

## CONFLUENCE

### Akram Khan and Nitin Sawhney on Confluence

“‘Time’ is the one thing that initially drew Nitin and I together... And by ‘time’, I don’t mean it in a conventional sense... Not in the Western, masculine, linear clock time sense, that both Nitin and I have been groomed, educated, and cultured in. I mean it in another sense... natural time, seasonal time, emotional time, life time, space-time, mythic time, spiritual time. And it is in this cyclical sense of ‘time’, that we built our early conversations and dreams. We were not even aware of it at that stage of our creative journey, that we shared one profound sense of connection that manifested itself in the form of deep fascination and curiosity to discover the inevitable complexity of the ‘eastern time’.

In a world where things are increasingly disposable, where aesthetics are dictated by trends and quality by ephemera, we wanted to create something of lasting value. One hand and ear reaching and listening towards the tradition and the other reaching out towards the unfamiliar, the unknown.

I feel that *Confluence* is a journey of our various works created over a decade, that we have slowly and at times, painfully and yet humorously journeyed through. Creating a work is not always easy, actually most of the time it is not. It is usually a combination of harsh words, tired muscles, strong visions, encouraging smiles, infinite hours, supportive nods, stressful silences, and long breakfasts together. And in all this, we knew that we were never alone in this journey. *Confluence* will hopefully be for you as a spectator, as it is for me, a reflection of our ‘time’ together, as creators, as performers and most importantly as friends.

I look forward to our future collaborations.”

#### **Akram Khan**

“Collaboration is always a personal challenge for any artist. Most of us exist cocooned in a familiar world, cushioned by the limitations of our own imagination. We return time and again to the comfortable vocabularies, images, sounds, memories, thoughts and feelings that constitute the boundaries of our experience and expression. Yet every now and then we encounter a breakthrough moment - a rare instant where the daunting constraints of possibility melt away and we once more dare to focus through new lenses. Meeting Akram and seeing his work gave me that moment. To find a creative partner who shares a common sense of purpose, ideology and aesthetic is a rare and invigorating epiphany. When I first heard of Akram’s brilliance, let alone witnessed it for myself, I was so intrigued that I decided to make contact. His humility, prescience and open mind at an early stage were so evident that I knew immediately he was my natural collaborator.

I was acutely aware from the outset that Akram was a unique visionary. Though he had a profound respect for traditional form and the rich heritage of his kathak training, his contemporary work and London context gave him a powerful and challenging edge over other dancers I had encountered. I had of course been working with diverse forms and ingenious directors/artists for many years. But Akram stood out. He was a provocateur, a catalyst, an activist, a futurist, a highly trained and ambitious force of nature... To work with him was pure inspiration from the start.

*Confluence* was originally conceived as an informal conversation between the two of us as curators of last year’s *Svapnagata* festival. Intended initially as a retrospective we, perhaps inevitably, developed the idea into a performance piece in its own right. *Confluence* is about the

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beginning and end of creative journey - from that very first search for a spark of artistic motivation to those blurred corridors between imagination and memory where dreams reside.

Although most of the music comes from my previous collaborations with Akram, there is also work written specifically for *Confluence* with new choreography and design. Ultimately, our intention was to present the processes of invention as well as the result. For the two of us, imagination can often be like a tide flowing back and forth in symbiotic harmony or conversely like a battle, incessantly provocative and challengingly intrusive.

To collaborate with Akram is like walking gracefully through the very essence of the Natya Shastra. There is no fear in his willingness to confront the trials of another perspective because he is so totally at ease with himself. It shows in all his work. *Confluence* is a celebration of not only that but our artistic journeys, independently and together. I look forward to many more.”

**Nitin Sawhney**