



AKRAM KHAN COMPANY

XENOS
Creation

World Première Onassis Cultural Centre - Athens, 21 February 2018

Akram Khan is working on his much anticipated new opus, a solo inspired by Greek mythology that will mark his last performance as a dancer in a full-length production.

Creative Team

Akram has brought together a stellar creative team, and along with dramaturg Ruth Little, is developing ideas around the theme, which will focus on the First World War through the lens of the myth of Prometheus. German designer Mirella Weingarten will create the set, which will be lit by the award-winning lighting designer Michael Hulls. The costumes will be designed and made by costumier Kimie Nakano, and the score will be composed by Vincenzo Lamagna. Akram will be joined onstage by five international musicians: percussionist B C Manjunath, vocalist Aditya Prakash, bass player Nina Harries, violinist Andrew Maddick, and saxophonist Tamar Osborn.

What makes us human?

Title & theme

The title *XENOS* means 'stranger' or 'foreigner'. Akram and his world-class team of collaborators will focus on the Prometheus story, that of the Titan who stole fire and gave it to mankind, and through their interpretation of the myth will seek to express tales of loss, hope and redemption.

Akram will also build upon his experience and research around the creation of the award-winning *Dust* for English National Ballet and will draw on specific events from the First World War, exploring our connection with our past to our future, using the rich language of movement, light, and sound.

Akram's interest lies in both the mythological body and the technological body. As Akram himself writes: "I will investigate specific questions that confront me more and more every day, like a shadow constantly following me, haunting me, whispering to me. How does 'myth' (like the Prometheus story) play a part in today's society? What is its relevance to humankind? Does Prometheus or Zeus have a place in our global political arena today? 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, retold, and told 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?"

**'But just as there is no fire without fuel
they needed new strangers to burn
So they began making strangers of themselves'**

Xenos by Jordan Tannahill

For his rebellion against Zeus, Prometheus was punished by being chained to a rock in the Caucasus, an eagle tearing daily at his liver. The theft of fire from the gods marked the beginning of human domination of the planet by means of technology – a victory which bore such terrible fruit during the First World War. *XENOS* explores the central question at the heart of the myth – was Prometheus' gift the blessing or the curse of mankind? By revisiting the classical Greek myth in the context of the most violent century in human history, *XENOS* reveals the beauty and horror of the human condition.

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. 'This is not war', wrote one wounded Indian sepoy. 'It is the ending of the world. This is just such a war as was related in the Mahabharata'.

Many sepoys were buried abroad, while for those who returned home, often mutilated and traumatised, another form of erasure followed, as their stories were interred in archives following the rise of Indian nationalism and the rejection of colonial rule. Estranged from their own histories, homelands, and countrymen, they became xenoi.

The text for *XENOS*, by acclaimed Canadian playwright Jordan Tannahill, gives voice to the shell-shocked dream of a colonial soldier trapped in a trench, his body torn by shrapnel. To be human is to be made of mud, and to return to it. In a pool of fire between life and death, the soldier rises from the earth as Prometheus, to shape mankind from clay and witness his triumph and destruction, and to challenge the will of his tormentor, Zeus. In Tannahill's retelling, Prometheus is cursed by Zeus to return again and again to live among men as man, woman and child, to witness the cycle of suffering as well as the joy his gifts of fire and knowledge have brought. His only possession is a wooden box – Pandora's bitter legacy – from which all evil has flown out into the world.

Akram Khan's movement language shifts between classical kathak and contemporary dance on Mirella Weingarten's precipitous and symbolic set. His Prometheus is a warrior-trickster, victim-perpetrator, defying categories of duty, loyalty and gender. *XENOS* takes place on the border between East and West, past and present, mythology and technology, where humanity stands in wonder and disarray.

XENOS is a portrait of Homo Deus brought back to his origins to be broken and remade, to meet himself as both stranger and friend. Prometheus means forethought. Among Prometheus' gifts to humanity, whom he loved, according to Aeschylus, was the gift of art. Is art, and its capacity to hold a mirror to mankind and our possible futures, the small box in which hope and love remain?

– Ruth Little, dramaturg

Artistic team & credits

Director/Choreographer/Performer Akram Khan

Set Designer Mirella Weingarten

Lighting Designer Michael Hulls

Costume Designer Kimie Nakano

Original Music Score composed by Vincenzo Lamagna

Dramaturg Ruth Little

Writer Jordan Tannahill

Rehearsal Director Mavin Khoo

Dancer Akram Khan

Musicians Nina Harries, Andrew Maddick, B C Manjunath, Tamar Osborn, Aditya Prakash

Producer Farooq Chaudhry

Associate Producer Lindsey Dear

Technical Director Richard Fagan

Production Manager John Valente

Stage Manager Marek Pomocki

Lighting Engineer Stéphane Déjours

Sound Engineer Julien Deloison

Project/Tour Manager Mashitah Omar

Props made by Louise Edge from LFX props & special fx

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

Confirmed co-producers to date New Vision Arts Festival Hong Kong, Sadler's Wells London, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Théâtre de la Ville Paris, Grec 2018 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...

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Supported by Arts Council England

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

Produced during residency at The Grange Festival, Hampshire and Onassis Cultural Centre – Athens.

Akram Khan

Artistic Director/Choreographer/Dancer

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.

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.

Mirella Weingarten

Set Designer

After completing her studies in dramatic arts in London, Mirella Weingarten studied fine arts in Hamburg and Edinburgh, with teachers including Marina Abramovic. In 1998, she received a Masters degree in stage and costume design from the Slade School of Art in London.

Since 1996, she has worked as a professional theatre designer and director for opera and dance theatre. After developing productions in the UK she returned to Germany.

Then began a continuous extensive collaboration with Berlin Contemporary Opera, designing many of their award-winning productions. Her recent work as director and designer has been seen throughout Europe, including Lucerne Opera in Switzerland, Expo Zaragoza in Spain, Komische Oper Berlin, Salzburg Festival, as well as the Venice Biennale, Royal Opera House London, Theater Basel, Theater St. Gallen, Bolzano Opera and many others. Her works have been presented at the Art Festival Weimar, KKL Lucerne, Zurich, Berliner Festspiele, Holland Festival, the Leipzig Opera House, the Davos Festival and many other festivals.

Since 2011, Mirella Weingarten has been the Artistic Director of the arts and music festival Schlossmediale Werdenberg in Switzerland, a festival for contemporary and early music and audiovisual art.

Working with kinetic sculpture and moving objects and stages has characterized her work throughout the past years.

Michael Hulls

Lighting Designer

Over the last 20 years Michael has worked exclusively in dance, particularly with choreographers Russell Maliphant and Akram Khan, and established a reputation as a "choreographer of light". His collaborations with Russell Maliphant have won international critical acclaim and many awards: *Sheer* won a Time Out Award for Outstanding Collaboration, *Choice* won a South Bank Show Dance Award, *PUSH*, with Sylvie Guillem, won four major awards including the Olivier for Best New Dance Production and *AfterLight* won two Critics Circle awards.

Michael and Russell also collaborated on *Broken Fall*, commissioned by BalletBoyz, which also featured Sylvie Guillem and won the 2004 Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production. *Fallen*, their most recent work for BalletBoyz, won the 2014 Critics Circle Award for Best Modern Choreography. In 2007, Michael and Russell's work was the subject of BalletBoyz's Channel 4 documentary *Light and Dance* and The Daily Telegraph hailed their collaboration as "possibly the most important creative partnership in modern British dance". *Eonnagata*, Michael's collaboration with Sylvie Guillem, Robert Lepage and Russell Maliphant, for which Michael won the 2009 Knight of Illumination Award for Dance, opened at Sadler's Wells and, along with *AfterLight*, led to Michael being nominated for a second Knight of Illumination Award and for the 2010 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance.

Michael has also worked with Akram Khan over many years, including on his full length solo *DESH*, winner of the 2012 Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production as well as *In-i* his duet with actress Juliette Binoche and *TOROBACA* his collaboration with flamenco virtuoso Israel Galvan. Most recently Michael lit Akram's highly acclaimed *Until the Lions*.

In 2009, Michael became an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells. In 2010, his contribution to dance was recognised with his entry into the Oxford Dictionary of Dance, as only the fourth lighting designer to be given an entry. In 2014 Michael received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance, and in 2016 Michael created his *LightSpace* installation on the main stage at Sadler's Wells, the first ever show presented there without any performers, and was also awarded a second Knight of Illumination award for *Conceal | Reveal*, his 20th anniversary programme with Russell.

Michael is currently working on light installations for the Lisbon Oceanarium and for Messum's Gallery Wiltshire.

Kimie Nakano

Costume Designer

Kimie Nakano studied Literature at Musashino University in Tokyo, Theatre Costume at École Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques du Théâtre in Paris and obtained a Theatre Design MA at Wimbledon College of Art in London.

Her designs for Akram Khan Company include: *Vertical Road, Dust* (English National Ballet's *Lest We Forget*), *iTMOi*, *TOROBABA*, *Gnosis*, *Kaash*, *The Rashomon Effect* (National Youth Dance Company), *technê* (choreographed for Sylvie Guillem, *Life in Progress*).

During the course of her career, she has designed costumes for many international dance companies and choreographers, such as The Royal Ballet of Flanders, Rambert Dance Company, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, José Agudo and Van Huynh Dance Company. Kimie has also designed set and costumes for a number of opera, theatre and film productions, including *Dream Hunter*, *The Oslo Experiment*, Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* and *Macbeth*.

Kimie Nakano's costume designs for *iTMOi* by Akram Khan Company were chosen by Prague Quadrennial 2015, a world theatre design exhibition held every four years, as well as by the V&A Make/Believe exhibition as part of the section British Design.

Kimie strives to create intercultural projects for the stage, workshops and films, to promote different world cultures.

Vincenzo Lamagna

Composer

Vincenzo Lamagna is an Italian musician, composer and producer based in London. His music is known for its visceral, emotive and edgy language that utilises an unconventional hybrid of electro-orchestral sounds.

As well as his solo work, Lamagna has carved a niche in the alternative contemporary dance world, where he has established himself as a major collaborator with some of the most acclaimed choreographers of this generation, Hofesh Shechter and Akram Khan.

His most recent collaborations include Akram Khan's award winning 21st-century adaptation of *Giselle* for the English National Ballet and Khan's *Until the Lions*, which was premiered at the Roundhouse, London in 2016.

His scores are a mercurial combination of acoustic and electronic music, recognised for their ferocious industrial undertones, haunted melodies and cinematic soundscapes.

Ruth Little

Dramaturg

Ruth Little is a dance and theatre dramaturg, a teacher and writer. Her work has encompassed national arts organisations, remote rural communities, site-specific production and large and small-scale exhibitions and expeditions. She lectured in English Literature at the University of Sydney, and was Literary Manager at Out of Joint, Soho Theatre, the Young Vic and the Royal Court. Ruth was Associate Director at Cape Farewell from 2010-2016. She is dramaturg with Akram Khan Company (*Gnosis*, *Vertical Road*, *DESH*, *iTMOi*, *Dust*, *technê*, *Until the Lions*, *Giselle*) and has worked with Banff Arts Centre, Sadlers Wells, English National Ballet, Northern Ballet, Spitalfields

Festival, Barbican, National Theatre Connections, Fuel Theatre, Siobhan Davies Dance, Dance Umbrella, Le Patin Libre and many others. Winner of 2012 Kenneth Tynan Award for dramaturgy. Publications include *The Young Vic Book* (Methuen, 2004), *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out* (Oberon, 2007); *The Slow Art of Contemporary Expedition: Islandings* (in *Expedition*, University of the Arts, 2012), *Art, Place, Climate: Situated Ethics* (In Art and Ethics, Springer, 2014), *War in the Body* (La Monnaie/de Munt, 2014), *The Meteorological Body* (In *Imaginative Bodies: Dialogues in Performance Practices*, Valiz, 2016).

Jordan Tannahill

Writer

Jordan Tannahill is a Canadian playwright, author, and director based in London. He has been described in the press as 'the hottest name in Canadian theatre' (Montreal Gazette) and 'the posterchild of a new generation for whom 'interdisciplinary' is not a buzzword but a way of life' (The Globe and Mail). He won the Governor General's Award for Drama in 2014 for *Age of Minority* and was shortlisted for the prize again in 2016 for *Concord Floral*. His films and multimedia performances have been presented at various festivals and galleries such as the Toronto Int. Film Festival, the British Film Institute, and the Tribeca Film Festival. From 2012 - 2016 he and William Ellis ran the influential artspace Videofag out of their home in Kensington Market. His 2015 book *Theatre of the Unimpressed* sits on the curriculum of theatre programs across North America and the UK and first novel, *Liminal*, is forthcoming from House of Anansi Press. Jordan is currently working on a commission for the National Theatre and the film adaptation of his play *Botticelli in the Fire* with filmmaker Stephen Dunn. His play *Late Company* transferred from the Finborough Theatre to the West End in August 2017.

Nina Harries

Musician - double bass

Nina Harries studied classical double bass at the Royal College of Music under Enno Sent of the London Sinfonietta, graduating in July 2016 and specialising in contemporary classical music.

She performs extensively for a host of artists including Symphonica Featuring DJ Switch, The Burning Glass, John Fairhurst Trio as well as the opera company workshOpera and contemporary classical music ensemble Echoshed. She also earned a place in The London Sinfonietta Academy in July 2017.

Aside from ensemble work, Nina is a soloist and songwriter, incorporating theatre, cabaret and comedy and captivating audiences with original songs and commissions exploring the relationship between the double bass and voice. Her solo work has earned her performances at Glastonbury Festival 2016, the English Folk Expo 2017 and OMNI Fete 2017 in Luxembourg.

Andrew Maddick

Musician - violin & viola

Andrew is a freelance musician based in Australia and Europe. He was principal violinist for *Kinky Boots* (Brisbane, 2017), the Opera Australia productions of *The Sound of Music* (Brisbane, 2016) and *The King & I* (Brisbane, 2014) and the Tim Finn musical *Ladies in Black* (QTC, 2017 & 2015). In London he performed in the National Theatre production of *Revenger's Tragedy* (2008) and the Sam Mendes directed *Cherry Orchard* at the Old Vic (2009). Andrew has performed with Hans Zimmer (2017), The Whitlams (2017), Sting (*If On A Winter's Night* DVD & 2009 Europe tour), Paolo Nutini (*Sunny Side Up* LP & 2010 tour), Missy Higgins (2014), Katie Noonan (2013), Smokey

Robinson, George Benson, Nigel Kennedy and Katherine Jenkins (BBC Radio Cymru live). With the Hofesh Shechter Dance Company he was a principal musician from 2009 until 2015, touring *In Your Rooms* and *Political Mother* to international arts festivals including Paris, Melbourne, Berlin, Seoul, Montreal, Los Angeles and Tokyo. He has been the principal violinist for The Bootleg Beatles since 2007 and performed at Glastonbury Festival with them in 2013. As an orchestral violinist he was a member of Orchestra of The Swan, UK (2005 - 2011) and the English Symphony Orchestra (2005 - 2010). In 2016 he toured Australia with the Cologne Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

B C Manjunath

Musician - mridanga

Manjunath revealed an innate musical talent even as a young boy and he imbibed the best in Carnatic Talavadya from his parents. Later he enlarged this musical perspective by training in Mridanga under Karnataka Kalashree K N Krishna Murthy and Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri T.K.Murthy.

Manjunath's creative impulses have flowered in various forms, from solo and ensemble performances, contemporary classical, modern jazz and Indian classical. He has accompanied many greats from India and abroad, including Sangeetha Kalaratna, Sri R R Keshavamurthy, Sangeetha Kalaratna Sri H P Ramachar, Mysore M Nagaraj and Dr. Mysore M Manjunath (aka Mysore Brothers), Dr. Suma Sudhindra and Chitraveena N Ravikiran. He has also shared the stage with international legends like Kani Karaca (Turkish Sufi singer) and Robin Eubanks (Trombone genius). He has worked with composers Rafael Reina, Riccardo Nova, members of Bhedam, Conservatorium of Amsterdam, The Karnatic Lab Festival, Zagreb Music Biennale, Fabbrica Italy, Santander Percussion Festival (Spain), Perth International Festival, Romaeuropa Festival, Milano Musica/John Cage Festival, Ictus Ensemble (Belgium), Quintetto Bibiena (Italy) and Het Nederlands Fluit Orkest.

Selected for the prestigious USTAD BISMILLAH KHAN YUVA PURASKAR award for the year 2012, Manjunath also received the highest recognition for youth in the field of fine arts from CENTRAL SANGEETH NATAK ACADEMI of India. For two years, Manjunath toured with Akram Khan Company's 2004 production *ma*, performing in 175 shows. He continued to work on several Company pieces including *Gnosis* in 2009 and *TOROBKA* in 2015.

Tamar Osborn

Musician - saxophone & clarinet

Saxophonist and multi-wind player, Tamar graduated from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2000.

A strong classical background complemented by jazz studies has enabled her to perform in many genres and many different contexts in her professional career. A member of the Dele Sosimi Afrobeat Orchestra since 2009, she has also performed and recorded with, amongst others, Kelis, Van Morrison, Billy Ocean, tabla maestro Tanmoy Bose in India, the acclaimed production of *Fela!* at the National Theatre & Sadler's Wells (London) and Africa Express (an on-going series of collaborative concerts between African and western musicians including artists such as Tony Allen, Baaba Maal, Rokia Traore, and Fatoumata Diawara).

She runs her own creative project Collocutor, for which she is bandleader, composer and performer. Collocutor released their debut album 'Instead' in 2014 and second album 'The Search' in 2017.

Aside from Collocutor and the Dele Sosimi Afrobeat Orchestra, she currently performs and records most regularly with Sarathy Korwar, the Hackney Colliery Band, The Fontanelles, Emanative, Jessica Lauren's Naga Five and The Organic Jam DJ & musician collective.

Aditya Prakash

Musician - vocalist

Aditya Prakash is an award-winning Indian classical vocalist and composer, best known for his powerful and emotive voice. Although firmly rooted in South Indian classical (Carnatic) music, which he studied under venerated Gurus in Chennai, his style is heavily inspired by North Indian classical music, Sufi music, jazz, and hip hop, which he brings out in his collaborative cross-over genre projects.

Aditya has had the rare fortune of performing, touring and working with Sitar Maestro, Pandit Ravi Shankar, since the age of 16. Aditya toured with Ravi Shankar and Anoushka Shankar, as the lead vocalist in Ravi Shankar's "Festival of India III" ensemble, taking him to the most prestigious venues across the USA, Canada and Europe. Aditya has collaborated with leading names such as Karsh Kale, Anoushka Shankar and Salim Merchant to name a few.

Aditya is the founder of the acclaimed performing group Aditya Prakash Ensemble, which creates original compositions inspired from the styles of Indian classical, folk, jazz, funk, and hip hop.

Aditya has been performing classical Carnatic vocal concerts since the age of 13 and has performed solo concerts at prominent venues throughout the world. While pursuing an Ethnomusicology degree from UCLA (University of California Los Angeles), Aditya studied composition and performance under award-winning musicians such as Tamir Hendelman, Kenny Burrell and Shujaat Khan. Aditya continues his training with advanced mentorship in Carnatic music under reputable musicians - T. M. Krishna and R. K. Shriramkumar - while receiving firm grounding under legendary Gurus - Sri P.S. Narayanaswami and Sri Palai Ramachandran.