



Akram Khan announces his final full-length solo production, to premiere in Sadler's Wells' Spring 2018 Season

One of the most celebrated and highly regarded dance makers working today, Sadler's Wells Associate Artist **Akram Khan** announces a new production, **XENOS**, which will mark his final performances as a dancer in a full-length piece. The production, commissioned by **14-18 NOW**, the UK's arts programme for the First World War centenary, is inspired by Greek mythology with a particular focus on the myth of Prometheus, and by specific events from the First World War.

XENOS, co-produced by Sadler's Wells, will premiere in 2018, sixteen years after the debut of Khan's acclaimed first full-length production *Kaash*. **Sadler's Wells** will present the **UK premiere** from **29 May - 9 June**, as part of its Spring 2018 Season announced today, and the production's international tour. The London performances mark the opening night of the 14-18 NOW commemoration season. Tickets for **XENOS** and the Spring 2018 Season at Sadler's Wells are on public sale from **Monday 6 November at 10am**.

XENOS, meaning 'stranger' or 'foreigner', seeks to express tales of loss, hope and redemption, through a movement language that shifts between classical kathak and contemporary dance.

Working from a text by acclaimed playwright **Jordan Tannahill**, alongside his world-class team of collaborators Khan will draw on the story of a shell-shocked Indian soldier trapped in a trench during the First World War, through the lens of the myth of Prometheus - the Titan who stole fire and gave it to mankind.

Reuniting with many of the stellar creative team from Khan's celebrated 2011 solo work *DESH*, **XENOS** brings together dramaturg **Ruth Little**, award-winning lighting designer and Sadler's Wells Associate Artist **Michael Hulls** and costume designer **Kimie Nakano**. The set will be designed by **Mirella Weingarten**, and the score will be composed by **Vincenzo Lamagna** who created the music for *Until the Lions* and Khan's award-winning *Giselle* for English National Ballet.

Khan will be joined on stage by five international musicians: percussionist B C Manjunath, vocalist Aditya Prakash, bass player Nina Harries, violinist Andrew Maddick, and saxophonist Tamar Osborn.

Akram Khan said *"My interest lies in both the mythological body and the technological body. I want to explore our connection with our past and our future, investigating specific questions that confront me more and more every day, such as how does 'myth' play a part in today's society?"*

XENOS explores the central question at the heart of the myth – was Prometheus' gift the blessing or the curse of mankind? And at its centre is a colonial soldier, one of over 4 million men mobilised on behalf of the British empire. 1.5 million of these recruits were Indian, mostly peasant-warriors from North and North-Western India, and they fought and died in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Many sepoys were buried abroad, while those who returned home, often mutilated and traumatised, were estranged from their own histories, homelands, and countrymen, becoming xenoi.

So, do we need to tell other people's stories just in case they vanish? Who are the 'other' people? Are stories of human journeys told and retold again and again, so we can eventually learn from our mistakes? Who are 'we', a collective or many individuals? What makes us human? Are we still human?"

With an artistic vision that both respects and challenges Indian kathak form and contemporary dance, internationally renowned choreographer and dancer **Akram Khan** has created a substantial body of critically acclaimed work that ranges from classical and modern solos to cross-art form collaborations and company productions.

Recognised for the profoundly moving nature of his work, his reputation has been built on the success of imaginative and resonant productions such as *Until the Lions*, *DESH*, *Gnosis* and *zero degrees*, and collaborations with world-class artists and companies from other cultures and disciplines such as Juliette Binoche, Sylvie Guillem, Kylie Minogue, Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley, Hanif Kureishi, Steve Reich and English National Ballet. In 2012 he was chosen to create and perform in a dance section that paid tribute to absent friends and family at the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, set to Emeli Sandé's rendition of *Abide with Me*.

This autumn Khan's work has been seen on the Sadler's Wells stage with English National Ballet's reprisal of *Giselle*, and he will curate and perform in the theatre's inaugural presentation of the **Darbar Festival**, the established celebration of classical Indian music and dance from **9-12 November**. Darbar comes to Sadler's Wells to offer a classical dance programme for the first time since the festival launched over ten years ago.

Also in November, he presents a new **Channel 4** documentary **Can We Live With Robots?** (working title). In this unique project for the channel, he explores the impact robots and AI are having today on human relationships, and meets the cutting-edge robots of the future. Travelling from the UK to Japan and USA, he meets the robots already co-existing with humans, and the scientists harnessing artificial intelligence and the most advanced robotic mobility techniques to create eerily humanistic machines for the 21st century. Following his encounters, he interrogates his own reactions and improvises ideas to produce the film's finale - a powerful new piece of dance with dancer Ching-Ying Chien that portrays the emotional tensions and connections in human-robot relationships.

The film is directed by Hannah Berryman and exec produced by Joe Evans and Neil Crombie for Swan Films. It was commissioned for Channel 4 by John Hay, Head of Specialist Factual and Madonna Benjamin.

Other highlights of Sadler's Wells' Spring 2018 season include: the **15 year anniversaries of two major festivals** introduced under Alistair Spalding's artistic directorship – the **Flamenco Festival** and the theatre's acclaimed annual festival of international hip hop dance theatre **Breakin' Convention**. The season also celebrates the **10th anniversary** of one of Sadler's Wells' longest running productions **Sutra**, the award-winning collaboration between choreographer **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui**, sculptor **Antony Gormley** and **19 Buddhist monks from the Shaolin Temple** in China, which marks its **200th performance** during its return run.

From abroad, **International Associate Company Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch** performs **Viktor** and Canada's most cutting-edge dance company **Ballet British Columbia** brings a triple bill of works by female choreographers: **Sharon Eyal**, **Emily Molnar** and Olivier Award-winning Sadler's Wells Associate Artist, **Crystal Pite**, as part of a Dance Consortium tour.

UK Premieres include summer show **Carmen La Cubana** featuring Bizet's classic score, with new orchestrations by Tony Award-winner Alex Lacamoire (Hamilton), **Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan's** much-anticipated **Formosa**, and award-winning duo **Cecilia Bengolea and François Chaignaud's DFS** – the result of Bengolea's immersion in Kingston, Jamaica's defiant dance scene, and Chaignaud's study of traditional medieval vocal polyphony repertory, stretching back hundreds of years. **Candoco Dance Company** presents its commissioned double bill including Sadler's Wells New Wave Associate **Hetai Patel's** riotous **Let's Talk About Dis** and the **National Youth Dance Company's** latest cohort of talented young dancers performs a world premiere by Guest Artistic Director **Sharon Eyal**.

Sadler's Wells Associate Company English National Ballet presents a mixed programme featuring two works by one of dance's leading figures, **William Forsythe**: the world premiere of a new work created for the Company and **Approximate Sonata 2016**, a series of pas de deux deconstructing the vocabulary of classical ballet, to a score by Thom Willems. **Rambert** stages its first full-length narrative work in more than 30 years - a two-act modern reimagining of the 17-century play *Life Is a Dream* created by Olivier Award-winning choreographer **Kim Brandstrup**.

Two of the theatre's initiatives supporting emerging and early career artists are in evidence during the season with the return of **Wild Card** in the Lilian Baylis Studio. In March, the bespoke evening is curated by **Adrienne Hart** - who is also a participant in Sadler's Wells' Summer University programme - and her company **Neon Dance**. Special guests from different disciplines feature in the programme which encompasses dance, live music, video and lighting design. This event is part of Nils Fram's Piano Day, a creative international celebration initiated by the acclaimed Berlin music producer and pianist.

For young audiences Newcastle-based **balletLORENT** returns with another of its fantastical dance-theatre fairy-tale adaptations, commissioned by Sadler's Wells. Directed by **Liv Lorent**, and retold by **Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy**, *Rumpelstiltskin* has a score by *Doctor Who* composer **Murray Gold**, costumes designed by **Michele Clapton** (*Game of Thrones*), and narration by actor **Ben Crompton**.

Sadler's Wells Artistic Director and Chief Executive Alistair Spalding said *"The coming season is a reflection of our long-term relationships with artists like Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, and our most recent Associate Artist Crystal Pite. Supporting artists at every stage of their career is at the heart of what we do at Sadler's Wells, and this begins with our commitment to nurturing the next generation of talent. The world premiere of National Youth Dance Company is a personal highlight each spring season, and I'm delighted that the latest cohort of talented, ambitious young dancers will have the opportunity to work with Sharon Eyal, whose visceral choreography has absolutely marked her out as an artist to watch."*

The Monument Trust supports co-productions and new commissions at Sadler's Wells

Tickets for the Spring 2018 season are on public sale from Monday 6 November at 10am via www.sadlerswells.com and 0207 863 8000. Priority booking opens to members from Wednesday 1 November.

For press enquiries contact Sadler's Wells' Head of Media Relations, Abigail Desch: Abigail.Desch@sadlerswells.com / 020 7863 8119 or Senior Press Manager, Caroline Ansdell: Caroline.Ansdell@sadlerswells.com / 020 7863 8125

Notes to Editors

XENOS is commissioned by 14-18 NOW, the UK's arts programme for the First World War centenary

It is a co-production by New Vision Arts Festival Hong Kong, Sadler's Wells London, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Théâtre de la Ville Paris, Grec Festival de Barcelona, Adelaide Festival, Centro Cultural de Belém, Festspielhaus St. Pölten, Edinburgh International Festival, Concertgebouw Brugge, Espace des Arts Chalon-sur-Saône, HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts Dresden, manège scène nationale – Reims, Onassis Cultural Centre – Athens, Festival Montpellier Danse 2018, Romaeuropa Festival, National Arts Centre Ottawa, Curve Leicester.

Sponsored by COLAS

Supported by Arts Council England

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

XENOS International tour dates until the UK premiere

Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece: 21-27 February 2018 (world premiere)

Adelaide Festival, Australia: 16-18 March 2018

HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts Dresden, Germany: 6-7 April 2018

Festspielhaus St. Pölten, Austria: 17 May 2018

Sadler's Wells, London, UK: 29 May-9 June 2018

About Akram Khan

Akram Khan is one of the most celebrated and respected dance artists today. In just over 17 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 *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 Galván, 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. A career highlight 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 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.

ABOUT SADLER'S WELLS

Sadler's Wells is a world-leading creative organisation dedicated to dance in all its forms. With over three centuries of theatrical heritage and a year-round programme of performances and learning activities, its goal is to motivate everyone to experience dance – to take part, learn, experiment and be inspired. Audiences of over half a million come to Sadler's Wells' London theatres each year, with many more enjoying its touring productions at partner venues across the UK and around the world, or accessing its content through digital channels.

Sadler's Wells commissions and presents more new dance work than any other theatre in the world, embracing the popular and the unknown. Since 2005, it has helped to bring over 140 new dance works to the stage, many of them involving its 16 Associate Artists, three Resident Companies and four Associate Companies – the most exciting talents working in dance today. It also nurtures the next generation of talent through its artist development initiatives, and reaches over 25,000 annually through its learning and engagement programmes.

Located in Islington, north London, the current theatre is the sixth to have stood on the site since it was first built by entrepreneur Richard Sadler in 1683. The venue has played an illustrious role in the history of theatre ever since with The Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet and English National Opera having all started at Sadler's Wells. Sadler's Wells is a charity and a National Portfolio Organisation, currently receiving 10% of its revenue from Arts Council England.

www.sadlerswells.com

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