

Akādemi presents

THE TROTH

उसने कहा था

Usne Kaha Tha

The Troth began as the seed of an idea when it was announced that the UK would be commemorating the centenary of World War 1. In considering how Akademi might mark the occasion, I remembered the short story *Usne Kaha Tha*, which I had read as a student of Hindi literature in India.

Guleri's tale of one soldier's unrequited love and mortal sacrifice is known to generations of Indians, but the contribution of Indian soldiers to the Allied war effort is too little remembered outside India. With the UK-India Year of Culture marking 70 years of Indian independence, I saw an opportunity to re-tell this story through a vivid blend of dance, film and music – a 'living silent film' that imagines how the early pioneers of Indian cinema would have adapted the story 100 years ago.

I am grateful to Gary Clarke and the whole team who have created a unique and truly special show. Cultural and historical authenticity has been central to our vision and I am indebted to our creative consultants for their expertise. My thanks also to all the funders and supporters who have made this project possible.

I hope you are inspired, as I was, by the story of Lehna Singh.

Mira Kaushik OBE
Executive Producer of *The Troth*

It is a real honour to be asked to translate this special Indian story into the art of movement and moving image. It has been an educational and inspirational creative journey and I hope that I and the creative team have done the story and its heritage justice.

Gary Clarke
Direction and Choreography

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.co.uk    #TheTroth2018

Synopsis

“The memory becomes luminous just before death”

Amritsar, India, 1888: In a bustling marketplace a young boy, Lehna Singh, meets a girl, Leela. He cheekily asks her, “Are you betrothed?”. She runs away, shyly. The season passes. Again they meet and Lehna teases her with the same question. On their third encounter, the girl replies: “Yes, I was engaged just yesterday – see my silken shawl.” Only betrothed women wore these. Lehna despairs.

“Are you betrothed?”

7 years later: Lehna discovers that the British Army is recruiting Indians in Punjab. He joins up and begins his training.

18 years later: Lehna is a junior officer in the British Army. War is declared. On visiting the home of the Subedar (Captain) before travelling to the front, Lehna discovers that the Subedar's wife is the girl he met in the marketplace. Taking Lehna aside, Leela makes him promise to protect her husband and son, Bodha, who is in the same regiment.

“I beg you, protect them both”

Belgium, 1915: As war rages, the 77 Sikh Rifles keep their spirits up in the trenches with songs. But Bodha is seriously ill. Lehna cares for him.

A German soldier, impersonating a British officer, infiltrates the trench and commands a group of men to mount an attack. Lehna remains with Bodha but becomes suspicious of the imposter when he offers Lehna a cigarette (a real British officer would have known that Sikhs do not smoke). A struggle ensues; the spy is killed and Lehna is mortally wounded. The Germans launch a full-scale assault on the trench, but are trapped as the Subedar's men return, having discovered their mission was a decoy. The 77 Rifles are victorious but both Bodha and the Subedar are injured.

There is no space in the ambulance for three so Lehna insists that they go ahead. As they leave, he asks them: “When you see her, tell her that I kept my troth.” Drifting out of consciousness, he mumbles “She had said so” and dreams of home.

“Tell her that I kept my troth”

About the author

Chandradhar Sharma Guleri (1883–1922) was a writer and scholar from Jaipur, India. Described as a versatile genius, he is best known as the author of *Usne Kaha Tha* (1915), taken to be the first short story in Hindi.

Creative Team



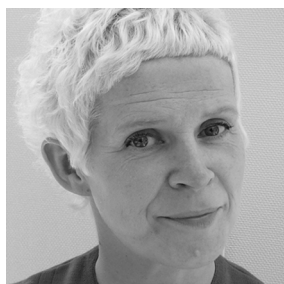
Photo: Josh Hawkins

Gary Clarke

Direction and Choreography

Winner of a UK Theatre Award, a Critics Circle National Dance Award and The Brian Glover Memorial Award, Gary Clarke is currently regarded as one of the UK's leading independent dance

makers. His work to date has toured extensively both nationally and internationally to critical and audience acclaim. Hailed as 'Outstanding' by The Times, Clarke's choreography is thought provoking, visually striking and instantly recognisable. He has created an impressive body of work of various sizes and scales for stage and site specific locations. Other work includes commissions for Opera North, The Cultural Olympiad, Hull City of Culture and Big Dance.



Lou Cope

Dramaturg

Lou Cope is a dance & theatre dramaturg who works with performance makers across Europe. She is also Dramaturg in Residence at South East Dance. Current or recent

collaborations include Birmingham Royal Ballet, English National Ballet, Aakash Odedra, Stopgap Dance, Alex Hemsley and Gary Clarke (COAL). Previous shows Lou has worked on have won two Olivier Awards, the Benois Prize for Dance and a UK Theatre Award.



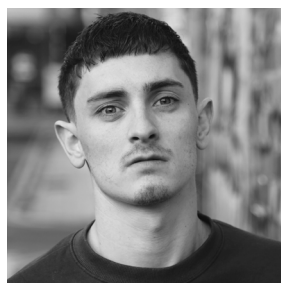
Photo: Duncan Lomax

Shri Sriram

Composer

Shri is a composer, musician and producer. He trained on Tabla before developing his unique style on his self-made fretless bass. He developed his ground-breaking

electroacoustic sound with Badmarsh&Shri. He has performed at Glastonbury and Montreux & London Jazz Festivals and has remixed tracks for De La Soul and Andrew Lloyd Weber. Recently, he has written the promo tune for Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* and a new Brass band project, 'Just A Vibration', for which he won a BASCA British Composer Award 2016.



Josh Hawkins

Film

Josh Hawkins is an artist currently based in North West England working within photography, film and choreography. After graduating from the Northern School of

Contemporary Dance with a First-Class Honours in Contemporary Dance, he founded his own dance company, Hawk Dance Theatre, in 2015. Since then Josh has created several works for stage, festivals and broadcast. His recent short film, 'The Blackest Day' won Best Experimental Short Film at the London City Film Awards 2017.



Charles Webber

Lighting

Charles Webber works across electroacoustic music, moving image and lighting design. He has worked extensively both nationally and internationally alongside artists such as Faulty Optic, Fevered Sleep

and Wendy Houston. In 2016 he was nominated for the Knight of Illumination Award for his work on Gary Clarke's COAL. As artistic director of operaNCV, his work incorporates electronics, video and voice. He has written three operas to date; *Four White Walls* (Opera North), *The Glass Hotel* (with Loré Lixenberg, BAC) and *Room of Worlds* (with Eve Libertine, CRASS).



Penny Andrews

Producer

Penny's professional career has included posts at the British Council, Arts Council England and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company. She specialises in the production

of cross art form projects that are site-based and socially engaged. Her clients have included Hackney Council, motiroti, Royal Festival Hall, Greenwich Dance Agency/National Maritime Museum and Canary Wharf Arts & Events, *One Hackney Festival/2012 Cultural Centrepiece* (2012, with Hackney Council and Keith Khan Associates), *Priceless* (2006, with Exhibition Road Cultural Group), *Alladeen* (2003-5, with motiroti and The Builders Association New York) and *Coming of Age* (2001, with Akademi and Royal Festival Hall).

Cast

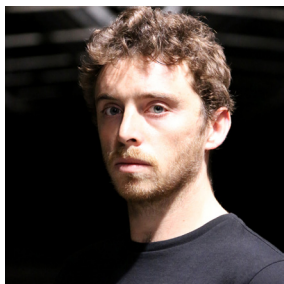


Dom Coffey

Bodha

Dom is a freelance dance artist from Manchester and completed his degree at Northern School of Contemporary Dance. After

gaining a place on the Jasmin Vardimon Professional Development Course he toured with the JV2 company. He has worked professionally with companies such as Gary Clarke and Hawk Dance Theatre. He is also an Educational Facilitator for Jasmin Vardimon.



Daniel Hay-Gordon

Recruiting officer, Sergeant Major, Lt Sahib, Assistant Director

Daniel studied at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance graduating in 2009. He has performed throughout the UK,

Photo: Diane Howse

Europe and the USA to critical acclaim as a dancer, performer and choreographer with some of the leading companies and directors in the sector.



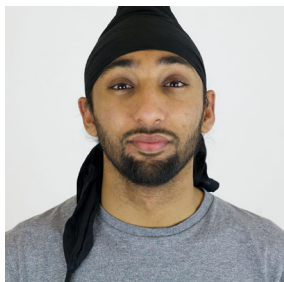
Vidya Patel

Leela

Vidya is a Kathak dancer from Birmingham, under the tutelage of Sujata Banerjee. After graduating from the Centre of Advanced Training, at Birmingham DanceXchange,

Photo: Indy Sagoo

Vidya performed in the Grand Finals of BBC Young Dancer 2015. In 2016, she was invited to join Richard Alston Dance Company's new creation *An Italian in Madrid*, which premiered at Sadler's Wells.



Deepraj Singh

Wazira

Deepraj is an explorative urban improviser with a keen sense of rhythm and beatboxing / vocal percussion skills. His achievements

Photo: Lucas Adamson

include performing at Buckingham Palace and Sadler's Wells. In 2013, Deepraj Singh became the first Duke of York Scholar at London Contemporary Dance School, from where he graduated in 2015.



Songhay Toldon

The Subedar

In 2016, Songhay graduated from the Graduate Diploma in Dance Studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. His dance skills include contemporary, hip-hop, street

Photo: Hae Yeon Lim

and salsa. He has worked with choreographers such as Saju Hari, Danny Lucien Reid, Nadia Iftkhar and Hakan Redep. Songhay features as a backing dancer in the Pussycat Dolls' *Jai Ho* music video.



Subhash Viman Gorania

Lehna Singh

Subhash, artistic director of Morph Dance Company, is a British Asian choreographer and dancer. Having trained in Contemporary, urban,

Photo: Hitz Rao

Bharatanatyam and Kathak, his distinct style gives him the ability to move in a smooth and liquid way, giving his performance and choreography an unorthodox and quirky edge.

Production Team

Executive Producer: Mira Kaushik OBE

Assistant Director: Daniel Hay-Gordon

Technical Production Manager: Ned Lay

Company Stage Manager: Beth Hoare-Barnes

Technical Manager: Alex Hopkins

Costume: Abha Desai

Prop Sourcing: Holly Morris

Administrative Director: Tim Foxon

Production Administration: Holly Morris

Communications & Marketing: Antareepa Thakur

Marketing and Design: Rohanne Udall

Education Consultant: Christina Christou

Finance: Catherine Ibbotson and Syd Rae

PR: Martha Oakes PR

Tour Booking: Sarah Trist Arts Management

Creative Consultants

Prof. Ashok Bhagat: Professor of Theatre Architecture at the National School of Drama, Delhi and lighting and set designer.

Amarjit Chandan: Poet and literary translator.

Dr Santanu Das: Reader in English Literature at Kings College London and writer.

Prof. Tripurari Sharma: Professor of Acting at the National School of Drama, Delhi and playwright.

Jasdeep Singh: Curator in the Research and Academic Access department at the National Army Museum in London.

Music

Composer and Producer: Shri Sriram

Vocalists: Nandini Srikar, Kaviraj Singh Dhadyalla, Shri Sriram.

Instrumentalists: Shri Sriram, Kirpal Singh Panesar

Original lyrics: Amarjit Chandan

Voice actor: Jaskarn Singh

Military band arrangements: Andrew Skeet

The musical score is produced with the support of the British Army and Corps of Army Music and features musicians from the Band of the Coldstream Guards and the Countess of Wessex String Orchestra. The Bagpipes are played by Sgt Ben Duncan from The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers & Greys).

Army strings and musicians recorded by Jonathan McMillan at Smokehouse Studios London.

Akademi Team

Mira Kaushik OBE, Tim Foxon, Antareepa Thakur, Rohanne Udall, Holly Morris, Christina Christou, Joe West, Claire Farmer, Pia Zicchi, Sydney Rae, Catherine Ibbotson.

Production photography: Simon Richardson

Photoshoot location courtesy: Tara Arts

Cast and Creative Team photos courtesy the artists, unless otherwise credited.

Film

Original film material: Josh Hawkins

Text curation and contributing text: Lou Cope and Dr Santanu Das.

Translation: Mira Kaushik and Antareepa Thakur

Indian soldier letter extracts: *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers Letters, 1914–18*; edited by David Omissi, published by Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

Poetry: *Aj Aakhan Waris Shah*, Amrita Pritam, 1948

Archive Images

Imperial War Museums. ©IWM

Centenary Partnership images, Imperial War Museums. ©IWM

Council of National Army Museum, London

Archive Film

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museums (IWM 202-1; IWM 116; IWM 1061-04d; IWM 383; IWM 68; NTB 178-1; IWM 83; IWM 30)

Additional photography

Subhash Parihar

Images and footage used under license from shutterstock.com.

Funders and Partners



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Print media
partner

EasternEye

Thank You

His Excellency Mr Y K Sinha, Ambassador Mr Dinesh K Patnaik, Faheem Ahmed, Debesh Banerjee, Anand Bhatt, Sinead Burke (Gem Arts), Katie Childs, General Sir Nicholas Carter, Nick Coult, Alex Croft, Jennifer Crook, Mrs Riva Das, Suba Das, Monique Deletant, The Gainsborough Hotel, Alan Gemmell OBE, Alison Grade, Shri Srinivas Gotru, Dr. Padmesh Gupta, Rachel Harris, Minhal Hasan, Dominic Hastings, Joanne Hedley, TC Howard, Nigel Jamieson, Praneet Jha, Naresh Kapuria, Sergeant Major Mem Kavaz and Sergeant George Anderson of 'Army in London', Kiran Khatri, Vikas Kumar MBE (Gem Arts), Jan Lennox, Ashok Malik, Amit Mathur, Mrs Vibha Mehdiretta, Sunil Mehdiretta, Riddhi Mishra, Minaxi Mistry, Mohammed Naeem. Tara Naidu, Surina Narula MBE, Simi Obra (Sampad), Aakash Odedra, Nitin Palan MBE, Eleanor Perry, Sujata Prasad, The Rt. Hon. Baroness Prashar CBE, Irna Qureshi, Rahul Rastogi, Himanshu Rai, Maj. Ashok Rao, Piali Ray OBE (Sampad), Nasreen Rehman, Sanjoy Roy, Jan de Schynkel, Mahinder Sehgal, Pravinder Singh, Akshay Sharma, Dr Mahesh Sharma, Rajat Sharma, Sudesh Sharma, Tejinder Sharma (Katha UK), Anita Srivastava (New Dimensions Arts Management), Maj. Richard Stanford, Jyotsna Suri, Rupert Thomson, Helen Upcraft, Jatinder Verma MBE, Capt. A D Williams, Lt Col Jo Young.