



The performance first shown at the Oslo Opera House last winter is now playing at the Bergen International Festival.
c EIRIK BREKKE

It's time to drum a little harder.

REVIEW: Together, we need to find truth and reconciliation.

DO WE REALLY HAVE ANYTHING to applaud?

The question slowly arose when the performance 'Birget; Ways to deal, ways to heal' transitioned from the Carte Blanche dancers rhythmically clapping at the audience, to the common applause, during the premiere at the dirty-white Oslo Opera House on 9 February this year.

Don't get me wrong. As a work of art, the show deserves all the applause it gets. Watching the performance again during the Bergen International Festival cemented my view: Annabelle Bonn ry, artistic director at Carte Blanche, knows how to get to the heart of Norwegian social debate. She has enabled contemporary dance, whose forms of expressions are supposedly so strange and inaccessible, to get straight to the point.

SHE INVITED the choreographer

Elle Sofe Sara and the artist and architect Joar Nango to collaborate with the dancers at Carte Blanche, the Norwegian national company of contemporary dance. This last part is easy to forget. The Carte Blanche dancers belong to Bergen, whether it's Daniel Mariblanca, Aslak Aune Nyg rd, Nadege Kubwayo, Trine Lise Moe, Caroline Eckly or any of the other dancers. But that's wrong. Strictly speaking, they belong to the whole of humanity.

Choreographer Elle Sofe Sara has a number of productions behind her, both as a filmmaker and choreographer, since graduating from dance school in London and taking a master's degree in choreography in Oslo. The audience ought to remember the artist and architect Joar Nango from 2021. As an artist in the International Festival, he transformed Bergen Kunsthall into a landscape from a place far away. There, you use what you have to build what you need, whether it's bits of wood, a worn-out tarpaulin, car parts or stretched halibut stomach to make something translucent.

THE DEPARTURE POINT FOR THE ARTISTS is the experience of the Sami people.

The result is 'birget', a Sami expression for getting by – or managing – when everything is in flux.

And nowadays we need it.

Above the noise in the foyer at Studio Bergen, we can already hear the voices of parliamentarians. They are emanating from a portable speaker dangling from a fully packed sleigh. It is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission being debated in the Norwegian Parliament – and in precisely the way I love parliamentary debate. Everyone waits their turn. Confidently addresses the Parliament's President. That's exactly what I'm glad about whenever I see video clips from the British Parliament, where grownups boo in each other's faces.

BUT THEN THE VOICE of His Majesty King Harald resonates in the room. We hear an opening speech in the Sami Parliament. The audience is reverently hushed by the sound of the King's voice. The dancers glide among us and lead us on a journey into the theatre, pulling the sleigh behind them.

You really ought to experience for yourself everything that happens in there. For me, the performance was about the distance between the decision makers and those who have to live with the decisions. About going about daily life and making the best of the situation. About the feebleness inherent in political language, when all you can do is refer to good intentions and practical considerations, that everything is someone else's responsibility, that you must be cautious and ask for inquiries and commissions, hearings and

processes. Even after the Supreme Court has ruled that something is a violation of human rights.

The debate about the Sami people is probably very Norwegian. The responsibility is international. The art of dance offers the bodily experience. The feeling that it's time to drum a little harder, clap a little faster – and that we need to do it together.



Grethe Melby
Theatre reviewer
DANCE

'Birget; ways to deal, ways to heal'

Who: Elle Sofe Sara, Joar Nango and the dancers at Carte Blanche
Where: Studio Bergen **When:** 25 May–3 June

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The departure point for the artists is the experience of the Sami people.
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