

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 16–November 18, 2018

Tuesday–Thursday, October 16–18, 2018 at 7:30 pm

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui/Sadler's Wells London

Sutra

A Sadler's Wells London Production, co-produced with Athens Festival, Grec Festival de Barcelona, Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg, La Monnaie Brussels, Festival d'Avignon, Fondazione Musica per Roma, and Shaolin Cultural Communications Company

With the blessing of the Abbot of Song Shan Shaolin Temple Master Shi Yongxin

This performance is approximately one hour long and will be performed without intermission.

Sutra is made possible in part by The Joelson Foundation and The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

Major endowment support for contemporary dance and theater is provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Endowment support for the White Light Festival presentation of *Sutra* is provided by Blavatnik Family Foundation Fund for Dance.

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Steinway Piano
Rose Theater
Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

The White Light Festival 2018 is made possible by The Shubert Foundation, The Katzenberger Foundation, Inc., Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater, The Joelson Foundation, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, Great Performers Circle, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center

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UPCOMING WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL EVENTS:

Friday–Saturday, October 19–20, at 7:30 pm in the Gerald W. Lynch Theater, John Jay College

Borderline (New York premiere)

Company Wang Ramirez

Honji Wang and **Sébastien Ramirez**, artistic direction and choreography

Louis Becker, Johanna Faye, Saïdo Lehlouh,

Alister Mazzotti, Sébastien Ramirez, Honji

Wang, performers

Jason Oettlé and **Kai Gaedtké**, rigging development

LACRYMOBOY, music composition

Cyril Mulon, lighting design; **Paul Bauer**, set design

Post-performance discussion with Honji Wang, Sébastien Ramirez, and Stanford Makishi on Friday, October 19

Wednesday–Thursday, October 31–November 1 at 7:30 pm in the Rose Theater

XENOS (U.S. premiere)

Akram Khan, director, choreographer, and performer

Mirella Weingarten, set design; **Michael Hulls**, lighting design; **Kimie Nakano**, costume design;

Vincenzo Lamagna, composer

Musicians: **BC Manjunath, Aditya Prakash,**

Clarice Rarity, Tamar Osborn, Nina Harries

November 2–13 at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater

Waiting for Godot

By **Samuel Beckett**

Directed by **Garry Hynes**

Produced by **Druid**

Starring **Garrett Lombard, Aaron Monaghan, Rory Nolan**, and **Marty Rea**, with **Nathan Reid** and **Jaden Pace**

Pre-performance discussion with Garry Hynes and Robert Marx on Saturday, November 3 at 6:15 pm

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit WhiteLightFestival.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a White Light Festival brochure.

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We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui/Sadler's Wells London

Sutra

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, *Director and Choreography*

Antony Gormley, *Visual Creation and Design*

Szymon Brzóska, *Music*

with **monks from the Shaolin Temple**

Performers

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui/Ali Thabet, Chang Mengqiang, Chen Haojie,
Chen Xiao, Hu Kunpeng, Hu Zeen, Huang Jiahao, Lu Hongtian,
Qi Zhenzong, Sun Tongxu, Sun Zihao, Wang Chuang, Wang Hao,
Wang Zhaohui, Wang Zhentao, Wu Haixiang, Xing Kaishuo,
Li Jiaheng, Zhang Quanlong, Zhang Xueyao, Chen Kaiping

Musicians

Szymon Brzóska, *Piano*

Alies Sluiter and Olga Wojciechowska, *Violin*

Rebecca Hepplewhite, *Cello*

Raimund Wunderlich, *Percussion*

Sutra: Shaping Space

By Karthika Nair

Antwerp, August 2007. Heads turn at the sight of saffron-clad, tonsured Chinese monks striding down the road to the Bourla, the theater where Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui is working on his next piece. Once there, though, the exotic quotient rapidly recedes: the 17-year-old monks deactivate their mobile phones and begin rehearsing with the dancers—the sole addition to the usual proceedings being an interpreter—tentatively attempting some moves of the work in progress. Techniques are shared, martial art lunges dissected, and a rotating wrist whirls a giant sword with skill that would put the Jedi to shame. Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, shorthanded Larbi, tries out the weapon, encouraging his guests to correct his wrist movements.

It could be called destiny, this encounter. For Larbi—whose childhood fascination with kung fu soon developed into interest in and respect for the Shaolin school of Chan Buddhism—has long dreamed of working with its monks and exploring its main principles: the interconnectedness of body and soul, life in total harmony with one's surroundings.

"As a dancer and choreographer, I was inspired by their understanding of movement, their complete identification with life around them, that amazing ability to become the essence of a tiger, a crane, or a snake; to transform energy from cold to warm, yin to yang." Oddly enough, the Temple, too, has been seeking to relocate kung fu within its proper context and highlight its core philosophy to the wider world. The last two decades have seen its practice emulated but also molded into a spectacular entertainment, spawning legions of schools and companies that tour the world over, popularizing the martial art for sure, but all too often omitting the spirituality and intense mental and physical discipline it demands. So when Japanese impresario Hisashi Itoh introduced senior monks to the Belgian-Moroccan choreographer in May 2007, and to his work—signature-tuned by plurality, an unblinking gaze at humanity, and remarkable technical mastery—there was a sense of recognition, of common denominators, and of possibilities ahead.

London, October 2007. Sculptor Antony Gormley, previously a partner in zero degrees, and young Polish composer Szymon Brzóska have been invited by Larbi to helm the visual design and the original score, respectively, for the forthcoming piece. Gormley proposes man-sized boxes as the sole landscape of the piece. He has brought one life-sized model, and Larbi begins to improvise, stepping in and out of the box, walking on its edges, disappearing then reappearing, carrying it like a carapace, climbing as though up a tree...it becomes anything he chooses to make it: bed, coffin, pillar, or portal. The universe unfolds, space changing form and function constantly.

Antony Gormley's interest in Buddhism goes back to his graduate days, when he spent three years in the East and in India, studying meditation at various monasteries. The boxes, for him, reflect the dialectics of freedom and containment, central to the Buddhist idea of liberation: the mind is housed in the body, and the body in architectural space, which he considers the second body. So the body in relation to the box could become the equivalent of a thought in the mind, or conversely, to the empty mind when freed of its occupant.

Taoist and Confucian ideals of individual utility to the collective find their way in: “Like a brick that is larger than a hand but can be held by it—these boxes, though bigger than the body, can be used by it to make different things.”

References from belief systems resurface, in the name to begin with. *Sutra*, derived from *Sutta* in Pali, is used to denote any of the sermons or scriptural narratives of Buddha. It strikes a chord with Larbi, who has persistently sought a deeper morality through almost his entire body of work, often dissecting religious archetypes in pieces like *Myth* (2007).

It has other appropriate connotations too. In Hinduism, *sutra* laid down guidelines for the conduct of life. The word in Sanskrit also means string, or measure of straightness, all of which resonate with Larbi’s own quests. Szymon Brzóska, meanwhile, is grappling with *sutra* of his own: composing for warrior monks fabled for their split-second precision, but unused to interacting with music. On him falls the task of understanding the internal rhythms of their body language and responding with a score that will neither disturb nor necessarily match these, but create a spectrum within which the movement can flow untrammelled.

Shaolin Temple, Songshan (China), March 2008. Rehearsals have been on for four weeks in a corrugated iron-roofed shed east of the Steles Yard. Twenty-one boxes that minutes ago formed the ramparts of a castle (complete with guards and drawbridge) become a pile of dominoes, then suddenly transform into a lotus bud with an infant Buddha at its heart. The bud unfolds into a flower; the monks who had upended each petal-box slide into them, becoming, as it were, the godhead.

The monks, too, are on an arc of discovery. They are learning to move differently—mainly through time. They absorb another consciousness, that of unbroken sequences, which requires a different channeling of strength. Accustomed to expelling energy in bursts of movement, they must now retrieve it to maintain continuity.

Territories are emerging. And thus getting defined, delimited. That of the monks, anchored in nature: a land of harnessed, conscious animality that is kung fu. The modular horizon of Gormley, stretched out like space or time, serene. The emotive frame of Brzóska’s music: primarily colored in melancholy, providing perhaps the soul to this mind-body equation. So Larbi’s greatest challenges lie here: in shaping a space that will not merely let these distinct elements co-exist but become a seamless sphere; so the essence of an eagle will not just be the sight of its movement, but the music of its soul soaring, the meaning of the landscape beneath; so the whole sequence can take on meaning, become a story—of life, of its struggles and triumphs, individual and collective. A world that anyone can relate to, whatever our cultural or artistic lenses.

In this search for a common space where each person can hear and be heard, the boxes have become steadfast allies. Lego-like in their potential, humanoid in their size, they have evolved into something more than props or a backdrop: they have supplied the identifiable element—a surrogate language of sorts, words of the imagination—that has transcended the multiple tongues, personalities, and artistic disciplines involved. From forest to wall to mountain to city to graveyard, they mutate. But Larbi’s goal is the moment when they embody the unity of the human being: a safe zone where the mind can find its contours and the body, sanctuary.

Shaolin Temple, Songshan (China), April 2008. Midpoint. It is visitor's week of sorts for the Sutra team: the producers are here, so are members of the British media, Japanese flamenco dancers, Chinese officials from the Ministry of Culture, Antony Gormley, Szymon Brzóška, Larbi's dancers from Antwerp...there are interviews, recordings, measurements, musical corrections, new and ambitious ideas, doubts, expectations, deadlines crowding the air. Then music and movement take over.

They move in and out of kinetic fields: portraits of stillness one minute, their being suspended in the fullness of the moment, breath expanding as collective thought; a force of nature the next, limbs scything the air, spines an arrow to the earth, challenging and embracing gravity in turn. The eye of centrifugal energy spreads in waves, each successive one bearing the charge of the last, crescendoing as fists hit the floor, continuing as the heartbeat of the earth through a percussive music that goes on and on. It is a reminder that nothing is lost: it just changes form.

Karthika Nair is the author of several books, including the award-winning Until the Lions: Echoes from the Mahabharata, and principal scriptwriter of Akram Khan's DESH. She is also the co-founder of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's company, Eastman.

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A Brief Introduction to the Shaolin Martial Arts

By Meir Shahar

The Shaolin monastery is an enigma. The Buddhist faith prohibits violence, and yet the Shaolin Buddhist monks have been perfecting their fighting techniques for centuries. How can they ignore a primary article of their religion that forbids killing a living being?

It could be argued that individuals and collectives alike have always found ways to justify violating their professed ideologies. However, one wonders whether the Shaolin case is not altogether different. Perhaps the Shaolin martial arts are not intended for fighting but rather for mental self-cultivation. Perhaps the Shaolin monks are not training their bodies for battle, rather they are cultivating their minds for spiritual awakening. If so, how and when did their unique synthesis of mental and physical training emerge?

An examination of the historical records reveals that the origins of the Shaolin martial arts were economic and political rather than spiritual. Large stone steles that are still extant at the monastery are engraved with inscriptions attesting the historical conditions under which, some 1,500 years ago, the Shaolin monks resorted to arms. As early as the Chinese Middle Ages—the sixth and seventh centuries—the Shaolin Monastery possessed a large agricultural estate that required military protection. In times of political turmoil, Shaolin monks defended their monastery against bandits and marauding rebel armies. Economic concerns for Shaolin's wealth were joined by its strategic location on a narrow mountain path leading to the then Chinese capital of Luoyang. In the early seventh century, the monastery was embroiled in a military confrontation over the capital of far-reaching political consequences. Its heroic monks assisted the future emperor Li Shimin (600–649) in the campaigns leading to the founding of his mighty Tang Dynasty (618–907). The grateful emperor bestowed upon the monks an imperial letter of thanks, sanctioning their military activities for centuries to come.

Imperial authorization was joined by divine sanction. The history of the Shaolin martial arts reveals an intimate connection between monastic fighting and the veneration of Buddhist martial deities. Even though Buddhist ethics condemns violence, the Buddhism pantheon of divinities features numerous warriors who serve as the divine protectors of the faithful. Wrathful gods who trample demons underfoot flank the entrances to Buddhist temples throughout Asia. Such warrior divinities provided divine sanction for violence to the Shaolin monks, who venerated them for their military might.

If Shaolin monks exploited the violent potential of Buddhist military divinities, they made similar military use of another Buddhist emblem—the staff. As in other religions—consider the Catholic crosier—the staff functioned in Buddhism as a symbol of religious authority. Monastic regulations required itinerant monks to carry a staff, which Shaolin warriors gradually transformed into an effective weapon. Indeed, all through the 16th century, the Shaolin monastery was renowned in China primarily for its superior staff techniques, which were lauded by military experts. The association of fighting monks with the weapon extended to popular fiction and drama, which celebrated staff-wielding clerics. The most beloved Buddhist warrior in Chinese popular culture—the heroic monkey Sun Wukong—manipulates the staff as his quintessential weapon.

It was likely no earlier than the 16th and 17th centuries that Shaolin monks gradually began to develop the bare-handed techniques that, by the 21st century, have made their monastery famous the world over. These empty-handed fighting methods are known in Chinese as *quan* (literally: fist), and their emergence signaled a profound transformation. Beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Chinese martial arts were no longer intended for fighting only. Rather, Shaolin monks (and other warriors) have transformed martial practice into a unique system of physical and mental self-cultivation. The Shaolin techniques of bare-handed fighting have been designed for military, therapeutic, and religious goals alike. It is arguably this unique combination of fighting, healing, and spiritual self-cultivation that have made them attractive to millions of practitioners all over the world.

The Shaolin methods of fist fighting draw on native traditions no less than on the imported Buddhist faith, which had arrived to China from India. Even as these bare-handed methods are couched in the Buddhist vocabulary of enlightenment, they largely derive from an ancient Chinese gymnastic tradition that had evolved centuries before the arrival of Buddhism in China. As early as the first centuries BCE, Chinese manuals described elaborate breathing and callisthenic techniques, which were premised upon one's inborn vital energy, which was called *qi*. During the 16th and 17th centuries, this ancient Chinese gymnastic tradition was gradually integrated into the newly emerging systems of bare-handed fighting, creating the Shaolin synthesis of fighting, healing, and religious self-cultivation.

The modern era has witnessed the globalization of the Shaolin martial arts. Millions of Western practitioners are attracted to the Chinese martial arts, even as kung fu cinema is enjoying tremendous popularity, influencing Hollywood film-making. The history of the Shaolin martial arts is still unfolding.

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The ancient Masters were profound and subtle.
Their wisdom was unfathomable.
There is no way to describe it;
all we can describe is their appearance.

They were careful
as someone crossing an iced-over stream.
Alert as a warrior in enemy territory.
Courteous as a guest.
Fluid as melting ice.
Shapable as a block of wood.
Receptive as a valley.
Clear as a glass of water.

Do you have the patience to wait
till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
till the right action arises by itself?

The Master doesn't seek fulfillment.
Not seeking, not expecting,
she is present, and can welcome all things.

—From Lao-Tzu's *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version*, with foreword and notes, by Stephen Mitchell. Translation copyright © 1988 by Stephen Mitchell. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

*For poetry comments and suggestions, please write
to programming@LincolnCenter.org.*

Meet the Artists

KOEN BROOS



**Sidi Larbi
Cherkaoui**

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's debut as a choreographer came in 1999 with Andrew Vale's contemporary musical *Anonymous Society*. Since then, he has made more than 50 full-fledged choreographic pieces and picked up a number of prestigious awards. Mr. Cherkaoui is an associate artist at Sadler's Wells and assumed the role of artistic director at the Royal Ballet of Flanders in 2015. Notable works include the Sadler's Wells productions *Sutra* and *mjlonga*; *zero degrees* with Akram Khan; *Dunas* alongside Flamenco Bailaora and María Pagés; *Play* with Kuchipudi danseuse Shantala Shivalingappa; *生长genesis* with Chinese choreographer Yabin Wang; and more recently *Mermaid*, a duet for Carlos Acosta and Marta Ortega which received its world premiere at Sadler's Wells in September 2017.

Since founding his company, Eastman, in Antwerp in 2010, Mr. Cherkaoui created the multiple-award-winning *Babel (Words)* with choreographer Damien Jalet and Antony Gormley, which was featured at the 2016 White Light Festival. He has also received international acclaim for his choreography in the film *Anna Karenina*, and in 2015 was movement director for Lyndsey Turner's production of *Hamlet* starring Benedict Cumberbatch. In 2016 he was conferred an honorary doctorate by the University of Antwerp for his outstanding contribution to contemporary dance. Mr. Cherkaoui's production *Pluto*, a collaboration with Bunkamura Theatre Cocoon, was presented at the Barbican Centre in February.

STEPHEN WHITE



Antony Gormley

Antony Gormley's career has spanned almost 40 years, with sculptures, installations, and public artworks that include *Another Place*, *Domain Field*, *Inside Australia*, *Clearing*, *Breaking Room*, and *Blind Light*. His work has been exhibited worldwide, and he has increasingly taken his practice beyond the gallery, engaging the public in active participation, as in *Clay and the Collection Body* and the acclaimed *One & Other* commission in London's Trafalgar Square. Last year, Mr. Gormley worked with choreographer Hofesh Shechter on *Survivor* at the Barbican. In 2012 an exhibition of major new works, *Model*, opened to critical acclaim at the London gallery White Cube. He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1994, the South Bank Prize for Visual Art in 1999, and the Bernhard Heiliger Award for Sculpture in 2007.

In 1997 Mr. Gormley was made an Officer of the British Empire (OBE) and was made a knight in the New Year Honours list in 2014. He has been a Royal Academician since 2003 and a British Museum trustee since 2007. Mr. Gormley previously collaborated with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui on the Sadler's Wells co-production *zero degrees*, which premiered in 2005.



Szymon Brzóska

Polish composer Szymon Brzóska graduated from the Music Academy in Poznan, as well as the Royal Flemish Conservatory

in Antwerp. His particular interest in the synergy between music, contemporary dance, theater, and cinema led him to participate in numerous collaborative projects across various art forms.

Along with his autonomous work, Mr. Brzóska has an established career in creating music for dance. He worked with many award-winning choreographers, including Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, David Dawson, Maria Pages, and Vladimir Malakhov; such acclaimed orchestras and musicians as Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, Het Balletorkest, Le Concert d'Apollon, Patrizia Bovi, and Barbara Drajzkowska; and dance companies that include Dutch National Ballet, Semperoper Ballett, Göteborgs-Operans Danskompani, Cedar Lake Company, and Eastman. Mr. Brzóska's compositions have been performed at numerous prestigious dance venues and contemporary music festivals across the world, such as Sadler's Wells Theatre, Sydney Opera House, Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Dresden's Semperoper, Singapore's Esplanade, and at the Festival d'Avignon.



Ali Thabet

Ali Ben Lofti Thabet's initiation into movement arts came through kung fu. Despite an affinity for dance, he joined the National Centre for Circus Arts in Châlons-en-Champagne, France, in 1997. He performed in Francis Viet's *Furie* (2001) and got his first major breakthrough in 2002 with *Cyrk 13*, a piece choreographed by Philippe Decouflé. He worked with Josef Nadj on *Il n'y a plus de firmament* (2003), featuring Jean Babilé and Ioshi Oid. Mr. Thabet met Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui in 2004

and joined the cast of *Tempus Fugit* as a performer, beginning what would become a longstanding collaboration, including working as assistant choreographer on *TeZuka*, which premiered in Tokyo in 2011. Since 2012 he has created his own work with his brother, Hèdi Thabet.

Shaolin Temple

The monks performing in *Sutra* are from the original Shaolin Temple, situated near Dengfeng City in the Henan Province of China and established in 495 AD by monks originating from India. In 1983, the State Council defined the Shaolin Temple as the key national Buddhist Temple.

The monks follow a strict Buddhist doctrine, with kung fu and tai chi martial arts forming an integral part of their daily practice. There are many martial arts schools that have also been set up in the region under the name of Shaolin, from which performers for many of the more commercial Shaolin monk shows are drawn. The performers in *Sutra*, however, are all Buddhist monks from the original temple itself.

Sadler's Wells

Sadler's Wells is a world-leading dance house, committed to producing, commissioning, and presenting new works and to bringing the best international and U.K. dance to London and worldwide audiences. Under the artistic directorship of Alistair Spalding, the theater's acclaimed year-round program spans dance of every kind, from contemporary to flamenco, Bollywood to ballet, salsa to street dance, and tango to tap. Since 2005, it has helped to bring over 100 new dance works to the stage, and its award-winning commissions and collaborative productions regularly tour internationally. Sadler's Wells supports 16 associate artists, three resident companies, an associate company, and two international associate companies. It also

nurtures the next generation of talent through its New Wave Associates and Summer University programs, its Wild Card initiative, and hosting of the National Youth Dance Company.

White Light Festival

I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear; this prism could be the spirit of the listener. —Arvo Pärt. Now in its ninth year, the White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. International in scope, the multidisciplinary festival offers a broad spectrum of the world's leading instrumentalists, vocalists, ensembles, choreographers, dance companies, and directors complemented by conversations with artists and scholars and post-performance White Light Lounges.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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