



Press release

Akademi at 40

The UK's leading South Asian dance organisation celebrates 40 years of innovation and diversity with a year of celebratory events in major London venues from 17 May

The anniversary celebrations mark the final year of the directorship of Mira Kaushik OBE

2019 sees game-changing South Asian dance organisation Akademi marking its 40th anniversary with a series of celebratory events running from May 2019 to April 2020.

Akademi embraces South Asian dance in all its forms - classical, contemporary, commercial and social - commissioning, creating and supporting it. Its work over the past 40 years is an expression of the UK's increasingly diverse society. Now a truly British artform, South Asian dance is woven into the tapestry of our culture. Many artists who were presented by Akademi in the early days of their careers are now part of the cultural mainstream.

Founded by Tara Rajkumar, Akademi's patrons and trustees have included Pandit Ravi Shankar, Dame Alicia Markova, Anish Kapoor and Anoushka Shankar. Over the years, it has presented hundreds of performances including large-scale productions at locations including the Houses of Parliament, Trafalgar Square, the Southbank Centre and more. Its recent dance theatre piece on World War I, *The Troth*, received international acclaim. For over three decades, Akademi has pioneered projects in education and community settings, providing workshops for young people including those with special educational needs along with a health and wellbeing programme for older adults living with dementia and heart and lung diseases.

Akademi's year of celebratory events includes performances, talks, workshops and competitions in some of the capital's landmark venues.

***THE RITE OF SPRING* by Seeta Patel at The Place Theatre on 17 & 18 May as part of a UK tour**

Akademi supported the R&D and preview performances of Seeta Patel's re-imagining of the iconic *THE RITE OF SPRING* back in 2017. Now it supports the UK tour of the finished piece. Patel's transformative re-telling showcases some of the finest international Indian classical dance talent and bridges two very technical, powerful and evocative art forms: western classical music and Indian classical dance.

***AUNUSTHAN* by Pagrav Dance Company at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital on 13 June**

Akademi celebrates 21 years of collaboration with its oldest partner, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, with a performance by vibrant Kathak ensemble, Pagrav Dance Company. Choreographed by artistic director Urja Desai Thakore, *Aunusthan*, meaning 'celebration', will be performed in the hospital's atrium space for patients, staff and members of the public.

***DANCE DIALOGUES: Glittering Tales – Dancing for Rajahs, Nawabs, and the Officers of the Raj* at Asia House on 25 June**

In a special curation by Chitra Sundaram, Akademi launches its *Dance Dialogues* series of talks with noted Bharatanatyam artist and Indian actor Dr Swarnamalya Ganesh making her London debut. Ganesh and Sundaram will explore the narratives, the women and the repertoire of Sadir Āttam, the command performance that was presented in darbars and salons for royalty, aristocracy and officers of The Raj from the 17th to the early 20th century. Sadir is considered by many as the historic precursor to the classical Indian dance style of Bharatanatyam.

Performances of *SADIR: Dancing for Rajahs, Nawabs, and the Officers of the Raj* – a performance with live music in partnership with SAMA Arts on 28 & 30 June

Whilst in the UK, Dr Swarnamalya Ganesh will be performing *SWARNAKATHA: A Salon Soiree* accompanied by live musicians – on 28 June, at Rhythm in the

Landscape Festival, Cambridge, introduced by Dr Avanthi Meduri, and, on 30 June, at Woman in the Arts Festival, LSO St Luke's, London EC1V 9NG.

DANCE DIALOGUES: Classical Indian dance and its relevance in a global contemporary context at Asia House on 12 July

Bharatanatyam artist and Indian actor Rukmini Vijayakumar will be in conversation with Vena Ramphal, Bharatanatyam dancer, scholar and media talking head. Vijayakumar will share her experience in creating and touring work that adheres to traditional vocabulary while experimenting with context and presentation. This pairing of two eminent women will be a fresh insight into a modern cultural India.

Rukmini Vijayakumar will be running repertoire and choreographic workshops at Dance Works, London on 13 and 14 July.

NAVADAL South Asian dance competition and NAVADAL Rising Stars curated by Vidya Patel at Southbank Centre on 20 July

Akademi is partnering with One Dance UK, the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and Yuva Gati, the South Asian strand of the Centre for Advanced Training programme, run by DanceXchange and Sampad, to present *NAVADAL* at the National Youth Dance Festival, U.Dance 2019. *NAVADAL*, meaning 'new shoots', gives young British exponents of South Asian dance an opportunity to be recognised at an early stage in their career and find pathways into the dance sector.

In a special evening of dance curated by Vidya Patel, BBC Young Dancer 2015 finalist, Yuva Gati 2016 winner and star of Akademi's *The Troth*, the winners of *NAVADAL* competition will get a chance to perform in the Purcell Room.

Akademi is also sponsoring a 'Lifetime achievement in South Asian Dance' award at the One Dance UK 2019 Awards.

UDAL Bharatanatyam performance by dancers from Chennai's Kalakshetra Foundation at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on 9 September

UDAL is presented by Akademi together with Uyir, a group led by Bharathanatyam dancer Stella Uppal Subbiah. Formed in 2014, Uyir provides performance platforms for adults re-discovering Bharatanatyam. This performance will be followed by a workshop.

***DESCENDANTS* British South Asian female choreographers at Southbank Centre on 29 September**

This is an evening of bold, topical and thought-provoking work from a range of celebrated female dance artists connected with Akademi over the past 40 years.

***RUMINATION* Akademi at 40 (1979-2019) at the V&A on 18 October**

Akademi's founder Tara Rajkumar and former director Pushkala Gopal host an event celebrating the four decades of Akademi's work when they will hand over archive material from 2000 to 2019 to add to the V&A's collection.

***BROWN TANGLE* a two-day festival at Rich Mix on 25 & 26 October**

Guest director Shane Shambhu and guest curator Parbati Chaudhury have put together this first-of-a-kind festival which sees young British Asian arts practitioners take over Rich Mix with their fresh perspective on South Asia's artistic legacy. Daytime sees intense 'closed-door' dialogues and workshops for artists looking at process, collaboration and integrating artistic disciplines. The evenings, open for audiences, include dance performances, eclectic cabarets (curated by Raheem Mir), creative club nights, and an open stage for extempore spoken word.

***SPARKPLUGS* at Watermans Arts Centre on 1 November**

An evening celebrating the work of the best and the brightest up-and-coming South Asian dance talent. British-based with international roots, these artists provide a fresh take on traditional Indian dance styles, showing a mix of bold and adventurous choreographies.

***APOTHEOSIS* at the British Museum on 15 November**

Akademi and the British Museum host a special event where classical Indian dance is performed in response to the South Asian Collection on permanent display in the museum's stunning Hotung Gallery.

Further events in autumn 2019 and spring 2020 will be announced later in the year.

The 40th anniversary celebrations have been envisioned by Akademi's dynamic director Mira Kaushik OBE, working closely with producer Nina Head. November 2019 sees Kaushik's departure after being at the helm for more than 30 transformative years, seeing it through the many changes in the cultural and political landscape in that time.

Kaushik says: "I have had three decades of illuminating adventures in the world of dance in the UK. My journey from being a cultural ambassador of South Asia to being at a place where South Asian dance is seen as an intrinsic and valued part of the British creative DNA is my greatest achievement. I am thrilled to have been a conduit for the UK's thriving community of South Asian dancers, the majority of whom are based in London. There is still exciting work to do which will further professionalise the sector and I look forward to the next generation of leadership picking up the baton during this year's celebratory anniversary programme.

Ends

Press contact: Martha Oakes or Sue Lancashire at Martha Oakes PR / martha@marthaoakespr.co.uk / 07798 626555 or sue@marthaoakespr.co.uk / 07973 819984

Listings information

Friday 17 & Saturday 18 May at 7.30pm

Seeta Patel *THE RITE OF SPRING*

The Place Theatre, 17 Duke's Road, London WC1H 9PY

Box office 020 7121 1100 / www.theplace.org.uk

Tickets: £17 / £13 concessions

Thursday 13 June at 1pm

Pagrav Dance Company *AUNUSTHAN*

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital

The Atrium, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, 369 Fulham Rd, London SW10 9NH

Free

Tuesday 25 June at 6.45pm

DANCE DIALOGUES: Glittering Tales – Dancing for Rajahs, Nawabs, and the Officers of the Raj

Dr Swarnamalya Ganesh in conversation with Chitra Sundaram

Asia House, 63 New Cavendish St, Marylebone, London W1G 7LP

Box office 020 7307 5454 / <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/glittering-tales>

Tickets: £10 / £8 concessions, Students go free

Friday 28 June, time tbc

SADIR: Dancing for Rajahs, Nawabs, and the Officers of the Raj
a performance with live music in partnership with SAMA Arts

Rhythm in the Landscape Festival

Storey's Field Centre, Eddington Avenue, Cambridge CB3 1AA

Box office: www.sama.co.uk

Sunday 30 June, time tbc

SADIR: Dancing for Rajahs, Nawabs, and the Officers of the Raj
a performance with live music in partnership with SAMA Arts

Woman in the Arts Festival

LSO St Luke's, 161 Old St, London EC1V 9NG

Box office: www.sama.co.uk

Friday 12 July at 6.45pm

DANCE DIALOGUES: Classical Indian dance and its relevance in a global contemporary context

Rukmini Vijayakumar in conversation with Vena Ramphal

Asia House, 63 New Cavendish St, Marylebone, London W1G 7LP

Box office 020 7307 5454 / <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rukmini-vijayakumar>

Tickets: £10 / £8 concessions / students go free

Saturday 20 July at 11am

NAVADAL 2019: National South Asian Youth Dance Festival

Part of U.Dance 2019

Clore Ballroom, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

Free

Saturday 20 July at 5.30pm

NAVADAL Rising Stars

Part of U.Dance 2019

Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

Box office: 020 3879 9555 / <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on>

Tickets: £5

Monday 9 September, time tbc

Uyir and Akademi present UDAL

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 4A Castletown Rd, Hammersmith, London W14 9HE

Box office: 020 7381 3086 / <https://bhavan.net/events/>

Sunday 29 September, time tbc

DESCENDANTS British South Asian female choreographers

Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

Box office: 020 3879 9555 / <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on>

Friday 18 October, time tbc

RUMINATION - Akademi at 40 (1979-2019)

Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Rd, Knightsbridge, London SW7 2RL

Box office: 020 7942 2000 / <https://www.vam.ac.uk/whatson>

Friday 25 October & Saturday 26 October from 10am to 8pm

BROWN TANGLE: British Asian Arts Festival

Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London, E1 6LA

Box office: 020 7613 7498 / <https://richmix.org.uk/whats-on/>

Friday 1 November, time tbc

SPARKPLUGS

Watermans Arts Centre, 40 High St, Brentford TW8 0DS

Box office: 020 8232 1010 / www.watermans.org.uk

Friday 15 November, time tbc

APOTHEOSIS

Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery, British Museum, Great Russell St, London WC1B 3DG

Box office: 020 7323 8181 / https://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on

Free

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.

4 June 2019