‘Monsoon Wedding’, a new musical by Mira Nair releasing in 2020

A new musical theatre adaptation of the hit film ‘Monsoon Wedding’ will play at the Leeds Playhouse and London’s Roundhouse in Summer 2020. Nearly 20 years after the multi-award-winning Monsoon Wedding broke all moulds by becoming one of the most successful international films of all time and introducing a worldwide audience to Indian culture through the joy of the rom-com, the beautiful story of finding love against the odds returns as a brand-new musical.

Co-Directors Mira Nair (Salaam Bombay, Mississippi Masala and forthcoming BBC adaptation A Suitable Boy) and Stephen Whitson (West Side Story Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Prom and UK associate for Hamilton) have worked with book writers Arpita Mukherjee (Artistic Director of Hypokrit Theatre, 2018-2020 WP Theater Directors Lab member, 2018 Eugene O’Neill National Directing Fellow) and Sabrina Dhawan (original Monsoon Wedding screenplay, written for 20th Century Fox, HBO, Disney Animations, Fox Star and Killer Films), award-winning composer Vishal Bhardwaj (over 40 Bollywood films, 6 National Film Awards, winner of People’s Choice Award at Rome Film Festival for Hamlet) and lyricists Masi Asare (Music and Lyrics for Sympathy Jones, music and lyrics for Family Resemblance Theatre Royal Stratford East) and Susan Birkenhead and orchestrator Jamshied Sharfiri (winner of the Tony© for Best Orchestration for The Band’s Visit) to bring the film to life on the stage.

Synopsis

In Delhi, preparations are under way for a lavish, nonstop, four-day celebration to mark the arranged marriage of Aditi...
and Hemant. Aditi is the only daughter of an upper middle-class family in India. She is about to meet her groom, an Indian-American from New Jersey. It should be the perfect wedding, but the bride is having an affair, her father is in financial trouble, and as members of the family descend from around the world, dark family secrets surface.

At its heart Monsoon Wedding is an anthem to modern India. In the way that the film introduced the world of a globalizing India, the musical is a celebration of the exuberant chaos of contemporary India and its vibrant diaspora. The musical explores the ever-increasing difference and discrepancy in India between the rich and the poor, the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, the east and the west.

The brand-new musical will open at Leeds Playhouse on 17th June 2020 and play there until 11th July 2020. Following that it will transfer to London’s Roundhouse to play a strictly limited season from 17th July to 29th August 2020.

The creative team will also include: Movement Director Scott Graham (Frantic Assembly, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time), and Casting Director Karishma Balani.

Tickets for Leeds Playhouse are on sale today at leedsplayhouse.org.uk and you can sign up at MonsoonWeddingmusical.co.uk to be given priority opportunity to book for the Roundhouse season on Wednesday 18th December ahead of general on sale on Thursday 19th December.

Jatinder Verma MBE to step
down as Artistic Director of Tara Arts

Founder of Tara Arts, Jatinder Verma MBE, is to step down as Artistic Director, forty years after founding the groundbreaking company. From its beginnings in 1977 at Battersea Arts Centre, Jatinder has led the company in a pioneering effort to promote cross-cultural theatre. Garnering support from Arts Council England, trust and foundations and over 1,400 individuals, he led the creation of Britain’s first multicultural theatre building. The award-winning Tara Theatre marks a historic step-forward in BAME theatre provision.

The company was formed in response to the racist murder in 1976 of young Gurdip Singh Chaggar, with a clear mission to make connections across cultures through theatre. The company’s inaugural production was Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore’s anti-war play, Sacrifice, staged at Battersea Arts Centre in the summer of 1977.

Jatinder has led the emergence of Tara Arts from a community theatre group rooted in Wandsworth to an international touring company to, now, the only BAME company to own a distinctive theatre building, which echoes his vision of connecting worlds. The award-winning theatre in south London combines architectural elements from India and Britain to create a unique legacy for multicultural theatre provision in the country.

Over four decades, Jatinder has supported the emergence of generations of Asian theatre artists – including Ayub Khan Din, Sanjeev Bhasker, Shelley King, Paul Bhattacharjee, Shaheen Khan, Kumiko Mendel, Sudha Bhuchar, Nadia Fall – and companies such as Tamasha, Kali and Yellow Earth. He has toured extensively around the UK and internationally and co-produced with a wide range of theatres, including the National
Theatre where Jatinder was the first non-white director of a production.

Naresh Aggarwal, Chair of Tara Arts comments: “Jatinder’s greatest achievements lie in helping us appreciate that Asian stories are for all Britons and inspiring generations of Asian talent to emerge onto the public consciousness. He has firmly set Tara on the map of modern British theatre and I am confident his legacy will be built upon by his successor.”

Jatinder Verma said: “Salman Rushdie memorably talked of introducing a ‘different sort of noise in English’ with the publication of his ground-breaking novel Midnight’s Children. The past 40 years have seen British Theatre take on the challenge of embracing difference, with a host of new writers, directors, performers and designers. I feel privileged to have played a part in changing the landscape of modern theatre. While cultural diversity has increasingly become an accepted norm, the challenge of diversity, sadly, remains as acute as ever. Connecting worlds seems to me a necessary mantra for our times; it is certainly what I intend to continue to work on in the years ahead.

Theatre has never been more urgent. This is an exciting time for a new generation of artistic leaders to continue the “connecting worlds” story of Tara.”

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: “Jatinder’s vision and dedication to championing inclusion and diversity have opened up the theatre and changed the landscape of the stage in London and beyond. Tara Theatre has always held a special place in my heart, and I know that Jatinder’s legacy will continue to inspire artists and audiences for generations to come. I wish him all the very best for his next adventure.”

Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, Justine Simons OBE, said: “Jatinder is a trailblazer. It’s hard to quantify the breadth and depth of his influence on theatre and
on society over the past four decades. He has given a vital platform to generations of writers, directors and performers and produced work of the highest quality that represents, reflects and speaks to today’s society. Jatinder leaves a powerful legacy at Tara and I wish him all the very best for this next exciting chapter.”

Director Theatre at Arts Council England, Neil Darlison comments: “Jatinder is one of the pioneers of British Asian Theatre. Under his direction Tara Arts has been extraordinarily influential in British Theatre and both he, and the works he has created, have inspired theatre-makers and audiences alike. In addition to this, his unstinting energy means he leaves an award-winning theatre in Earlsfield – a brilliant legacy for Wandsworth, for London and for the next leader of this company. I look forward to whatever he does next.”

About Jatinder Verma MBE

Born in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, Jatinder grew up in Nairobi and migrated to Britain in 1968 aged 14, as part of the exodus of Asians from Kenya. At 23 when he co-founded Tara Arts he began to develop a unique cross-cultural theatre style, influenced by both Indian and European theatre. After writing and producing new plays in the late-70s and early-80s, exploring racism in school, migration and the sexual dilemmas facing young Asians, he began directing adaptations of European classics, including Gogol’s The Government Inspector and Buchner’s Danton’s Death.

During the 80s he helped set up the pioneering Black Theatre Season – an effort to bring Black Theatre onto West End stages and in 1990, became the first non-white director at the National Theatre, staging his own adaptation of Molière’s Tartuffe. This was followed by the first-ever staging at the National of the Sanskrit classic The Little Clay Cart.
As well as productions of other classics, Jatinder produced a new play from India, Hayavadana and, in 2002, saw the completion of a five-year cycle of work for Tara, staging Journey to the West. This large-scale trilogy of plays was based on over 400 interviews with migrants across the country, presenting the story of Asian migration and settlement in the West over the course of the 20th century. The trilogy was written and directed by Jatinder.

Through the company’s 3-year strategic initiative, Black Theatre Live, Jatinder helped commission the staging by Jeffrey Kissoon of the first all-Black Hamlet, the emergence of Cathy Tyson’s new company Pitch Lake Productions, Ambreen Razia’s ground-breaking Diary of a Hounslow Girl and Joseph-Barnes Phillips’ searing play, Big Foot.

In 2009, he returned to the National to direct Hanif Kureishi’s The Black Album. In 2012, he took Farrukh Dhondy’s compelling post-colonial take on The Tempest, Miranda, on tour to India; a new version by Hardeep Singh Kohli of Moliere’s The Miser followed; in 2013 he premiered American writer Wajahat Ali’s The Domestic Crusaders. In 2015, Jatinder directed a touring version of Macbeth, casting the Witches as Indian hijras (transsexuals & transgenders) and, in 2016, Farrukh Dhondy’s Bollywood Jack. In 2017, he co-produced debut playwright Asif Khan’s hard-hitting play set in Bradford, Combustion. Most recently has directed Nigel Planer’s adaptation of a Marivaux farce, The Game of Love and Chai and Shamser Sinha’s Three Sat Under the Banyan Tree.
Tamasha & SOAS present ‘Decolonising History’, audio dramas

Tamasha presents a digital project for the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, which has been active in debates about ‘Decolonising History’ – what it means in practice, and if it is even possible. Inspired in part by SOAS’s own uncomfortable past as a training college for officers of the British Empire, SOAS History department hosted five Tamasha playwrights on an access-all-areas basis.

These five thrilling audio dramas reflect what they found.

Exploring issues from politicised teaching, to the legacy of trauma, to the joys of discovering uncelebrated historical figures, these five plays showcase the power of drama to unpack big ideas in a human and relatable way. The dramas will be played to a live audience at four ‘gathered listening’ events in theatres and cultural spaces across the UK, starting with a world premiere at SOAS (London) on 8 October. Accompanying the playback will be panel debates involving SOAS staff, students and playwrights – your opportunity to ask questions about the journey they have been on together, and about this fascinating subject.

“The discipline of History as we know it today is a product of the age of European empire. This has had profound consequences for our understanding of where ‘history’ happens and who shapes it.”

– Dr Eleanor Newbiggin, SOAS University of London

KEY DATES

Tuesday 8th October 2019 (World Premiere)
THE AUDIO DRAMAS

A Form of Colonisation by Amy Ng

When SOAS History student Ai Ling Lo fails her latest essay on the last Chinese emperor Pu Yi, she goes to challenge her lecturer about her consistently harsh marking. Little does she realise this will set in motion a chain of events for them both, echoing the relationship between Pu Yi and his Scottish colonial tutor, Reginald Johnstone. A smart and timely examination of the power politics of teacher-student relationships across the centuries.

Scar Tissue by Satinder Chohan

When sisters Neeti and Priya travel back to India to scatter their grandmother’s ashes, Neeti takes with her the final recordings their beloved Bibi made on her death bed. Haunted by her past and gripped by strange visitations, Bibi’s voice follows them on their journey, before revealing a devastating secret.

“I have never felt comfortable being British in a Britain that frequently whitewashes the darker aspects of its imperial history. Both fascinated and alarmed by Britain’s collective historical amnesia, I had to be involved in a project that sought to ‘decolonise history’.”

The Museum by Danusia Samal
Once upon a time, a desperate man accepted an offer he couldn’t refuse for a collection of highly personal community artefacts at risk from war. Years later his daughter, on a scholarship to a London university, seeks out the academic she holds responsible. What lengths is she prepared to go to, to reclaim this lost museum?

**The Bigger Picture by Guleraana Mir**

On a cold autumn day, a lone hawk is spotted on SOAS campus, killing and mutilating pigeons. Meanwhile, Saima is struggling to get her lecturer to accept the subject for her dissertation – sixteenth century Indian warrior queen Chand Bibi. How can women take up their rightful place in history when the records of their achievements are so sparse? The answer comes from an unlikely source. Is any of it real, or a product of Saima’s grief-stricken mind?

**The Questions You Ask by Bushra Laskar**

As Aisha Saikia waits in hospital for news of her mother, undergoing brain surgery after a debilitating stroke, an old classmate, Sunny, shows up to pay his respects to his old History teacher. But when it turns out that ‘Psycho Saikia’ told the two of them very different stories about a traumatic experience from her past, Aisha is forced to question everything she thought she knew about her mum, and herself.

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**Kali Theatre presents ‘Homing Birds’ by Rukhsana Ahmad,**
Autumn Tour

Young Afghan refugee Saeed desperately wants to reconnect with his roots and find his long-lost sister. So he leaves his adoptive family in London and returns home to Kabul to work as a doctor, eager to contribute to rebuilding a new Afghanistan. But here past and present collide and Saeed must face up to the reality of his changed world.

This moving and thought-provoking play asks if a place can ever be home without a connection to family and roots?

About Rukhsana Ahmad

Rukhsana is a playwright, writer and translator. Stage plays include: Song for a Sanctuary, Gatekeeper’s Wife, River on Fire, Mistaken: Annie Besant in India and Letting Go. For BBC Radio, besides originals, she has adapted: Nawal El Saadawi’s Woman at Point Zero, Jean Rhys’ Wide Sargasso Sea, R. K. Narayan’s The Guide, Kiran Desai’s The Inheritance of Loss and Salman Rushdie’s ‘Midnight’s Children’, among others.

Autumn Tour

PLYMOUTH
Theatre Royal – The Drum
Wed 9th – Sat 12th October 2019, 7.45pm
Post show discussion with the writer Thursday 10 October

Theatre Royal – The Drum
Royal Parade Plymouth PL1 2TR
Box Office 01752 267222

Book online here

SALISBURY
The Salberg at Salisbury Playhouse
Thur 17th – Sat 19th October 2019, 7.45pm
HORNCHURCH
Queens Theatre
Fri 25th – Sat 26th October 2019, 7.30pm

QUEENS THEATRE
Billett Lane
Hornchurch RM11 1QT
Box Office 01708 443333

LEICESTER
Leicester Curve
Thur 31st Oct – Sat 2nd Nov 2019, 7.45pm
Post show discussion with the writer Thursday 31 October

LEICESTER CURVE
60 Rutland Street
Leicester LE1 1SB
Box Office 0116 242 3595

LONDON
Tara Arts
Tue 26th November – Sat 7th December 2019
Tue – Sat 7.30pm Sat 7 Dec 3pm
Post show discussion with the writer, director and Nadene
Ghouri, an award winning journalist who has reported
extensively from Afghanistan Tuesday 3rd December

TARA ARTS
Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding, launches second UK Tour

Bollywood-inspired stage spectacle, Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding, launches second UK Tour from 15th – 22nd September 2019. Hailed one of the best British Asian theatre productions of recent years, championed by audiences and critics alike, Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding is an intimate invite into a typical Asian household as it prepares for a wedding in the family, with all the Bollywood trimmings.

Uniting onstage YouTube sensation Parle Patel; West End singer Shahid Abbas Khan; and singer Drupti Vaja, Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding is a laugh out loud, comedy-dance production for a family audience that follows the life of Mrs Kapoor, played by Parle Patel, who is mother to five daughters, one of whom is getting married.

The production is packed with cultural reference points and nuances, bursting with colour, energy and live comedy sketches that will resonate with audiences of all ages. Bollywood dancing that showcases the craft of AK Bollywood dancers is harmonised with live singing, a fashion show and Rhythm ‘n’ Bass dhol players to create a stage extravaganza unique to the
Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding is written, directed and choreographed by Archana Kumar, Winner, UK Battle of Bollywood; and Founder, AK Productions and AK Bollywood Dance. The production is a collaboration between AK Productions and AK Bollywood Dance that will tour a team of 35 dancers, actors, singers, dhol (drum) players and production staff. The dancers originate from the London-based AK Bollywood Dance group that have featured in Bollywood productions such as the 2018 film release Namastey England as well as at major events in and around the Capital such as Diwali on the Square, held by the Mayor of London in London’s Trafalgar Square.

**Tour Venues and Dates**

**Sunday 15th September 2019**
Watford Colosseum (Matinee Performance: 1.30pm; Evening Performance: 6.30pm)

**Saturday 21st September 2019**
St George’s Hall Bradford (Matinee Performance: 2.30pm)

**Sunday 22nd September 2019**
Leicester Haymarket (Matinee Performance: 1.30pm; Evening Performance: 6.30pm)

Ticket Purchase via: [www.mkdw.co.uk](http://www.mkdw.co.uk)

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**Transforming Narratives** offers £50K funding for new
artistes

Transforming Narratives, a project to establish Birmingham as a global centre for contemporary arts from Pakistan and Bangladesh, is offering up to £50K for new artistic work. The project brings together artists and cultural organisations from across artforms, who are located in Birmingham and cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh, to give previously unheard voices an international platform. The closing date for applications is 31st October 2019.

Open Call Opportunities

There are three funding strands available:

**Exchanges:** Supporting work that brokers new partnerships or develops existing ones through international residencies, exchanges and critical dialogue in Birmingham, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Funding of up to £30k available.

**Collaborative Projects:** Supporting the showcasing of contemporary artistic work and building long-lasting cross-country relationships. Funding of up to £50k available.

**Reciprocal Showcasing:** Supporting ambitious cross-country collaboration projects to develop new work and build on existing ideas. Funding of up to £20k available.

Interested applicants can attend one of two briefing sessions:

- **25 September 2019** at [Midlands Arts Centre 1.30pm](#)
- **26 September 2019** at [STEAMhouse lab, Digital Cities 5.30pm](#)

Transforming Narratives is managed by Culture Central, supported by Arts Council England and delivered in association with The British Council.

To apply visit [https://www.transformingnarratives.com/open_call_-_artistic_pr](https://www.transformingnarratives.com/open_call_-_artistic_pr)
Phizzical Productions presents ‘Stardust’, 14th – 21st Sept 2019

Phizzical Productions in association with the Belgrade Theatre Coventry presents Stardust from Saturday 14th – 21st September 2019. Written by Shahid Iqbal Khan and Samir Bhamra, Stardust is a musical thriller featuring pulsating dance numbers and melodious ballads drawing on the romantic, pop, R&B and Bollywood genres produced by the makers of Bring on the Bollywood. Stardust will mark a first for the British stage as the first South Asian theatre production to feature same-sex marriage. It will also explore topical issues such as the #MeToo movement, toxic masculinity and the patriarchy.

Playing the central role of Amar will be Robby Khela, who has penned original pop and R&B songs for the musical. His recent credits include Grindr The Opera, which won Best New Musical at The Offies 2019 and Indian films including Judwaa 2, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Dil Diyan Gallan. Robby’s work in music has seen him support pop acts such as Craig David, Blue, Lemar, Girls Aloud and Misteeq on tour. He re-joins Phizzical having previously appeared in the previous national tours of Bring On The Bollywood and Cymbeline, a Bollywood staging of William Shakespeare’s late plays.

Joining him will be Amanda Clapham, best known for her portrayal of Holly Cunningham in Channel 4’s Hollyoaks – a series regular and fan-favourite for the past five years. No stranger to the stage, Amanda performed at the Edinburgh
Fringe Festival in Norris & Parker – All Our Friends Are Dead and played many leading roles during her training, to include Cissy in Punk Rock and Lady Anne in Richard III.

Christoph L. Dorocant will be playing the role of the music mogul Cyrus Singhania. His highlights include the Hollywood film Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom and theatre productions The Tempest, directed by Simon Usher (The Print Room) and God City at the Shuffle Festival hosted by Danny Boyle.

The cast welcomes the familiar face of Sophie Kandola who plays Amor, the Whitney Houston of Bollywood. Sophie began her professional career with Phizzical, first starring in the short musical film Mad About The Boy and the national tour of Bring on the Bollywood. Her recent credits include playing Coco in Fame.

Bringing their powerful vocals to Stardust are Harriette Mullen. Nataylia Roni and Aizaac Sidhu. Harriette will be multi-role featuring as emerging pop-star Tara and psychotherapist Dr Constance Mullen. Harriette is best known for appearing in Search for Cilla and went on to play Rose Willis & Understudy Cilla in Cilla The Musical. Multifaceted performer Nataylia will be playing Amar’s ambitious mum and manager Sheila. Her previous credits include The Harder They Come and the BAFTA award-winning, pre-school dance and music show Boogie Beebies by BBC. Aizaac has numerous theatre and film credits including Beauty and Beast for Disney Dream, Umrao: The Noble Courtesan and This Was a Man.

About the production

Stardust is the third production by deaf writer Shahid Iqbal Khan, whose development has been nurtured by Phizzical’s associate artist scheme, where he has been mentored by Michael Attenborough CBE and BAFTA nominee Janys Chambers. It is the second collaboration between associate artists Devesh Sodha (music producer) and Robby Khela (song-writer) following the
success of Bring On The Bollywood in 2016 and 2017. Devesh is an international composer for film, television, theatre and games, working with major companies such as Paramount, Nike, Harley Davidson and EMI. Their songs written for STARDUST have recently won the Bronze Best Music Award at Queen Palm International Festival in California.

The creative team sees the return of choreographer Dr Leena Patel and designer Richard Evans. Leena is one of the UK’s most accomplished and leading Asian dance sensations. Her work has stretched from training young, fresh talent to professional level through to choreographing celebrities including Will.I.Am, Gary Lineker, Shahid Kapoor, Sonakshi Sinha, Jacqueline Fernandez, Ali Zafar, Malaika Arora Khan, Bipasha Basu and Amy Jackson.

Richard’s work includes the West End premieres and subsequent international tours of Seussical and Guess How Much I Love You and the UK Tour of hit musical Avenue Q. In 2018, he was shortlisted for the Scottish Culture Design Award and his work has been nominated for the Broadway World Awards (Addams Family, 2014) and the Off West End Awards (Merchant Of Venice, 2013).

Lighting will be designed by Grant Anderson, whose credits include Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs (Edinburgh International Festival), My Left Right Foot (National Theatre of Scotland & Birds of Paradise), We’ll Live and Die in these Towns (Belgrade Theatre). Grant has also designed extensively for the Scottish Events Industry, including Botanic Lights, (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh), Edinburgh’s Hogmanay Torchlight Procession & Street Party, including the 2017 Midnight Moment.

Director Samir Bhamra is an award winning multi-disciplinary artist, creative director and producer who has created numerous productions that encourage BAME participation in the arts. He is the winner of the Arts and Culture Award 2016 at
the British Indian Awards, Best Costume Designer and Best Director at Asian Cinematography Awards for the short musical film Mad About The Boy in Manila.

Stardust is supported by Arts Council England’s National Lottery Project Grants.

Stardust Synopsis
Amor is the Whitney Houston in the Bollywood music industry in the late 1980s. She is silenced when she uncovers an explosive secret involving Cyrus, her music producer and husband. 30 years later, British Asian singer Amar is struggling to make his mark as a mainstream star. When he discovers Amor’s songs, Amar plunges into an extraordinary journey that culminates in a chilling encounter with Cyrus.

Stardust, 14th – 21st September 2019
Belgrade Theatre, Belgrade Square, Coventry, CV1 1GS
Evenings: 7.30pm (except Mon 16 Sept, 7pm)
Matinees: Thurs 19 & Sat 21 Sept, 2.30pm
Post-Show Discussion: Sat 14 Sept, Fri 20 Sept
Age recommendation 13+. Tickets cost £13.50
Box Office: 024 7655 3055
http://www.belgrade.co.uk/event/stardust

‘Mushy: Lyrically Speaking’, UK Tour 6th Sep – 12th Oct 2019

Rifco Theatre Company and Watford Palace Theatre are pleased to announce a new rap infused play inspired by Educating
Yorkshire’s Mushy with book by Pravesh Kumar, lyrics by Raxstar and Directed by Ameet Chana. The UK Tour of ‘Mushy: Lyrically Speaking’ takes place from 6th September until 12th October 2019.

In an uplifting tale of finding a voice, this new production follows the real-life story of Musharaf Asghar, who won the heart of the nation when he overcame his debilitating stammer in the Channel 4 documentary Educating Yorkshire. Mushy: Lyrically Speaking recounts the story known and loved by the public of a young man overcoming the odds with the help of an inspirational teacher, then asks what happened next as the teen was hit by the highs and lows of overnight fame. With music playing a crucial role in helping Mushy to find his voice, the show will use rap and lyrical narration written by rapper Raxstar, and the book has been written by Rifco Theatre Company’s Artistic Director Pravesh Kumar.

About Musharaf Asghar ‘Mushy’

Musharaf Asghar, also known as ‘Mushy’, was the star of Channel 4’s reality TV series, Educating Yorkshire. In amongst the chaotic comprehensive he was a 16-year-old impeded by an acute stammer which threatened to mute him. But thanks to his enthusiastic teacher, Matthew Burton, Mushy was at last given a voice. The show’s finale revealed an empowered Mushy who spoke to his entire year for the very first time, no longer debilitated by his stutter – his teachers, fellow pupils and the show’s 4m viewers (plus the 7m more who watched the YouTube clip) were brought to tears. Comedian Jack Whitehall called him a “hero”, and Jessica Ennis tweeted that the show made her cry. Mushy now attends events up and down the country as a motivational speaker, a young, positive, Muslim role model.

Musharaf Asghar said, “I’m really excited that Rifco Theatre Company is telling my story, everybody remembers the headphones moment but nobody really knows what happened
afterwards. That one moment has changed my life and I hope that I can be an inspiration to other people like me.”

Writer Pravesh Kumar is the Artistic Director of Rifco Theatre Company. His theatrical directorial debut was in 1999 with a UK tour of Bollywood – Yet Another Love Story and he has gone on to achieve critical acclaim for Rifco Theatre Company’s productions including Pyar Actually, The Deranged Marriage, Laila The Musical and Britain’s Got Bhangra. His first short film, Gods On Mountains was nominated for the Satyajit Ray Short Film Award in 2009. He was Associate Director on the musical Wah! Wah! Girls, which opened in the West End as part of World Stages.

Pravesh Kumar said, “I first saw Mushy on a viral video online and his story really moved me. I started to think about what actually happened to him after the television programme, what is his story now? I contacted him and on the phone his confidence just really shone through and his stammer had almost gone. I met with Mushy and Matthew Burton over a few months and started to collect their stories, they were both so honest and forthcoming. We then took all the research into a workshop with actors and found that music played an important part of the narrative, and a new play infused with rap and lyrical narration was born. I’m genuinely excited about Mushy: Lyrically Speaking, it’s a rare story about a boy finding his voice.”

Director Ameet Chana, best known for his roles in Bend It Like Beckham and EastEnders, alongside his work on Sunrise Radio’s weekend breakfast show, was recently appointed Rifco’s Associate Director to work with Pravesh Kumar on the Rifco Associates programme and Rifco Digital projects. This is Ameet’s directorial debut.

Lyricist Raxstar is a British Rapper from Luton Town who first came to prominence in 2005 with the song “Keep It Undercover” produced by long-time collaborator Sunit Music. Duality is an
integral part of his identity as a British Asian, and his perspective allowed him to create songs like “Jaaneman”. The mixtapes Lost Ones (2008), Spring Cleaning (2010), About A Girl (2011) and Late On Time (2012) continued to showcase his work ethic, versatile subject matter and lyrical prowess. 2018 saw the release of debut studio album Glass Ceiling with features from Arjun, Pav Dharia and Humble the Poet. He kicks off 2019 with his most personal project to date, Artbreak.

**Mushy: Lyrically Speaking Synopsis**

An uplifting tale inspired by the true story of Musharaf Asghar (Educating Yorkshire). Dewsbury, 2013.

Mushy, a young man with a debilitating stammer, finds himself at the centre of a television documentary. In a moment of inspiration from his teacher, Mr. Burton, he starts to find a rhythm in his voice through music. Social media erupts hailing it a miracle cure and both teacher and pupil become overnight celebrities.

But Mushy’s journey to find his voice has only just begun...

Starring Oliver Longstaff (Operation Neptune, Absurd Person Singular), Medhavi Patel (Three Sat Under the Banyan Tree, Women of the Mahabharata) and Varun Raj (Dubailand, Baar Baar Dekho), Rifco Theatre Company (Pyar Actually, Dishoom!) and Watford Palace Theatre, bring you the world premiere of this heart-warming new play written by Pravesh Kumar (Laila The Musical, The Deranged Marriage) infused with rap and lyrics by award-winning British rapper Raxstar (Keep It Undercover).

**Creatives**

Writer – Pravesh Kumar; Lyricist – RaxStar; Director – Ameet Chana; Designer – Eleanor Bull; Lighting Designer – Robbie Butler; Sound Designer – Chris Murray; Dramaturg – Nic Wass; Composer – Niraj Chag
UK Tour dates

Watford Palace Theatre
Fri 6th Sep – Sun 15th Sep 2019
https://www.watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/theatre/mushy-lyrically-speaking/

The Curve, Slough
Wed 18th Sep – Sun 22nd Sep 2019
https://uk.patronbase.com/_TheCurveSlough/Productions/RIFC/Performances

Royal & Dearngate, Northampton
Tue 24th Sep – Wed 25th Sep 2019
https://www.royalanddderngate.co.uk/whats-on/mushy/

Birmingham Repertory Theatre
Thu 26th Sep – Sat 28th Sep 2019
https://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/whats-on/mushy-lyrically-speaking.html

Arcola Theatre, London
Tue 1st Oct – Sat 5th Oct 2019
https://www.arcolatheatre.com/whats-on/mushy-lyrically-speaking/

Leeds Playhouse
Tue 8th Oct – Sat 12th Oct 2019
https://leedsplayhouse.org.uk/events/mushy-lyrically-speaking/#tickets

About Rifco

Rifco Theatre Company was founded by Pravesh Kumar in Slough in 1999, and has been Resident Company at Watford Palace Theatre since 2011. The company develops new plays and musicals that are authentic, topical, thought-provoking, rich and entertaining which celebrate and reflect contemporary British Asian experiences, culture and society. Rifco is
committed to diversifying the kind of work in British theatres through five strands: Rifco Theatre Company, touring new plays and musicals for the middle scale, Rifco Studio for a smaller scale; Rifco Associates to develop new talent; Rifco Digital to create and distribute content online; and British Asian Festival, the biennial, multi-artform celebration of British Asian talent.

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‘I Wanna be Yours’ by Zia Ahmed, UK Tour 16th Oct – 30th Nov 2019

Paines Plough and Tamasha have announced the full UK tour dates for ‘I Wanna be Yours’ which opens on 16th October and runs until 30th November 2019. A tender, funny, lyrical play about finding love and holding onto it with everything you’ve got, ‘I Wanna be Yours’ is the debut play from London Laureate and Roundhouse Poetry Slam Champion Zia Ahmed.

In partnership with Tamasha and directed by former Paines Plough trainee director Anna Himali Howard, the play will tour to Canada Water, Barking, Luton, Whitehaven, Liverpool, Lyme Regis, Ventnor, Brighton, Bracknell, St Albans, Havant, Peterborough, Canterbury, Bordon, Tunbridge Wells, Guildford, Bolton, Middlesbrough, Banbury, Bromsgrove, Derby, Beverley, Doncaster, Maidenhead, Norwich, Lincoln, Manchester, Preston, Washington, Selby, Halifax and Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Ella is from Yorkshire. Haseeb is from London. They order a pizza. House red for Ella. Hot chocolate for Haseeb.

“I think I’m falling in love with you.”

Love is more than just a game for two. Especially when there’s an elephant in the room.

About Zia Ahmed

Zia is from North West London. He is a London Laureate, having been shortlisted to be the Young Poet Laureate for London 2015/16. He is a former Roundhouse Poetry Slam champion. Zia was Paines Plough’s Channel 4 Playwright in Residence 2016/2017.

About Anna Himali Howard

Anna is a director and theatremaker. She was Paines Plough’s Trainee Director in 2016. She is also an Alumni Artist at the Gate Theatre and an alumnus of the Birmingham REP Foundry.

Her work as a Director includes A Small Place by Jamaica Kincaid (Gate Theatre), Albatross by Isley Lynn for NEW (RWCM/Paines Plough/Gate Theatre), Life is No Laughing Matter Demi Nandhra (Birmingham REP/mac Birmingham), 20B by Jane English (Birmingham REP/CPT). As a theatremaker work includes Mahabharat/A by Anna Himali Howard and Zarina Muhammad (Camden People’s Theatre), The Beanfield by Breach Theatre (New Diorama, National tour 2016). Anna was Associate Director on Fleabag by Phoebe Waller-Bridge (Drywrite/Soho Theatre international tour) and Assistant Director on Othello, directed by Ellen McDougall (Shakespeare’s Globe) and In the Night Time (Before the Sun Rises) by Nina Segal, directed by Ben Kidd (Gate Theatre).

‘I Wanna be Yours’ was developed with support from the Channel 4 Playwrights’ Scheme.

UK Tour Schedule

16th – 19th October 2019
The Albany Canada Water Hub, Canada Water
020 8692 4446
https://www.thealbany.org.uk/

21st October 2019
Studio 3 Arts, Barking
020 8594 7136
http://www.studio3arts.org.uk/

22nd October 2019
Luton Culture, Luton
01582 878100
https://www.lutonculture.com/

24th October 2019
Rosehill Theatre, Whitehaven
01946 692422
https://www.rosehilltheatre.co.uk/

25th October 2019
Unity Theatre, Liverpool
0844 873 2888
https://www.unitytheatreliverpool.co.uk/

28th October 2019
Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis
01297 442394
http://www.marinetheatre.com/

29th October 2019
Ventnor Exchange, Ventnor
01983 716767
https://ventnorexchange.co.uk/

30th October 2019
The Old Market, Brighton
01273 201801
http://theoldmarket.com/
31st October 2019
South Hill Park, Bracknell
01344 484123
https://www.southhillpark.org.uk/

1st November 2019
Trestle Arts Centre, St Albans
01727 850950
https://www.trestle.org.uk/

2nd November 2019
The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre, Havant
023 9247 2700
http://thespring.co.uk/

4th November 2019
The Key Theatre, Peterborough
01733 207239
https://vivacity.org/vivacity-venues/the-key-theatre/

5th November 2019
The Marlowe, Canterbury
01227 787787
https://marlowetheatre.com/

6th November 2019
Phoenix Theatre and Arts Centre
01420 472664
https://www.phoenixarts.co.uk/

7th November 2019
Trinity Theatre, Tunbridge Wells
01892 678678
https://www.trinitytheatre.net/

8th November 2019
Electric Theatre, Guildford
01483 501 200
https://electric.theatre/
11th November 2019
Octagon Theatre, Bolton
01204 520661
https://octagonbolton.co.uk/

12th November 2019
Middlesbrough Theatre, Middlesbrough
01642 81 51 81
https://www.middlesbroughtheatre.co.uk/

13th November 2019
The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury
01295 279002
https://www.themillartscentre.co.uk/

14th November 2019
Artrix, Bromsgrove
01527 577330
https://www.artrix.co.uk/

15th November 2019
Derby Theatre, Derby
01332 59 39 39
https://www.derbytheatre.co.uk/

16th November 2019
East Riding Theatre, Beverley
01482 874050
http://www.eastridingtheatre.co.uk/

19th November 2019
Cast, Doncaster
01302 303959
https://www.castindoncaster.com/

20th November 2019
Norden Farm, Maidenhead
01628 788997
https://www.norden.farm/
21st November 2019
The Garage, Norwich
01603 283382
http://www.thegarage.org.uk/

22nd November 2019
Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Lincoln
01522 837600
https://www.lpac.co.uk/

23rd November 2019
The Edge, Manchester
0161 282 9776
http://www.edgetheatre.co.uk/

26th November 2019
The Continental, Preston
01772 499425
http://newcontinental.net/

27th November 2019
Arts Centre Washington, Washington
0191 561 3455
https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/our-venues/arts-centre-washington/

28th November 2019
Selby Town Hall, Selby
01757 708449
http://www.selbytownhall.co.uk/

29th November 2019
Square Chapel, Halifax
01422 349422
https://www.squarechapel.co.uk/

30th November 2019
The Maltings, Berwick-upon-Tweed
01289 330 999
About Paines Plough

Paines Plough is the UK’s national theatre of new plays. The company commissions and produces the best playwrights and tours their plays far and wide. Whether you’re in Liverpool or Lyme Regis, Scarborough or Southampton, a Paines Plough show is coming to a theatre near you soon.

Paines Plough was formed in 1974 over a pint of Paines bitter in the Plough pub. Since then they’ve produced more than 150 new productions by world renowned playwrights like Stephen Jeffreys, Abi Morgan, Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Dennis Kelly, Mike Bartlett, Kate Tempest and Vinay Patel.

Paines Plough Limited is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. For further information visit http://www.painesplough.com/

About Tamasha

Tamasha is a diverse cohort of bold theatre makers.

We foreground emerging and established artists from culturally diverse backgrounds by producing and touring the best new plays, nurturing and training artists and young people through Tamasha Developing Artists and enabling theatre makers to engage creatively with communities and audiences.

Successes like East is East, Snookered, Blood, Made in India and Approaching Empty have won acclaim from critics and audiences alike. For further information visit www.tamasha.org.uk
Tamasha and Nyla Levy present ‘Does My Bomb Look Big In This?’

Tamasha and Nyla Levy present ‘Does My Bomb Look Big In This?’, a human story behind the headlines, which opens at Tara Arts on 30th April and tours until 11th June 2019. Nyla Levy first conceived Does My Bomb Look Big In This? in 2016 after being cast in roles as a ‘jihadi bride’ and generally dissatisfied with their portrayal. She ran research workshops with school children and interviewed Muslim community leaders and professionals. The result voices the complexities of the choices made by disaffected youth, their vulnerability, and how the decisions made can change lives, communities and countries forever.

Yasmin Sheikh feels torn in the city she used to call home, but Aisha sees a different London to her best friend. When Yasmin suddenly disappears to Syria, Aisha embarks on a mission to uncover the truth and decide whether there is any hope in Yasmin’s new-found world. With fierce wit and disarming honesty, Does My Bomb Look Big in This? cleverly unveils a human story behind the headlines and questions how close or far we are from multicultural harmony.

2019 Tour

30 Apr – 4 May 2019
Tara Arts
London SW18

14 May 2019
Avenue Centre, Luton
Luton LU1
15 May 2019
**Whitefield School, Barnet**
London NW2

16 May 2019
**South Street**
Reading RG1

17 May 2019
**Elstree UTC**
Borehamwood, WD6

21 May – 8 June 2019
**Soho Theatre**
London W1D
[Book now >](#)

10 June 2019
**The Compton School, North Finchley**
London N12

11 June 2019
**Luton Libraries**
Luton LU1
[Book now >](#)

12 June 2019
**Goldaming School**
Surrey

13 June 2019
**Darwen Vale High School**
Darwen, BB3

14 June 2019
**Chorlton High School**
Manchester, M21
Birmingham to become a leading centre for Pakistan & Bangladeshi arts

Transforming Narratives, a ground-breaking three-year project that will establish Birmingham as a leading international centre for contemporary Pakistan and Bangladeshi arts was launched on Thursday 21 March 2019 at an event at Birmingham Repertory Theatre hosted by BBC Asian Network’s Nadia Ali and attended by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Yvonne Mosquito, Mr Ahmar Ismail, Consulate General Pakistan and Mr Muhammed Nazmul Hoque, Assistant High Commissioner Bangladesh. Managed by Culture Central it is supported by Arts Council England and delivered in association with The British Council.

Delivered by 12 diverse Birmingham-based cultural organisations Transforming Narratives links Birmingham with major cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh and will lead to new artistic works, a cultural leadership programme, new audiences, creative exchange and dialogue as well as artistic archiving.

Partners include: Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG); Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT); Birmingham Repertory Theatre; Fierce Festival; Ikon Gallery; Kalaboration; Legacy West Midlands; Midlands Arts Centre; South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive (SADAA); Sampad; Sonia Sabri Company and Soul City Arts / Mohammed Ali.

One of the biggest British Council projects in a UK city, organisations from Birmingham are travelling to Pakistan and Bangladesh to meet with artists there, to share learning and
start to develop artistic projects which will take place during the life of the project. For the launch weekend, the Birmingham team were joined by arts leaders from Bangladesh who are in Birmingham to experience the city’s cultural offer.

The project launched with two collaborative events at Birmingham Repertory Theatre signalling the start of the artistic programme. Sigh of the Musaafir, a cutting-edge international collaboration featuring artists from Pakistan and Birmingham, took place on Saturday 23 March led by Artistic Director Mukhtar Dar. Bangladesh to Birmingham took place on Sunday 24 March at Birmingham Repertory Theatre and was an immersive dining experience that invites guests to experience the sounds, sights and flavours of Bangladesh as they enjoy an authentic three-course Bangladeshi meal, prepared by award-winning chef Munayam Khan.

Sophina Jagot, Transforming Narratives Project Manager said: “It is fantastic that we are able to launch Transforming Narratives here in Birmingham, for decades people have left their homes to forge a new life in Birmingham, but their stories have rarely been told. Working with partners here in the City as well as in the cities of Bangladesh and Pakistan we are uncovering these stories and look forward to sharing them.

“This project is a real opportunity for us to establish Birmingham as the leader in contemporary Pakistan and Bangladeshi arts both in terms of the artistic programme we will develop but through working with communities, stakeholders and artists to develop skills and encourage debate and knowledge sharing. I hope you will join us on this journey.”
Suhaee Abro performs an excerpt from Sigh of the Musaafir as part of the Transforming Narratives launch. Pic by Jas Sansi.

**About Transforming Narratives**

Transforming Narratives is a project to establish Birmingham as a global centre for contemporary arts from Pakistan and Bangladesh taking place from 2018 – 2021. The project brings together artists and cultural organisations from across artforms, who are located in Birmingham and cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Transforming Narratives allows for new ideas and artistic practices to be shared, leading to the creation of new work that will give previously unheard voices an international platform.

Transforming Narratives is managed by Culture Central, and delivered in partnership with The British Council and 12 Birmingham-based cultural partners. Transforming Narratives is funded by Arts Council England’s Ambition for Excellence programme with support from the British Council.
Birmingham-based cultural partners include:

- Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG)
- Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT)
- Birmingham Repertory Theatre
- Fierce Festival
- Ikon Gallery
- Kalaboration
- Legacy West Midlands
- Midlands Arts Centre
- South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive (SADAA)
- Sampad
- Sonia Sabri Company
- Soul City Arts / Mohammed Ali

Find out more about Transforming Narratives online at www.transformingnarratives.com

Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding, UK Tour: 16th Mar – 27th May 2019

Bollywood-inspired, British Asian stage spectacle ‘Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding’ is to tour the UK from 16th March until 27th May 2019. The audience is invited into a typical Asian household as it prepares for a wedding in the family, with all the Bollywood trimmings. Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding unites on onstage YouTube sensation Parle Patel; West End singer Shahid Abbas Khan; and singer Drupti Vaja. A laugh out loud, comedy-dance production, it follows the life of Mrs Kapoor, played by Parle Patel, who is mother to five daughters, one of whom is getting married.
The production is packed with cultural reference points and nuances, bursting with colour, energy and live comedy sketches that will resonate with audiences of all ages. Bollywood dancing that showcases the craft of AK Bollywood dancers is harmonised with live singing, a fashion show and Rhythm ‘n’ Bass dhol players to create a stage extravaganza unique to the UK stage.

Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding is written, directed and choreographed by Archana Kumar, Winner, UK Battle of Bollywood; and Founder, AK Productions and AK Bollywood Dance. The production is a collaboration between AK Productions and AK Bollywood Dance that will tour a team of 35 dancers, actors, singers, dhol (drum) players and production staff. The dancers originate from the London-based AK Bollywood Dance group that have featured in Bollywood productions such as the 2018 film release Namastey England as well as at major events in and around the Capital such as Diwali on the Square, held by the Mayor of London in London’s Trafalgar Square.

Mrs Kapoor’s Daughter’s Wedding UK Tour

16th & 17th March; 21st April 2019
Beck Theatre,
Hayes, Middlesex
https://becktheatre.org.uk
Box Office 020 8561 8371

6th April 2019
The Woodville Theatre
Gravesend, Kent
https://woodville.tickets.red61.com
Box Office: 08442 439 480

20th April 2019
Watford Colosseum
https://watfordcolosseum.co.uk
Box Office: 01923 571 102
5th & 6th May 2019
Leicester Haymarket Theatre
Leicester
https://www.haytheatre.com
Box Office: 0116 296 1236

27th May 2019
Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham
https://www.atgtickets.com
Box Office: 0844 871 3011

Ticket Purchase via: www.mkdw.co.uk