

# To CAMP

Questions for email reflection  
with Elle Sofe Sara currently  
on the road.

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## Where do you look for inspiration to create the structure of your company?

I look to other artists and also from my own previous experience.

Right now, I have made a conscious decision to have a team of creatives and producers in my new works. Previously I have been both the director, choreographer and producer in my work. But that has been challenging when I became pregnant, had small children, when I was sick and when my family experienced tragedy. By having a production team, it will hopefully make the production stronger for unexpected happenings. It will give people working on it a stronger sense of belonging or ownership to the production. It will also make more time for me as the artistic director to work artistically.

## What is your definition of a producer?

A dream producer for me would be someone who has worked in the performing arts field for many years and knows about festivals, venues that would be interested in presenting our work. Someone who has a relevant network in Scandinavia, Europe, Canada and the US. Someone interested to be a part of the process to plan performances and to discuss artistic choices. Someone who can work in a structured way, plan long-term and has endurance. And someone who is an outgoing person who likes to talk to people and to travel.

## If you could choose a method to find (more) team members to represent and produce your work, what would it be?

In my new work, we have two teams, an artistic team that consists of me, composer, performers, dramaturge, costume-, light and set designers etc. And a production team with me, producer and coproducers.

To find a creative/artistic team is often easy because the artists are on stage, you see them dance, see their costumes, light or set design. But the producers and people behind you don't see. The production team is more difficult for me to find. Maybe also because I live in a small village in Northern Norway.

In an ideal world, a production team would also include marketing worker and social media worker. There are significant costs to produce a performance, and I need to make sure that the performance is seen by many and has a long life.

I think that many freelance performances often lack that "marketing" part like a theatre institution or established dance companies have. We as freelancers can have an outstanding performance, but we don't have the infrastructure to run marketing over several years, to keep every social- and website platform updated etc. Because by then we are busy making a new performance or making a living in another way.

So, back to the question, a method to find team members. Right now, I would need an international producer, and it would be great to get to know more producers. A plan for that could be online in micro meetings or presentations. Where artists looking for producers and producers looking for work can meet. I have been to these kinds of a micro session in the film sector, where I also work. In those cases, the arrangers already match artists and producers that they believe fit together.

## Are there mechanisms in the sector that stands in the way of accurate representation for your work?

Well I don't have that many productions behind me yet, so my experience is limited.

I think that in contemporary dance and theatre there is a particular "look" on how good contemporary dance or Avant-Garde theatre looks. It is very much based on a middle-class European body and culture. There is very little diversity, even though diversity has been a subject for many years now. I often think that my productions don't fit in that box; you can look at the pictures of my work; they not look like the average contemporary dance production. My productions only get booked in venues where they are especially interested in indigenous culture or diversity.

I think as an indigenous choreographer I often get put in a box, either when venues are considering booking us or when we are booked and put in a program.

To be profiled as a Sámi choreographer or a filmmaker, I do not mind. I am very proud of that.

It is only a problem when being a

Sámi choreographer means that my work cannot be on the main stage or in the main program. Or that I only get booked in Norway around the times when the Sámi national day is because theatres only want to put a focus on Sámi culture at that time.

I wish that there was a greater awareness that a Sámi choreographer or artist, can make art that is universal and relevant for all people regardless of their background. A Sámi perspective is also contemporary and avant-garde.

### Do you work with a code of ethics and if so can you please describe it?

I often start an artistic process by interviewing elderly Sámi people about the themes I want to investigate in my art. I am interested in all sorts of traditional knowledge, it can be about the body, about health, nature, storytelling, songs, life philosophy or world view.

The point concerning ethics is that I work with indigenous culture, that is my own culture as well, and I have to treat it with respect but also make an artwork that communicates. So there is a balance there I consider each time.

I also think that it is a difference when I as a Sámi person makes something about Sámi matters, then if someone from the outside did. In film and TV, for instance, we see many bad examples where portraits of Sámi people are very stereotypical and like mystic creatures. Those kinds of stereotypes keep reproducing themselves, and I also think in contemporary dance we also need to rethink and not work after the same old ideal when it comes to artistic expression, to the body and what is good quality dance.

### In which contexts would you like your work to be presented in the future?

If you asked me in February before the corona shut-down, I would probably answer international venues,

theatres and festivals. But now I am rethinking how I want my artwork to make an impact, who is my audience.

I have to admit that I still dream about international venues, but maybe when travelling to a country, we could also do other things, work in communities or travel to places nearby. In that way, we can do more in one region, rather than travelling to lots of counties. I have not a clear answer to this question.

