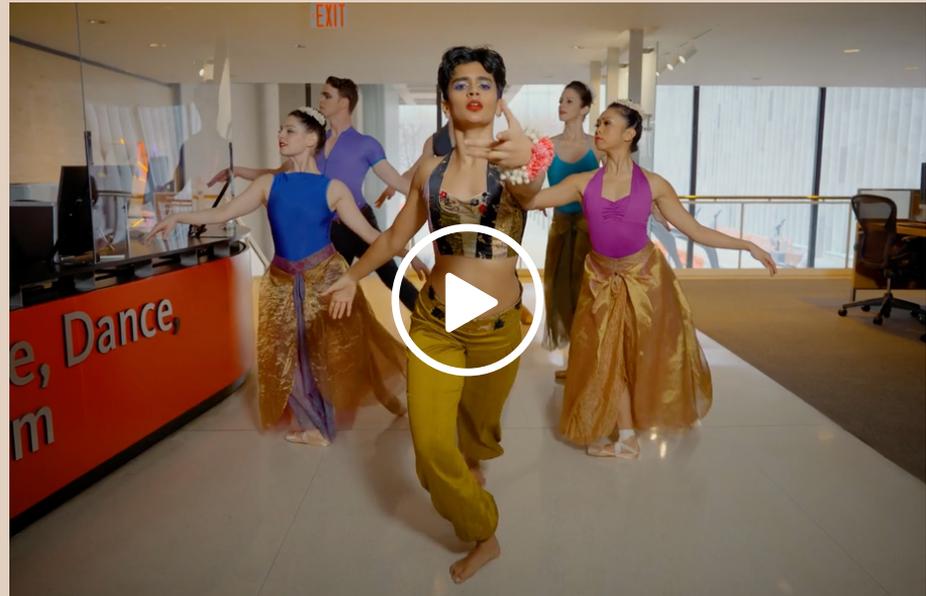


L'Orient: Search for the Real Lakmé

A panel of judges gazes down on the beautiful bodies of five women as they strive to perform their increasingly demanding audition pieces. The bodies are brown, or black. Or non-binary. Or all the above, or none...the erotic in an explosive mixture with the exotic. So which one will be chosen for the role...?

Or...are the flesh-exposing gyrations of these aspiring performers a relic from a bygone age: the sexualized gaze, the unchallenged province of high art for so many centuries, now strictly tabù...?

These are the questions explored in L'Orient, a thrilling new dance-opera from choreographer Preeti Vasudevan, composer Kamala Sankaram, and writer/librettist Catherine Filloux. Taking as its starting point Lakmé, the 1893 opera by Léo Delibes, the new work is set in the cut-throat world of reality television. A public search is on for "the real Lakmé"—a performer with the star quality to bring the hide-bound opera into the twenty-first century. A grueling series of auditions has whittled the short-list down to five...



"L'Orient" [discovery capsule](#) (2021) Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filming: Dancing Camera.

"Award-winning choreographer Preeti Vasudevan is an exponent of classical Bharatanatyam creating new provocative contemporary works from the Indian tradition." — *New Music USA*

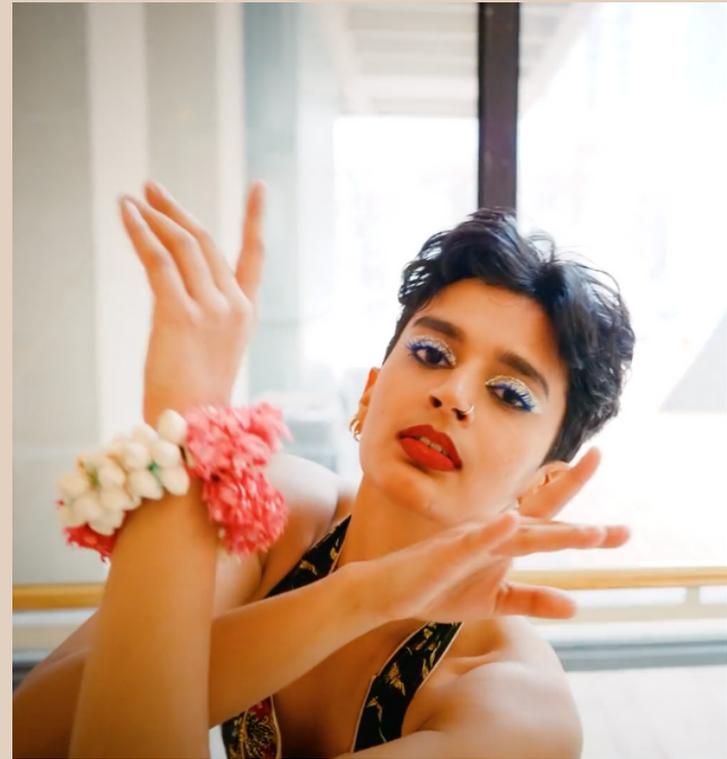
L'Orient: Search for the Real Lakmé

L'Orient is the creative brainchild of three female creators bringing in varied cultural perspectives. Their provocative questioning of the classical arts to subvert the rules and usher in a new era of inclusivity is the heartbeat of this dynamic new work.

As the narrative unfolds, the audience meets the finalists: a black ballerina, a transgender actress, an Indian TikTok star, and other familiar characters that make up the modern landscape.

This dynamic work combines choreography based on the principles of classical dance—ballet and South Indian Bharatanatyam—alongside contemporary, street and Hip Hop moves. The choreography is brought to life through a radical sound world, bringing together elements of Carnatic (South Indian classical) music, traditional grand opera (including themes from *Délibes'* score), and the compulsive rhythms of electronic dance music.

This genre-bending dance opera embraces new connections and cultural collisions to create a fresh voice: today's voice.



"L'Orient" discovery capsule (2021) Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Image Credit: Dancing Camera.

Treatment

Bringing in the creative expertise of choreographer Preeti Vasudevan, composer Kamala Sankaram, and writer/librettist Catherine Filloux, *L'Orient* challenges the world of classical forms from both the west and east. Seeking to create a new language that makes classical arts more inclusive and representative of today's society.

Setting

This immersive show has been developed for an intimate audience to allow for the interactive elements to take flight. The audience enters through a digital installation lobby experience and moves into a non-proscenium, dynamic black box space to immediately become part of the action.

Draft of Libretto by Catherine Filloux

Duration: 60 minutes (no intermission)



"L'Orient" at Lincoln Center Restart Stages on THE GREEN (2021) Image Credit: Sachyn Mital



Sample setting

Creative Team



Preeti Vasudevan, Artistic Director/Choreographer

Award-winning choreographer and cultural storyteller Preeti Vasudevan's provocative theatrical works redefine individual identity, uniting artists and audiences alike. Her creations have been lauded as a refreshing collision of eastern and western aesthetics pushing for a new expression in art-making. Using just about every mode of the performing arts (including dance, music, poetry, visual art, mime, and theater), Preeti invites cutting-edge collaborators to form a 21st-century language of expression. Her unconventional storytelling challenges the status quo of dance-theater, bridging ancient traditions with the contemporary world.

[More information.](#)



Kamala Sankaram, Composer

Praised as “strikingly original” (NY Times) and “new voice from whom we will surely be hearing more” (LA Times), Kamala Sankaram writes highly theatrical music that defies categorization. Recent commissions include the Glimmerglass Festival, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Shakespeare Theatre Company, and Opera on Tap, among others. Awards, grants, and residencies include Jonathan Larson Award, NEA ArtWorks, MAP Fund, Opera America, NY IT Award for Outstanding Production of a Musical, the Civilians, HERE, the MacDowell Colony, and the Watermill Center.

[More information.](#)



Catherine Filloux, Writer/Librettist

Catherine Filloux is an award-winning playwright who has been writing about human rights and social justice for over twenty-five years. Her plays have been produced around the U.S. and internationally. Catherine has been honored with the 2019 Barry Lopez Visiting Writer in Ethics and Community Fellowship; the 2017 Otto René Castillo Award for Political Theatre; and the 2015 Planet Activist Award. Catherine is a Franco-American writer and received her French Baccalaureate in Philosophy with Honors in Toulon, France.

[More information.](#)



Robert Wierzel: Production Director

As a lighting designer, Mr. Wierzel has worked with artists from diverse disciplines and backgrounds in theatre, dance, opera and contemporary music, with companies throughout the country and abroad. His theatre work has been seen on and off Broadway, including *Lady Day At Emerson's Bar & Grill*, starring Audra McDonald; the musical *Fela!* (Tony Award nomination); *Dreams and Nightmares*; and productions at the New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater; Roundabout Theatre Company; Signature Theatre Company; Playwrights Horizons; and more.

[More information.](#)



Ramona Kelley, Assistant to Artistic Director

Ramona Kelley is from Berkeley, CA where she began her training at Berkeley Ballet Theater. She went on to earn a BFA in dance from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Ramona danced the principal role of 'Betsy' in Twyla Tharp's *Come Fly Away* and went on to dance with the Tharp company creating new roles in addition to performing repertory works. She is also a principal guest artist with Oakland Ballet and is an adjunct ballet faculty member at NYU's Tisch Dance.

[More information.](#)

Development: Live Performances

Performed at Restart Stages September 2021 , Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Commissioned by Works & Process in January 2021 for a bubble residency at Mount Tremper Arts, NY and co-produced by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center's Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

L'Orient was initially presented in November 2019 at Works & Process at the Guggenheim as part of the Joyce Theater Foundation/Dance Lab NY Creation Grant for Women Choreographers, and supported by the Fall 2019 Virginia Toulmin Fellowship for Women Leaders in Dance through The Center for Ballet and the Arts, NYU.



"L'Orient" at Lincoln Center Restart Stages on THE GREEN (2021) Image Credit: Sachyn Mital;

"L'Orient" Works & Process at the Guggenheim Joyce Theater Foundation (2019) Image Credit: Robert Altman

Additional Media



"Featuring Nicola Bennett" (2021)
Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filming: Dancing Camera.



Behind the Scenes: Nicola (2021):
Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filmed at Mount Tremper Arts, NY.



"Featuring Crystal Freeman" (2021)
Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filmed at Mount Tremper Arts, NY.



Behind the Scenes: Crystal (2021)
Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filmed at Mount Tremper Arts, NY.



"Featuring Malli" (2021)
Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filmed at Mount Tremper Arts, NY.



Behind the Scenes: Malli (2021)
Commissioned by Works & Process, the performing arts series at the Guggenheim, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Filmed at Mount Tremper Arts, NY.



"Speaking with Pointe" (2019)
Preeti Vasudevan in conversation with Lourdes Lopez, Miami City Ballet and Ford Foundation Trustee, and Joshua Prince, Founding Director of Dance Lab New York



"Flower Duet" (2019)
Preeti Vasudevan in conversation with Lourdes Lopez, Miami City Ballet and Ford Foundation Trustee, and Joshua Prince, Founding Director of Dance Lab New York

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