



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 17, 2024

**DanceHouse and Dancers of Damelahamid Present Vancouver Premiere of  
Elle Sofe Sara's Potent Commentary on Reclamation and Identity in  
*Vástádus eana – The answer is land***

***Indigenous Sámi choreographer and filmmaker Elle Sofe Sara's new work inspired by  
anti-colonial and environmental activism and Sámi spiritual practices***

**Vancouver, BC — DanceHouse and Dancers of Damelahamid** present the Vancouver premiere of the politically-charged and spiritually-centred work, ***Vástádus eana – The answer is land***, on stage **February 23 and 24, 2024 at 8pm** at the **Vancouver Playhouse**. Choreographed by **Elle Sofe Sara**, the full-length work is a powerful exploration and reclamation of the central tenets of Sámi cultural identity: community and kinship between people and nature. Having been subjected to almost-total cultural obliteration through residential schools, language suppression, and religious conversion, *Vástádus eana – The answer is land* embodies a critically important message about the foundational attachment arising from community and culture, and offers a return to dignity, healing, and ultimately the possibility of a new relationship with the natural world for the Sámi people.

"This work is like nothing we have ever experienced before at DanceHouse. Through a radical act of resilience, the performers open the evening by guiding the audience through a traditional spiritual practice outdoors before shepherding them into the theatre," says Jim Smith, Artistic and Executive Director of DanceHouse. "By reframing the western theatre going experience, we are invited to be active participants in the performers' restorative journey toward reclaiming their Indigenous identity and traditional customs."

Taking inspiration from a poem that foregrounds the relationship between the Sámi people and their homeland, Sofe Sara's choreography – at once both playful and bold – speaks to the strength and resilience of the Sámi people, as well as the community's generational trauma caused by hundreds of years of colonialism and forced assimilation. Sámi people are Indigenous to Sápmi, the traditional territory that spans the northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, including modern day Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia.

"For Indigenous communities from around the world, artistic practices such as storytelling, singing, and dancing are an integral part of the celebration and preservation of a people's cultural identity and overall well-being," says Margaret Grenier, Artistic Director of Dancers of Damelahamid. "Sharing these practices offers a deep sense of healing and reclamation over their spiritual practices, and offers the opportunity to rebuild community and connection to the natural world."

Hailed by NRK – Norway's public broadcaster – as "powerful in a quiet yet magnificent way," *Vástádus eana – The answer is land* features seven Sámi and Norwegian women performers who combine ritualized movement with polyphonic yoiks – traditional mountain songs – from composer **Frode Fjellheim** to hypnotic effect. Dressed in traditional Sámi headwear and fully black ensembles, the work opens with megaphones in hand, in tribute to activists who fight to make the world a better place

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through the protection of the environment and their communities. The performers move in steady formations and repetitive movements to reveal their resolute strength in community.

Co-choreography is by **Alexandra Wingate**, dramaturge by **Thomas Schaupp**, costume design by **Elle Sofe Sara** and **Ramona Salo**, set design by **Elin Melberg**, and light design by **Øystein Heitmann**.

Hailing from Guovdageaidnu, Norway, Elle Sofe Sara is a choreographer, director and filmmaker. Sara's work uncovers a space in which the past and the present coincide, giving voice to often overlooked areas of Sámi physicality and unspoken rituals. She has collaborated internationally with artists in China, Finland, and Greenland, among others. She is also the co-founder of DÁIDDADÁLLU, a Sámi contemporary art collective. She holds an MA in choreography from the Oslo Academy of Arts and studied dance at the LabanTrinity School in London, UK.

**For tickets and further information, visit: [dancehouse.ca](https://dancehouse.ca)**

**About DanceHouse ([dancehouse.ca](https://dancehouse.ca))**

DanceHouse connects Vancouver audiences and the local arts community to the international world of dance by presenting exceptional companies that are recognized for their excellence, innovation, and international reputation. Since 2008, DanceHouse has presented vibrant and inspiring companies from Canada and around the world. In addition to the performances on stage, DanceHouse offers a suite of engagement opportunities and a chance for the general public and local artistic community to engage with the presented artists and their work.

**About Dancers of Damelahamid ([damelahamid.ca](https://damelahamid.ca))**

The Dancers of Damelahamid is an Indigenous dance company from the Northwest Coast with a rich history of masked dance. The Dancers of Damelahamid has produced the annual Coastal Dance Festival since 2008, presenting Indigenous dance from the Northwest Coast as well as hosting guest national and international Indigenous artists. The company's full-length works include *Setting the Path* (2004), *Sharing the Spirit* (2007), *Visitors Who Never Left* (2009), and *Spirit Transforming* (2012). Newly created works include *Flicker* (2016) and *Mînowin* (2019).

**LISTING INFORMATION**

**DanceHouse and Dancers of Damelahamid present Elle Sofe Sara's *Vástádus eana – The answer is land***

Dates: February 23 + 24, 2024 at 8pm

Ticket Prices: From \$35

Address: Vancouver Playhouse  
600 Hamilton St, Vancouver

Box Office: [dancehouse.ca](https://dancehouse.ca) or call 604.801.6225

Website: [dancehouse.ca](https://dancehouse.ca)

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