

torted into the need to overcome others." Whether he is culpable for making his ideas easy to mangle is debatable. Certainly no democrat, he had much to say about how the old order was decaying and perhaps too little about what could replace it.

Nietzsche had plenty to overcome in his own life, which is vividly recounted in Ms Prideaux's wide-ranging and sensitive book. He suffered severe headaches and eye and stomach problems, and retired very early from his professorship in philology at Basel University. He was lonely both personally and professionally. And his key relationships, with Richard and Cosima

Wagner, and with Lou Andreas-Salomé, did not end well. Nietzsche proposed twice to Salomé, who subsequently wrote books about him, as well as about Freud (of whom she became a disciple) and about the poet Rilke (with whom she had a long affair).

Yet there is joy in Nietzsche's writing, too. It came from his long Alpine walks—"Never trust a thought that occurs to you indoors"—and from music. He turned to Bizet's "Carmen" when Wagner's "Tristan" lost its hold; it made him a better philosopher, he said. On the eve of his madness, Nietzsche wrote that without music "life would be a mistake." ■

Akram Khan's last solo dance

The whirligig of time

A magical contemporary dancer finally bows out. Sort of

IN AKRAM KHAN'S latest—and last—solo work, "XENOS", the dancer whirls himself into breakneck turns, stamps his feet in ankle bells to *Kathak* drumming, hoists himself into the air on ropes as the set collapses around him, and rolls down a slope like a rag doll, pine cones raining onto his body. It is a vigorous, exhilarating performance over one unbroken hour; just watching it can feel exhausting.

It would be natural to conclude that the 44-year-old has decided to make this his final solo show because of the physical demands of his style. Mr Khan, one of Britain's most celebrated dancers and choreographers, is the vortex of energy around which all his pieces are created. But the fact that his body is ageing is not his primary reason for stopping. "The physical shift is a hassle but it's the psychological shift that is much greater," he says. "Funnily enough, when I'm on stage I feel I've never been so confident, but off-stage I feel terrified...It's really the fear of messing up or disappointing myself."

Mr Khan, born in south London to Bangladeshi parents, merges contemporary dance with traditional Indian *Kathak*. He is known for surprising collaborations with artists from other disciplines, such as Juliette Binoche, an actor, and Anish Kapoor, an artist, but has also received critical acclaim for his solo works, such as "DESH" ("homeland" in Bengali), a highly personal piece from 2011 in which he wove Bangladeshi myths into an exploration of identity and cultural dislocation.

"XENOS", which Mr Khan will perform at the Lincoln Centre in New York next week, returns to similar themes. Mr Khan interprets the title as meaning both "foreigner"

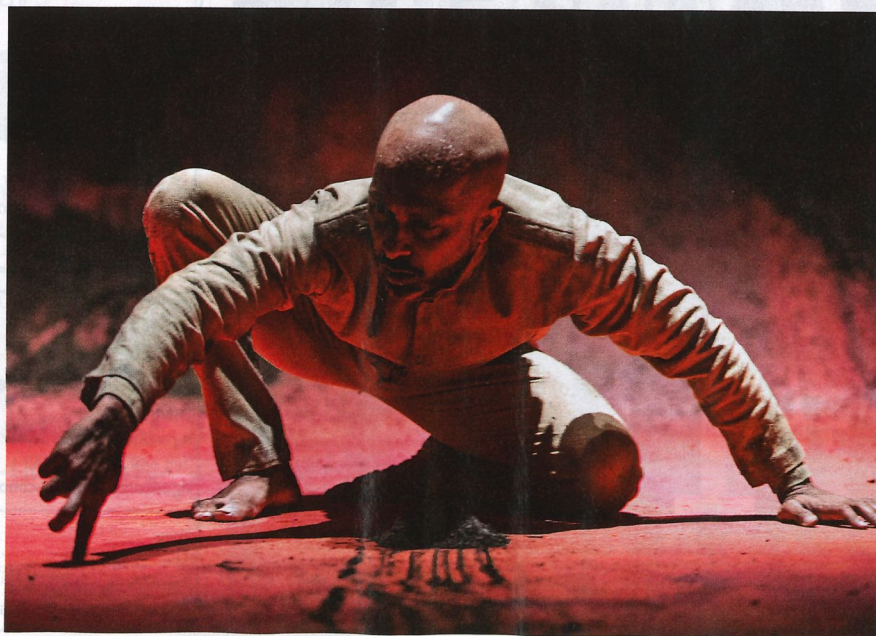
and "guest"; the work is based on the experience of the 1m Indian soldiers, now largely forgotten, who served with the British army in the first world war. A highly theatrical piece, with an artful set and haunting music, it showcases Khan's range. He plays a shell-shocked soldier whose physical and mental landscape is ripped apart. "XENOS" is by turns classical, operatic and even Chaplinesque, as when Mr Khan's character tries to converse, through sound and body language, with a gramophone.

Although Mr Khan dominates the stage, in a sense he is never alone. He developed the work with a group of regular collabora-

tors, such as Vincenzo Lamagna, a composer, Mavin Khoo, a choreographer and rehearsal director, and Michael Hulls, a lighting designer. "The irony is that he's ending his dancing career with a solo, but that piece is probably the most collaborative work he's ever made," reckons Ruth Little, a dramaturg who has worked with Mr Khan for a decade. His directorial style has evolved over the years, Ms Little thinks. "Like any master," she says, he has come to see that "he has a great knowledge and experience in his work, but so do others."

With age, Mr Khan has learned to appreciate both the virtues of co-operation and the potential of vicarious expression. When he was working on "Giselle" for the English National Ballet in 2016—his production will open at the Harris Theatre in Chicago in February—he had a revelation. It was the first time he had choreographed "for a company that wasn't my own", he says. "I focused on the freedom. I thought, I could still dance, but through the spirits of other people's bodies."

Still, Mr Khan won't be retiring from dancing in person immediately. He will perform in "Until the Lions", inspired by the poet Karthika Nair's reworking of stories from the ancient Sanskrit epic, Mahabharata, at the Roundhouse in London in January. "XENOS" will tour until 2020, at which point he will be 46, well over a decade older than most dancers when they bow out. Even then he plans to dance "in much smaller doses", for example in "cameo roles of five or six minutes". Mr Khoo, the rehearsal director, doubts Mr Khan will ever stop. In the classical Indian tradition, he says, dancers train whether or not they go on stage. "Dancing every day is part and parcel of who we are." ■



The moving finger writes; and, having writ, moves on