

Amina Khayyam Dance Company_____

MEDIA RELEASE/ LISTINGS – SPRING 2016

Fourth touring run in two years!

YERMA



The anguishing story of Yerma in Federico Garcia Lorca's savage yet lyrical play about a woman who suffers the heart breaking social torment of a childless marriage, that forces her to commit a horrific and irrevocable act, is set to Indian neoclassical dance - Kathak.

Originally set in rural patriarchal Spain of 19th century, Yerma is made relevant by Amina Khayyam Dance Company for today's new and marginalised communities of Britain and Europe.

Performed to spectacular live music with tabla, cello and vocals featuring world-renowned musicians.

11th March	Gulbenkian Theatre University of Kent, Kent CT2 7NB	Box office: 01227 769075 www.thegulbenkian.co.uk
22nd March	Watford Palace Theatre Watford WD17 1JZ	Box office: 01923 225671 www.watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk
6th April	Courtyard Theatre Hereford HR4 9JR	Box office: 01432 340555 www.courtyard.org.uk
22nd March	Circomedia Bristol BS2 8SJ	Box office: 0117 924 7615 www.circomedia.com

AMINA KHAYYAM DANCE COMPANY, the UK-based dance company that uses KATHAK as the core narrative in making new work, embarks on a fourth touring run in two years of its unique dance/theatre interpretation of **YERMA**, the famous 1934 'tragic poem' written by the Spanish dramatist and poet, Federico Garcia Lorca. In re-imagining **YERMA** from early rural 20th century Spain using the south Asian dance form of kathak, Amina has ensured this very topical tale resonates with modern and diverse British audiences.

YERMA is about a young woman, who is tormented by the social stigma of being in a childless marriage. So obsessed is Yerma with the notion of having a child so that she fits into what she considers to be her rightful role in society, and so frustrated is she by her husband, that she is driven to commit murder. Amina Khayyam's version is performed to spectacular live music played by musicians on tabla, cello and vocal.

choreography and principal performer: Amina Khayyam
music: Tarun Jasani, Amina Khayyam & Debasish Mukherjee
dancers: Lucy Teed, Jane Chan & Amina Khayyam
musicians: Debasish Mukherjee, Lucy Rahman, Alastair Morgan
costume: Keith Khan **lighting and production:** Stuart Walton

Image Downloads: www.aminakhayyam.co.uk/yerma

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YERMA is creatively co-produced with **zeroculture** (in association with Collage Arts) whose last dance-theatre work *Find Me Amongst The Black* featuring choreography by Darshan Singh Bhuller (ex- Artistic Director of Phoenix Dance) and KMA, was seen at the Southbank Centre, London.

"This is a slick production." The Telegraph

What they are saying about YERMA...

4**** / The Scotsman (Kelly Apter)

"Khayyam has a strong command of Kathak.... takes us deep into Yerma's soul" <http://www.wow247.co.uk/2015/08/20/dance-review-yerma/>

4**** / The Herald (Keith Bruce)

"highest production values are in evidence throughout"

http://www.heraldsotland.com/arts_ents/13617476.Fringe_Dance_review_Yerma_New_Town_Theatre/

4**** / The List (Donald Hutera)

"Powerful, poignant kathak dance...sharply stylized.. dramatically alert, thematically rich and ultimately moving "

<https://edinburghfestival.list.co.uk/article/73288-yerma/>

4**** / FestMag (Lucy Ribchester)

“This isn’t dance narrative as we know it but something that burrows much deeper into the emotional roots of Lorca’s play, finding a poetry of its own”
<https://www.festmag.co.uk/features/102961-yerma>

4**** / Broadway Baby

“The choreography is exquisite... breathtaking”
<http://www.broadwaybaby.com/shows/yerma/707487>

4**** / Edfest Mag

“emotive, well-choreographed. The highlight is Yerma’s expressive eyes. For a dancer to be able to tell the entirety of the narrative just through her eyes, it’s astonishing” <http://www.edfestmag.com/yerma/>

TOTAL THEATRE (Dorothy Max Prior)

“an intense and accomplished demonstration of the power of movement-based theatre to tell stories” <http://totaltheatre.org.uk/amina-khayyam-dance-co-yerma/>

“Amina Khayyam Dance’s interpretation of Federico Garcia Lorca’s play Yerma offers a haunting account of a woman in an arranged marriage who attracts suspicion from her husband and the community due to her inability to have children. Although written in 1934, women find themselves in similar situations today among some sub-cultural communities in Britain, prompting Khayyam to create a contemporary version of the tragedy. Drawing on the dramatic potential of kathak, specific characters are fleshed out whose response to Yerma changes over time as friends and relatives eventually shun her. Visually evocative, Khayyam as Yerma and three other female dancers in long dark dresses appear with striking white makeup, challenging the conventions of the classical abhinaya, or use of the face to convey emotion. Complex rhythmic footwork plays on the amazing ensemble of musicians who draw from classical Indian and western traditions and instrumentation with a tabla, two cellos and Indian vocalist Lucy Rahman. Drama is conveyed through the body, as intricate call and response kathak phrases build up relationships of unity and opposition. Meticulously rehearsed, the group of three dancers often function as a unit with a strong walking motif that poses numerable challenges to Yerma, breaking her spirit then serving as a source of defiance embodied by Khayyam. Technically strong, the dancers are able to play with the classical form and infuse it with a contemporary resonance through the interplay of traditional vocabulary, stylised motifs and naturalistic action. The dance is rich in emotional intensity, finely tuned and expressive movement detail, with an original score by Tarun Jasani that combined to create evocative imagery that stays with the viewer long after the show”. **Dr Stacey Prickett, Principal Lecturer, University of Roehampton**

On the making of YERMA



© Vipul Sangoi, Raindesign, 2011. Credit photo to Vipul Sangoi. vipul@raindesign.info

“When I first started creating Yerma, I had just given birth to my child, a fact that made empathising with Yerma's yearning for a child slightly problematic. However, having a little cherub of my own in my arms, I could see why Yerma would yearn for one of her own. But that is not why I had started on my journey to meet Yerma - I grew up with stories around me from my own community where if a woman was unable to bear a child, she would automatically considered to be at fault! The family would then force the husband to re marry so he may get a second chance to have a child. Although this is not the case with Yerma, everything else in the story resonates. Amazing that while the play was written in 1934, it is so topical for many women around the world today in numerous different cultures who find themselves in similar situations; they are under tremendous pressure to ‘do the right thing’ and if they seemingly don’t conform to what society has decided are the rules, they will find themselves marginalised, pushed out and ultimately without family or support. Today, Europe has new Yermas seething on the fringes of inner-cities, hidden behind the insularity of communities where women's issues still have a long way to go...

*I approach the re-telling of Yerma using the passion of Kathak. I use Abhinaya - the gestural facial expressions - as the central movement within it, but I subvert it by negating it – so that my Yerma wears a face of death – there is no prettiness, no jewels, no shine. Rural Spain of Yerma is transposed to contemporary Britain: some issues remain the same. I hope audiences enjoy our modern take on Yerma.” - **Amina Khayyam***

KATHAK is fundamentally a storytelling form that traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as *Kathakars* or storytellers. The name is derived from the Sanskrit word *katha*, meaning story. *Kathakar* in Sanskrit means the person who tells a story. Its form today contains traces of temple and ritual dances, and the influence of the bhakti movement.

From the 16th century onwards Kathak faced a major transformation when it entered the courts of Mughal rulers. Here it absorbed certain features of Persian and central Asian dance, imported by the Mughals, and progressed to develop a poetical as well as a highly technical and rhythmic dance form under their patronage. There are three major *gharanas* (or schools) of Kathak from which performers generally draw their lineage: the *gharanas* of *Jaipur*, *Lucknow* and *Varanasi*, each developed from the respective courts of Rajput, Oudh and Varanasi.

Today, in the UK, Kathak is undergoing another transformation, as result of its meeting with British culture. It has absorbed as well as confronted much of the political and cultural baggage creating in the process a style unique of a *gharana* in its own right. Artists such as Nahid Siddiqui, Sonia Sabri and Akram Khan have helped push kathak to a new audience base in this country.

about Amina Khayyam Dance Company

AKDC is a touring company that uses Kathak as the core narrative in making new work; adding to it other media and forms such as theatre, live art, and technology.

Led by **Amina Khayyam**, the Company treats Kathak as a contemporary form thereby transcends any 'classical' or 'modern' precepts to its approach. It uses classical Kathak vocabulary to transpose it on a modern body dialogue, in the process subverting its many facets to carve out an emotion performed to a contemporary narrative. AKDC believes the dance form is evolving with progressions demanded by the contemporary zeitgeist, in the same way it did so from the demands of the Mughals, the last time it took a major step forward. At its heart, the Company emphasises Kathak as a storytelling form using its uniquely placed and equipped vocabulary to tell new and urgent stories of global importance.

Based in Surrey, the Company is particularly concerned with issues that affect marginalised women, not just from the mainstream but from within their own communities. It is from there that it draws its inspiration to tell stories as well as to shape its process, embedded in an extensive work-shopping process that empowers and stake holds women in the work. The work's dramaturgy is explored through the sub-culture context of the targeted audience, but one that transposes to the wider mainstream audience.

In addition to touring *Yerma*, AKDC will be touring its *A THOUSAND FACES* this summer/autumn as well as making a new production – *SLUT*.

Bios of Artists & Collaborators

about Amina Khayyam_____

Born in Sylhet, Bangladesh, Amina trained in Kathak in the UK, initially with Alpana Sengupta, and later from one of Kathak's finest exponent Sushmita Ghosh, under whose guidance she made her professional debut in 2001 at the Purcell Room, Southbank Centre. Her performance ranges from classical Kathak, in which, she has received high accolades for her Abhinaya, to multi-media performances such as the principle performer in the Akademi/South Bank's outdoor spectacle *Escapade* and in International Arts' and Forum for Laboratory Theatres of Manipuri's production of *Macbeth-Stage of Blood* on the River Thames.

She has toured extensively both nationally and internationally with several companies including Sonia Sabri, and has worked with reputable dancers/choreographers such as Nahid Siddiqui, Kumudini Lakhia, Darshan Singh Bhuller, Filip Van Huffel, Jonathan Lunn etc.. Amina makes new work using Kathak as the main core of a piece, but uses cross-form mediums in her narrative. In LAAL SHAARI, which was selected for ROH2 *Firsts*, she used live art approaches to controversially subvert the Kathak form. That creative approach is evident all her work such as in her last pure form piece – *ONE*, commissioned by the Musee du quai Branly, Paris. In addition to touring *Yerma*, Amina has just finished making a full production of *A THOUSAND FACES* and is in development with a mid scale production *AMAD*, both due to tour in 2016.

Press Comments:

“elegant and serene” - Ballet Dance Magazine

“delightful style” – The Stage

“moved with spell binding intensity and glided with fascinating fluidity in and out of traditional movement vocabulary” - “a characteristic aloofness, holding the audience's attention” – Pulse

about Dancers_____

Lucy Teed (*Dancer*)

Lucy Teed graduated from the University of Surrey in 2008 with a degree in Dance and Culture. This included a year on professional placement working with Phoenix Dance Education. She then went on to complete a post-graduate diploma in Performance at the University of Chichester. This involved an extensive national tour with Mapdance 09, working with choreographers Shobana Jeyasingh, Charles Linehan, Liz Aggiss, Ben Wright and Laila Diallo. Lucy trained in Kathak for three years at university with teachers Alpana Sengputa and Amina Khayyam. She resumed training with Amina after her year with Mapdance, which has since led to various performance projects through Amina Khayyam Dance Company. Lucy has worked on a range of performance, community and education projects within both contemporary and kathak dance. This recently involved working in the South West with Attik Dance and Spindrift Dance Company.

Jane Chan (*Dancer*)

Jane is a London based dancer who graduated from her postgraduate studies in Dance Culture (MA) with merit in 2013 following her BA (Hons) Dance and Culture programme (2012) both at University of Surrey, UK. She is an avid dancer since

young age. She has been trained in Chinese classical and folk dance, contemporary and Kathak with Amina Khayyam. A member of Amina Khayyam Dance Company since 2014, she teaches Kathak classes regularly in London. She was invited as visiting tutor at the University of Surrey after she finished her MA course. She is the London correspondent for the Hong Kong Dance Journal as well as a freelance project assistant. She is currently training in Stilts, Qi Gong and Wing Chun. Other performances included Canada Powell River and USA Montana International Music Festival (1996), Shanghai International Children's Cultural & Arts Festival (2000), The Olympic Games, Beijing (2008), Equestrian Events, Hong Kong and 60 Anniversary of the establishment of Peoples' Republic of China Cocktail party (2009).

about Musicians_____

Tarun Jasani (*Composer*)

Tarun Jasani is a Sarod player belonging to the Shahjahanpur Gharana. He was trained by Pandit Buddhadev Dasgupta in India and makes a living from performing and teaching the Sarod. Tarun has performed in various prestigious events and festivals in the UK and abroad, including the largest Indian Classical music festival outside of India, the Darbar festival. Aside from his Classical recitals, he has also performed in various cross-cultural collaborations including a tour of Spain with the legendary Flamenco dancer Manuela Carrasco, performances with Kora players from Mali, Latin Jazz musicians from Cuba and Sufi musicians from Iran. His recitals have been broadcasted on Sky TV, Zee TV and numerous radio stations.

Debasish Mukherjee (*Tabla*)

Debasish Mukherjee is one of the few tabla players who is known for his versatility. Hailing from a family of tabla and music traditions, he started receiving his training from his father, the renowned tabla exponent Pandit Kanai Mukherjee of Benares gharana. He was also privileged to be trained under the able guidance of his grand Guru, the great tabla maestro Late Pandit Nanku Maharaj as well as under the tutelage of his other grandguru, Pandit Kishen Maharaj, the doyen of tabla. Debasish has performed at many prestigious festivals throughout India and abroad. He has developed his own style, which is unique and highly praised everywhere by accompanying musicians as well as listeners. Debasish believes that tabla is not just a percussion instrument but it is a musical instrument, which has melody as well as rhythm. Debasish has performed with great artists like legendary Pandit Birju Maharaj, Pandit V.G.Jog, Ustad Bahadur Khan, Pandit Rajan Mishra and Shajan Mishra, Ustad Rashid Khan, Pandit Budhaditya Mukherjee, Smt. Saswati Sen, Ustad Aashish Khan, Daniel Hope, Pandit Shyamal Chatterjee, Pandit Om Prakash Maharaj, Smt. Haimanti Shukla to mention a few. Debasish regularly performs with Amina Khayyam, having done **Laal Shaari** and **One**, which toured in Paris and Various venues in UK since 2010 and most recently in **A Thousand Faces**.

Lucy Rahman (*Vocal*)

Lucy Rahman is a vocalist of international repute. She is a British singer of Bangladeshi origin. She was trained in semi-classical Indian music in Bangladesh and was awarded "Sursaki" from her music college as the most promising vocalist of her generation. She now lives in Britain and works with various music projects. She is one the lead singers of Grand Union Orchestra, a very well-known jazz music group in Britain, with whom she performed at various famous venues throughout the country including, Sadlers Wells Theatre, Queen Elizabeth Hall Barbican Centre. Lucy was

born in a family of famous musicians, artists and poets and from her very early age she trained in Indian classical and semi-classical music from her renowned father, Sheikh Lutfur Rahman. For his contribution to the music, her father was awarded the highest national accolade award from Bangladesh government. In his lifetime, he also received award from India and Russia. Lucy has performed in countless stage, television and radio shows both in Bangladesh and in the U.K. She is a “grade A” artist of Bangladesh television. She has also performed as a semi-classical singer on her own at various venues in Britain and internationally at a number of well known venues notably in New York, Berlin, Brussels and Paris. Lucy is a regular member of AKDC, performing in all the company’s work.

Alastair Morgan(Cello)

Alastair made his debut as a concerto soloist at the age of fifteen, playing the Saint-Sains cello concerto with Sutton Youth Symphony orchestra. He has since performed Tchaikovsky’s Rococo variations with the Sutton Symphony orchestra and has given many recitals in the UK and also New Zealand.

Alastair received a scholarship to study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and has also participated in master classes with many distinguished cellists, including Leonard Elschenbroich, Leonid Gorokhov and Alexander Baillie in the UK, and with Wolfgang Boettcher in Liechtenstein and. He has led the cello section of the Jericho Ensemble in performances of Benjamin Britten’s “Misericordiam” and has taken the solo continuo cello role with them in both of Bach’s Passions. In his spare time he has organised and performed in several charity recitals in care homes and cancer care groups in his local area.

Alastair is very grateful to William Syson and the Beatrice Huntington Foundation whose support has allowed him to participate in Masterclasses with teachers of international acclaim including Raphael Wallfisch and Sebastian Comberti".



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