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"★★★★☆☆ Sand Flight – Humans and Nature in a Hopeful Work About a New World Order"

by [Dorte Grannov Balslev](#)

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[Metropolis](#) Festival presents the dance performance *Sand Flight* by choreographer Ingri Fiksdal and director and playwright Jonas Corell Petersen, which had its world premiere in Toronto in June.

Among Prøvestenen's mountains of stone, sand, and gravel, which date back millions of years, the planet's cyclical renewals and, currently, our ability to navigate the world after a climate collapse are explored.

The weather grows wetter, wilder, and warmer. The rain has momentarily opened the floodgates again, gathering in puddles while the audience huddles against the wind, dressed in rain gear. The performance is designed for life on tour with local dancers and choirs, while the two Oslo-based dancers, Sudesh Adhana and Pernille Holden, travel along. A large grid gate separates us from an industrial area of building materials until the announcement: "Now we go to the theater!"

An impressively tall, pyramid-shaped mountain of sand rises before us. Lasse Marhaug's soundscapes begin with a deep rumbling as if from the earth's core. It repeats for the first many minutes, as if the sand is telling us that it was, is, and always will be—unlike the fleeting traces of different lives. Behind the sand mountain, gray and barren stone mountains rise in the background between cranes, while a figure approaches in the distance.

Mountains of sand, stone, and gravel form a dramatic scenography in *Sand Flight*.



Photo: Morten Lundrup

Cyclical World Order

One person becomes seven, all climbing the sand dune from different angles and beginning their sensory interaction with the material. A call from the top is answered by the vocal ensemble ÆTLA, who sing articulated and atmospheric a cappella in microphones behind the audience. At this pre-linguistic stage, vocal tones initially drip slowly and develop into harmonies as another layer of evolution. The newly composed, sensory, and—especially toward the end—moving choral work is created by the Norwegian composer Gaute Tønder.

Sand arises from rocks broken down by water, wind, and ice, constantly changing shape and expression. In the same way, the performers embody how, since time immemorial, we have lived unprotected in deserts as nomads. Movements must adapt to the conditions of the sand and weather until surrender. Without an actual plot, we freely associate as witnesses to the bodies' various strategies for adaptation under inhospitable conditions.

“Carrion, which the sand moves down the mountain toward a new cyclical world order”.

One dancer has moved outside the sand while another stands on a neighboring mountain in a position of homage. The choral work pauses as more industrial sounds—like ship horns and metallic vibrations—take over. Emotions fluctuate from collective homage with arms raised overhead to twisted, lonely bodies lying as carrion, which the sand moves down the mountain toward a new cyclical world order.

The reorientation of living species

The scenography is nature itself, which along the way provides both rustling in the microphones, dramatic clouds, and warm sunset light casting shadows over the barren mountain landscape. Costume designer David Gehrt has made the dancers stand out in brightly colored costumes that protect against the sand—especially as they suddenly take the mountain with detailed, animal-like movements featuring long, articulated necks and abrupt head turns.

They scrape at the sand, throw themselves onto their stomachs, shake, and huddle together into a clattering, humming soundscape. The choir joins in with gliding tones alternating with short, shrill sounds. The dancers fling themselves from the top in daredevil acrobatics, landing in rolls or being caught by the sand. Their vastly different body types result in distinctive expressions and movement languages, which they use to explore the sand.

“The dancers relate to the qualities of the sand through their individual physiques.”

This raises high expectations for technical variation but also demands an understanding that this is not a flat stage—it is a living, sloped surface. There is clearly inspiration from improvisational practices, with a keen awareness that the wide-open stage and the nature of the sand require larger movements and thoughtful consideration of dynamics and speed.



Photo: Morten Lundrup

Farewell to the world as we know it

The choral work and sound design explore various cyclical lives on Earth and humanity's response. The piece concludes with a classical, harmonious expression—almost like a requiem or a farewell to the world as we know it. Beautifully performed by the singers, who must intone with both wind and voices. Symbolically, the sun slowly sets behind the city while the dancers slowly descend from the mountain one last time.

“We are left with hope—that we can adapt step by step and create meaning in chaos.”

The work feels somewhat installation-like, as the audience views it from their own specific, physical vantage points and cannot move around. The intentions become airy, fleeting, and difficult to gather into wholes that can be absorbed as realizations and emotions. Like a drawing in the sand washed away by the next wave. Just as unpredictable and fragmented as facing a new world order, where the full picture is missing and strategies must constantly be reconsidered.

We are left with hope—that we can adapt step by step and create meaning in chaos. Just as our existence is part of nature's order—in contrast to the last 200 years—it is equally fascinating and atmospheric how nature co-creates with singers and dancers. The weather governs the qualities of the sand, the direction of sound, and the entire lighting of the work. The hierarchy is dissolved.

Credits:

- Concept, Choreography, Direction & Text: Ingri Fiksdal & Jonas Corell Petersen
- Costumes: David Gehrt
- Composer & Sound Design: Lasse Marhaug
- Choir Composition: Gaute Tønder
- Performers: Sudesh Adhana, Pernille Holden, Jonathan Ibsen, Magali Camps, Rob Hesp, Bjørk Mynte Paulse, Marcus Alexander Roydes
- Choir: ÆTLA Vocal Ensemble
- Originally developed with Sudesh Adhana & Pernille Holden, including a wider cast
- Performances at Prøvestenen from July 30 – August 3, 2025