



BLANCA LI

The Merry Widow



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AN IMMERSIVE
DANCE AND
MUSIC SHOW
IN VIRTUAL REALITY

DANCE / MUSIC SHOW / VIRTUAL REALITY



“The Merry Widow”

A NEW SHOW BY BLANCA LI

Blanca Li’s new show will be an immersive dance, music, 100% virtual experience, in which the audience will be able to walk and move around the space, under the guidance of 20 dancers. Blanca Li imagined this show as an invitation to live an experience in which the audience members are simultaneously spectators and actors. The story is set in a virtual world, inhabited by all kinds of creatures. Some of them are totally virtual but others are embodied by real characters, interacting with the audience both in the real space and in the virtual space. The audience will be invited to take part in different scenes of the show, and to dance throughout the entire performance.



**“AN EXTRAORDINARY
EXPERIENCE
FOR THE
SPECTATOR”**



Blanca Li, a choreographer and multi-talented artist, has a passion for technology and all the possibilities it offers. In fact, the technologies on which virtual reality are based are constantly evolving, offering artists supports and possibilities unheard of up to this day.

For this piece, Blanca Li has chosen to adapt "The Merry Widow», a light and festive operetta, whose plot takes characters from one ball scene to another. The entire story unravels throughout different parties during which characters are constantly dancing.

The performance will last one hour and a half. It will be an extraordinary immersive experience of virtual reality allowing the audience to explore through dance the border between the real world and the virtual world. Led by the dancers, the audience will be fully integrated into the narrative, taking the role of ball guests.

In the virtual world, the public will follow the course of the plot immersed in different sets: an embassy, a garden, a cabaret. The dance scenes will be staged in each part, featuring different types of dance. Audience members will be able to participate to a waltz, a polonaise, a polka, a mazurka, or a can-can. Each time, real dancers will invite the participants to join the ball.



The audience will be immersed together and in real time in a virtual space, with real characters. Dancers and spectators will each have their **own specific avatar (an alter ego virtual character for everyone to be represented and seen in the virtual world).**

The audience will take part physically in the show, carried away in successive dances by the professional dancers.

Each participant will be equipped with a helmet and a vest with sensors, allowing him to be spotted and visualized by other spectators in the virtual space. This device will allow everyone to see each other and discover their behavior in real time. The audience is immersed in the performance, both in reality and virtually: the audience and the dancers, represented by their avatars, move together and at the same time in the real/virtual space.

Each one can decide to follow his own story, with his own particular point of view. Moving in the set (both real and virtual), the spectators will also become actors mixed with the performers of the piece (actors, dancers, musicians and extras, real or not).

Physical contact between the performers and the audience from dancing together will enhance the audience sensory experience and the feeling of being fully immersed in another reality.

In the virtual world, real dancers will invite the audience to dance and lead them through different places to have them discover and follow the stories of the different characters.

The audience and the dancers will act in **physical interaction**, in order to incite the audience members to participate in the plot that unfolds all around them and together with them.





**“THE ATMOSPHERE
WILL BE FESTIVE,
STRANGE,
FANTASTIC,
SURREALISTIC”**

A real journey into a virtual world where all the senses will be awake: the eye will be surprised by the sets, the characters, the lights and colors of each scene. It will be possible to move around, to dance with other characters; and there will be smells, drinks and food available in the virtual/real settings that will be possible to taste ...

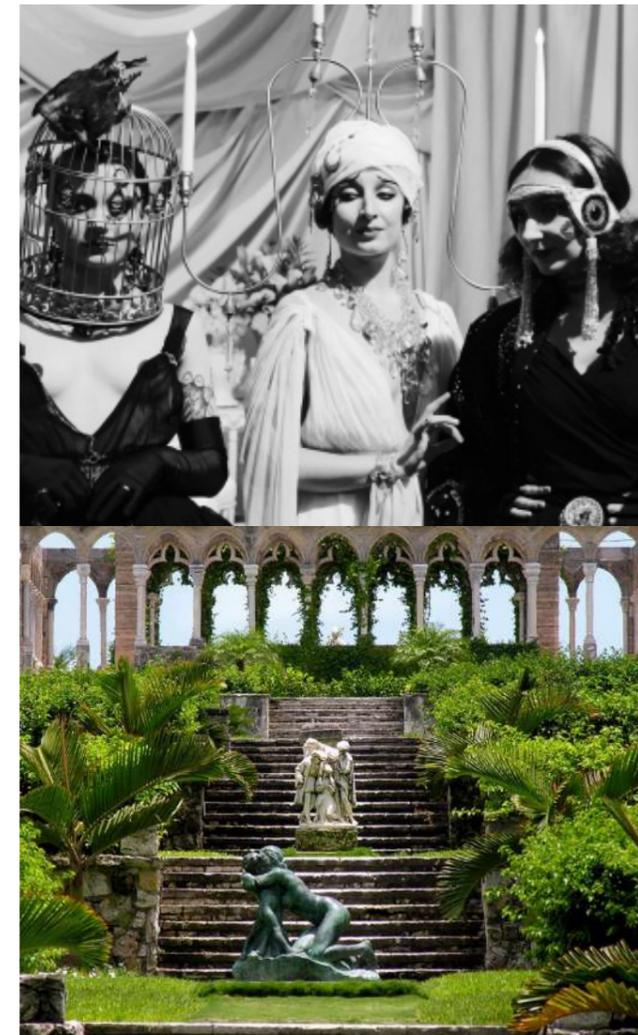
The performance environment will include different surroundings such as warmth (with sensations of sun), cold or even changing the texture of the (real) objects to transport the audience into fantastic and wild universes of sensations.

The piece will have a **narrative structure**, with a story involving characters that will incite the audience to follow them. The idea is to be able to bring different groups at the same time into the set and have dancers leading them into different spaces. The audience will be able to touch each other, to dance together, **to really share the dance but in a virtual world, with virtual characters**. This experience will create a **connection** between the spectators, in **a digital architecture specially created for the show**. Sets, music, and dance: we will create an imaginary world for a unique and unforgettable experience.



The characters used for the avatars can use fantastic references, imaginary animals or hybrid characters, half-men, half-animals...

For this creation we are inspired by the play «The Merry Widow». We propose a modern and current version with virtual characters and sceneries. The score and the narration will be adapted to be modern and contemporary. The audience will arrive for a large party during which they will be able to experience the unexpected. They will go through the same universe and story, but each one in a different way.



THE AUDIENCE'S ARRIVAL

The audience arrives at the venue and is introduced into a large hall, a ballroom with a live orchestra, where they can enjoy an «introduction» to the performance. Without knowing exactly what to expect during the show they are about to attend, some dance lessons are offered to train them.

Three classes in the show's theme will be offered to the participants (waltz, mazurka, French can-can...). The atmosphere of the show will already be perceptible before crossing the doors of the main space: a bright atmosphere, drinks, music...

The moment to enter the doors is approaching: it's time to go through a corridor, where the transition from the real world to the virtual world will be organized. The public will be equipped and will receive the necessary information to use their equipment in a very simple way. A virtual cloakroom allows the participants to design their avatar and decide which character he/she will embody in the virtual world, as well as the accessories and clothing he/she will wear.

Once ready, the group will be invited to enter the virtual world...



DEVELOPMENT

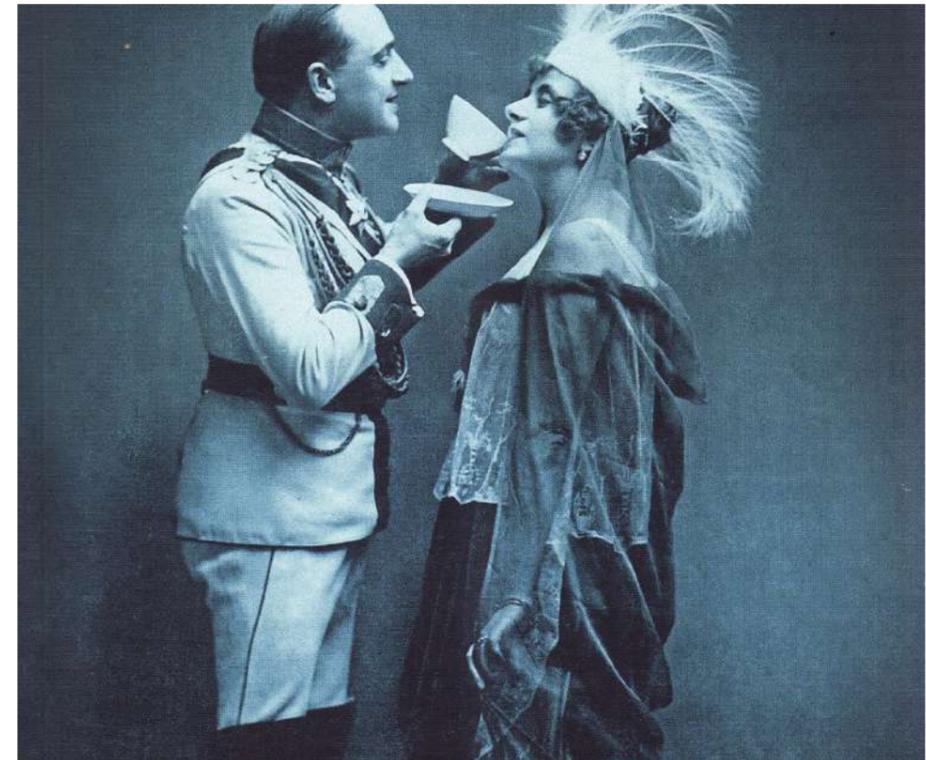
Lehár's "The Merry Widow" is an operetta in three acts. Three acts, three great scenes danced in three radically different atmospheres.

The Story:

In Paris, at the hotel of the Marsovian embassy, a beautiful party is organized for the birthday of the reigning Prince. The ambassador, Baron Mirko Zeta, his wife, the beautiful Nadia, their friend, the elegant Camille de Rosillon, and the young and beautiful widow of the court's banker, Missia Palmieri, make an appearance. Count Danilo Danilowitsch is required, for State reasons, to wed the beautiful and rich widow.

The next day, the widow offers a reception in her residence during which we learn that Danilo and Missia had known each other and are still in love, despite all the time elapsed.

During an evening at Maxim's, after many adventures, the widow will become the Baroness Danilowitsch and her property will still remain Marsovian.





“ACT 1”

BLACK AND WHITE ENVIRONMENT / BALROOM

ACT 1.

Act 1 takes place in a very elegant, black-and-white environment.

An alley appears where the guests are invited to come forward... As the public advances, the sound of music seems to draw near.

At the end of the alley, the public reaches a huge ballroom: we are at the Marsovian Embassy in Paris.

At the end of the hall is a rich and spectacular staircase. An orchestra composed of strange virtual characters stands on the stairs, playing beautiful music. Then the Ambassador appears, welcoming the audience to join his guests.

All of a sudden, the orchestra begins playing a waltz. The dancers appear in the virtual space and begin to dance throughout the room, before inviting the audience to dance.

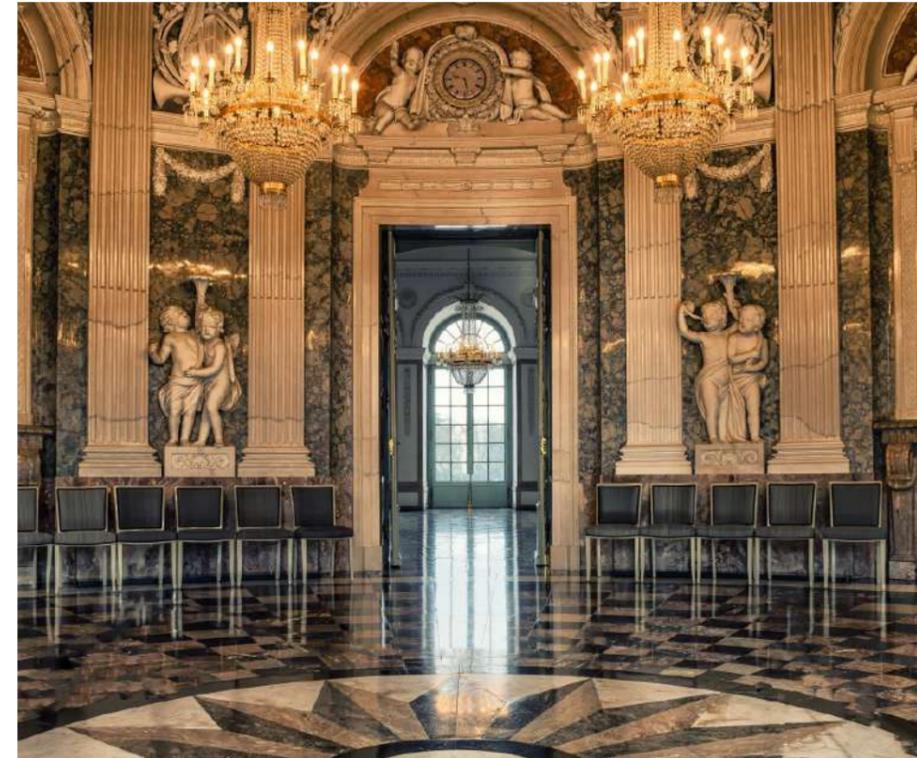
Virtual and real characters mix together in an elegant atmosphere, inhabited by surrealist creatures... Then the beautiful Missia Palmieri appears, the widow of the millionaire banker Palmieri who has just bequeathed a fortune to her.

The ambassador knows that the widow is very courted. He is concerned not to let her remarry with a foreigner, as this would cause the country's bankruptcy.

Her arrival to the ball does not go unnoticed. All her admirers crowd around her, and among them she comes face to face with beautiful Danilo. Everybody watches their reunion. They knew each other a long time ago and take pleasure in remembering some episodes of their youth when they loved each other...

Later, the ambassador informs Danilo that the country needs him: he must marry Missia. Moved by the ambassador's request, Danilo approaches Missia and invites her to dance. Everyone is also invited to dance, the public mixes with the dancers in a big waltz.

At the end, the public is gently led to move through space towards a labyrinth of fragrant flowers that leads the audience to another universe...







"ACT 2"

GARDEN PARTY / MISSIA PALMIERI'S HOME

ACTE 2

Act 2 takes place during a garden party at Missia Palmieri's home...

The atmosphere is delicate, with wood scents, very colorful. The action clearly takes place in another place, at another time. The guests wear contemporary costumes, multi-colored, folk-inspired.

The audience is greeted by Missia Palmieri, superbly dressed.

An orchestra begins to play folk melodies; the guests begin to dance one after the other: polkas, mazurkas...

The atmosphere is very festive, we hear laughter, the tables are overflowing with incredible dishes, drinks are served to the audience while dancers occupy the entire dance floor...

As happened at the Ambassador's ball, the dancers invite members from the public to dance... It's a grand polka that fills the whole space.

Suddenly, all movement stops, and we hear the rumor rise: Danilo enters the scene. He was no longer expected and he is the last of the guests to arrive. He does not forget his mission from the ambassador.

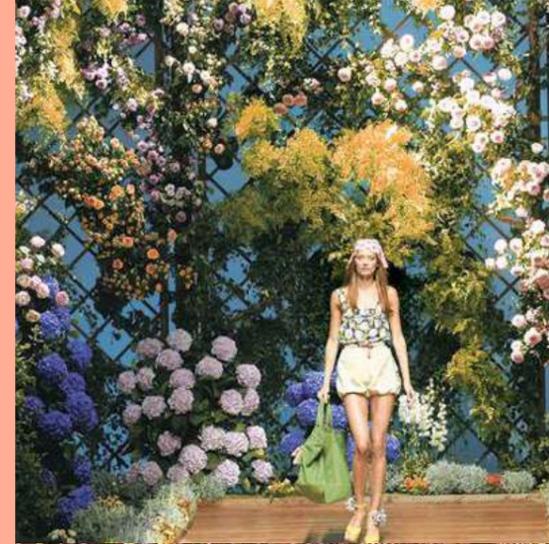
Missia and Danilo greet each other and begin a game of obvious seduction. Danilo feels uncomfortable, and when Missia tries to draw him into her net, he resists.

Aside at the party, Nadia - the Ambassador's wife - is living a romance with the elegant Camille. Hidden in a small garden pavilion, the lovers are in danger of being discovered as the Ambassador is approaching. To save Nadia from scandal and to hide her affair from her husband, Missia runs and takes Nadia's place. When the Ambassador discovers them, Missia feigns to be the mistress of Camille and announces to everyone her engagement to him. Danilo is broken, annihilated, his whole world and the party collapses around him and the public.

He leaves.

The public is then invited to follow him...







**"ACT
3"**

PARISIAN CABARET / CHEZ MAXIM'S

ACT 3.

The third and final act takes place at the Parisian cabaret Chez Maxim's.

The sound and visual atmosphere is hushed but we guess that at the end of the vibrantly red corridor, a party is going on. The dominant colors are red and green, the set is made with art-deco elements...

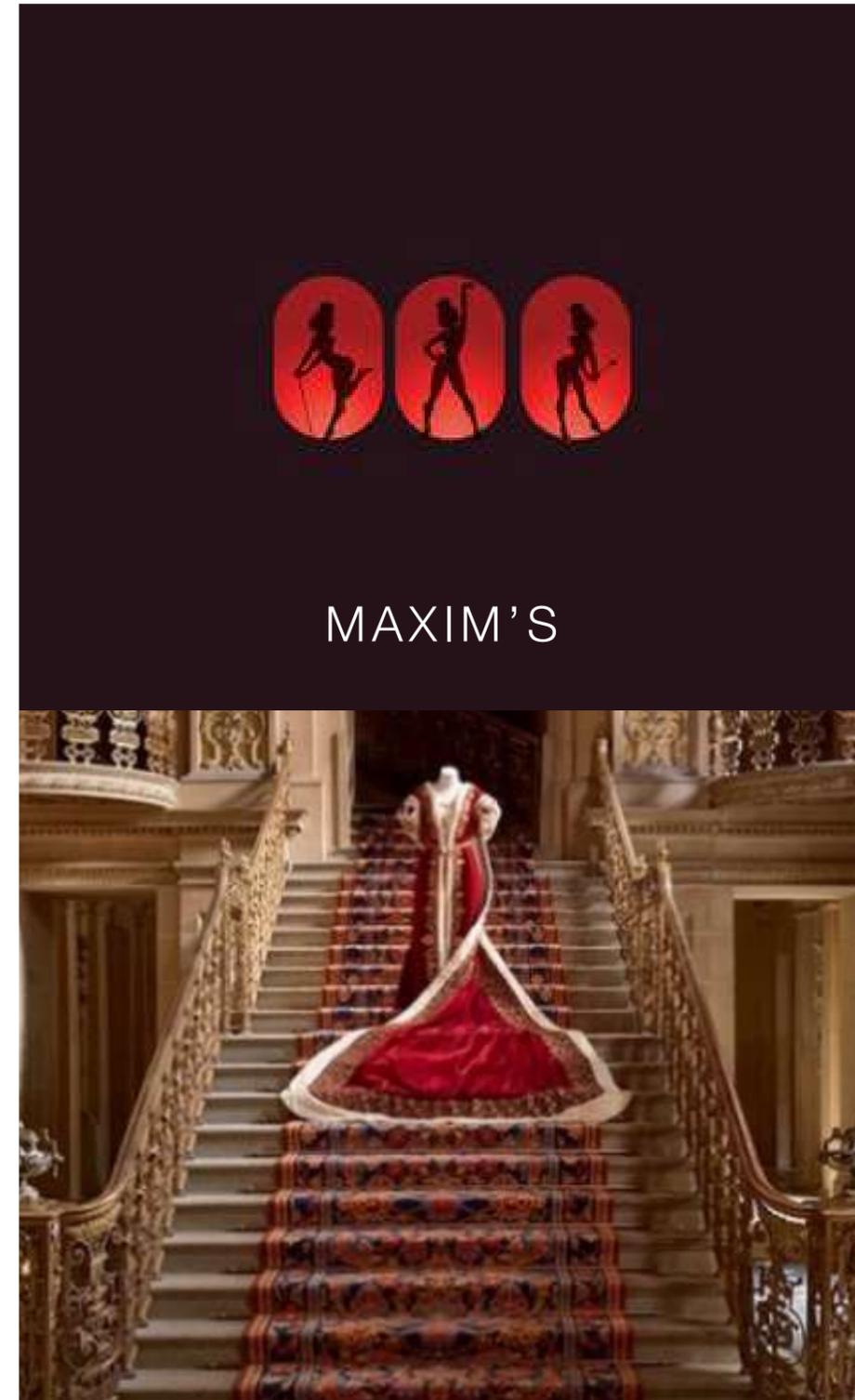
The public is invited to walk down the hall to arrive at the cabaret's main hall. In a festive atmosphere, the audience is invited to sit around small tables arranged around the dance floor. A few couples are dancing. Danilo is there, sitting apart on a chair, looking sad.

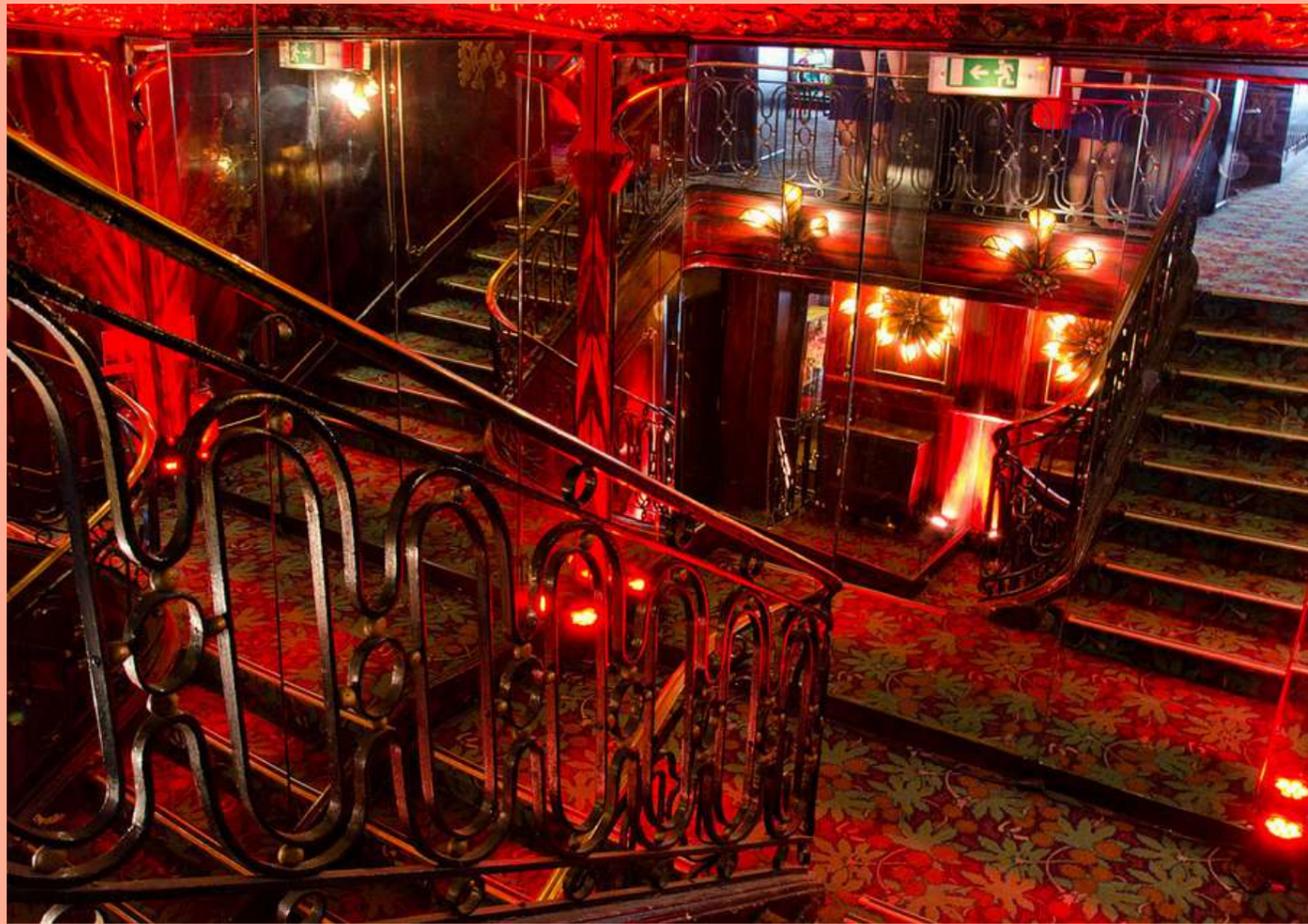
The orchestra, who was playing background ambient music, begins a can-can melody. The dancers rush to the dance floor and start the Can-Can.

Missia arrives at the cabaret looking for Danilo on the dance floor.

When she finally finds him, all the dancers, the guests and the orchestra stop to hold their breath.

Missia confesses to Danilo that she is not going to marry Camille, that it was only a ploy to save Nadia. Danilo then reveals his love. Musicians and dancers carry the lovers to the dance floor, where everyone celebrates with a spectacular Can-Can display.





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LI**

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CONTACT DIFFUSION & MANAGEMENT
STÉPHANE HIVERT - COMPAGNIE BLANCA LI
+33 6 63 74 04 05 / s.hivert@blancali.com
www.blancali.com