

YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION

# Jungle Book reimaged

**Akram Khan Company**

**Dates:** 15 – 16 Mar 2024

**Venue:** Festival Theatre

**Duration:** 2hrs 10mins, incl. interval

**Warnings:** Contains depictions of violence, theatrical smoke and sound pressure effects (loud noises).  
Recommended for audiences aged 10+

**Note:** Latecomers will not be admitted.

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## Credits

**Director/Choreographer** Akram Khan

**Creative Associate/Coach** Mavin Khoo

**Writer** Tariq Jordan

**Dramaturgical Advisor** Sharon Clark

**Composer** Jocelyn Pook

**Sound Designer** Gareth Fry

**Lighting Designer** Michael Hulls

**Visual Stage Designer** Miriam Buether

**Art Direction & Director of Animation** Adam Smith  
(YeastCulture)

**Producer/Director of Video Design** Nick Hillel  
(YeastCulture)

**Rotoscope Artists/Animators** Naaman Azhari,  
Natasza Cetner & Edson R Bazzarin

**Rehearsal Directors** Nicky Henshall, Andrew Pan &  
Angela Towler

**Dancers** Maya Balam Meyong, Tom Davis-Dunn,  
Hector Ferrer, Harry Theadora Foster, Filippo  
Franzese, Bianca Mikahil, Max Revell, Matthew  
Sandiford, Elpida Skourou, Holly Vallis, Jan Mikaela  
Villanueva, Lani Yamanaka

**Assistant Animators** Nisha Alberti, Geo Barnett,  
Miguel Mealla Black, Michelle Cramer, Jack Hale,  
Zuzanna Odolczyk, Sofja Umarik

**Voice Actors** Tian-Lan Chaudhry, Joy Elias-Rilwan,  
Pushkala Gopal, Dana Haqjoo, Nicky Henshall, Su-  
Man Hsu, Kathryn Hunter, Emmanuel Imani, Divya  
Kasturi, Jeffery Kissoon, Mavin Khoo, Yasmin Paige,  
Max Revell, Christopher Simpson, Pui Yung Shum,  
Holly Vallis, Jan Mikaela Villanueva, Luke Watson,  
3rd year students of Rambert School

**Producing Director** Farooq Chaudhry

**Executive Director** Isabel Tamen

**Project Manager** Mashitah Omar

**Technical Director** Zeynep Kepekli

**Technical Manager** Michael Cunningham

**Touring Production Manager & Prop Maker** Marek  
Pomocki

**Lighting Engineer** Stephane Dejourns

**Sound Engineer** Philip Wood

**Video Technician & Projectionist** Matthew  
Armstrong

**Technical Stage Manager** Samuel Collier

**Co-produced by** Curve Leicester, Attiki Cultural  
Society – Greece, Birmingham Hippodrome,  
Edinburgh International Festival, Esplanade –  
Theatres on the Bay Singapore, Festspielhaus  
St. Pölten, Internationaal Theater Amsterdam,  
Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and  
Dance – Chicago, Lincoln Center for the Performing  
Arts – New York, Maison de la Danse / Pôle  
européen de création – Lyon, National Arts Centre  
– Canada, New Vision Arts Festival – Hong Kong,  
Orsolina28, Pfalzbau Bühnen – Theater im Pfalzbau  
Ludwigshafen, Romaeuropa Festival, Stanford Live  
/ Stanford University, Teatros del Canal – Madrid,  
théâtre de Caen, Théâtre de la Ville – Paris

The technical adaptation of *Jungle Book  
reimagined* is kindly supported by Les Théâtres de  
la Ville de Luxembourg.

Jocelyn Pook's music © Copyright 2022 Chester  
Music Limited

**Music recorded by**

**Singers** Tanja Tzarovska, Melanie Pappenheim,  
Sushma Soma, Sohini Alam, Voya Zivkovic

**Musicians** Jocelyn Pook (piano, viola, voice,  
keyboards), Mulele Matondo (guitar and sanza),  
Belinda Sykes (shawm and gralla)

**Recording and mixing** Steve Parr

**"How Dare You?", Greta Thunberg**, recording  
property of United Nations

**"Blah, blah, blah"**, speech by **Greta Thunberg**

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## Synopsis

### ACT 1

Sea levels are rising; waters dominate land and humans scramble for their survival in search for higher ground. A young child finds herself separated from her family and ends up in a flooded city, deserted by its human inhabitants. Monuments have been uprooted and rearranged, and animals of all shapes and sizes have congregated here and formed an uneasy alliance as they try to live with this new unreliable climate. They have claimed this cityscape as their own – marking their territories in libraries, supermarkets, government buildings and even places of worship.

The child is discovered by the wolf pack led by Raksha and Rama. Raksha wants to keep the child, but Rama insists that humans bring danger and they must destroy it. Raksha protects Mowgli and presents her to an animal council, led by Akela, a dog, and with the watchful eyes in the sky of Chil, the kite. The animals speak of a mysterious hunter, a human who has been cast out by his own kind. The hunter has returned to these lands and keeps the animals in constant fear. After much deliberation, the child is accepted by the council and the naming process begins – Mowgli. Mowgli is set to work straight away; she must prove her worth and help the animals in their search for food. Maybe human instincts are just what they need.

Mowgli finds herself in the company of Bagheera, a kidnapped albino panther who grew up in a palace, and Baloo, an escaped dancing bear. However, on their quest for food, Mowgli is taken by the Bandar-log; lab monkeys who have had all kinds of experiments done on them. Through cunning the Bandar-log outwit Baloo and Bagheera and steal Mowgli. Bagheera and Baloo must now find an animal capable of striking fear into the Bandar-log. After all, they are not animals of the tree world. They seek out Kaa, a rock python, who has escaped from captivity but still lives with the traumas of a lifetime stuck behind a glass viewing screen.

## **ACT 2**

Mowgli is taken to the Bandar-log's lair, a ransacked government building. The Bandar-log are no strangers to humankind – they come from testing laboratories and regurgitate commercial jingles and political rants they heard from their cages. They listened, copied and aped the humans, but now they want to become them. Mowgli is the missing piece of the puzzle. A human child to teach them how to fully become human.

With the help of Kaa, Baloo and Bagheera rescue Mowgli from the hands of the Bandarlog just at the moment she is about to help them create fire: the most feared possession of mankind. Animals can't control this. Mankind can.

When Mowgli is saved, the trio return to the council where Hathi, the leader of the elephants, tells them of their ancient tale, back to the time when the jungles they once knew were created.

But when the hunter finally breaches their territory, and shoots down Chil, the animals know that this spells the beginning of the end of the peace they have forged together. Mowgli, remembering her mother's words throughout her journey, decides to stand up and fight for her newfound friends and seeks out the hunter and ends his savagery.

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## **Program Note**

### **Akram Khan, Director & Choreographer**

I want to dive into the myths of today, and children's stories of tomorrow. Hence, I want to find a way to take a known, familiar story and observe it through the lens of today's children, my children, our children, who are and will become our present and future storytellers.

#### **WHY?**

*The Jungle Book's* story has always been close to me. Not only because I had played the role of Mowgli in an Indian dance production as a young boy, but more because of the three deep lessons it held within it, that I have since carried with me throughout my life. The lessons of commonality between species, the binding interdependence between humans, animals and nature, and finally, a sense of family and our need to belong.

We are now living in unprecedented and uncertain times, not only for our species but for all species on this planet. And the root cause of this conundrum is because we have forgotten our connection to our home, our planet. We all inhabit it, we all take from it, and we all build on it, but we have forgotten to return our respect for it.

I believe that we must make changes from the grass roots up if we are to see a brighter future. And so I feel compelled to share the story – lovingly known as *The Jungle Book* – with children and adults from all cultures, in order to re-learn what we, as a species, have so conveniently forgotten. And I believe that the strongest and deepest way to tell this story is through the magic of dance, music and theatre.

## WHAT?

This production traces the original story by Rudyard Kipling, but this particular version is very much my own interpretation of the original. Mowgli and all the known characters from the original are in this new version, with a new original score.

## HOW?

I am extremely conscious of the deep messages within the original work. But I am also aware of the potency and relevance of these messages for today's world. And I have always believed that before words comes actions. So, I decided to approach this production with a direct action towards climate change.

Climate change is and will continue to affect all living creatures on this beautiful planet. So then how do we create a work that uses less sets, so we can travel lighter when touring? Since lockdown, I have come to appreciate technology, in ways that I did not before COVID-19. And that's simply because it has allowed me to stay connected with my loved ones, my artistic team and the wider world. Without the use of technology, I would have felt truly alone. And so, for *Jungle Book reimagined*, the stage is nearly empty – there is no traditional physical set. To achieve this, I explored the use of technology, projections and film as the non-physical set. We must not forget that most often, great storytelling can be told by the simplest of tools. Our bodies, our voices, and our conviction in that story.

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## The Process of Reimagining *Jungle Book*

Sharon Clark, Dramaturgical Advisor

*"We humans have become geological agents, by changing the most basic physical processes of the earth."* – Amitav Ghosh

The process of reimagining *Jungle Book* was ignited by Akram's provocation as to how the production could, through the story of Mowgli's adventures, explore a near future world that nature is hungrily starting to reclaim. A world where human relationship with the wild is changing and the interconnectivity between animal and human is becoming more complex and precarious.

The role of water in this future world became an imperative in creative explorations – the increasing lack of it in certain parts of the world and the huge rise in sea levels in others. So the creative team began to explore the places where water strips land and reclaims land.

It was from this volatile world of water that Mowgli's journey began to emerge. It felt more and more urgent that in this reimagination Mowgli is born of an indigenous tribe from South-East Asia. Mowgli's parents have stowed the family away on a huge container ship escaping with thousands of others from a homeland ravaged by drought.

On this huge floating island of migration, Mowgli falls overboard and is carried by the water to a modern, high-rise city that has been deserted by its human inhabitants due to a tumultuous change in its climate – the winters bring huge floods and the summer's perilous drought. In this city, animals who have escaped from the zoos, from the hands of private owners, from laboratories have formed an uneasy alliance, a ramshackle pack whose instincts allow them to understand the natural ebb and flow of this new unreliable climate. They now claim this cityscape as their own – marking their territories in the libraries, the parliament buildings, the cathedrals.

And so, this is the jungle of our story. A jungle where a menagerie of animals forges an uneasy alliance

to take a stand against a cunning and ruthless predator who they have long feared to name. The jungle where Mowgli finds the most unlikely allies in an aged albino panther and a geriatric bear who lives on past glories. A jungle where Mowgli is taught to listen to the water rhythms of this new world to combat the dangerous outsider who carries the gun.

Our creative ambition in reimagining *Jungle Book* was to forge a compelling visual story that deftly steers its audiences through the slapstick antics of Baloo and Bagheera, the drama of the chase as Mowgli is snatched from her pack and an intimate portrayal of a child and the mother she has lost.

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## Biographies

### CREATIVE TEAM

#### Akram Khan

Director & Choreographer

Akram is one of the most celebrated and respected dance artists of today. In just over 23 years he has created a body of work that has contributed significantly to the arts in the UK and abroad. His reputation has been built on the success of imaginative, highly accessible and relevant productions such as *Jungle Book reimagined*, *Outwitting the Devil*, *XENOS*, *Until the Lions*, *Kaash*, *iTMOi (in the mind of igor)*, *DESH*, *Vertical Road*, *Gnosis* and *zero degrees*.

As an instinctive and natural collaborator, Akram has been a magnet to world-class artists from other cultures and disciplines. His previous collaborators include the National Ballet of China, actress Juliette Binoche, ballerina Sylvie Guillem, choreographers/dancers Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Israel Galván, singer Kylie Minogue, indie rock band Florence and the Machine, visual artists Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley and Tim Yip, writer Hanif Kureishi and composers Steve Reich, Nitin Sawhney, Jocelyn Pook and Ben Frost.

Akram's work is recognised as being profoundly moving, with intelligently crafted storytelling that is effortlessly intimate and epic. Described by the *Financial Times* as an artist "who speaks tremendously of tremendous things", a highlight of his career was the creation of a section of the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony that was received with unanimous acclaim.

As a choreographer Akram has developed a close collaboration with English National Ballet. He created the short piece *Dust*, part of the *Lest We Forget* program, which led to an invitation to create his own critically acclaimed version of the iconic romantic ballet *Giselle*. *Creature* was his latest work for English National Ballet.

Akram has been the recipient of numerous awards throughout his career including the Laurence Olivier Award, the Bessie Award (New York Dance and Performance Award), the prestigious ISPA (International Society for the Performing Arts) Distinguished Artist Award, the Fred and Adele Astaire Award, the Herald Archangel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival, the South Bank Sky Arts Award and eight Critics' Circle National Dance Awards. He was awarded an MBE for services to dance in 2005. He is an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells and Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, London and Curve, Leicester.

#### Mavin Khoo

Creative Associate & Coach

Mavin is internationally recognised as a dance artist, teacher, choreographer and artist scholar. His initial training was in Malaysia before training intensively in Bharatanatyam under the legendary dance maestro Padma Shri Adyar K. Lakshman in India. As a contemporary dance artist, he has worked with Wayne McGregor, Akram Khan, Shobana Jeyasingh and many others. Mavin founded *mavinkhooDance* in 2003 and was Artistic Director of *ŻfinMalta Dance Ensemble* 2014 – 17. He continues to tour as a mature artist with a focus on solo Bharatanatyam performances and specifically commissioned contemporary duet works. He has worked as rehearsal director for Akram Khan Company and alongside Akram on *Giselle* (English National Ballet) and *Creature* (English National Ballet and Opera Ballet Vlaanderen) and is currently Akram Khan Company's Creative Associate.

#### Tariq Jordan

Writer

Tariq is a writer, actor and practitioner of proud Russian-Jewish and Iraqi-Muslim heritage. He graduated from the Royal Central School of Speech

and Drama in 2007 and has worked extensively as an actor for stage and screen since. His debut play *Ali and Dahlia*, inspired by his experiences working in Palestine, premiered at the Pleasance Theatre Islington in spring 2019 directed by Kerry Michael MBE. The play received three OffWestEnd Award nominations, including Most Promising New Playwright, and was a finalist for the Best Play Award in the 2020 Writers' Guild Awards. Tariq currently works as a tutor at RADA Business training companies around the world in personal impact and storytelling.

### **Sharon Clark**

Dramaturgical Advisor

Sharon is a playwright, dramaturg, producer and Creative Director of the immersive, multidisciplinary theatre company Raucous. She has previously worked with the National Theatre, the RSC, Theatre 503, Arcola, Theatre 503, New Diorama, Aardman Animations, Bath Theatre Royal, Sherman Cymru, Watford Palace Theatre and Bristol Old Vic. In 2017, she was awarded a Bruntwood Judge's Prize for Playwriting and her plays have also been shortlisted for the Yale Drama Prize and the PapaTango Prize. In 2019 she was awarded a Digital Fellowship with the RSC and the spatial computing company, Magic Leap. She is a resident artist at Bristol's Pervasive Media Studio, a senior lecturer in writing for performance at UWE and also writes for film.

### **Jocelyn Pook**

Composer

Jocelyn is an award-winning British composer and musician known for her unique and versatile voice in contemporary music. Her work spans cultures and genres ranging from orchestral and choral to minimal, frequently inspired by found sound and field recordings and conjuring evocative soundscapes. She is also known for her highly acclaimed film scores such as *The Wife*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Brick Lane* and Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*. In 2018, she won the BAFTA for Best Original Score for the TV film of Mike Bartlett's play *King Charles III*. She was awarded the British Composer Award in 2012 for the much-celebrated score for *DESH*, a collaboration with Akram Khan.

### **Gareth Fry**

Sound Designer

Gareth is a multi-award-winning sound designer, best known for his cutting-edge work in theatre. His dance work includes *The Language of*

*Kindness (Wayward)*, *Stones of Venice*, *Invisible Cities* (MIF, 59 Productions & Rambert), *Othello* (Frantic Assembly) and *John* (DV8). Other productions include *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, Complicité's *The Encounter*, *Bedknobs & Broomsticks* and the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games. He is the author of Sound Design for the Stage. His awards for best sound design include three Olivier Awards, two Tony Awards, two Drama Desk Awards, two Helpmann Awards and an Evening Standard Award.

### **Michael Hulls**

Lighting Designer

Over the last 20 years, Michael has worked exclusively in dance, particularly with choreographers Russell Maliphant and Akram Khan, and established a reputation as a "choreographer of light". His collaborations with Russell Maliphant have won international critical acclaim and many awards. Michael has worked with Akram over many years on productions including *In-I*, *DESH*, *TOROBAKA*, *Until the Lions* and most recently *Creature*. In 2009, Michael became an Associate Artist of Sadler's Wells. In 2010, his contribution to dance was recognised with his entry into the *Oxford Dictionary of Dance*, only the fourth lighting designer to be given an entry. In 2014, Michael received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance.

### **Miriam Buether**

Visual Stage Designer

Miriam is an award-winning stage designer working internationally in theatre, opera and dance. Born in Berlin, she trained in costume design at Akademie für Kostüm Design in Hamburg, and in theatre design at Central Saint Martin's, London. Her recent work includes *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Three Tall Women* and *A Doll's House 2* on Broadway, *The Jungle* for the Young Vic (subsequently transferring to the West End and New York) and Caryl Churchill's *What If It Only* for the Royal Court. Miriam won The Linbury Prize for Stage Design in 1999 and received the Evening Standard Best Design Award in 2010 for *Earthquakes in London* and *Sucker Punch*, and again in 2018 for *The Jungle*.

### **Adam Smith**

Art Direction & Director of Animation

Adam is an award-winning animation and art director who has been working in live dance, theatre and music for over a decade. After graduating from Southampton Solent University with a degree in animation he moved straight

into television and film before being introduced to creating animation for live performances and video design by YeastCulture. His first piece with them was the animation for Akram Khan's *DESH*. He has since gone on to create work for ballet, contemporary dance, opera, as well as classical and contemporary music with productions such as *The Nutcracker and I*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Petrushka* and Nitin Sawhney's *Dystopian Dream* with Wang Ramirez.

### **Nick Hillel**

Producer & Director of Video Design

Nick is a video artist, producer and video designer based in London. In 1998, he graduated from a film and politics degree and went on to direct documentaries for the BBC and Channel 4 before establishing the digital media company YeastCulture. Their first major project was creating visuals for Nitin Sawhney's global *Prophecy* tour. He then produced and directed visuals for artists including Akram Khan (*DESH*), Philharmonia Orchestra (*RE-RITE* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*), Simon Rattle and the LSO (Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*), Courtney Pine (live tour), The Berliner Philharmoniker and Peter Sellars (Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen*), Boy Blue's (*The Five*), Matthew Herbert (*Big Band Tour*) and Hussein Chalayan (*Gravity Fatigue*) at Sadler's Wells.

### **YeastCulture**

Production Company

YeastCulture was established in London in 1999 as a space to explore innovative ways of connecting the stage, video and the screen into one integrated audience experience. Video design and projection mapping creations have since featured in orchestral performances, contemporary dance, ballet, theatre, gallery installations as well as visuals for live bands for international tours. Past productions include collaborations with Sir Simon Rattle, Esa Pekka Salonen, Akram Khan, Ludovico Einaudi, Michael Tilson Thomas, Nitin Sawhney, Hussein Chalayan, Cirque du Soleil, Michael Nyman, The Beastie Boys, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmoniker, Clod Ensemble, Dickson MBI, George Fenton and The V&A.

### **Nicky Henshall**

Rehearsal Director

Nicky trained at the Royal Ballet Lower and Upper school and performed professionally as an artist with English National Ballet company from 2009 – 15. She has been rehearsal director for Akram

Khan Company, English National Ballet, New English Ballet Theatre and Birmingham Royal Ballet. Nicky's performing credits include *An American in Paris* West End production, *On The Town* Japan Tour, New English Ballet Theatre's 2017 season, and *Nutcracker Reimagined*. She has also appeared on the BRIT Awards with Wayne McGregor, in Disney's *Nutcracker and the Four Realms*, and was a second year tutor at the Central School of Ballet during the 2020 – 21 school year. Nicky is also director of Staffordshire Youth Ballet.

### **Andrew Pan**

Rehearsal Director

Andrew was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Studying at the Federal Academy of Ballet in Malaysia, he was offered a scholarship to study at the Central School of Ballet in London. After touring with Notre Dame de Paris for three years, he spent five years in Celine Dion's show *A New Day* in Las Vegas. Throughout his career Andrew has worked with different choreographers and directors, including Jiří Kylián, Rui Horta, Itzik Galili, Richard Wherlock, Roberto Galvan, Mia Michaels, Karl Schreiner, Christian Spuck, Carlus Pardrissa, Johann Kresnik, Jean Renshaw and Philipp Stölzl. Andrew joined Akram Khan Company in 2018 as a dancer in *Outwitting the Devil*.

### **Angela Towler**

Rehearsal Director

Angela has had a long professional career dancing with Richard Alston Dance Company and Rambert. She has worked with internationally celebrated choreographers including Christopher Bruce, Wayne McGregor, Mats Ek and Jiří Kylián to name a few. She was nominated for a TMA award for Achievement in Dance and the Critics' Circle National Dance Award for Outstanding Female Performance. She has choreographed many works for Rambert and for BBC, ITV and live events. She is working with The Royal Ballet School, English National Ballet School teaching contemporary technique and continues to work with leading companies. She joined Akram Khan Company in 2021 as Rehearsal Director.

## **DANCERS**

### **Maya Balam Meyong**

A Belgian native with Cameroonian origins, Maya graduated with a BFA in dance from the PSPBB/ Paris 8 University before moving to Brussels where she danced for different choreographers

and started developing her own artistic vision, works and projects. She co-founded The Dancing Society, a collective at the intersection of dance and different art forms, as well as the Perpetuum Mobile, a Brussels-based international dance festival. Since moving to New York, Maya has danced with the CR Dance Company and has been influenced by Gaga as well as physical theatre coupled with her personal movement research. This has inspired her to create dance pieces, films, installations and lead productions both in the US and Belgium.

### **Tom Davis-Dunn**

Tom graduated from the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) in 2017 and has since had the privilege of working with the likes of Lloyd Newson DV8/Rambert for the revival and world tour of *Enter Achilles*, Gary Clarke – *Wasteland*, Theo Lowe and Jamaal Burkmar, amongst many others. Tom has a keen eye for detail and prides himself on always delivering the best quality of work with enthusiasm and rigour. Tom constantly explores his movement practice with curiosity and generosity, immersing himself into the depths of his thinking body to find new paths, questioning his artistry with consideration and dexterity.

### **Hector Ferrer**

Hector was born in Barcelona, Spain and started dancing at the age of 10 pursuing his studies at the conservatoire of Barcelona Institut del Teatre. He moved to Madrid to continue his training with Victor Ullate and later moved to Stuttgart to complete his diploma at the Stuttgart Ballet Akademie, the John Cranko Schule. He has performed works from Pina Bausch, Maurice Béjart, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Edward Clug, Sharon Eyal, Andonis Foniadakis, William Forsythe, Akram Khan, Jiri Kylian, Kurt Jooss, Jean Christophe Maillot, Hans van Manen, Ohad Naharin and Crystal Pite, and has collaborated on different creations in Belgium, France, Spain and Germany. He is currently a freelance dancer based in Belgium working on different projects across Europe.

### **Harry Theadora Foster**

Harry was born in Los Angeles and moved to the UK as a young child. His experiences of living and travelling around the globe have given him a longstanding interest in the ways art investigates how we are shaped as human beings by our social surroundings. He sees the human body as a vessel that holds stories and histories which dance can unlock. Now a London-based dance

artist and choreographer, he trained at CAT at The Place, English National Ballet Youth Company, and Rambert School. He has created a number of dance films and stage works, and was co-founder in 2021 of Elbow Dance Collective.

### **Filippo Franzese**

Filippo was born in Naples, Italy, where he started his modern dance studies. In 2021, he graduated from Codarts, University of the Arts in Rotterdam, Netherlands and has performed works by choreographers Roy Assaf, Nacho Duato, Andonis Foniadakis, Wayne McGregor, Lucinda Childs, Felix Landerer among others. In 2020, he became a member of Skånes Dansteater in Malmö, Sweden as an intern-dancer. Here, he performed works by the choreographers Tero Saarinen and Mari Carrasco, among others. From 2021, he worked as a freelance dancer for Marcel Leemann Physical Dance Theater (Bern), ARK Connor Schumacher (Rotterdam), WDTanztheater Düsseldorf and GrossDanceCompany, Amsterdam. In 2022, he became a répétiteur at Codarts for the re-staging of *Façade* by Andonis Foniadakis.

### **Bianca Mikahil**

Born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil, Bianca moved to London in 2019 to study at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, where she graduated with a First Class BA (Hons). In her career, Bianca has performed works by Alleyne Dance, Joy Alpuerto Ritter, Ivri&Greben, Richard Alston, and toured with National Dance Company Wales, performing works by Marcos Morau and SAY (Sarah Golding and Yukiko Masui). Bianca was one of the National Youth Ballet's Beyond Ballet Artists in 2021 – 22 and co-created Elbow Dance Collective in 2021.

### **Max Revell**

Growing up in Cornwall, Max began training in Plymouth, taking breaking and popping classes with Street Factory from the age of nine, later returning there to teach. As a teenager, he travelled across the UK competing in battles and worked with several theatre companies before joining Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds. In 2019, he won the BBC Young Dancer competition, graduating NSCD in 2020, he joined postgraduate company Verve. He has enjoyed working with The Hiccup Project, Frantic Assembly, Patricia Okenwa, Gary Clarke, Eleanor Sikorski, Susanne Thomas, Dickson Mbi, Tony Adigun, Barnaby Booth, Botis Seva, Caroline Finn and Matthew Robinson.



### **Matthew Sandiford**

Born and raised in Luton, Matthew discovered a passion for dance at the age of 17 whilst studying performing arts at college. He went on to train at Trinity Laban and after graduating joined BalletBoyz. He continued to work as a company dancer there for eight years, performing and touring both nationally and internationally in works by choreographers including Russell Maliphant, Ivan Perez, Christopher Wheeldon, Pontus Lidberg, Alexander Whitley, Maxine Doyle, Xie Xin, Javier de Frutos and Craig Revel Horwood. Matthew went on to work with National Dance Company Wales and James Cousins Company before joining Akram Khan Company in August 2021. He is also a Board Member for BalletBoyz.

### **Elpida Skourou**

Elpida was born and raised in Athens, where she started ballet and contemporary dance at age four. During her academic pursuits, she was invited by Antony Lachky to perform with the Hellenic Dance Company Special Gala in Megaro Mousikis. With Akram's Company she performed in *Father: Vision of The Floating World*, part of the 100th year anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Sheik Mujib in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Khan's episode in the Netflix series *MOVE*. More recently, she toured with the Company's production *Outwitting the Devil*. Elpida is also a certified pilates teacher.

### **Holly Vallis**

All their life, Holly has been questioning and challenging the ways we, as a society, grow, move and live and as they've entered the profession, how this can exist within art and movement expression. Over the past couple of years, Holly has been trying to integrate what they continue to learn about their own identity, community, and imperatively, the experiences of those belonging to different communities into their day-to-day life as well as their work. Holly trained at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance and after graduating worked with TanzTheater Münster, Ballet Cymru, and Matsena Productions, before joining Akram Khan Company in 2021.

### **Jan Mikaela Villanueva**

Jan Mikaela was born and raised in the Philippines. At the age of 15, she joined Ballet Philippines where she performed and toured the company's repertoire for three seasons. She has performed and worked with renowned choreographers such as Paxton Ricketts, Anh Ngoc Nguyen, Zoltan

Fodor, Eve Chan, Carlo Pacis and Alice Reyes. A Full Academy Scholar and recipient of the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund (ROA), Mika obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) degree with First Class Honours at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts before joining the Akram Khan Company in July 2022. Mika is also passionate about dance science, writing, outreach programs and mentoring students.

### **Lani Yamanaka**

Lani is a fourth-generation Japanese American artist based in California. She began her training in Judo and Dance and after graduating from UC Irvine with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Performance and Choreography started her freelance career as an original ensemble dancer in Pearl by Daniel Ezralow. She has performed works by Edward Clug, Yin Yue, Bryan Arias, Alba Castillo, Kat Burns, Kate Weare, Yayoi Kambara, Shanda Sawyer, Laura O'Malley, and as a company member with SF Danceworks, Entity Contemporary Dance, and ODC Dance. In 2018, she was Dance Captain for the off-Broadway production *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise*, her first time working with choreographer Akram Khan. She went on to collaborate with Akram Khan Company as lead dance artist for *Father: Vision of the Floating World* and is featured in *MOVE*, a Netflix documentary series.