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[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Photos of *Sutra* are available for download from Cal Performances' [Press Room](#).

A video trailer for *Sutra* can be found on [YouTube](#).

CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS

A Sadler's Wells and Shaolin Temple Production

THE BAY AREA PREMIERE OF

SUTRA

a collaboration of

SIDI LARBI CHERKAOUI / ANTONY GORMLEY / SZYMON BRZÓSKA

WITH THE MONKS OF SHAOLIN TEMPLE

SATURDAY–SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8–9

AT ZELLERBACH HALL

Berkeley, CA, September 26, 2025—Cal Performances at UC Berkeley presents the Bay Area premiere of the internationally acclaimed production *Sutra*, a collaboration of Belgian choreographer **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui**, British visual artist **Antony Gormley**, Polish composer **Szymon Brzóska**, and the **monks of the Shaolin Temple** in China's Henan Province. Performances take place on Saturday, November 8 at 8pm and Sunday, November 9 at 3pm at Zellerbach Hall. Hugely popular

with international audiences since its world premiere in London in 2008, *Sutra* has been presented in only three US cities prior to this tour, and this is the first time the work has traveled to the West Coast. *Sutra* is a production of Sadler's Wells and the Shaolin Temple.

A family-friendly production that fuses modern dance with ancient martial arts, *Sutra* is inspired by the Shaolin *kung fu* tradition and set in the context of contemporary culture, as 20 modern-day practitioners lend their skills to a humorous fable about a European outsider (The Westerner) who is learning about their monastery. The work, informed by Cherkaoui and Gormley's time spent at the Shaolin monastery, explores faith and spirituality, the contrasts between Eastern and Western cultures, and the tensions between tradition and novelty. When developing the choreography for *Sutra*, Cherkaoui worked with the monks to learn about not only *kung fu*, but also their other movement traditions, knowledge and experience that ultimately influenced the production's unique choreography.

Cherkaoui shared, "That very first time [I visited the temple], it was all about movement. Martial arts and Shaolin *kung fu* have movements, so I was just asking, what are the moves you have, and what's the vocabulary? And then, from what they showed me, there were some things that I felt were really interesting, and others that I didn't know how to approach. I loved their animal incarnations, when they're being like a panther or moving like a snake. It's real theater—and it's like dance. When you're doing *Swan Lake*, you have to believe you're a swan. And so, when you have a martial artist who believes he's an eagle, it's the same, the same imagination." The word "sutra," which has many connotations in both Buddhism and in Hinduism, in this production translates to "thread," meaning a string used as a measure of straightness. In the piece, the Shaolin monks perform the flying kicks, backflips, and shadow-boxing practiced as part of their spiritual discipline, as Cherkaoui's choreography finds them artfully navigating a modular set by Gormley that consists of 20 moveable wooden boxes.

Brzóska's meditative score is performed live by a chamber ensemble featuring the composer on piano; Emanuel Salvador, violin; Emilia Goch Salvador, viola; Jess Cox, cello; and Coordt Linke, percussion. Andrea Bououthmane, an Italian-Tunisian movement artist and frequent collaborator of Cherkaoui's, performs the role of The Westerner.

Sadler's Wells Associate Artist Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui is an award-winning choreographer and director whose work spans modern dance, opera, ballet, theater, circus, musical theater, film, and fashion. He

is a recipient of two Olivier Awards and the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award, is Artistic Director of Ballet of the Grand Théâtre de Genève, and leads his own Antwerp-based company, Eastman.

On Friday, November 7, the San Francisco Dance Film Festival presents [Don't Put Met in a Box](#), a documentary about Cherkaoui's work, at the Brava Theater in San Francisco, one day before Cal Performances' presentation of *Sutra*.

For blind and visually impaired audience members, Cal Performances offers a live audio description for the Sunday, November 9 performance. This live audio track—delivered by a professional describer to audience members through a wireless headset system—is intended to provide clear and engaging descriptions of the meaningful visual details of a performance. Live audio descriptions are provided at no extra charge and employ headsets that can be reserved at the time of ticket purchase or by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or tickets@calperformances.org. Additional information about services available for patrons with disabilities can be found at calperformances.org/accessibility.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Saturday, November 8, 8pm

Sunday, November 9, 3pm

Zellerbach Hall

Bancroft Way at Dana Street,
UC Berkeley campus

Dance / Family

A Sadler's Wells and Shaolin Temple production

[Sutra](#)

**Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui / Antony Gormley / Szymon Brzóska
with the Monks of Shaolin Temple**

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, *choreographer*

Antony Gormley, *visual creation and design*

Szymon Brzóska, *composer*

Program:

Contemporary dance and ancient martial arts combine in this collaboration between Belgian

choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, sculptor Antony Gormley, composer Szymon Brzóska, and 20 Buddhist monks from the Shaolin Temple in China's Henan Province. *Sutra* explores the Shaolin *kung fu* tradition in the context of contemporary culture, inviting a cadre of modern-day practitioners to lend their skills—the flying kicks, backflips, and shadow-boxing practiced as part of their spiritual discipline—to a humorous fable about a European outsider learning about their monastery. The chamber music score by Brzóska is performed live.

For blind and visually impaired audience members, live audio descriptions are available for the Sunday, November 9 performance. Headsets may be reserved by contacting the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or tickets@calperformances.org.

Tickets: \$48–\$120 (prices subject to change)

Tickets for all performances are available at calperformances.org, by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm. Through Cal Performances' Golden Bear Circle program, UC Berkeley students are eligible to purchase a limited number of \$10 tickets for the best seats in the house for the Sunday, November 9 performance at 3pm. These tickets go on sale at noon on Friday, October 24. Information about student tickets and discounts is available at calperformances.org/ucb-students. For information about other discounts, visit calperformances.org/discounts.

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