

AKRAM KHAN COMPANY

CHOTTO XENOS

World Première

DanceEast, Ipswich, UK

21 February 2020



How does war begin? And how does it end? It depends on who is telling the story.

Inspired by Akram Khan's award winning final full-length solo *XENOS*, *Chotto Xenos* is a captivating dance production that takes young audiences back in time, exploring the often forgotten and untold stories of World War 1 colonial soldiers, in order to shine light on our present and future.

Reimagined by Sue Buckmaster, Artistic Director of Theatre-Rites and creator of the highly successful *Chotto Desh*, *Chotto Xenos* weaves together stunning choreography by Akram Khan, lighting design by Guy Hoare, costumes by Kimie Nakano, and tender and evocative visuals by Lucy Cash. Mounted on a set by Ingrid Hu, this family production incorporates Domenico Angarano's stirring original music, inspired by Vincenzo Lamagna's score for *XENOS*.

Chotto Xenos is for anyone over the age of 8.

Duration: approx 50 mins

Age: Suitable for those age 8 years + and their families

Artistic team & credits

XENOS Artistic Direction and Original Choreography Akram Khan
Chotto Xenos Direction and Adaptation Sue Buckmaster (Theatre-Rites)

Set Design Ingrid Hu

Lighting Design Guy Hoare

Original Music Domenico Angarano, inspired by Vincenzo Lamagna's score for XENOS

Sound Design Domenico Angarano & Phil Wood

Costume Design Kimie Nakano

Film & Projection Design Lucy Cash

Assistant Choreographer Nicola Monaco

Rehearsal Directors Nicolas Ricchini & Amy Butler

Dancer Guilhem Chatir or Kennedy Junior Muntanga

Producer Clare Cody-Richardson

Technical Manager Tina Fagan

Production Manager Richard Fagan

Sound Engineer Matthew Armstrong

Lighting Technician Lars Davidson

Stage Manager Marek Pomocki

Project & Tour Manager Mashitah Omar & Mai Tassinari

Digital animation & motion graphics Laurie Hill

Props made by Louise Edge from LFX props & special fx

Puppets made by Naomi Oppenheim

Music recorded with Stefano Ancora, Domenico Angarano, James Browne, Nina Harries, Joost Hendrickx, Matt Holborn, Arran Kent, Stefan Knapik, Vincenzo Lamagna, Andrew Maddick, B C Manjunath, Tamar Osborn, Aditya Prakash, Clarice Rarity, Ciro Riccardi

In order of their first appearance, the archive images used in the *Chotto Xenos* projection are copyright of: National Portrait Gallery, London (image 3), ECPAD/collection Mick Micheyl - Jean-Baptiste Tournassoud / Photographe: Jean-Baptiste TOURNASSOUD (images 4, 5 & 6), MOREAU Albert/ECPAD/Défense (image 8), CORDIER/ECPAD/Défense (image 9), IWM (images 12 & 31). All other images are out of copyright.

We gratefully acknowledge the artists, collaborators and co-producers who contributed to the original production of *XENOS* by Akram Khan Company.

Co-produced by DanceEast Ipswich, The Point Eastleigh, Stratford Circus Arts Centre, Théâtre de la Ville - Paris

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On *Chotto Xenos*

Background

In 2015 Akram Khan Company decided to do an experiment. They wanted to see if it would be possible to adapt one of Akram's adult, solo pieces and turn it into a child-friendly performance and do a short tour. They asked me to re-imagine and direct this new production. Little did we know that what we were creating would become such a huge success, *Chotto Desh*!

Chotto Desh has reached thousands of children offering them a high quality and truly moving and inspiring experience. Akram's narrative about how he made sense of his cultural heritage and became a dancer has offered a reflection space for young people to ponder on their own personal narratives, especially vital for those from a mixed cultural heritage themselves, which so many children are now. It gave children a taste of the delights of Akram's choreography which was previously less available to them. We are now aware of the hunger they have for it and the inspirational impact it can have on them.

Chotto Desh proved to be an exemplary model of good practice. It reveals how the time, resources, expertise and inspiration involved in making a highly acclaimed production for adults, like the original *DESH*, can be reimagined to create high quality work for children and the adults who accompany them.

So we decided we would like to use this proven approach to re-imagine Akram's show *XENOS*.

'Our future peace processes rely on us inspiring a younger generation to be more tolerant'

Making *Chotto Xenos*

The question was how and why? On first glance, *XENOS* appeared almost impossible to re-imagine for a child-friendly audience.

Children today are exposed to images of war through social media and the concept of conflict as fun through video games. They deserve to have some creative reflection time to ponder on what it means to them, the lives of those they are close to and the world they will grow up in. They are also subjected to a rather limited education about the history of war, often neglecting a very necessary re-telling of the soldiers experience, where they are from and what they believe they are fighting for. Our future peace processes rely on us inspiring a younger generation to be more tolerant and understand the triggers for conflict and ways to manage it. This begins in the playground but unfortunately doesn't end there.

Once again we were able to draw from the rich reservoir of ideas discovered in *XENOS* and revisit, re-imagine and recycle them. Aspects of the original *XENOS* are interwoven with more child-friendly content to present a unique new production.

We did this by widening the reference to all colonial soldiers and incorporating some assemblage film footage of original soldiers which the children in our audience may never have seen. We also provided a gateway of understanding by making reference to the iconic soldiers uniform which they may be more familiar with. Akram's early research into the story of Prometheus inspired a mythical beginning of how man plays with fire. Humour became important as we explored how children will often 'play at war'. A dog gas mask which had been cut from the *XENOS* production reappeared as a puppet to explore the loneliness of war. Once these gateways of engagement had been explored and incorporated we were able to take our audience closer to the darker elements of the original *XENOS* and draw from the exquisite solo choreography Akram had created.

In 2020, just before the pandemic halted touring, we created *Chotto Xenos*. It was developed at Arts Admin and Sadlers Wells, London, The Point, Eastleigh, and finished rehearsals at Dance East, Ipswich where it opened.

Chotto Xenos will build on the previous tour of *Chotto Desh* and continue important audience development for Akram Khan Company. I hope it will inspire positive understanding of the danger of war whilst being a beautiful engagement with the best that dance and music has to offer.

– Sue Buckmaster, Director of *Chotto Desh* and *Chotto Xenos*

In the press

"One graceful dancer narrates his story in Chotto Xenos which is emblematic of the stories of many thousands like himself. It is a story told by his body in choreography which is wonderfully clear and simple to understand."

"A powerful film projection moves the work seamlessly between the personal and the universal."

The Wonderful World of Dance



"The very gifted Sue Buckmaster, from the theater and puppet world, makes this warrior a multifaceted hero. Fighter, an invisible weapon in his hands, or puppet as if hunted down under a maze of roots, Guilhem Chatir, beautiful presence, plays his cards right."

"Chotto Xenos is teeming with great finds, like this horn that is both speaker and projector. Or this opening sequence, with hands filmed in close-up ending up opening up and revealing the dancer in the flesh."

dance critic Philippe Noisette for Les Echos



"Here we find the precise style of the master and his impressive virtuosity: each movement seems to be nourished by an intense inner rage. The very meaningful dance traces the character's life course, until his disappearance under the earth of the trenches. A painful loneliness..."

"We must at all costs discover this work which remarkably combines theater and dance."

Théâtre du Blog

*"First I believed that performing for adults was a more serious job than performing for kids
but it's actually the opposite.*

*Inspiring a kid and encouraging him to follow his dreams and face with strength all the difficulties in life
- especially now a lot of kids migrate because of war or poverty - was one of the best things
that I have done as a dancer."*

Dennis Alamanos, dancer of *Chotto Desh*

Akram Khan

Artistic Director/Choreographer

Akram Khan is one of the most celebrated dance artists today, building his reputation on the success of imaginative, highly accessible and profoundly moving productions such as *Until the Lions*, *Kaash*, *iTMOi* (in the mind of igor), *DESH*, *Vertical Road*, *Gnosis* and *zero degrees*. As an instinctive and natural collaborator, Khan has been a magnet to world-class artists from cultures and disciplines such as the National Ballet of China, actress Juliette Binoche, ballerina Sylvie Guillem, choreographers/dancers Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Israel Galván, singer Kylie Minogue, visual artists Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley and Tim Yip, and composers Steve Reich, Nitin Sawhney, Jocelyn Pook and Ben Frost. 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.

Sue Buckmaster

Director

Sue is the Artistic Director of Theatre-Rites and has many years of experience as a director and puppetry specialist working with a wide variety of companies including the National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company and the Young Vic. In 2018 she was awarded an honorary Doctorate for her outstanding contribution to theatre. For Theatre-Rites Sue has created 25 theatre and site-specific productions whose commissioners include Sadler's Wells, Manchester International Festival and Salzburg Festival. In 2018 she reimagined Theatre-Rites' critically acclaimed *The Welcoming Party* for the Ruhrtriennale Festival, co-directing a walkabout experience for Kew Gardens and developing a production for 3-6 year olds to tour in 2019.

Guilhem Chatir

Dancer

Guilhem Chatir was born in Toulouse. He started training in hip hop and circus which led him to the Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Toulouse. In 2010, he joined the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris and in 2013, joined Anne Teresa de Keersmeaker's P.A.R.T.S. Guilhem started working with Wim Vandekeybus' company Ultima Vez in 2015 where he performed in the revival of *What the Body Does Not Remember* and on the revival of *In Spite of Wishing and Wanting*. In 2017, he initiated a collaboration with Lali Ayguadé on a piece titled *HERE*. In November 2018 he started working with Yoann Bourgeois for his new creation *Requiem* and earlier this year he performed in *Ludum*, a new creation by Anton Lachky Company and founded his own company Guilhem Chatir.

Kennedy Junior Muntanga

Dancer

Kennedy Junior Muntanga is a movement artist born in Ndola, Zambia where he resided until he was 7. Moving to Leeds (UK), Kennedy's passion for movement came from his wholesome relationship between dance and culture. The importance of dance was already embedded in him through his African heritage, which he began to study from the age of 12. Kennedy furthered his training and graduated in Ballet and Contemporary Dance at the Rambert School in July 2019. So far, he has worked for companies such as Phoenix Dance Theatre, Humanhood, Robert Cohan, Michael Keegan-Dolan, Alesandra Seutin & Raman Schlemmer. Kennedy enjoys jazz music, and the blending of cultures and choreography which he hopes to explore further in the future.