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Radiant Triumph for La Bayadère Reimagined

Dutch National Ballet, 02.04.2026 [ENA]

Dutch National Ballet's bold new production of La Bayadère, with Rachel Beaujean responsible for the staging and additional choreography while collaborating with Kalpana Raghuraman, Dr. Priya Srinivasan, and artistic director Ted Brandsen on the revised concept and libretto, achieves a near-miraculous feat: it preserves every glittering choreographic jewel of Marius Petipa's 1877 masterpiece.

This masterpiece is recasting its narrative as a fact-based tragic love story set in Southeast India during the Dutch East India Company era. Premiering on the main stage of Dutch National Opera & Ballet, this vibrant adaptation transcends orientalist fantasy, transforming it into a poignant drama of sincere love between Nikiya (danced by Anna Tsygankova), a beautiful local dancer, and Solor (Giorgi Potskhishvili), a captain manipulated by Dutch governor Willem Karel Hartsinck into marrying his daughter Alida (Riho Sakamoto).

When Alida discovers Solor's true affections, she eliminates Nikiya, leaving Solor overcome with grief and guilt—drifting into a dream state where the iconic 'Kingdom of the Shades' reveals Nikiya one last time, forever out of reach, haunting him with the consequences of wrong choices. Beaujean's staging honors Petipa's architecture while infusing character-driven nuance true to the new libretto. The production's crown jewel remains the Kingdom of the Shades in Act III—a descent of 24 white-clad shades down a ramp, their arms undulating in perfect unison under golden lighting by James F. Ingalls.

Dutch National Ballet's corps executes this with breathtaking precision: each chassé and arabesque a shimmering thread in a luminous tapestry, now commenting on memory's fragility and colonial history's invisible bodies. Jérôme Kaplan's sets and costumes, inspired by seventeenth-century India yet referencing other eras and cultures, evoke authentic textiles, temple motifs, and projected Himalayan vistas by Bowie Verschuuren and Amos Mulder—Nikiya's saris flow like liquid silk, the shades' tutus retain ethereal poise.

Ludwig Minkus's melodic, rhythmic score (original libretto by Sergei Khudekov), adapted by Koen Kessels and Olga Khoziainova and elevated by the Dutch National Opera Orchestra, surges with vitality: the Shades music evokes both cosmic order and human longing. What elevates this Bayadère to masterpiece status is its historically sensitive confrontation of colonial power dynamics and fresh perspectives on ballet's hidden histories. Dr. Priya Srinivasan's diversity consulting ensures authenticity without didacticism. Brandsen's oversight ensures seamless flow, proving classical repertory's adaptability. Dutch National Ballet, at peak

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form under Brandsen's leadership, delivers a Bayadère that dazzles the eye and stirs the heart.

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