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Dutch National Ballet
A VR choreography in 360 degrees
Introduction

To showcase the full beauty of ballet &samhoud media and Dutch National Ballet developed this Virtual Reality concept. Virtual Reality makes it possible to fully emerge in the experience of ballet, recorded with special 360 degree stereoscopic cameras and quadraphonic audio.

With this Virtual Reality production the mesmerizing experience of ballet will be brought to a large audience, especially those who are not yet familiar with ballet. The immersive qualities of Virtual Reality will engage and inspire them while showing ballet up close. The main objective is to convince viewers to come to the theatre to watch ballet on stage.

The experience, that will be choreographed for VR specifically, has the ambition to be world renowned and will be published in the different VR app stores.
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Concept
Inspiration

The great ballets from the Romantic era illustrated a supernatural atmosphere. The dancers represent a superhuman being, not only in the spiritual characters they play but also in their physically admirable endeavors like dancing on pointe shoes. Also, a supernatural world is represented. This twilight zone can for instance be a place where people go when they die of heartbreak. It is a mysterious land and the dancers there resemble ghosts or spirits.

To the viewer, ballet might also be ‘not for me’, ‘something from another world’. By being drawn into the stage and standing in the middle of it, the viewer experiences the attractiveness of it. That it is nice and inspiring to be there.
Story

This story is situated in a supernatural place like in the Romantic ballets. A mysterious violinist controls the place and therefore the people that end up in it, like the spirits (corps the ballet) and main couple.

The main male and female dancer fall for each other in this mysterious and dark place. In spite of the desperate and hopeless nature of the location, they try to get together in a passionate dance. However, they wind up in a fight against the control of the violinist. At the end of an intense game of love versus bitterness, the violinist claims his dominance and the lovers are separated again. The man ends up alone while his woman goes up in mist.

To the viewer, the violinist bridges the gap between the normal world and the world of ballet. At first, he is one of you. During the performance, it becomes clear he is the antagonist you don’t want to identify with after all, because you are on the side of the dancers.
Characters

Violinist: A mysterious man who has been in the supernatural world for too long. Once he died of heartbreak and now he has turned bitter. He wants to control everyone, especially the dancers because he can’t dance, and they can. The violinist presents himself as a host but turns out to be a sorcerer. His violin is in fact his only companion to whom he expresses his feelings. And that is what you hear: the music of a lonely soul.

Main male dancer: Quite new to the supernatural world and still hoping to find love, he is captured by the beauty of the main female dancer and falls in love immediately. In his efforts to impress her and under the spell of the violinist, he hopelessly dances himself to exhaustion.

Main female dancer: She is a mysterious being, somewhere between a spirit and human. She has an ethereal beauty, is light as air and has an enchantingly innocent yet strong quality.

Corps de ballet: A group of spirits, ghosts. They have been in the supernatural world for a while and became part of the place, even though they still fear the controlling of the violinist.
Style

The style of the Virtual Reality experience and choreography is inspired by the ballet blanc as depicted in Les Sylphides, Giselle or Swan Lake. The ballet blanc is considered the pure classical form of ballet and illustrates a magical and illusionistic atmosphere. You have to feel like you are part of the ghost-like, ethereal beings that are the ballerinas. After all, in het VR experience you cannot see your own body.

The mood of the different parts in the experience are emphasized in music, light and special effect like mist. The parts where the violinist is in full control are musically and physically darker than the parts where the lovers break out of the spell.

Core words:
Magical, mystical, illusion, ghosts, dark and light, beauty, dream, fairytale, hypnotic
Location

The location has to represent the mysterious supernatural world in which the story unfolds. Therefore, the VR experience will be shot at a large and dark venue that is suited for a 360 degree shooting.

Options are the Gashouder (Amsterdam) or a industrial, empty factory.
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You are surrounded by thick mist. A violin starts to play. In the distance you vaguely see and hear the corps the ballet, moving to the violin. The music becomes louder and the violinist emerges as the mist starts to clear. He walks towards and around you. While you follow him, he moves back into the darkness and once again you only hear the violin.

This scene not only functions as an introduction to the ballet but also as an introduction in the Virtual Reality experience. The violinist’s movements guides the viewer to discover their 360 degree world.
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The music swells while the corps de ballet emerge from the darkness. They are like mesmerizing spirits in white tutus. They run towards you and surround you with kaleidoscopic patterns. Suddenly, you are part of their patterns.

After a short moment in formation with the corps the ballet, they fan out again to the surrounding circle before disappearing in the dark. You notice the violinist has returned behind you. While following his steps and the corps de ballet, you discover the main male dancer lying on the ground.
The violinist stops the music briefly and looks at the man. Like if under his spell, the dancer starts to move slowly when the violinist continues playing his instrument.

In the distance, the female dancer emerges from the corps de ballet, while the rest disappears. It looks like she’s floating and she’s surrounded by mist, as if she’s part of it. She approaches her love.
The male and female dancer dance individually under the spell of the violinist while the corps the ballet returns. The female dancer reaches out to them, including you, hopelessly seeking for help.

The spell seems to break and they start their pas de deux. For a moment, their love overrules the violinist's magic. The violinist and corps de ballet disappears into darkness again.
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The pas de deux unfolds in 360 degrees. Then, mist is returning and the violinist appears in various spots. Suddenly strings emerge from the bodies of the dancers. They move up and above you see a huge violinist that works the dancers like puppets on strings. He is taking back control aggressively and manipulates the pas de deux.
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The manipulated pas de deux intensifies towards a climax as the corps the ballet returns. Then, the female and male main dancer break manage to break the strings and the huge violinist disappears.

For a brief moment, the spell has broken completely and you see the dancers as human beings while they stand still everywhere in the space. We hear them breathing and see their strength.
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The violinist reappears from the distance. He breaks the silence by starting to play his violin again and continuing his spell.

The main female dancer goes up in the group and disappears into darkness with them. The main male dancer stays behind and falls to the ground exhausted.
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After it has turned dark, light is fading in again and thick mist is returning. It is closing in around you and the violinist plays his last notes as he walks around you. The music stops and he takes a bow before he turns around and walks away in the distance. When he is almost absorbed by the darkness, the mist closes in fully.
Production planning
The production of the Virtual Reality experience of Dutch National Ballet can roughly be divided in four different phases. The total duration of the production process will be dependent on the final concept and the availability of locations, cast, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>week 52 - 1</td>
<td>Finalizing script, Research</td>
<td>Shooting VR experience, Audio recording</td>
<td>Post-production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>week 2 - 4</td>
<td>Creating and rehearsing choreography by Peter Leung, Pre-production</td>
<td></td>
<td>Animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>week 5</td>
<td>&amp;samhoud media (location scouting, testing, facilities, music, licenses, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>week 6 - 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**indicational timeline**
Necessities

The following is needed from the National Opera and Ballet in order to realize this VR experience:

**Choreography**
- A main female and male dancer
- 6 to 8 female dancers (corps de ballet)
- A tailor-made choreography by Peter Leung
- Rehearsal and shooting time from the dancers and choreographer

**Music**
- A tailor-made music piece
- Actor/violinist and musicians for additional music

For location and productional necessities barter possibilities will be researched.