



AAKASH
ODEDRA
COMPANY

AAKASH ODEDRA COMPANY

PRESENTS

SONGS OF THE BULBUL

in association with Manchester Camerata



"A tribute to my mother "Kay"... my smiling bulbul who left her cage."

Aakash Odedra



Birdsong is ephemeral – like dance, it exists only in the moment— sung once, then lost to time.

Nightingales, or “Bulbuls”, hold a special place in Persian culture, with their song representing a spiritual seeker, yearning for union with the divine. Their passionate songs are often directed towards the rose, symbolising both earthly beauty and the divine beloved and highlighting the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

Songs of the Bulbul, a new dance work by Aakash Odedra with choreography by Rani Khanam and music by Rushil Ranjan, is inspired by the ancient Sufi myth of a bulbul captured and held in captivity. The bird was bound ever closer and slowly perished through despair, singing more sweetly as its end drew nearer, until it uttered one final, heartbreaking and piercingly beautiful song just before it departed the mortal world. Thus ended the journey of the mythical bird, a tale of beauty born of loss and of freedom found only in the ultimate sacrifice. The beauty of this songbird’s melody serves as a metaphor for the fleeting moments of dance and an artist’s life. Rooted in the expansive music, dance, and poetry traditions of Sufism, this new work by two of the most outstanding Sufi Kathak artists performing in the world today emerges as a sensitive dialogue between the ferocious physicality of Kathak and the spiritual journey of Sufism, a path seeking unity with the Divine.

A sensitive, beautiful dialogue between Sufi and Kathak, music that seamlessly blends orchestral and Indian Classical tradition, and Islamic Poetry, Songs of the Bulbul invites audiences to witness a transformation transcending physical boundaries towards enlightenment. Through a journey from Persia to the subcontinent, from freedom to captivity, and the soul’s journey towards divine love and enlightenment, Odedra poses a universal question: Will we, like the caged bird, remain bound to the material world, or will we soar towards a higher existence of liberation, and the divine?



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST



Aakash Odedra Company

Aakash Odedra Company was founded in Leicester in 2011 by Anand Bhatt and our Artistic Director Aakash Odedra, a choreographer and world renowned British South Asian dancer; born in Birmingham, Aakash trained in bharatanatyam and kathak before moving to India to further study dance under world famous gurus. Aakash is a globally recognised talent, performing over 300 times in 40 countries.

Based in Leicester, United Kingdom, Aakash Odedra Company exists to deliver exceptional creative experiences for audiences and participants, helping create a society that is happier and healthier through dance.

Bilingual in classical and contemporary dance, we use the voice of British-Asian experience to translate ancient and contemporary movement languages to tell new relevant stories. We want to ensure that our work reflects excellence, removes barriers to access high quality dance and makes dance education opportunities more widely available.

Our journey has taken us around the world with successful international tours of our captivating productions, including Mehek, Samsara, Little Murmur and Rising, which have left undeniable impressions on audiences across the globe. Our shows have played on some of the world's most prestigious stages such as Sadler's Wells, Lincoln Center and Shanghai International Dance Center.

Visit aakashodedra.com
or scan this QR code to
find out more.



Manchester Camerata

Manchester Camerata is the UK's most relentless pioneering orchestra.

Great performances with no boundaries

From performing Mozart at Manchester's Stoller Hall to playing with the Pet Shop Boys at MTV's EMA awards, Manchester Camerata believes good music is good music, and they present this to you at the highest level.

Investing in the next generation of Musicians from the North

The Camerata 360° Ruth Sutton Fellowship is specifically designed for the next generation of musicians from the north of England, ensuring that great art can continue here in Manchester.

The National Centre of Excellence for Music and Dementia

Manchester Camerata are leading the way in Music and Dementia - using the power of music to help people living with dementia and their carers. Their free Music Cafés are happening right now across Greater Manchester and beyond.

Visit manchestercamerata.co.uk
to find out more.



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

SHOW CREDITS

Dancer
Aakash Odedra

Choreographer
Rani Khanam

Composer/Musical Director
Rushil Ranjan

Designer
Emanuele Salamanca

Lighting Designer & Dramaturg
Fabiana Piccioli

Costume Designer
Kanika Thakur

Rehearsal Director
Dheerendra Tiwari

Music performed by Manchester Camerata conducted by Melvin Tay

Vocals
Sarthak Kalyani, Abi Sampa

Choral vocals
Rushil Ranjan, Aakash Odedra

Additional instrumentation
Janan Sathiendran (tabla), Praveen Prathapan (bansuri)

Additional composition
Abi Sampa, Danyal Dhondy, Shuheb Hasan, Amaan Ali

Mixed and mastered by Andrea Gobbi at Gloworm Studios

Additional composition on Yaare Mann and Forest by Shuheb Hasan and Amaan Ali

Music preparation
Danyal Dhondy, Max Guthrie

Production Manager
Salvatore Scollo

Touring Technical Manager
Ryan Phillips

Stage Manager
Jamie Kubisch-Wiles

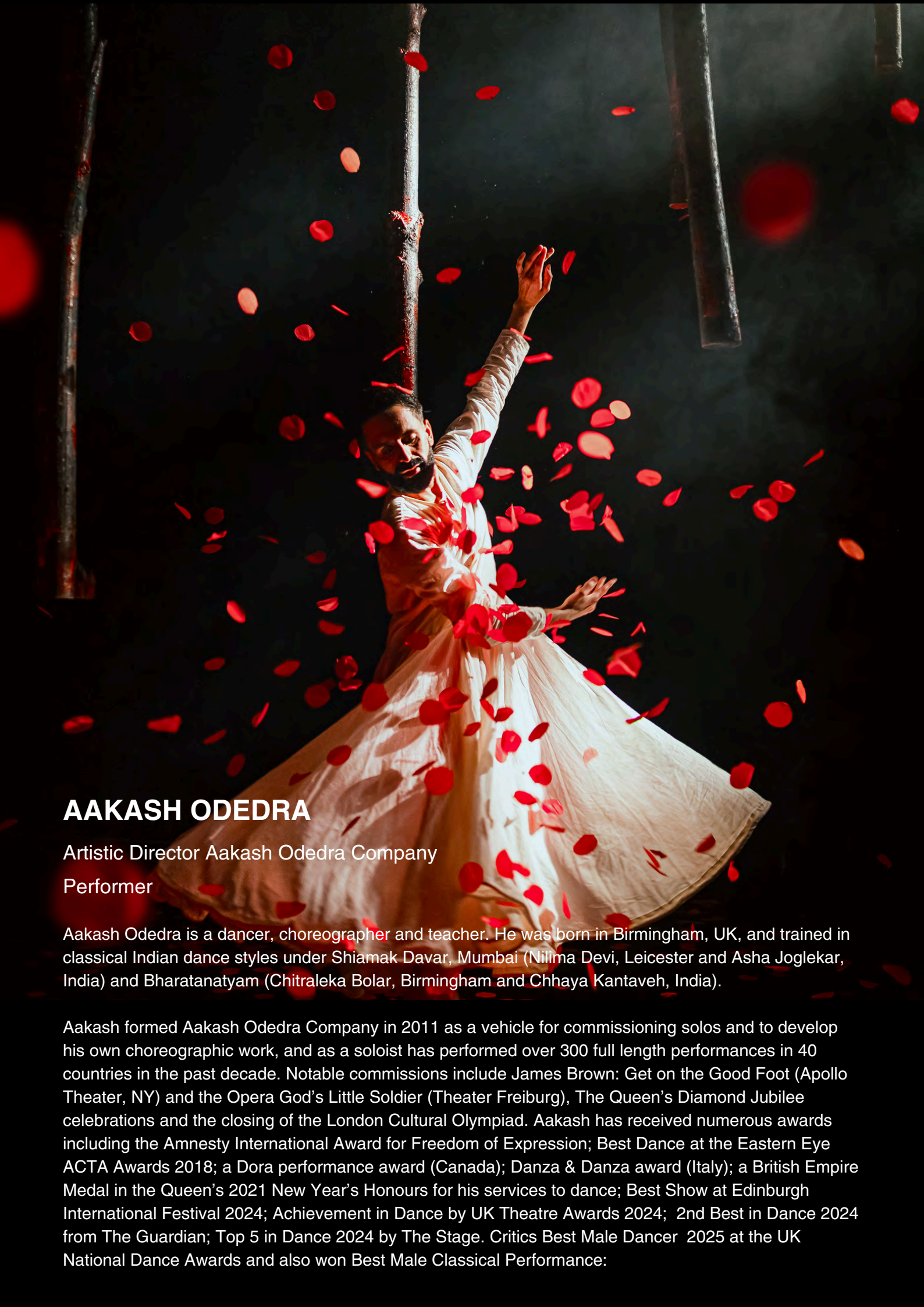
Stage Manage
Sheriton Swan

Photography
Angela Grabowska, Kuldeep Goswami

Videography
Danielle Bower

Trailer
Subhash Viman Gorania

Presented in association with Manchester Camerata. Supported by Jacob's Pillow and was created in part during a residency at the Pillow Lab at Jacob's Pillow. Remount and Development Support: Birmingham Hippodrome.

A full-page photograph of Aakash Odedra, a man with a beard, wearing a long, flowing white dress. He is captured in a dynamic pose, with his right arm raised and his left hand extended. The background is dark, and numerous red rose petals are falling around him, creating a dramatic and ethereal atmosphere. The lighting highlights the texture of the dress and the movement of the petals.

AAKASH ODEDRA

Artistic Director Aakash Odedra Company

Performer

Aakash Odedra is a dancer, choreographer and teacher. He was born in Birmingham, UK, and trained in classical Indian dance styles under Shiamak Davar, Mumbai (Nilima Devi, Leicester and Asha Joglekar, India) and Bharatanatyam (Chitraleka Bolar, Birmingham and Chhaya Kantaveh, India).

Aakash formed Aakash Odedra Company in 2011 as a vehicle for commissioning solos and to develop his own choreographic work, and as a soloist has performed over 300 full length performances in 40 countries in the past decade. Notable commissions include James Brown: Get on the Good Foot (Apollo Theater, NY) and the Opera God's Little Soldier (Theater Freiburg), The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the closing of the London Cultural Olympiad. Aakash has received numerous awards including the Amnesty International Award for Freedom of Expression; Best Dance at the Eastern Eye ACTA Awards 2018; a Dora performance award (Canada); Danza & Danza award (Italy); a British Empire Medal in the Queen's 2021 New Year's Honours for his services to dance; Best Show at Edinburgh International Festival 2024; Achievement in Dance by UK Theatre Awards 2024; 2nd Best in Dance 2024 from The Guardian; Top 5 in Dance 2024 by The Stage. Critics Best Male Dancer 2025 at the UK National Dance Awards and also won Best Male Classical Performance:



RANI KHANAM

Choreographer

Rani Khanam, a renowned Kathak dancer of the Lucknow Gharana, has over three decades of experience and trained under maestros like Ustad Fattan Khan and Pt. Birju Maharaj. Her performances, known for their devotion, inspire and fulfill audiences.

She has developed a unique style that respects tradition and inspires young dancers. As a guru, she follows the Guru Shishya parampara, teaching many students and creating acclaimed repertoires of Islamic and Sufi texts.

With over 200 productions, her choreography has been praised by Indian dignitaries and international critics. She addresses social issues through her work, notably in her production "Black and White," highlighting the rights of Indian Muslim women.

Rani Khanam's contributions to dance have earned her numerous awards, including the Women Achievement Award 2022 by Gandhi Smriti & Darshan Samiti, the National Integration Award 2017, and the Loreal Femina Women Award 2014. As the founder of AAMAD Dance Centre, an NGO promoting Kathak, she continues to cultivate and groom the finest dancers, leaving a lasting impact on the classical dance world.

RUSHIL RANJAN

Composer / Musical Director

Rushil Ranjan is a multi-disciplinary artist and composer based in London, known for his work in contemporary, Sufi, and classical music. His compositions have been performed by prestigious orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. An artistic partner of the Manchester Camerata, Rushil, alongside Abi Sampa, premiered the world's first Urdu Symphonic Poem. In July 2023, he received the PRS Foundation Composer's Fund to tour this work. Rushil has also scored award-winning films for Netflix, ITV, Film 4, and the BFI.

As the artistic director and composer of the Orchestral Qawwali Project, he has reframed Sufi music through orchestral scores, gaining millions of streams and critical acclaim since its debut in 2020. The project has sold out venues worldwide, including the Royal Albert Hall during its headline performance. Rushil was announced as Royal Albert Hall's new associate artist in February 2025.



Aakash Odedra Company is an Associate
Company at Curve Leicester and
Birmingham Hippodrome, and is a
National Partner Organisation of Sadler's
Wells and one of Arts Council England's
National Portfolio Organisations.

Photography: Angela Grabowska



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST



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

SUPPORT OUR WORK:

We deliver exceptional creative experiences for audiences and participants and to help create a society that is happier and healthier through dance and the arts. Central to this is our belief that art's potential transformational powers for both individuals and communities should mean that access to the arts and in particular dance, is a fundamental right of everyone. We take positive steps to ensure that our dance work reflects excellence, removing barriers to access excellent dance and art and ensuring art and dance education opportunities are available more widely.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit www.aakashodedra.com/donate/
or scan the QR Code Below



Aakash Odedra Company is an Associate Company at Curve Leicester and Birmingham Hippodrome, and is a National Partner Organisation of Sadler's Wells and one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations.



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

Photography: Aashni Sawjani

We would love your feedback

We'd love your feedback!

Thank you for watching Songs of the Bulbul.

Please take a minute to scan the QR code and share your thoughts.

Your feedback helps us improve future performances and experiences.



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

Aakash Odedra Company is an Associate Company at Curve Leicester and Birmingham Hippodrome, and is a National Partner Organisation of Sadler's Wells and one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations.



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