

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Digidence Presents Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui & Damien Jalet's
Fiercely Resonant and Towering Creation
- *Babel 7.16* -

Recorded at its World Premiere at the 70th Festival d'Avignon in July 2016, the Monumental Work Revisits and Re-envisions the Choreographic Duo's Olivier Award Winning Babel(words)

Vancouver, BC – DanceHouse, in partnership with **Digidence**, announces the Canadian digital broadcast of ***Babel 7.16*** from two of the greatest names in contemporary dance - Belgian choreographers **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui & Damien Jalet**, **streaming December 8 to 19, 2021**. Using the biblical story of the Tower of Babel as its jumping off point, this new version of the duo's critically acclaimed 2010 work, *Babel(words)*, gathers 22 dancers from 15 nations on stage in a driving, kinetic exploration of the complexity, chaos, and possibilities that arise from diverse cultures striving to coexist.

The broadcast of *Babel 7.16* is due to the coordinated effort of Digidence, a national initiative formed in response to COVID-19 between four of Canada's leading dance presenters: DanceHouse (Vancouver), Harbourfront Centre (Toronto), the National Arts Centre (Ottawa), and Danse Danse (Montreal), in association with Springboard Performance (Calgary).

"When *Babel(words)* premiered in 2010, its vision of a fractured world seemed utterly of the moment. Praising the creation, The Guardian hailed the work as 'the most fiercely resonant dance theatre of the decade.' Six years later, following the terrorist attacks in Paris and at the dawn of the Trump era, *Babel 7.16* only seemed more relevant to a divided globe," says Jim Smith, Artistic and Executive Director of DanceHouse and Digidence Partner. "And here in 2021, as we are siloed by social media, as a global pandemic geographically and socially isolates us - this work's multitude of competing, disconnected voices feels more of this time than ever."

In the Biblical story, humankind attempts to draw closer to God by building a tower toward him. Refusing to share his domain, the deity punishes his worshippers by dividing them into competing nations and languages. Working from this seed of inspiration, Cherkaoui and Jalet assembled an enormously diverse group of dancers - who bring not only their bodies, but their voices, dialects, and personal stories of connection and withdrawal to the stage. Their stories are further amplified by British sculptor Antony Gormley's light-catching steel cubes and imposing three-dimensional structures that define and redefine the space in seemingly infinite geometric permutations.

Cherkaoui and Jalet heighten their distinctive, singular movement vocabulary through an original score that is as diverse as the dancers themselves; its heavy, propulsive rhythms combine taiko drums, bamboo flute, kokyu violin, and more into a fusion of Eastern and Western sounds.

Along with its diverse voices, the work embodies an eclectic array of tones - at times intimate and sensual, at times irreverent and quirky. Among the various visions brought to the stage are a *Kama Sutra* pas de deux, multi-lingual border guard robots, smooth-talking Frenchmen who regress to cavemen, and even a monstrous amalgam of six dancers that lays waste to everything in sight.

Babel 7.16 was a special commission for the 70th anniversary of the Festival d'Avignon in 2016 and the Digidence broadcast was filmed live by Roberto Maria Grassi at its world premiere at the Cour d'Honneur of the Palais des Papes.

Cherkaoui made his choreographic debut in 1999 with Andrew Wale's contemporary musical, *Anonymous Society*. Since then he has choreographed more than 50 pieces and won several awards, including two Olivier Awards, three Ballet Tanz awards for best choreographer (2008, 2011, 2017) and the Kairos Prize (2009) for his artistic vision and his quest for

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intercultural dialogue. Cherkaoui has been Artistic Director at the Royal Ballet Flanders since 2015 and has recently created new works for English National Ballet, Royal Ballet, and Paris Opera Ballet, as well as served as choreographer for the Alanis Morissette Broadway musical *Jagged Little Pill* for which he received a Best Choreography Tony Award nomination.

Jalet is an independent choreographer and dancer whose work has been presented around the world. He has worked as a choreographer and dancer for companies such as Ballet C. de la B., Sasha Waltz and Guests, Chunky Move, Eastman, NYDC, Hessisches Staatballett, Paris Opera Ballet, Scottish Dance Theatre, Icelandic Dance Company, Gothenburg Dance company, and many more. His work as a choreographer can be seen in the 2020 film *Suspiria* starring Tilda Swinton and directing credits include Antwerp Opera's *Pelleas and Melissande* - alongside Cherkaoui and with a set by Marina Abramovic.

Antony Gormley is widely acclaimed for his sculptures, installations and public artworks that investigate the relationship of the human body to space. He has always had great interest in watching other bodies in dance and considers the dancer's life the most generous and demanding of any profession, using life itself as the primary medium of communication. Widely exhibited throughout the UK and internationally, his work in dance includes the critically acclaimed collaborations with Akram Khan, Hofesh Shechter, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Nitin Sawhney on *zero degrees* (2005, Sadler's Wells) and again with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui on *Sutra* (2008, Sadler's Wells); *Babel(words)* (2010, Sadler's Wells) for which he was given an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance for the design of the set (2011); *Noetic* (2014, Göteborg Opera) and *Icon* (2016, Göteborg Opera).

For tickets and information on *Babel 7.16* and Digidance, visit: dancehouse.ca.

About Digidance

Digidance is a joint initiative of Canadian dance presenters to deliver exceptional, full length Canadian and international dance content online to patrons across the country. Created in July 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Digidance consists of the following leading dance presenters: [DanceHouse](https://dancehouse.ca) (Vancouver), [Harbourfront Centre](https://harbourfrontcentre.ca) (Toronto), the [National Arts Centre](https://nationalartscentre.ca) (Ottawa), and [Danse Danse](https://danse-danse.ca) (Montreal).

By joining expertise, experience, and international networks, the partner organizations are better equipped to pivot to presenting work online - a first for all four organizations. Beyond the short term response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on presenting live work in theatres, Digidance will ensure a rich legacy of dance in Canada for future years through continued presentations and access to Canadian and international dance works without the barriers of transportation, physical mobility, and affordability.

LISTING INFORMATION

***Babel 7.16* Choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui & Damien Jalet**

Dates: Dec. 8 to 19, 2021
Video on Demand Streaming in Canada only.
Available from midnight PDT on Dec. 8.

Price: From \$15 + applicable taxes

Event Link: dancehouse.ca

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