

Archive and new silent film footage, an evocative soundscore and powerful dance tell a 100-year-old Hindi short story from World War I

Akademi's new international dance theatre production, *The Troth*

World premiere: Jaipur Literature Festival, 26 January 2018

UK Premiere: Curve, Leicester, 21 February

UK tour to 16 March

Part of UK-India Year of Culture and Re-imagine India

Through powerful dance theatre, *The Troth* tells a story of love, loss and sacrifice against the backdrop of the horror and conflict of World War I. Inspired by film noir and the era of black and white films, *The Troth* weaves its poignant narrative through dance, music and film.

Based on Chandradhar Sharma Guleri's iconic Hindi short story *Usne Kaha Tha*, *The Troth* is about one soldier, Sardar Lehna Singh, and the sacrifice he makes to keep his secret promise to an unrequited love whilst mid-conflict in the horror of the trenches of Belgium.

Over 1.3 million Indians contributed active service over the course of World War I and were the largest voluntary force ever assembled. Their losses were staggering. *The Troth* reveals the contribution and human cost of Indian soldiers to the allied war effort. British Armed Forces have advised the creative team on military training, movement, aesthetics and music of the period

Award-winning director and choreographer Gary Clarke is acclaimed for his compelling works of narrative dance theatre, most recently with *COAL* based on the miners' strike. Clarke's emotionally direct and physical approach to storytelling and character

is notable in contemporary dance.

For *The Troth* he collaborates with dramaturg Lou Cope to tell the soldier's story, using archive wartime footage and new subtitled films by Josh Hawkins to unfold the narrative. They set the scene for viscerally powerful dance from six dancers of diverse backgrounds and training within an evocative soundscape created by BASCA award-winner Shri Sriram who laces his original composition with sounds from World War I and Indian folk music.

The cast includes Kathak dancer Vidya Patel, finalist in BBC Young Dancer of the Year 2015 who has recently performed to great acclaim with Richard Alston Dance Company.

The Troth marks the centenaries of World War I (1914-18), Indian cinema (1913) and the first Hindi short story (1915). It is rooted in the most recent academic research and in-depth cultural exchange. Leading academics and experts who have contributed to the project are Amarjit Chandan (Poet and academic), Dr Santanu Das (literary specialist and historian at Kings College London specialising in World War I), Tripurari Sharma (Professor of Acting at the National School of Drama, Delhi) and Ashok Sagar Bhagat (Professor of Theatre Architecture at the National School of Drama, Delhi) and Jasdeep Singh (Community Curator, National Army Museum).

Mira Kaushik OBE, Director of Akademi, says: *"Usne Kaha Tha is a classic of Hindi literature, loved by millions. Our production will be a powerful 'living silent film', and is Akademi's first theatre show after nearly 20 years of primarily outdoor performances. This Indo-UK artistic collaboration has galvanised partners from both countries – including Arts Council England, British Council, the Government of India's Ministries of Culture and External Affairs, and the British Army – to reveal the vital contribution made by Indian soldiers to World War I".*

Lt. Col Jo Young, the British Army's Officer for the Arts, says: *"The British Army is thrilled to be supporting the production of The Troth. It tells a vital piece of World War I history and speaks volumes about shared heritage. Army musicians are involved in the sound score, contributing military themes and authenticity to the fantastic*

composition by Shri, and soldiers are working with the dancers to assist them in the portrayal of drill, PT and movement under fire.”

Akademi has been commissioned by The Space to release a digital film of *The Troth*, which will enable the show to reach a global audience.

Ends

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Listings

Akademi's *The Troth* tour 2018

Friday 26 January (world premiere)
Jaipur Literature Festival, Hawa Mahal

Monday 29 January
Kamani Auditorium
Delhi, India

Friday 2 February
Bharat Bhavan
Bhopal, India

Sunday 4 February
Tarang Auditorium
Jabalpur, India
then touring India to 14 February

Tuesday 20 February (preview), Wednesday 21 February (UK premiere), 7.45pm
Curve
60 Rutland St, Leicester LE1 1SB

Box office: 0116 242 3595

www.curveonline.co.uk

Monday 5 March (time tbc)

ArtsEkta Belfast,

The Mac (Downstairs Theatre)

Belfast

Saturday 10 March, 7.30pm

Tacchi Morris Theatre

School Rd, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton TA2 8PD

Box office: 01823 414141

<http://tacchi-morris.com/whats-on/the-troth-akademi-south-asian-dance-uk>

Tuesday 13 March, 7.30pm

Edge Hill Arts Centre

Edge Hill University, St Helens Rd, Ormskirk L39 4QP

Box Office. 01695 584480

www.edgehill.ac.uk/artscentre/

Friday 16 March, 7.30pm

Duke's Theatre (The Rake)

Moor Lane, Lancaster LA1 1QE

Box Office: 01524 598500

www.dukes-lancaster.org

Notes to editors

1. Akademi is a progressive South Asian dance organisation, based in London. It aims to inspire audiences and change lives by creating and nurturing excellence in classical, contemporary, popular and participatory South Asian dance. Akademi's programmes bring South Asian dance to mainstream attention, capturing the public's imagination through inspiring storytelling and unique spectacle. It creates talent pathways for the next generation of dance artists, and takes South Asian dance to the heart of the community, creating

life-affirming experiences for those who are disadvantaged, disengaged or isolated.

2. *The Troth* is funded by Arts Council England; Ministry of Culture, Government of India; Armed Forces Covenant Fund; Cockayne Grants for the Arts through the London Community Foundation; PRS for Music Foundation; ICCR; and Air India.
3. Partners include UK-India Year of Culture; British Council; The Space; Imperial War Museum; National Army Museum; The Nehru Centre, London; Watermans Arts Centre; Teamwork Arts; Ustad Allaudin Khan Sangeet Evam Kala Academy and Vivechana Theatre Group.

Production credits for *The Troth*

Produced by Akademi

Choreography and direction: Gary Clarke

Dramaturgy: Lou Cope

Music: Shri

Film: Josh Hawkins

Lighting design: Charles Webber

Costume design: Abha Desai

Producer: Penny Andrews

Cast: Daniel Hay-Gordon, Deepraj Singh, Dom Coffey, Songhay Toldon, Subhash Viman Gorania, Vidya Patel

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