

Akademi announces its new leadership team of joint Chief Executive Officers

Subathra Subramaniam as Artistic Director

Kirsten Burrows as Executive Director

Akademi, the UK's leading South Asian dance organisation, has announced its new leadership team of joint Chief Executive Officers. Choreographer, dancer and educator Subathra Subramaniam takes over as Artistic Director of Akademi whilst Kirsten Burrows, currently the organisation's interim Administrative Director, takes up the role of Executive Director. They will be starting their tenure from November 2019.

Subathra Subramaniam has been artistic director of two innovative South Asian dance companies in the UK, Angika and Sadhana Dance. She is a dance artist who is both a trained Bharatanatyam dancer and a qualified science teacher who has worked at the intersection of dance, culture and science, collaborating with artists and scientists on multi-disciplinary projects in theatres and outdoors. As education co-director of Cape Farewell, she co-organised two voyages to the High Arctic and was instrumental in writing resources for science and geography curricula from research carried out during the voyages. The organisations for which she has been artist-in-residence include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services at The Maudsley Hospital, London, The Place, South East Dance and The Environment Institute, University College London.

Subathra takes over at Akademi from Mira Kaushik OBE who has led the organisation effectively and been instrumental in shaping the sector over the last 30 years.

Kirsten Burrows has over ten years' senior management experience including Candoco Dance Company, Sadler's Wells Theatre, tiata fahodzi, China Plate Theatre, Company Three, Dante Or Die Theatre, Metis and Dash Arts' Arabic Series.

She was previously a producer for Dante or Die, Kayd's Somali Arts Festival and Context Theatre's Festival of Art from Pakistan. She has been Akademi's interim Administrative Director since May 2019.

Akademi's Chair of Trustees, Paul Parashar, says: *"We are delighted to make this announcement as we head towards the final segment of a busy year-long programme celebrating our 40th anniversary. We have spent much of 2019 looking back at the legacy of Akademi and its contribution to South Asian Dance in the UK. We are now looking to the future and a leadership team that will spearhead the evolution of Akademi. The Board of Trustees is excited to work with Subathra Subramaniam and Kirsten Burrows as they develop their strategic vision that will continue to place Akademi at the forefront of South Asian Dance. They were the two outstanding candidates and both have a heritage with Akademi that ensures that we will continue to deliver passionate, important work."*

ends

Press contact: Martha Oakes or Sue Lancashire at Martha Oakes PR on 020 8854 5460 / 07798 626555 / martha@marthaoakespr.co.uk or sue@marthaoakespr.co.uk / 07973 819984

Notes to editors

1. **Akademi** is a progressive South Asian dance organisation based in London, funded as a National Portfolio Organisation by the Arts Council England. It aims to inspire audiences and change lives by creating and nurturing excellence in classical, contemporary, popular and participatory South Asian dance - commissioning, creating and supporting it. 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. 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.

2. **Subathra Subramaniam** is the one of UK's leading choreographers and educators working at the confluence of dance, culture and science having spent over 20 years as Artistic Director of two of the UK's pioneering South Asian dance companies - Angika and Sadhana Dance. Subathra started her Bharatanatyam training in Malaysia at The Temple Of Fine Arts and continued it in London under Prakash Yadagudde at the Bhavan Centre; as a qualified science teacher with a Masters Degree in Education and PGCE in Science, her dual training in Bharatanatyam and science puts her in a unique position and is highly respected within the UK's dance and scientific communities. Creating work for theatres, festivals and alternative spaces Subathra's works are a result of in-depth cross art collaborations with award winning artists like Kathy Hinde and Aideen Malone alongside extended periods of research undertaken with scientists and academic institutions. Recent works include: *Surrender*, *Unkindest Cut*, *Under My Skin*, *Elixir* and *The Shiver*; Subathra has been artist in residence at The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit at The Maudsley Hospital, London; Sura Medura, Sri Lanka; The Environment Institute, University College London; The Place, London (where she was also associate artist) and associate artist with South East Dance. During her time with Angika she choreographed and performed in all the company's duet and ensemble works including: *Sudarsana*, *The-Triple-Hymn*, *Kala*, *Pulse of Tala*, *Bhakti*, *Ether*, *Urban Temple*, *Soul of Light and Cypher*, touring both nationally and internationally to venues and locations including the V&A and Royal Festival Hall in London, Tanzhaus in Germany, Sziget Festival, Hungary and Kampnagel in Hamburg, Germany. As an educator Suba was co-education director of Cape Farwell where she co-organised two voyages to the High Arctic and was instrumental in writing resources for science and geography curricula from the footage, photography, art and scientific research that was carried out during the voyages. She is regularly asked to speak at international conferences including British Council in Thailand, Cuba, Canada and Egypt and the International Public Engagement Conference for the Wellcome Trust, Mumbai. Subathra was also a successful applicant for the Choreographic Development Programme that was run by Akademi from 2009 to 2011.

3. **Kirsten Burrows** has over ten years' senior management experience including Candoco Dance Company, Sadler's Wells Theatre, tiata fahodzi, China Plate Theatre, Company Three, Dante Or Die Theatre, Metis and Dash Arts' Arabic Series. She was previously a producer for Dante or Die, Kayd's Somali Arts Festival and Context Theatre's Festival of Art from Pakistan. She has been Akademi's interim Administrative Director since May 2019.

25 September 2019