrumental to the movement or the other way around.

Scenography and costume

The scenography will consist of the mentioned sand dune which will be 6m high. This will be constructed of a solid base (larger rocks and gravel) with a layer of sand on top to keep its shape and stay semi-solid. The sand dune can partially cover already existing structure or architecture of a given urban space. The audience can sit or stand either all around the sand dune or on three sides of it, depending on how the sand dune connects to existing buildings or structures and how these allow for visibility.

The costumes will be based on protective wear from motor sports as a way of keeping the performers safe in the sand dune. Gloves, knee and shoulder protection, and possibly masks will be needed. This will be combined with other visual elements and types of garments to widen the aesthetic and possible readings.

The construction and safety of the sand dune will be developed and guaranteed by a team of technicians and engineers at The Bentway.

Artist Bios

Ingri Midgard Fiksdal is a choreographer based in Oslo, Norway. She holds a PhD in artistic research from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts titled *Affective Choreographies* (2019).

Ingri's work on affect has in recent years taken her into discourses on perspective and privilege. She is currently working on a number of projects that research the posthuman and with these hegemonies of knowledge and power. Here, choreography is understood as a format of speculative fiction that can propose complex and manifold understandings of body, gender, species, ethnicity, knowledge and history. Ingri is concerned with how practice and theory are entangled in her work in a way where neither is perceived as anterior to the other. Since 2020, Ingri has been an Affiliated Artistic Researcher with CoFUTURES at the University of Oslo (www.cofutures.org). The CoFUTURES group led by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay researches global futurisms from non- anglophone traditions. Ingri's work has in recent years been performed at Obscene Festival in Seoul, Homo Novus in Riga, Kunstenfestival in Brussels, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Santarcangelo festival, Beijing Contemporary Dance Festival, Sommerszene in Salzburg, Reykjavík Art Museum, brut-Wien, Teatro di Roma, Harbourfront Centre Toronto, Contemporary Art Center Cincinnati, BUDA Kortrijk, Tanzhaus NRW in Dusseldorf and Steirischer Herbst Festival in Graz, alongside extensive touring in Norway. Ingri's work is supported by Fri scenekunst – kunstnerskap from Arts and Culture Norway.

Jonas Corell Petersen was born in Copenhagen and has studied theater science, art history, and philosophy at The University of Copenhagen. He has a five-year education in theater directing from The Oslo National Academy of Art. His work has been performed in Norway, England, The Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark. Petersen is currently appointed house director at The Norwegian National Theatre. He won the European Fast Forward award for young directors for his diploma production, *Young Werther's Sufferings* (2010). In 2012, he was awarded The Hedda Award for best youth production for I-IK-EG. Other productions include the dramatizing and directing of *BABY*, *Don Quijote*, and *ZOO*. Petersen has recently written and directed two plays performed at the Norwegian National Theatre, *We chew on the bones of time* (2015) and *Island* (2016), which both could be seen as works of magical realism.

Touring and sustainability

When touring the performance we travel with 3 Oslo-based performers and collaborate with 5 local dancers and a local choir of approximately 40 singers in each new city we perform. This greatly reduces the team on tour and related emissions whilst still making it possible to present a large-scale performance. It also provides local performers with paid work and an opportunity for artistic exchange between the traveling team and the local scene in each city. This can stimulate further artistic dialogue in the Nordics and beyond. Practically, the local choir would get the music sent up to six months ahead of the performance to have time to practice. The local dancers would participate in a 5-day paid workshop where they would learn the choreography ahead of the first performance. Each of these new editions of the performance would be adjusted in relation to the

collaboration with local participants and to local conditions and site, which makes the performance constantly evolve. As of now, we have upcoming performances planned in the following contexts and cities after the Toronto-premiere (to be finally confirmed):

- Nordic House, Torshavn (FO)
- CODA festival, Oslo (NO)
- Metropolis festival, Copenhagen (DK)
- DansIT, Trondheim (NO)
- Festival Dias da Danca, Porto (PT)
- Homo Novus Festival, Riga (LA)

Timeline

- **December 2024 - June 2025:** Research and development in Oslo, Sortland, Copenhagen and Toronto.
- **19.6-22.6.2025:** *Premiere* and performances at The Bentway, Toronto.
- **Autumn 2025 and beyond:** Touring in international cities, including Torshavn, Oslo, Trondheim, Copenhagen, Porto, and Riga.

Artistic team

Concept, choreography, direction and text: Ingri Fiksdal (NO) and Jonas Corell Petersen (DK)

Performers: Pernille Holden (NO), Sudesh Adhana (NO/IN) and Sigurd Myhre (TBC)
5 dancers from the host city (Toronto Dance Theatre for the premiere)

Local Choir: 40 singers (Toronto-based Viva Voices for the premiere)

Costumes: David Gehrt (DK)

Music: Lasse Marhaug (NO)

Arrangement for choir: Gaute Tønder (NO)

Production and distribution for Fiksdal dans stiftelse: Nicole Schuchardt (DE)

Video and photos: Mira Adoumier

Co-Produced by: The Bentway and Fiksdal dans stiftelse, in association with Toronto Dance Theatre

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