

Akram Khan's 'Outwitting the Devil' to open in July 2019

Akram Khan, the multi award-winning choreographer and dancer, is to open his new production 'Outwitting the Devil' in Stuttgart in July 2019. Khan's inspiration for Outwitting the Devil came from Leonardo da Vinci's mural 'The Last Supper', depicting the final meal that, in Gospel accounts, Jesus shared with his Apostles in Jerusalem before his crucifixion. Khan recalls studying the painting as a small child at school and feeling unable to see himself reflected in it. Later in life he encountered the radical reinterpretation of the work, 'The First Supper' by Australian artist Susan Dorothea White, portraying 13 women from around the world. The figure in the position of Leonardo's Christ is an Aboriginal woman, and Judas is the only white woman in the painting. This inspired him to create a piece challenging and redefining this oldest of human rituals, the coming together to share food in a time of limited resources.

Khan reunites with some of his close artistic collaborators: dramaturg Ruth Little, composer Vincenzo Lamagna, writer Jordan Tannahill, rehearsal director Mavin Khoo, costume designer Kimie Nakano – joined by lighting designer Aideen Malone and visual designer Tom Scutt. He gathered an international cast of six extraordinary performers to bring Outwitting the Devil to life.

Akram Khan said: "As I arrive at the end of my dancing career, I have awakened to a new way of dancing. And that is to dance my ideas through the bodies of others, including older dancers, who carry their histories and complex emotional experiences within them. One of the seeds of inspiration for Outwitting the Devil is Leonardo da Vinci's iconic mural of The Last Supper. This image has haunted me since I first laid eyes on it as a child."

As a young British Bangladeshi boy growing up in South London, I remember seeing The Last Supper on a printed A4 page in my art class. I was told it was one of the most famous paintings in the world, and was asked to draw my own version of it. I now realise that at the time I was uncomfortable and confused by the depiction. I could not see anything of myself in it, or of the culture and religion I grew up in. It was foreign to me. Or perhaps, I was foreign to it. It did not reflect me, or the people in my street – who came from many different cultures – in any way I could relate to.

Many years later, I stumbled across another version, The First Supper by Susan Dorothea White. This radical interpretation astonished me, and gave me permission to free myself from the classical version. And in this new, anti-colonial depiction, I recognised an artist's journey and challenge to convention which was parallel to my own. Ever since I entered the classical Indian dance world, I have been searching for a way out.... or perhaps more truly, I was searching for a new way in."

As one of the dance world's most respected figures, Khan has created an influential body of work, collaborating with an impressive range of performers and artists including Juliette Binoche, Sylvie Guillem, Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Nitin Sawhney. Khan's work for the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony was met with unanimous praise. Khan's recent final solo show XENOS and his production of Giselle for English National Ballet both opened to critical and public acclaim.

OUTWITTING THE DEVIL

Directed and choreographed by Akram Khan

13th, 14th July 2019

COLOURS International Dance Festival 2019, Stuttgart, Theaterhaus Stuttgart, Siemensstraße 11 70469 Stuttgart

About Akram Khan

Artistic Director/Choreographer/Performer

Akram Khan is one of the most celebrated and respected dance artists today. In just over 18 years he has created a body of work that has contributed significantly to the arts in the UK and abroad. His reputation has been built on the success of imaginative, highly accessible and relevant productions such as XENOS, Until the Lions, Kaash, iTMOi (in the mind of Igor), DESH, Vertical Road, Gnosis and zero degrees.

An instinctive and natural collaborator, Khan has been a magnet to world-class artists from other cultures and disciplines. His previous collaborators include the National Ballet of China, actress Juliette Binoche, ballerina Sylvie Guillem, choreographers/dancers Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Israel Galva'n, singer Kylie Minogue, visual artists Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley and Tim Yip, writer Hanif Kureishi and composers Steve Reich, Nitin Sawhney, Jocelyn Pook and Ben Frost.

Khan's work is recognised as being profoundly moving, in which his intelligently crafted storytelling is effortlessly intimate and epic. Described by the Financial Times as an artist "who speaks tremendously of tremendous things", a highlight of his

career was the creation of a section of the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony that was received with unanimous acclaim.

As a choreographer, Khan has developed a close collaboration with English National Ballet and its Artistic Director Tamara Rojo. He created the short piece *Dust*, part of the *Lest We Forget* programme, which led to an invitation to create his own critically acclaimed version of the iconic romantic ballet *Giselle*.

Khan has been the recipient of numerous awards throughout his career including the Laurence Olivier Award, the Bessie Award (New York Dance and Performance Award), the prestigious ISPA (International Society for the Performing Arts) Distinguished Artist Award, the Fred and Adele Astaire Award, the Herald Archangel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival, the South Bank Sky Arts Award and six Critics' Circle National Dance Awards. Khan was awarded an MBE for services to dance in 2005. He is also an Honorary Graduate of University of London as well as Roehampton and De Montfort Universities, and an Honorary Fellow of Trinity Laban.

Khan is an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells, London and Curve, Leicester.

About the Akram Khan Company

Co-founded in 2000 by award-winning choreographer Akram Khan and producer Farooq Chaudhry, Akram Khan Company has established itself as one of the foremost innovative dance companies, performing to sell-out audiences in leading festivals and venues around the world. Embracing Khan's artistic vision that both respects and challenges tradition and modernity, the Company has become renowned for its intercultural, interdisciplinary collaborations, and has developed a significant range of works from classical kathak and modern solos to artist-to-artist duets and ensemble productions. A milestone in the Company's journey was the creation of a section of the London Olympic Games Opening Ceremony in 2012.

The Company has been showered with prestigious honours including an Olivier Award for *DESH* and a record-breaking six Critics' Circle National Dance Awards. Akram Khan Company enjoys artistic association with Sadler's Wells Theatre in London, Curve in Leicester, and other leading venues and festivals around the world.

For further information visit akramkhancompany.net

The Troth – Usne Kha Tha, Autumn Tour 9th – 23rd Nov 2018

Akademi's 'The Troth' is a gripping wartime story of love and loss, told through powerful dance theatre, and returns for an autumn tour from 9th – 23rd Nov 2018.

Inspired by the classic Hindi short story *Usne Kaha Tha* (written in 1915 by Chandradhar Sharma Guleri), the action moves from the intense life and colour of rural India to the horrific darkness of the trenches in Belgium where young Indian men have been brought to fight for the Allied Forces. As the drama unfolds, we learn about the secret promise made by one soldier, Lehna Singh, as he makes the ultimate sacrifice to save another.

Marking the centenary of World War I, award-winning choreographer Gary Clarke unfolds the poignant narrative through contemporary dance, music and film. The show features a specially-commissioned music score by Shri Sriram and a cast including Vidya Patel (BBC Young Dancer 2015 finalist).

Supported by Arts Council England and British Council's Reimagine India cultural exchange programme, this international project is a collaboration between creatives from the UK and India, touring both countries during January to March 2018 as part of the UK-India Year of Culture.

Creative Team

Direction and Choreography: Gary Clarke

Assistant Director: Daniel Hay-Gordon

Dramaturg: Lou Cope

Composer: Shri Sriram

Film: Josh Hawkins