

August 2020 – For Immediate release

## Akademi brings live performances to older adults in Camden

After an abrupt halt to all live creative experiences due to the pandemic, Akademi are delighted to have taken a small, but important step by taking dance performance to the elderly tenants of Greenwood Sheltered Housing in London Borough of Camden that consists of 67 flats. This presentation was done in partnership with Ageing Better Camden, a programme run by Age UK Camden and funded by National Lottery Community fund.

On Thursday 20 August, Akademi's artists, Jesal Patel, Raheem Mir and Saloni Saraf presented a Classical Indian Kathak performance in Greenwood's garden area. The tenants, aged 65+, welcomed this initiative and enjoyed this unique experience either intimately while observing social distancing or from their apartment windows. The free of charge event was a part of Dance Well, Akademi's participatory and performance programme to improve the health and wellbeing of the general population through the medium of South Asian Dance. Dance Well is funded by City Bridge Trust and The Linbury Trust.

Richard Armitage from University of Nottingham writes in The Lancet that during COVID-19 self-isolation will disproportionately affect older people whose only social contact is out of the home, such as shopping, daycare and community centres and places of worship. Those who do not have close family or friends, and rely on the support of voluntary services or social care, who are already lonely, isolated, or secluded, face further barriers to contact ([Armitage, 2020](#)). As per the [Camden Profile](#) published in July 2020, 41% of households in the borough contain one person living alone – a third of these are people aged over 65 years.

With this in mind, Akademi were keen to engage with the local community, especially with those people who are not only socially isolated but also digitally isolated during the lockdown. The performance follows weeks of planning with the Housing Manager Lydia Haizel, artists and a production manager to adapt the programme and make it a safe and enjoyable experience. The safety of the artists and audiences was ensured through a detailed risk assessment of rehearsal and performance arrangements in light of current guidance on social distancing and travel. The tenants also learnt the hastas (hand gestures) for clouds, rain, thunder/lightning, window, earrings, necklace, mirror.

Here is what some of the tenants had to say:

*"I really enjoyed it. I was absolutely mesmerised.... I absolutely loved what went on here..."* Patricia

*"It all offers us something that changes our lives just a little bit once in a while....I was very pleased to know that talented people are coming here to entertain us..."* Peter

In 2020, Akademi is celebrating their heritage year with events such as these. They are also archiving 40 years of their vital contribution to South Asian Dance in the UK at the V&A Museum.

As Akademi starts to reimagine the future, this pilot programme has shown that we can provide creative experiences to communities across the borough and continue to play an active role in local civic life. The programme will also provide employment opportunities to freelance creative practitioners and the opportunity to perform again. With the help of existing and new partnerships,

# PRESS RELEASE

# Akademi

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Akademi can offer experiences we have missed so much - the opportunity to socially connect and share a joy.

**Further information:**

<http://akademi.co.uk>

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- ENDS -

**For press, enquiries, please contact:**

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**ENCLOSED:**

Images (photographer credit - Pari Naderi) and Video clips of the performance can be downloaded via this link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FPCMB02n\\_mwro1yIYmXYeCGs4LHLUSrv?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FPCMB02n_mwro1yIYmXYeCGs4LHLUSrv?usp=sharing)

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

## **Akademi**

Founded in 1979, Akademi is the UK's leading producer of South Asian dance, capturing imaginations through inspiring storytelling and unique spectacle. Creating vital talent pathways for the next generation of dance artists, Akademi also takes dance to the heart of the community, offering life-affirming experiences for those who are disadvantaged, disengaged or isolated. Akademi is a National Portfolio organisation supported by the Arts Council of England.

[akademi.co.uk](http://akademi.co.uk)

## **Dance Well**

Dance Well is Akademi's participatory and performance programme to improve the health and wellbeing of the general population through the medium of South Asian Dance. Akademi's learning and participation dance artists deliver workshops and intimate performances for all ages; from young children to older adults, in a range of settings from community organisations and care homes to hospital atriums and wards.

<https://akademi.co.uk/learning-and-participation/dance-well>

## **Ageing Better Camden**

Ageing Better Camden is a partnership of older people and Camden organisations, working together to tackle social isolation and loneliness among older people. It is a programme run by Age UK Camden, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

<http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk>