ICON

Programme

An Icon Theatre, ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company and Amina Khayyam Dance Company Co-Production, supported by The Historic Dockyard Chatham

Ghost Ships is part of **Medway Culture Fest 2024**, a year-long programme of cultural activity celebrating Medway's creativity and rich history.

Photography throughout: Manuel Vason & Roswitha Chesher

ICON
ZooNation The Kate Prince Company
Amina Khayyam Dance Company
The Historic Dockyard Chatham
Medway Serving You
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Funded by UK Government
Medway Part of Medway Culture Fest 24

WELCOME

Icon Theatre

Welcome to The Historic Dockyard Chatham and tonight's performance of *Ghost Ships*.

Chatham Dockyard is one of the most historically significant dockyards in the world, celebrated both for its rich history and its legacy as a cultural beacon today. While many aspects of its history are well known, *Ghost Ships* explores some of the lesser-known, more complex and sometimes darker stories that are part of its past, stories that have shaped both the communities of Medway and the wider world.

Tonight, through the powerful art forms of Hip Hop and Kathak dance, and original choral music, you will witness moments from the Dockyard's past, such as its ships' involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and the Bengal Famine. You will encounter key figures who passed through the Dockyard, such as Olaudah Equiano and John Newton—champions in the fight against slavery—as well as Mary Lacey and the many other courageous 18th century women who disguised themselves as men to work in the Navy and on the Dockyard's ships.

At a time when society feels more divided than ever, with outbreaks of anti-immigration violence both nationally and here in Chatham, *Ghost Ships* seeks to show the vital and positive role that telling a truly shared and diverse history can have in uniting communities. I hope the show's message will be a powerful and uplifting one to hear.

Ghost Ships has been brought to life by a team of professional theatre artists and performers, in collaboration with over one hundred people from Medway, many of whom will join the professionals on stage tonight.

I would like to extend my thanks to our funders: Arts Council England, Medway Council, and the Garfield Weston Foundation, as well as our co-producers, ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company, and Amina Khayyam Dance Company. Finally, a heartfelt thank you to The Historic Dockyard Chatham for their generosity in sharing their history and this extraordinary performance space with us.

I hope you enjoy the show.

Nancy Hirst
Artistic Director and CEO
Icon Theatre

WELCOME

Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

As Chief Executive of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, it's my pleasure to welcome you to The Historic Dockyard Chatham and tonight's performance of *Ghost Ships*, brought to life by the talented teams at Icon Theatre, ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company and Amina Khayyam Dance Company.

30 March 1984, marked a pivotal moment in our history when the iconic gates of Chatham Dockyard were closed, ending 400 years of shipbuilding and Royal Navy presence in Medway. For centuries, this dockyard was the heart of the local community, employing thousands across a range of trades, driving the regional economy, and standing at the forefront of shipbuilding and industrial innovation.

As we mark the 40 th anniversary of the closure, we reflect on the profound impact the closure had on Medway, while also celebrating the significant achievements of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust in safeguarding this incredible site. Our mission remains clear: to preserve, engage, and ensure that Chatham's extraordinary history is shared with generations to come.

This year, we launched an exciting programme of events and activities, providing opportunities for everyone to connect with our story. Our partnership with Icon Theatre and the production of *Ghost Ships* stands as a highlight moment in our celebrations.

Looking to the future, our commitment to working with our local communities to uncover and amplify untold stories grows ever stronger. Ghost Ships delves into these hidden narratives, offering a deeper understanding of the figures and moments that shaped our maritime past. I hope tonight's performance leaves you with new insights into Chatham's history and sparks curiosity to explore more of what we offer.

Thank you for joining us this evening. I hope you find *Ghost Ships* both inspiring and thought-provoking. Enjoy the show!
I hope you enjoy the show.

Richard Morsley
Chief Executive
Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

Publicity Photography © Manuel Vason

BSL

BSL-Interpreted Performances
will be held on Saturday 28 September, 7.30pm.

Icon Theatre welcomes all people on our stages including those who have learning disabilities, physical disabilities and are neurodiverse.

Post Show Discussion – Friday 27 September
Learn more about the production, its history and how it was made in this 20-minute discussion straight after the show, with the company's cast and creative team. Free to ticket holders.

SYNOPSIS: SCENE BY SCENE

The Build

A summary of some of the best known stories and eras of the Historic Dockyard Chatham, from its earliest days in the 1500s to 1984. At the start of the scene, workers on the tidal mudbanks use traditional methods build wooden sail boats. We see Sir John Hawkins, Treasurer and Vice-Admiral of Queen Elizabeth I's Navy, and local Chatham philanthropist, develop the dockyard. He builds almhouses and a local hospital in Medway, and establishes the Chatham Chest, one of the first disability pensions in the UK. Queen Elizabeth I grants Sir John Hawkins a charter. We see the journeys of the ships and some of the action they saw as people and boats of different eras travel across the stage.

Navy Days

The scene recreates an early 1980s Navy Day, which were celebratory family fun days held at the Dockyard every year. Interviews with local residents shared many happy memories of Navy Days, which included Navy rescue demonstrations, window ladder rigging displays (a traditional Navy skills showcase), visits from Royalty and children taking part in sack races and games. A fly past from Royal Fleet Auxiliary helicopters completes the day.

John Hawkins

The scene marks the fact that alongside his good deeds, Sir John Hawkins also used his charter from Queen Elizabeth I to start the British involvement in the slave trade, with two ships belonging to Queen Elizabeth I, *Minion* and *Jesus of Lübeck*, over wintering in Chatham before embarking on these voyages.

Busy Working 1970s Dockyard

Using recorded interviews with elders from the local community, including the Medway African Caribbean Society and the Sahara Foundation, who used to work at the Dockyard. The scene recreates the way people remember the Dockyard in the late 1970s - friendly, busy and a great community. Local residents talk about what Chatham was like when the dockyard was still open, including the great number of pubs and clubs in the Medway Towns, and the frequency of pub fights between Army and Navy personnel. The scene recreates a moment from the Dover Castle pub in Chatham in 1983.

John Newton

Staying in the Dover Castle pub, we go back in time 240 years to 1743 (the Dover Castle was continuously open throughout this time). John Newton, a captain, slave trader and a Chatham local, is pressganged into service for the Royal Navy. At this time, The Crown claimed a permanent right to seize men of seafaring experience for the Royal Navy, and would pay agents to place a coin in the victim's drink, wait till they fished it out, then grab them under the pretence of accepting 'the King's shilling'. John Newton is dragged out of the pub and into Chatham Dockyard.

HMS Harwich

John Newton is put to service on board HMS *Harwich*, which sails to modern-day Sierra Leone. The exact reasons will never be known, but on landing, John Newton is transferred to the ownership of Princess Peye, a woman of the Sherbro people who was herself a slave owner. After some time, John Newton managed to escape and return to England, where he underwent a spiritual conversion, becoming a cleric and an abolitionist, as well as a mentor to William Wilberforce. He wrote the lyrics to Amazing Grace in 1779.

Olaudah Equiano

According to his autobiography, Olaudah Equiano was born in present day Nigeria. Enslaved as a child, he was shipped to the Caribbean and sold to a Royal Navy officer, where he served on the Chatham built ship HMS *Namur*. He was sold twice more before purchasing his freedom in 1766. Olaudah wrote his autobiography, which became a best seller as well as an influential treatise against slavery in Georgian Britain. He and John Newton became life long friends, and worked with a wide range of other abolitionists and activities, including leaders of uprisings of enslaved people, to achieve the Abolition of Slavery, which was passed by an Act of Parliament in 1833. The surviving timbers of the HMS *Namur*, were discovered buried beneath the floor of the Wheelwrights Shop at the Dockyard in 1995 and can be seen to this day.

Women in the Sail Loft

From April 1803, women were part of the Chatham Dockyard's workforce, sewing flags and sails in the Sail Loft, as well as spinning and some other roles in the ropery process.

However some women worked in other ways, both at the dockyard and at sea. In 1759, at the age of 18, Mary Lacy travelled to Chatham in her fathers' clothes and became William Chandler. She boarded HMS Sandwich during a time when the Royal Navy was desperate for men, and worked her way through an apprenticeship to become a Master Shipwright, successfully working both in Chatham and Portsmouth.

Mary Lacy's assigned gender at birth was only discovered when an accident led to a medical examination. She received a full pension for her service and wrote an autobiography about her experiences.

There are at least 20 documented cases of women who dressed and lived as men and worked at the dockyard and in the Navy between the 1600s-1850s, including Hannah Snell and Mary Ann Talbot. Many of the other women serving in the Navy and at sea were also only discovered through receiving treatment for injuries. The full extent and true number of women living and working in this way will never be known.

The Victory - Battle of Trafalgar

The ship *'Victory'* was built at Chatham Dockyard in 1765. It was Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar, where Nelson's strategic brilliance led to the destruction of approximately two thirds of the French and Spanish navy fleets. The scene recreates the ship, the battle and Nelson's death on board HMS *Victory* during the battle. The battle established British 'dominion of the seas' which lasted for just under 150 years and enabled the British Empire to flourish.

India & the Growth of Empire

The scene begins in a Bengal village in 1743. Robert Clive of India arrives with soldiers from the privately owned East India Company, which had begun trading and exploratory activities in the area with a charter from Queen Elizabeth I in 1600.

Lucrative trading and commercial interests underpinned British activity in the region. By 1858, revenues received from India became so important to the British state that when the East India Company was no longer able to control India, Parliament transferred British power over India from the East India Company to the British crown.

By 1920, at the height of the British Empire, Britain directly controlled India and over 120 countries. Across the globe, Britain developed civic, administrative and military infrastructure in the colonised countries which enabled the British Empire to flourish.

Military and navy infrastructure was a key part of this, with personnel, munitions, supplies and soldiers being transported to and from Britain via Navy ships and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Records show ships built in Chatham Dockyard ending their days in the Kolkata and Mumbai dockyards and vice versa.

In Bengal in 1943, drought and bad harvest were exacerbated by poor British decisions about local food policies, alongside the diversions of ships to the war effort as directed by Churchill and the War Cabinet, triggering a famine which killed around 3 million people

A Modern Community in the Dockyard

We hear recorded voiceovers from Medway residents who worked at the Dockyard and who were born in countries which were at one time part of the British Empire. Several mention the vouchers issued by the British government in the 1960s, inviting citizens from colonised or previously colonised countries to come and work in Britain, where manpower was needed. Some talk about being born a British citizen with a British passport at the end of the era of Empire, and the problems this created in previously colonised countries after they became independent. Some talk about why they chose Medway when they got to Britain, and what it was like to work and settle here.

Closure of the Dockyard and the Future

The Dockyard was closed in 1984. At that time, the Dockyard was responsible directly or indirectly for approximately 1 in 4 jobs in Medway, and the economic and social impact on the local area was severe. We hear from residents at the time who recall what closing felt like, the repercussions on local lives and community, and how Medway slowly turned its fortunes round.

Local residents reflect on the need for acceptance and acknowledgement of the darker episodes in British history, alongside the more positive achievements, to allow us to fully understand our present and create a positive shared vision for the future.

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

VOICEOVERS USED IN GHOST SHIPS

The recorded voices featured in this production belong to former Royal Dockyard workers, as well as members of the Medway African Caribbean Association and The Sahara Foundation. These powerful, personal stories served as the foundation for this production, shaping and inspiring the narrative you see on stage today.

We have made a transcription of these stories available to honour the voices that brought this production to life. Their words are a poignant reminder of the rich history and lived experiences that connect a difficult past to our present.

Scene: Busy Working 1970s Dockyard

When you really think that there were six and a half thousand people working there, it was just like a big family. You've got a plumber there, you've got joiner there, you've got a ship carpenter there, electrician there.

The workmen were so, so good. they cared about their job. All over the world, they knew that if a ship was coming into Chatham, the work would be carried out to perfection. And that's why Chatham was chosen to be refitting the nuclear submarines.

We went in there and they brief us that when we go in there, it's a radiation - part like - of the boat. If you exceed 500 dose a night of radiation, then you have to go away for a week and recover.

And of course the other thing was we had these bloody awful boiler suits - well, an almost yellow colour like that!

Working in the dockyard was a very enjoyable thing. It was just a joy to go into work every day. Because you knew that you were going to see your friends, and they were friends.

I was on the outward shipper, which was getting the supplies ready to go

on to the Fleet Auxiliary Ships, all the food, cars, servicemen and their families, all going across with all their goods, going out to Hong Kong, Gibraltar. Places like that, you know.

So I applied for it and I got the job. They moved me into the ropery warehouse. But it wasn't my kind of job. It was getting too lazy, doing nothing. And there was lovely canteens. For - I think it was 50p, you get full meal with Guinness and bar of chocolate. So within six months I'd put on two stone in weight...!

Oh, yes. See? When the Dockyard was going, the place was busy, and you had the sailors, the armies, and all them mixed together. That was very exciting. Oh, it was booming. Everywhere you went, shops, pubs, clubs. There was many clubs, you know. So, you're spoiled for choice, you know.

And do you remember the Blue Grotto in, in the Pentagon when it was downstairs?

We used to have the Van Damme Bar and there was a nightclub next to it where the Bowling Alley is part of now and I can't remember what the name of it was.

Scamps! That's it. Scamps. So that was quite popular.

And the only thing, there was lots of fights. You had fights almost every night.

It was like a social thing. It was the same with the pubs in Chatham. It was a social thing. And they'd play darts and things like that, and crib and yucca and –

Yucca? Oh gosh, my husband loved yucca! That was a naval thing, that was. Yeah yucca.

The dockyard people were actually contributing to the safety of the UK.

On the green, you see, in front of the bus station, there was a pub on that little island there.

And the actual - not the mateys, but the sailors - used to have a tot of rum every morning at 11 o'clock.

Yes, the Dover Castle on the green in Chatham.

There were so many funny, funny, funny things about the Dockyard...

Scene: The Victory - Battle of Trafalgar

May the great God whom I worship grant to my country and for the benefit of Europe a great and glorious victory, and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it, and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. For myself individually I commit my life to Him who made me, and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen, amen, amen.

Scene: A Modern Community in the Dockyard

I was born in Jamaica, in a village called Juniper in Eastern St Mary. It so happened, when Jamaica got independence, independence from England, immigration got cut off. Right? You have to get a voucher. To come to this country. We couldn't jump on a boat or anything like that. Like what we used to do before we got independence. So to get to England and I asked my friend to get me a voucher, which he did. That voucher allowed me to come up. And it so happened when I came up, my friend was living in Medway Town. And that's the reason why I'm in the Medway Town.

I was born in East Africa in Uganda. At that time most of the African countries were governed by the British Empire. That's why they issued a British passport. Idi Amin decided to exodus all the people with British passport. I had no other options to go anywhere else. You know, because of the British passport, this was the only place I could have come. I think I was about 14 when I came here. There was no funds coming in. That's why I chose to come to the dockyard and did my apprenticeship.

I was born in the West Indies, in a little island called Dominica. I came to Britain when I was -1958. Seventeen. Well, I been moving around, all around the country. I made some friends here. And somehow I like the little place here in the Medway. So I decided to stay here.

My father was born in India, in Punjab. He joined Indian army in 1941 and he fought for the British. He fought in Burma. The British government needed men to rebuild Britain. The vouchers were issued to the people who were in Indian Army and who fought for British. They could come to Britain.
My father's intention was to work here for four to five years, send money back home, then move back. But that never happened People were very friendly at the Dockyard. It was the first place he started working and there was no other place he wanted to work because it was so good. People were very, very friendly. Very welcoming. 100 percent on that.

My parents were born in India. I was born in Uganda, it's capital Kampala. It's in East Africa. In '60, there was trouble in Uganda. My parents sent everybody to India to study and be safe. I went India and did all my schooling and all that. When I finished my schooling, I wanted to join the Indian Navy but because I was a British citizen because of my passport, they wouldn't let me do that. So I had no other option, so I came here. In 1972, I came in this country.
When we first moved to Medway - I'm black British, Jamaican heritage and my husband was white British, so and we weren't sure how it was going to be taken, but our neighbours were fantastic. They looked out for you. You know, we weren't used to a community where people actually embraced you. We weren't used to this. We weren't used to this!

Closure of the Dockyard and the Future

So I remember dad getting involved in the setting up of the Chatham Dockyard Historical Society. And he and a work colleague were involved in opening up doors that hadn't been opened for many years, literally unlocking doors and discovering a lot of tools, literally piles of chisels, piles of saws, hammers. And that's why dad was so shocked - that it had just been... left.

The dockyard closing down, it was a big impact on the economy. It affected the bus routes, the shops, the pubs...

It felt like the life had been taken out of Medway.

But we bounced back. We bounced back!

Gradually unemployment started to go down. And started coming back to normal.

It took time, you can't just build overnight.

It takes a few years

I think that's why I didn't like history at school. I hated it. I just saw it as just learning facts about exploitation.

That came to my mind, the awfulness of some of the things that have occurred over the years and the suffering caused by ignorance.

I feel like the more we know and the more we speak about the matters that are so awful and we wish never occurred, the better – hopefully - the changes we will make.
The darker stories in our history are shared by us all, they are part of all our pasts.

Only by sharing and acknowledging them can we build a brighter future together.

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

Creative Team

Creator and Co-Director
Nancy Hirst

Co-Director and Choreographer
Kloé Dean

Choreography
ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company led by Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe and Kloé Dean, and Amina Khayyam Dance Company led by Amina Khayyam.

Choreographer
Amina Khayyam

Associate Choreographer
Cherilyn Albert

Composer and Sound Designer
Serge Sainte Rose

Music Director
Tania Holland Williams

Set and Costume Designer
Sarah Jane Booth

Lighting Designer
Callum Macdonald

Projection Designer
Matt Powell

Sound System Design
Matt Pearson and Simon Foster

Dramaturg
Hardial Rai

Costume Supervisor
Evelien Coleman

Assistant Choreographer
Will Pascua

Assistant Composer
Sarah Victoria

Historian
Suchitra Chatterjee

Dramatherapist
Wabriya King

BSL Interpreter
Becky Barry

Production & Backstage Team

Production Manager
David Sherman

Stage Manager
Leah Butterworth

Deputy Stage Manager
Lauren Wedgeworth

Assistant Stage Manager
Lily Collins

LX Programmer
Jonathan Terry

Projection Engineer
Michael Fox

Sound Design Associate
Warren Morgan-Humphreys

Production Technician
Thomas Blake

Crew
Pete Southgate, Daniel Stevens, Ellie Blunt, Alex Law

Design Assistant
Sadie Benning

Costume Makers
Hannah Arteaga, Abeda Begum, Linda McCann

Dressers
Alice Drury, Layla Crick , Louise Sergent

Chaperones and Support Team
Donna Andrews, Heidi Andrews-Waller, Wendy Bosenko, Sarah Campbell, Cara Friday, Amanda Gray, Heidi Moran, Francesca West

Backstage Assistants
Evie Rostant & Ruth Atkinson

Ghost Ships was developed through a collaborative process with local Medway-based communities and groups including **Sahara Foundation** and **Medway African and Caribbean Association**.

CAST

Dancers

Jane Chan (R&D Dancer)
Savannah Daly
Robert Dunkley-Gyimah
Abirami Eswar
Jackie Kibuka
Rab McColl
D'jon McTernan
Kesha Raithatha
Shaq Shadare
Mohika Shankar
Jalpa Vala
Kyle Ralph-Walker

Musicians

Singer Sohini Alam
Singer Ben Milberry
Sitar Jonathan Mayer
Tabla Debasish Mukherjee
Singer Christopher Staines

Performers

Jordanne Case
Nia Davies
Chevon Edwards
Yeni Fadiya
Karmel Goddard

Voiceovers

Andrei Allen
Sue Abnett
Marguerita Bassi
Robert Bufong (Lucky)
Pat Cooper
Jhalman Dhillon
Malcolm Dramond
Kelvin Gardiner
Carol Haywood
Ron Hill
Ray Laws
Surendra Patel
Narendra Patel
Pammela Rimmel
Sue Tomlinson Childs

Community Cast & Choir

Sue Abnett
Marguerita Bassi
Sean Ballard
Sue Beeney
Erin Bryce
Fran Bryce
Olivia Bryce
Sue Burrows
Julie Clark
Pranita Choudhry
Nigel Cuming
Bernie Cumberland
Jo Eden
Deborah Gorman
Helen Govier
Barry Grimes
Georgia Grimes
Mollie Grimes
Robyn Harris
Elsie Hehir
Sarah Hehir
Kelly Holt
Hema Hussain
Julia Hurren
Silas Hurren
Eva Jolly
John Jolly
Jackie Lawrence
Frances Leonora Roberts
Luciana Leon
Mark Lingham
Kevin Lloyd
Anaya Marcus
Sharon Marcus
Sovra Newman
Julia Noakes
Peter Neill
Stephanie Plumb
John Robertson
Kieran Shannon
Karen Shannon
Suresh Swaminathan
Sue Tomlinson Childs
Vanessa Tanner
Angela Turner
Maisie Uden

Icon Young Company

Jessie Clarke
Evie Gage
Lidia Krzyzanowska
Grace Olaniyan
Irene Okrah
Jacob Ridge
Keira Steadman
Sophia Svinura
Astro Taylor

Rainham Mark Grammar School

Anthony Adeniran
Deborah Ajibogum
Irsaaa Chowdhury
Faye Davis
Lora Delcheva
Gabriella Emoekabu
Kenna Heel
Layla Hookey
George Kemp
Lucille Omusi
Olivia Rapley
Nicole Thacker
Tanishka Verma
John Woodhouse

Teachers:
Budd Birkitt,
Helen Macken

Leigh Academy Rainham

Darcey Clinton
Michael Cowdry
Adam Hall
Lucie Hooker
Emily Liddiard
Jasmine Morton
Erin Rous
Scarlett Smith
Luke Thompson
Harry Woodland

Teacher: Mike Clark

Byron Primary School

Natasha Alden
Laila Ashton
Allie Colman
Alisha Chowdhury
Ruben Gregory
Emily Juskevica
Amelia-Lilly Millican
Abbi Pankhurst
Gabija Petrosiute
Ava Robinson
Maria Robert
Rafael Seicheli
Sienna Scurr
Jessie Small
Daisy Wells

Teacher:
Richard Lock

Warren Wood Primary School

Nevaeh Back
Rose Bath
Catherine Bradshaw
Isabelle Butcher
Logan Casey
William Fairbrace
Madison Lengthorn
Summer Lengthorn
Lillian Letts
Callie-Ann Seaward
Emmie-Lou Seaward
Elinga Simaityte
Oskar Simmonds
Mollie Tickner
Felicity Warboys

Teacher:
Rebecca Lock

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

Icon Theatre

Artistic Director and CEO
Nancy Hirst

Executive Director
Daniel King

Senior Producer
Jemma Robinson

Creative Engagement Manager
Sarah Chiswell-Hornett

Community Engagement Practitioner
Chloe Witton

Assistant Producer
Denzel Ucheaguwa

Press and PR (Freelance)
Robert James PR

Social Media Support (Freelance)
Simone Mardell

ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company

Artistic Director
Kate Prince

Associate Artistic Director
Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe

Executive Director
Flo Buckeridge

Executive Director
Chantal Spiteri

Executive Producer
Sandra Castell Garcia

Producer
Annie Taylor-Gooby

General Manager
Sophie Cammack

Marketing and Communications Manager
Frankie Stansfield

Company Coordinator
Jasmine Cox

Development Consultant
Sri Sarker

Amina Khayyam Dance Company

Artistic Director
Amina Khayyam

Executive Producer/CEO
Hardial Rai

Outreach & Community Liaison
Sunita Kumar

Press Consultant
Amy McLauchlan

Communications Officer
Dharna

All At The Historic Dockyard Chatham

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

Volunteers

Sue Abnett
Fran Bryce
Erin Bryce
Medway Changemakers
Jools Clark
Maggie Erwin
Ellan Erwin
Lucas Erwin
Sian Ford
Deborah Gorman
Bethany Hodges
Pip Hornsby
Julia Hurren
John Jolly
Jackie Lawrence
Julia Noakes
Stephanie Plumb
Deborah Razzell
Cosimia Richards
Frances leonora Roberts
Geri Smith
Sue Thomlinson Childs
Angela Turner

Thank You

Nicole Alison
Jason Barningham
Kate Burt
Kaavya Chandrashekar
Roswitha Chesher
Gemma Cook
Paul Cowell
East London Dance
Visual Elements
Jude Fahey
Jack Finch-Harding
Sophie Hamlet
Susanna Hodder
Robyn Goldsmith
Robert James PR
Antje Lang
Jane Macpherson
Peter Maher
Medway African & Caribbean Association
Natalie Mitchell
Meryn Pillay
Flo Paul
Imogen Robertson
Alex Rowling
Alysha Sargent
Sahara Foundation
Tasnim Siddiqa Amin
Ian Taylor
The Brook Theatre
The Ropery
Music and Audio Technology Department, University of Kent
Frozen Light Theatre
ArtsTrust Productions
Manuel Vason
Frank Walker

R&D Photos © Roswitha Chesher

UNTOLD STORIES AND CONNECTIONS

Isaac Ouro-Gnao interviews Nancy Hirst (Creator and Co-Director), Kloé Dean (Co-Director and Choreographer), Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe (Choreographer) and Amina Khayyam (Choreographer) about the production

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

Many of us are familiar with this Christian hymn. You probably sang along as you read it – and why wouldn't you? It is one of the most recognisable songs in the English-speaking world and is quite the earworm. Behind it, however, may be a lesser-known genesis and untold history.

Amazing Grace was written in 1772 by John Newton – a sailor in the British royal navy, slave trader, and later in life, priest, poet, and slavery abolitionist. Most notably, his path to converting into an abolitionist began in Chatham Dockyard'.

"There are aspects of Chatham's history that are not well known locally," says Icon's artistic director Nancy Hirst. "[Histories] *like the British involvement in slavery in the dockyard in the 1500s. It's just not one of the stories that people tell themselves about where they live. But we felt it was important [to tell] this story."*

For 22 years, Icon has established itself in Medway as a place for people to tell their own stories and connect to the relevant yet challenging histories of Chatham. Take its 2019 production The Chatham Witch, for example. Its focus on the lives, plight, and triumphs of women in Medway – from the Anglo-Saxon burial on Chatham Lines to the ARP women at Fort Amherst in WWII – left a powerful mark on those who watched the large cast of 150 performers wrestle with these stories.

R&D Photos © Roswitha Chesher

The Ballad of St John's Car Park premiered in 2022 as a result of local protests in the aftermath of Black Lives Matter – protests that pushed for a car park to be renamed – originally named after 16th century slave trader John Hawkins.

Their newest production, *Ghost Ships*, fits the bill and may be their most ambitious yet. Marking the 40th anniversary of the Dockyard's closure, the work highlights the lesser-known and untold stories of people who built and sailed the dockyard ships and, with an ensemble of 150 performers, takes a closer look at the dockyard's link to empire, slavery and abolition.

"We're doing a show where we're exploring difficult subjects," says Hirst. *"Whenever we think in a broader way about the dockyard, it feels like its history is overshadowed by these things and feel ghostly in a way that haunts the present."*

The show is ambitious. But Icon won't be tackling this alone. Enter the collaborators and co-producers ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company and Amina Khayyam Dance Company. As a trio, 'ambitious' is their bread and butter.

ZooNation is an Olivier award-winning company, renowned for its narrative-based theatre productions rooted in Hip Hop dance and music. The company has given us hits like *Into the Hoods* (the West Ends' first ever Hip Hop dance production) and most recently the *Message In A Bottle* set to a score by popular musician Sting. Leading on *Ghost Ships* are company choreographers Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe and Kloé Dean.

Lecointe, the current associate artistic director at ZooNation, walks with tons of experience in theatre, TV, film, and dance (assistant choreographer at the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony is as large-scale as you can get) and Dean's extensive work as a movement director and choreographer for live music performances (Rapper and artist Little Simz is a frequent collaborator) speaks for itself in being up to the task.

"Hip Hop is powerful in storytelling," says Lecointe, and its track record for conveying powerful stories is 'undeniable'. There's also the cultural link to the work's themes. Hip Hop's roots can be traced to various African and Caribbean dance traditions that predated and survived slavery – with much of its movement language developed in social and multicultural settings.

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

Similarly, the critically acclaimed Amina Khayyam Dance Company (AKDC) use a South Asian dance form boasting storytelling prowess. *"The word 'Kathak' comes from a longer word, Kathakar, meaning storytellers,"* says artistic director Khayyam. Originating from northern India, the form was practiced by traveling bards sharing poems and epic tales.

AKDC's expressive practice can be seen in notable productions *YERMA, A THOUSAND FACES, KANTHA KATHA-K* – each focusing on social justice for women. *"The themes may sound gloomy, but they are all about empowerment"* she says. *"We work a lot with current stories, stories that affects us today."*

Hip Hop and Kathak join hands with dancers that "are just extremely open and resilient" in Dean's words, echoed by Lecointe whose experience of the styles coming together has been fulfilling. *"I've seen [the dancers] really take on that Hip Hop mantle and they've learned the bases of Kathak really well,"* she says. *"The work that they've done is incredible."* The production is predominantly Hip Hop, dotted with elements of Kathak-infused movement, and sections where Kathak is spotlighted.

For Khayyam, the British Empire's colonial rule in the 20th century and its cause of the Bengal famine in 1943 was a story to delve into with her best efforts. *"I'm looking at how trading started between East India Company and the Indians, and the repercussion of it as the time went on,"* she says. *"Famine never got much attention. There was no honouring, no kind of memorial. Nothing has been done. Nobody talks about it."*

There are many more stories to tell in Ghost Ships. Some fell to the historian Suchitra Chatterjee to unearth. *"There was a whole book put together and we were pulling from that resource,"* says Lecointe. *"We had a timeline up against the wall [of] historical moments that happened to and was connected to Chatham."*

Other stories were told by elders in the Sahara Foundation (supporting South Asian communities) and the Medway African and Caribbean Association. *"The community is the real key driver for how we create work,"* says Hirst. *"One lovely guy, Lloyd' said 'I came from Jamaica. I turned up here and I ended up working at the dockyard'. [It's] that symmetry that's important. Ships from the dockyard went out and were in the battle that took Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, and now you know, Lloyd is with us here, living in Medway. That history is shared through all those millions of miles."*

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

The challenge then presented itself – what stories and histories should be incorporated and how can that be done well with Hip Hop and Kathak in a co-producing effort of this scale?

"It's been a challenge to decide whether we are just doing snapshots of history, or if we are we trying to tell it in a way that has a through line," says Dean. "Like a thread all the way through, which for me it does with Hawkins and Newton, for example. What if you could turn back time? What would have happened if you could change [Hawkin's] journey? What should he have experienced to kind of understand the repercussions of what he did? We're navigating that journey through the light and darkness of the show in a short amount of time."

With a collaborative spirit involving professional and non-professional dancers, community groups, choirs, and musicians, Icon, ZooNation, and AKDC are pushing to create a production of spectacular scale and tightknit intimacy.

Will *Ghost Ships* leave you feeling haunted or hopeful for Chatham's future? *"I hope people watch it and feel that we can come together as a community and as a country, and acknowledge the darker side of our history,"* says Hirst. The focus is the coming together after all, and these histories are best faced in unity.

"If it challenges somebody to think differently, I think that's changing the world one brain at a time," Lecointe adds. In Dean's eyes, any opportunity to be educated and entertained is always worth it. As for Khayyam, she feels it best to leave a wisdom. *"We have something called 'Rasa' in Indian classical music and dance,"* she says. *"It's how the audience can connect and feel the same emotion the performer is trying to convey. When you become one with it, you will feel fulfilled."*

Isaac Ouro-Gnao is a Togolese-British multidisciplinary artist, somatic trauma therapist, mental health scholar-activist, and freelance journalist. Collaborations include Alesandra Seutin's Vocab Dance, BFI Doc Society, Traumascapes, The Stage, Dance Gazette (Royal Academy of Dance), The Lancet Psychiatry, and Punchdrunk.

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

TELLING STORIES IN KATHAK BY AMINA KHAYYAM

Mudras (hand gestures) play an important role in telling stories in Kathak. They are used to communicate an idea, event, action, character or a creature and are expressed through gestures with a single (asamyukta hastas) or both (samyukta hastas) hands. We are taught mudras according to how they have been passed on by 'gurus', yet the more I discover, the more I realise the versatility of the mudras and how they can be interpreted according to the artist's own imagination. Here are some examples of the mudras we explore in *Ghost Ships* that enhance the story we tell.

PATAKA (flag) is a neutral position in Kathak and is also ideal to portray opening doors.

TRI-PATAKA is used here to depict a peacock..

SARPA-SHIRSHA is used to show a snake and its charmer.

HAMSYA normally used to portray being beautiful, is used in the context of famine to denote the victim's desire to return to their normal self again.

KATAKA MUKHA (veil) is often used to depict a woman.

KANGULA can denote the turmoil or darkness within.

SIMHA-MUKHA (lion head) is depicting a flighty deer here..

SOLA-PADMA (flower) points to the hope of blossoming once again.

Amina Khayyam in rehearsals © Roswitha Chesher

Kloe Dean in rehearsals © Roswitha Chesher

CREATIVE TEAM

Nancy Hirst | Creator and Co-Director

Nancy Hirst founded Icon Theatre in 2002 with the vision of creating accessible, high-quality participatory theatre projects and productions. Having trained at the National Theatre Studio, Nancy has worked as a freelance director on community and education projects at companies and venues including Opera North, Royal Opera House, Yvonne Arnaud, Soho Theatre, Battersea Arts Centre, The Arcola and the Young Vic. Her productions have won awards including the Fringe First, Music and Drama Education and Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Awards. Nancy is passionate about the transformative personal and social impact of co-created theatre work, and the thrill of large-scale productions made by professionals and communities together.

Kloé Dean | Co-Director and Choreographer

Kloé Dean is a visionary storyteller, known for bringing narratives to life on stages and screens worldwide. As a choreographer, movement director, and performing artist, Kloé's expertise originates from Hip Hop, Funk and Streetdance styles.

Kloé has worked with music artists such as Little Simz (Glastonbury 2024), SAULT, Anne-Marie, Little Mix, Cleo Sol, Ghetts, Ezra Collective, and Kojey Radical. She has also collaborated with brands like Jimmy Choo, Nike, George at ASDA, Marks & Spencer, and Yazoo, and contributed to events including The Brit Awards, The MOBO Awards, and Capital Radio's Summer Time Ball and Jingle Bell Ball.

Currently a Work Place artist at The Place, Kings Cross, Kloé is the Creative Director and Choreographer of the all-female Hip Hop dance company Myself UK Dance. Her theatre credits include *Gully* (Royal Court), *Floella Benjamin's Coming To England* UK Tour (2024/25), *Tambo and Bones* and *Gone Too Far* (Stratford East), *Tapped* (Theatre 503), and *Dorian* (Reading Rep). She has also performed at *Breakin Convention* (Sadler's Wells) and *Ladies Of Hip Hop* (New York), and participated in *The Sub Urban Danse Festival* (Copenhagen).

Kloé has taught at Pineapple, Studio 68, Base, and The Hub, and delivered workshops in Spain, Denmark, and Turkey. She recently curated the Streetdance class timetable at East London Dance Talent House in Stratford. Passionate about education and battling, Kloé has competed both in the UK and internationally, judged battles, and created work for dance crews, schools education establishments.

Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe | Choreographer

Dannielle, known as Rhimes, is a London-based Creative, Choreographer, and Entrepreneur. Her career spans stage and screen, where she has performed in productions such as ZooNation's *Into the Hoods* (2006–2009), Boy Blue's *Pied Piper*, and *Over the Edge* at the Barbican. She also appeared as Justine in *Street Dance 3D*.

In 2012, Dannielle led Boadicea Crew to the finals of *Got to Dance* (Sky One) and toured with Diversity on productions such as *Digitized* and *Limitless*. Her choreography credits include Assistant Choreographer for the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremonies, *So You Think You Can Dance* (BBC), and Associate Choreographer for *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (West End, UK Tour, Motion Picture, Australian Tour). She also worked on *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World* and *The Lost Spells*.

Dannielle's directing work includes roles such as Associate Director on *Some Like It Hip Hop* (Sadler's Wells) and *Sylvia* (Old Vic), and Resident Director for *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*. Recently, she co-directed ZooNation's 20th Anniversary show *Mixtape* at Sadler's Wells and choreographed the Olivier Award-winning *Hey Duggee* (Southbank Centre, UK Tour). In 2024, she was commissioned by ITV to create a performance for the New Year's Eve Big Bash, commemorating Windrush.

Amina Khayyam | Choreographer

Amina is the Artistic Director of Amina Khayyam Dance Company. A critically acclaimed performer, choreographer and dance theatre maker, Amina began her Kathak training with Alpana Sengupta, progressing to professional level with Sushmita Ghosh at The Bhavan (London) under whose guidance she made her professional debut at the Purcell Room, Southbank.

As a dancer Amina has worked for many choreographers and directors such as Kumudini Lakhia (Ekatra), Darshan Singh Bhullar (*Find Me Amongst the Black*), and most memorably with Lokendra Arambam, with whom she worked on *Stage of Blood*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth staged on the River Thames, and who left a lasting impact on her through his 'shamanistic' technique.

Amina has created over a dozen touring productions, including *Yerma, A Thousand Faces*, *ONE*, *Hum in My Heart*, *Your&Me*, and *Bird* – which received the Lustrum Award at Edinburgh Fringe. Her company earned a nomination for "Best Independent Company" at the National Dance Awards 2022.

Cherilyn Albert | Associate Choreographer

Cherilyn Albert is a London-based dance artist and Artistic Director of Instigate Unknown Dance Company. They have over 10 years professional experience choreographing, teaching and performing across the UK and abroad. Their work uses Hip Hop and Contemporary theatre to draw in new and overlooked audiences and inspire the next generation.

R&D Photos © Roswitha Chesher

Serge Sainte Rose | Composer and Sound Designer

Serge Sainte Rose is a passionate and eclectic composer who loves stories. Whether for films, theatre, concert music, documentaries or adverts, Serge composes music that seeks to evoke the emotions needed to support the stories best.

In 2021 and 2022, Serge was awarded two Arts Council grants to compose, orchestrate and record his works with a symphony orchestra. One of these, *From Britain to the Caribbean and Back*, a fusion of classical orchestral music and Caribbean rhythms, was performed at St John's Smith Square.

His compositions have been featured in the documentary *Whales in a Changing Ocean*, which was awarded at the International Ocean Film Festival. Some of his pieces have been placed in various UK TV programs, and he has collaborated with established music production companies, including Leland Music, Finger Music and THE.

Tania Holland Williams | Music Director

Tania Holland Williams is an artist and opera practitioner whose work explores the potential of the human voice as an adaptable polychromatic instrument through which to communicate. She is particularly interested in the relationship between the artist as a sound source and the audience as a reflector and the unspoken narratives that develop in the space between. Although her work is primarily oriented towards devising contemporary opera, she has long-standing collaborations with artists from a huge variety of other genres. These partnerships have resulted in the creation of film scores, sound art installations, community operas and dance music.

Tania runs Fat Lady Opera - a company that is changing the shape of opera through ensuring it is accessible, relevant and brave.

Sarah Jane Booth | Set and Costume Designer

Sarah trained on the Motley Theatre Design course and works across theatre, opera and live events. She is carbon literate and collaborates with the Society of British Theatre Designers (SBTD) to train others.

For Icon Theatre, Sarah has designed *The Ballad of St John's Car Park*, *If Not Now*, *The Chatham Witch*, *The Silk of 1000 Spiders*, *23 Submarines* and various Christmas productions at The Brook Theatre.

Her other theatre work includes: *Inside* (NT Studio), *Henry I & The Last Abbot of Reading* (Reading Abbey), *Dead & Breathing* (Liverpool Unity and The Albany), *Refugee Boy* (Chickenshed Theatre), *Beast on the Moon* and *White Guy on the Bus* (Finborough Theatre), *A Tale of Two Cities* (Darlington Civic Theatre) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Park Theatre).
In opera, Sarah has designed productions including *Mansfield Park* (Byre Opera), *The Firework Maker's Daughter* (Minack Theatre), *Robinson Crusoe* and several contemporary operas for the Royal College of Music and Tête à Tête.

Her live event and photoshoot clients include Sorted Food, Zoella, Playstation, Ray Ban, Assassin's Creed Syndicate and Wellcome Trust.

Callum Macdonald | Lighting Designer

Callum is a lighting designer, associate designer, and touring re-lighter, working across theatre, dance, opera, and live events in the UK and internationally.

Early in his career, he worked as a lighting technician at The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich, where he gained experience by shadowing incoming designers and touring re-lighters. His progression through the ranks led him to launch his freelance design career in 2012.

In 2019, Callum was selected for the ALPD's prestigious Lumiere Scheme, where he was mentored by renowned lighting designer Mark Jonathan.

From 2021 to 2022, Callum received support from Arts Council England's *Develop Your Creative Practice* campaign, expanding his work as an associate to designers such as Johanna Town, Mark Jonathan, Matthew Haskins, and Lucy Carter on numerous large-scale productions.

Callum is a member of Equity and the ALPD.

Matt Powell | Projection Designer

Matt (they/she/he) is a non-binary, Offie finalist video designer, musical theatre creative, and queer practitioner based in the East Midlands.

Their musical credits include *CAKE* (The Other Palace), *MARIE CURIE* (Charing Cross Theatre), *RIDE* (The Old Globe, San Diego/Curve/Southwark Playhouse), *Gypsy in Concert* (Hope Mill Theatre), *Sherlock Holmes and the Poison Wood* (Watermill Theatre), *Nativity* (Derby Theatre), *Rebecca* (Charing Cross Theatre), *Rumi* (D'asha Performing Arts Festival Doha/London Coliseum), *Santa Must Die* (Alphabetti Theatre/ North Tour/Leeds Playhouse 2023), *Snowflake* (The Lowry, Salford Quays), *Public Domain* (Vaudeville Theatre & Southwark Playhouse), *Plaza* (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), and *American Idiot* (Derby Theatre).

For plays, Matt has worked on *The Real Ones* (Bush Theatre), *The Ghost of White Hart Lane* (Edinburgh Fringe), *So Unfair* (One Tenth Human), *Laughing Boy* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *Exhibitionists* (Kings Head Theatre), *I Really Do Think This Will Change Your Life* (Mercury Theatre Colchester - The Stage Awards Innovation Award Shortlisted), *Enact* (Chipping Norton Theatre), *Animal* (Hope Mill Theatre/Park Theatre - Offie Finalist), *Blow Down* (Leeds Playhouse/UK Community Tour), and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (Tanya Moiseiwitsch Playhouse/Lyric Hammersmith/Theatre Royal Haymarket).

In opera and concerts, Matt's credits include *New Year* (Birmingham Opera Company), *Music, Migration and Mobility* (Royal College of Music), and *Flight* (Royal College of Music).

Digital projects include *ILOVE* (Solo Art), *The Fabric of Watford/Buffering* (Watford Palace Theatre), *The Money* (Digital), *Wilf Goes Wild* (Digital), and *Shift+Alt+Right* (Digital).

Matt Pearson | Sound System Design

Matt has over 20 years of experience in sound engineering and currently runs Astra Sound, having taken over from his business partner, who first gave him work experience in 2002. His expertise in system and sound design has been essential in managing challenges like council noise restrictions and crowd coverage.

Matt's theatrical credits include a successful run of *Daisy Pulls it Off* with GSA, which featured a weeklong engagement at the Charing Cross Theatre. He also worked on the local pantomime in Deal, which included a voiceover from Sir Ian McKellen.

As a sound engineer, Matt has worked across the country with a wide range of bands and artists, from their first gigs to collaborating with musical legends such as Kiki Dee, Alvin Stardust and The Zombies.

Simon Foster | Sound System Design

Simon is an experienced sound engineer and co-founder of How Now Productions. An enthusiastic collector of microphones (don't ask about them or he will bore you!), he worked closely with Georg Neumann Microphones GmBh, testing and developing their range of digital microphones and his passion for recording the human voice knows no bounds. With a notable history in music, Simon is also an active professional singer, producer and arranger, working with such artists as The Flying Pickets and Arcelia. In 2009, Simon was Sound Designer for the award-winning series *Sky Arts Theatre Live!*

Hardial Rai | Dramaturg

Hardial has been involved in the diverse arts sector in the UK for almost four decades, developing, innovating, and pioneering arts activities as a producer, director, writer and dramaturg. His work is defined by his commitment to supporting artists in bringing their visions to life and engaging audiences to see beyond their expectations.

Hardial has commissioned, co-produced and delivered over 200 projects at all scales, including large-scale outdoor spectacles such as *Macbeth: Stage of Blood* on the River Thames for LIFT (1997), which *The Guardian* called "the most spectacular spectacle this year," and *Dogs of Desire*, staged in an underground car park.

Evelien Coleman | Costume Supervisor

Evelien works as a freelance Costume Supervisor, Assistant, and Maker for various theatre companies across the UK. She completed her BA in Costume Production at Rose Bruford College.

Her supervisor credits include *Chatham Witch, If Not Now,* and *Ballad of St John's Car Park* (Icon Theatre), *Henry I* (Rabble Theatre), *Little Women* (Mountview), *Christmas Adventures of Archie the Mouse,* and *Little Fox's Christmas Garden* (Play on Words, Icon Theatre and Loop Dance).

Costume Assistant credits include work with the Royal College of Music, *Alice* (LAMDA), and *Red Riding Hood* (JW3). Evelien's Costume Maker credits include *Revolutions, Don Giovanni and Orpheus in the Underworld* (Royal College of Music), Camden Costumes and the National Theatre.

Will Pascua | Assistant Choreographer

Will Pascua is a choreographer and performer with over a decade of experience at ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company. Will is passionate about spreading love, peace and good vibes. He lives by the motto: "there are no boundaries or limits that can hold me, only possibilities". #NB #NoBoundaries

Sarah Victoria | Assistant Composer

Sarah Victoria is a music and sound creative for stage and screen, with work ranging from studio engineering and production to composition and vocal performance as an artist.Her credits include *The Stormtrooper Scandal* (BBC Two, 2024), *Waco Untold: The British Stories* (ITVX, 2023), *Horizon Forbidden West* (Sony PlayStation, 2022), and the LA-based *Art Look Podcast*.

Recently, Sarah was commissioned to create an immersive music and sound-driven piece at the 2024 BBC Prom *Made in the North* at The Glasshouse. She was selected as one of 30 creatives from over 900 applicants for BBC Radio 3's Open Music Scheme.

Suchitra Chatterjee | Historian

S.D. Chatterjee is an inclusion researcher, curator and historian dedicated to illuminating overlooked stories and amplifying marginalised voices throughout history. Her passion for unearthing the past and bringing it to broader audiences has contributed to numerous projects and exhibitions over the years.

Her work has helped bring hidden histories out of obscurity and into modern society. For instance, Thomas Highflyer, a former enslaved African child buried in a Brighton cemetery, is now remembered by the children attending the school he once attended in 1868. The bones of Chatham's mammoths are once again roaming the Kent countryside, and Billy Waters, a disabled African American sailor, is dancing on the HMS Namur at the Historic Dockyard as well as in London, where he sings to patrons of the Apollo Theatre.

By bridging the past with the present, Suchi hopes to show that hidden histories are treasure chests waiting to be unearthed, with riches inside to be shared with anyone willing to step into the unknown.

Wabriya King | Dramatherapist

Wabriya King is a qualified Dramatherapist (Roehampton University), Actress (The Oxford School of Drama), creative facilitator, and Reiki practitioner. She combines her expertise to support creatives throughout rehearsal and performance periods.

Her recent dramatherapy support credits include *Slave Play* (Noël Coward Theatre), *Shifters* (Bush Theatre/ Duke of York's Theatre), *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed The World* (The Other Palace/ UK tour), *Red Pitch* (Soho Place/ Bush Theatre), *For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When The Hue Gets Too Heavy* (Royal Court/ West End), *A Strange Loop* (Barbican Centre), *Clyde's* (Donmar Warehouse), *The Empress* and *Julius Caesar* (RSC), *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (Lyric Hammersmith), *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (Complicité), *Hamilton*, *Moulin Rouge*, and *MJ The Musical* (West End).

Her film credits include *Empire of Light* and *Chevalier*.

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

DANCERS

Savannah Daly | Dancer

Savannah Daly is a professional dancer, teacher, and choreographer from Coventry. She began dancing at the age of four and has since trained in a wide range of styles, including commercial, hip hop, jazz, contemporary, tap, Latin, ballet, cabaret, and acro. Savannah graduated with a BA Hons in Dance and Performing Arts and has worked on various projects across different styles.

Her recent credits include performing in *Like a Butterfly*, a contemporary show choreographed by Ryan Lee Seager. She is also a member of Company Jinks.

Robert Dunkley-Gyimah | Dancer

Robert is a 21-year-old dancer from South London and a recent graduate of Rambert School. With a love for music and movement, they have trained in ballet, contemporary and street styles. Most recently, Robert worked with Jason Mabana Dance, touring internationally and has collaborated with Russell Maliphant on the restaging of *Fallen*, as well as Botis Seva and Es Devlin for *There Is No Other, There Is No Elsewhere*. Other work includes performances for Saul Nash during London Fashion Week and Unity UK.

Abirami Eswar | Dancer

Abirami is a Kathak dancer and teacher based in London. Whilst she remains true to traditional Kathak as a solo artist, her performances with other contemporary artists both in the UK and abroad have showcased her ability to tastefully blend her dance style with other art forms.

Abirami's dedication to Kathak and the performing arts has brought her recognition as one of UK's 40 under 40 South Asian Artists. Her work aims to push her creative boundaries while keeping their roots intact. She works as a freelance artist with leading dance companies and independent choreographers across the UK. In addition to being a performing artist she teaches aspiring Kathak dancers of all ages.

Jackie Kibuka | Dancer

Jackie is a dancer, movement director, choreographer, teacher and actress with over 15 years of experience in the UK street dance and hip hop theatre scene. She is an authentic and versatile mover, proficient in styles including waacking, popping, locking, house, hip hop, contemporary and commercial. Jackie frequently trains at Runway House and has trained with hip hop companies such as Boadicea and ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company.

Her performing credits include *Breaking Convention*, London Fashion Week, *Diversity Live*, *The Tide, Everyone's Talking About Jamie* (film), *Some Like It Hip Hop* (2019), English National Opera - *Drive in Live*, *Spotify* & Eurovision (2023), *Beetlejuice 2* (film), *Rumble in the Jungle Rematch* (2023) and *Christmas Karma* (film).

Jackie's choreography and movement direction credits include *British Book* (Roundhouse), *THEM* (Body Politic), Associate Choreographer for *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World*, *Longing to Belong* (BBC musical film), *Close Quarters* (LAMDA), *A Monster Calls* (LAMDA) and *Wrapped* (Mountview).

Rab McColl | Dancer

Rab is a Scottish-born dancer from the small village of Sanquhar. He is currently training in Glasgow at Dance Inc Studio Centre and is a core member of the Glasgow-based breaking crew Flying Jalapenos, with whom he has battled across the UK.

Although still in training, Rab has had the opportunity to perform in shows such as *America's Got Talent*, *BBC Saturday Mashup*, and multiple seasons at the Glasgow Pavilion Pantomime.

Rab is excited to have the opportunity to perform in this production and with this company.

D'jon McTernan | Dancer

D'jon McTernan, 22, from South East London, is a professional hip hop dancer who has trained with GDND crew, ZooNation Youth Company and Boy Blue. He is currently an active member of Flawless. He attended Brit School (2018–2020) and has been working professionally for the past four years, performing in both national and international showcases. His credits include Brit Awards with Little Simz, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, various music videos and pantomimes with Flawless.

D'jon's theatre work includes performing in the iconic *Blak Whyte Gray* by the Olivier Award-winning company Boy Blue at Manchester's HOME Theatre in 2022. He is also the co-founder of media and entertainment brand D'Eli (with Elijah Smith), which aims to spotlight contemporary dance through platforms like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. Together, they have hosted a range of events, including *Move It*, and launched the *Who's Next* showcase in 2023, providing a platform for emerging artists to present their work.

Kesha Raithatha | Dancer

Kesha is a dancer and choreographer who embodies Kathak and contemporary movement. She creates work that is rich in detail and experimentally reconsiders contemporary South Asian dance. Her curiosity and exposure to a wide range of movement training invigorate her dance-making vocabulary. Kesha is passionate about using dance as a tool to provide the viewer with a surreal and transcendental experience, *but also as a means to be a voice for the collective*.

Kesha is a Workplace Artist at The Place Theatre in London, Associate Artistic Director at Aakash Odedra Company and a Curve Theatre Resident Creative.

Shaq Shadare | Dancer

Shaq is a proficient dance and movement artist with experience in physical theatre, acrobatics and music production. He is the co-founder and co-artistic director of Company Apidae, a dance-theatre company specialising in breaking and contemporary dance.

Shaq currently trains in a variety of hip hop and street dance techniques, including Krump, House, Locking, and Tricking, while also having completed his master's in Physiotherapy at the University of Birmingham.

Mohika Shankar | Dancer

A first-class graduate of the University of Derby, Mohika Shankar hails from New Delhi, where she began her dance journey at the age of five, learning the Indian classical dance form Kathak under the guidance of the Late Guru Munna Shukla Ji.

As an early-career South Asian artist, Mohika is exploring various avenues in dance and has worked with organisations such as One Dance UK, Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies, and Sampad. She currently works as a freelance dance artist with Amina Khayyam Dance Company, Sonia Sabri Company, Black Country Dance Hub and many others.

Jalpa Vala | Dancer

Jalpa Vala is a versatile dancer and choreographer, trained in contemporary, ballet, Kathak, Bharatanatyam and other commercial art forms. Since graduating from the University of Roehampton, London, Jalpa has been performing and touring with Amina Khayyam Dance Company. She was also part of Shiamak Davar's OYP programme in 2015/16 and has performed on both international and local platforms.

Jalpa's movement practice draws from the various dance forms she has learned over the past 10 years. Recently, she has worked with Sonia Sabri Dance Company and Black Country Dance Hub as part of their future leader's dance programme, exploring what it means to be a community dance artist and the importance of health and well-being in community settings.

In addition to her dance career, Jalpa is a yoga and gym instructor, and she enjoys combining her movement background to create work that explores themes of identity,

Kyle Ralph-Walker | Dancer

Kyle is a multifaceted dance artist and choreographer who specialises in Hip Hop and its surrounding styles, with a particular flair for Popping and Locking. He is a long-standing member of Elementz Entertainment, a professional dance company founded by artistic director Lindon Barr. With Elementz Kyle has performed in a variety of works internationally, spanning countries such as Greece, Germany and Sweden. He also performed at the Saudi Games 2023 in Riyadh for the launch of their opening ceremony.

Most notably, Kyle appeared in Netflix's hit show *Dance 100*, where he was part of the winning company. He is thrilled to be part of Icon and ZooNation's production of *Ghost Ships*.

PERFORMERS

Becky Barry | BSL Interpreter

Becky Barry is a theatre-maker and BSL/English interpreter (Becky Allen RSLI). She is thrilled to be returning to work with Icon, having previously worked with the company on *The Chatham Witch*, *If Not Now* and *The Ballad of St John's Car Park*. Becky works across the UK, and forthcoming projects including *More Ghost Stories by Candlelight* with Hightide and Shakespeare's Globe, and *A Doll's House* with Sheffield Crucible. Becky is a passionate advocate for access provision, representation and liberation - onstage and off.

Nia Davies | Performer

Nia trained at the Jacques Lecoq Physical Theatre School in Paris and has worked as an actor and musician throughout the UK and internationally. Her previous work with Icon Theatre includes *Sammy the Sheep Saves Christmas, The Christmas Adventures of Archie Mouse, 23 Submarines,* and *The Chatham Witch*.

Nia has also worked with companies such as the National Theatre, Arcola Theatre, Birmingham Rep, National Theatre Wales, Told By An Idiot, Lyric Hammersmith, Trestle Theatre, Salisbury Playhouse, Theatre Centre, Theatr Clwyd, Sherman Theatre and Untied Artists.

Her other credits include *The Lower Depths* for BBC Radio Four, the short film *I Am Frida Kahlo,* and *Altemodern* at Tate Britain, where she played the world's largest accordion—a 3-metre-tall instrument requiring a step ladder! During lockdown, she filmed *How to Build a Plane* for Pursued By A Bear Productions.
Nia has a strong interest in site-specific and community theatre and is delighted to be working with Icon Theatre once again.

Chevon Edwards | Performer

Chevon is a professional contemporary dance artist who has collaborated with organisations such as Theatre Bristol, Impermanence and East London Dance. She has performed with companies like Tavaziva Dance and Earthbound Dance Theatre, as well as for artists Patsy Brown- Hope and Dr Tia- Monique Uzor. She also co-directed, choreographed and performed as a solo artist for dance film, One Night (2021) as well as performed for visual artist, Bryony Ella in 'Imaginal Cells' (2024).

Chevon achieved a Distinction in Dance Research (MA) from Rambert School. Her practice explores social dynamics, somatic movement and embodied responses to trauma and identity.

R&D Photos © Roswitha Chesher

MUSICIANS

Sohini Alam | Singer
Sohini Alam is a British Bangladeshi singer whose musical repertoire includes folk, modern, and traditional Bengali songs. She also composes and has branched out into multi-lingual music in bands, dance, film and theatre. Sohini is lead vocalist for the critically acclaimed bands Khiyo, Lokkhi Terra, and In Place of War's GRRRL. She is Musical Director of the arts company Komola Collective. A third-generation vocalist from a family of renowned Bangladeshi singers, Sohini has provided vocals for dancer/choreographer Akram Khan's *DESH, Until the Lions, Jungle Book Reimagined* and *Gigenis*. Sohini and her Khiyo bandmate Oliver Weeks are music directors of Leesa Gazi's multiple award-winning films *Rising Silence* and *A House Named Shahana*. Sohini's previous work with Amina Khayyam Dance Company includes *A Thousand Faces, Kantha-K* and *ONE*.

Debasish Mukherjee | Tabla
Debasish Mukherjee is one of the few tabla players who is known for his versatility. He hails from a family of tabla and music traditions, he started receiving his training from his father, the late renowned tabla exponent Pandit Kanai Mukherjee of Benares gharana. Debasish has performed at many prestigious festivals throughout India and abroad. Debasish believes that tabla is not just a percussion instrument but a musical instrument, which has melody as well as rhythm. He has performed with great artists like legendary Pandit Birju Maharaj, Pandit V.G.Jog, Ustad Bahadur Khan, Pandit Rajan Mishra and Shajan Mishra. Debasish regularly performs with Amina Khayyam.

Jonathan Mayer | Sitar
Jonathan Mayer - the son of the late Kolkata composer John Mayer - is a renowned sitarist and composer and the Artistic Director of zerOclassikal. He has composed extensively for many genres including jazz, Indian, dance and symphonic writing and has performed all over the world. Jonathan began his musical training at just 5 years old, learning violin from his grandfather Albert Hepton, piano from James Methuen-Campbell and composition from his father, and later mastered the sitar. His ability to read Western notation has allowed him to perform in a variety of genres – playing with artists such as Kuljit Bhamra, The London Philharmonic Orchestra and BBC Concert Orchestra among other notable names.

Christopher Staines | Singer
As a singer Christopher has performed – and led workshops – with Streetwise Opera, Filament *(Ospedale, Drive Ride Walk)* and Opera Project *(Dido and Aeneas, The Beggar's Opera, Tales of Hoffmann, The Merry Widow)*. Musicals include *The Hired Man* (Mercury Colchester, Leicester Curve), *The Great Gatsby* (Arts, London), *The Music Man* (Regent's Park) and *Cabaret* (Donmar). He performs his own cabaret of French songs *Boum! C'est chantastique* at Crazy Coqs, Brasserie Zédel.

He has played lead roles at the National Theatre (*Hamlet* and *She Stoops to Conquer*), the RSC *(The Tempest)*, the Almeida *(Our Town)* and at regional theatres across the country, including Queen's Theatre Hornchurch *(Abigail's Party)*. He recently appeared in *The Score* at Theatre Royal Bath, which transfers to the West End next February. On TV, he has appeared in series such as *The Crown, Wolf Hall, The Chelsea Detective* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

Company Rehearsal © Roswitha Chesher

About Icon Theatre

Newly appointed to Arts Council England's National Portfolio, Icon Theatre (established 2002) is an award-winning theatre and participatory arts charity.

Icon creates large-scale site-specific, outdoor and immersive theatre productions by bringing world-class artists into collaboration with communities. Recent productions include *The Ballad of St John's Car Park*, which told the story of the local Black Lives Matter movement's 2020 campaign to rename a car park that commemorated prominent slave trader John Hawkins; *If Not Now* (Rochester Castle), which explored how communities can come together to challenge and transform poverty, prejudice, and the climate crisis, and *The Chatham Witch* (Fort Amherst), exploring the extraordinary history of women in Medway through the ages.

Icon runs an award-winning young people's programme and participatory theatre programmes in schools, and drop-in centres in criminal justice settings.

For over a decade, Icon has been commissioned with other locally based arts companies to create a much-loved interactive Christmas show for early years children that is performed at The Brook Theatre in Chatham.

icontheatre.org.uk

'A sharp, impeccably performed and blazingly impassioned piece of theatre...simply terrific.'

★★★★

The Times

R&D Photos © Roswitha Chesher

About ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company

ZooNation was founded by Kate Prince in 2002 and is best known for its work in the theatre, creating full length narrative dance productions influenced in equal parts by musical theatre, Hip Hop culture and music. ZooNation's work is fortified with an extensive programme of engagement and talent development, working with different communities and young artists to expand their skills, knowledge, and confidence in our style of dance theatre.

ZooNation productions include: *Into the Hoods* (Novello Theatre 2008) which was the West End's first Hip Hop dance show, *Some Like it Hip Hop* (Sadler's Wells Peacock 2011-13 and UK tour), *Groove on Down the Road* (SouthBank Centre 2013-14), *ZooNation: Unplugged* (Sadler's Wells 2013), *The Mad Hatter's Tea Party* (Royal Opera House Linbury Studio 2014 and the Roundhouse 2016), *Into the Hoods: Remixed* (Sadler's Wells Peacock 2015-16 and UK tour), *SYLVIA* (The Old Vic 2018 and 2023). In 2020 Kate created, directed and choreographed *Message In A Bottle* (Sadler's Wells & Universal Music) at the Peacock Theatre.

zoonation.co.uk

R&D Photos © Roswitha Chesher

About Amina Khayyam Dance Company

A critically acclaimed, award-winning touring company, and nominated for the National Dance Awards 2022, the Amina Khayyam Dance Company (AKDC) makes touring work using the South Asian dance Kathak as the core narrative. It works in collaboration with those who are culturally least engaged, economically challenged and societally disenfranchised - with a focus on the marginalised female voice, not just from the mainstream but from within their own community - a place from where its founder and AD, the critically acclaimed dancer and choreographer, Amina Khayyam comes. The Company adds theatre, live art, and technology, striving to make relevant, engaging work through a process of collaboration, participation, exploration, and opportunities for creative and cultural expression- shaping a process that empowers women creatively as stakeholders. The work's dramaturgy is explored through the sub-culture context of this process, and made to transpose to the mainstream audience, so that the targeted sector's perspective, aspiration and voice is heard widely.

AKDC treats Kathak as a contemporary form thereby transcends any 'classical' or 'modern' precepts to its approach. It uses Kathak vocabulary to transpose it on a modern body dialogue, in the process subverting its many facets to carve out an emotion performed to a contemporary narrative. It believes the dance form is evolving with progressions demanded by the contemporary zeitgeist, in the same way it did so from the demands of the Mughals, the last time it took a major step forward. At its heart, AKDC emphasises Kathak as a storytelling form – an approach that has allowed it to use its uniquely placed and equipped vocabulary to tell new and urgent stories of global importance.

Based in UK (Slough), the Company, since its formation in 2013 has made 15 pieces of work, performed over 160 shows in over 40 venues (incl outdoors) & digital platforms, nationally and internationally.

aminakhayyamdance.co.uk

HMS Gannet © Louise Hubbard

About The Historic Dockyard Chatham

Discover a world of maritime history at The Historic Dockyard Chatham, home to over 100 preserved buildings, including 47 ancient monuments, all under the custody of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (charity no. 292101).

As the most complete dockyard from the Age of Sail, the story of Chatham Dockyard and its people can be discovered through immersive exhibition galleries. Explore *Command of the Oceans* and *The Ropery*, and step aboard three historic warships: HMS OCELOT, a Cold War submarine, HMS CAVALIER, a Second World War destroyer, and HMS GANNET, a Victorian sloop as well as enjoying an exciting range of changing exhibitions.

Beyond the visitor experience, the historic estate is home to over 120 businesses, employing over 1,000 people, ranging from businesses ranging from cutting-edge design studios to traditional craft workshops. All these businesses are housed in buildings ranging from properties that have been refurbished, to more traditional premises retaining their original character.

As an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation, the Dockyard plays a vital role in Medway's cultural regeneration, bringing together art and heritage.

thedockyard.co.uk

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Make A Donation Today

Icon is a registered charity (No. 1097311). We focus on providing transformative arts opportunities free of charge for families and young people who face significant socio-economic deprivation and exclusion.

Your support today could help a young person build confidence, performance and communication skills to improve their future.

Thank you for your support.

Donate now, click here

'Icon Theatre has given me new friends, taught me new skills and challenged my lack of self-belief'
Participant

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE SHOW?

Please let us know

As a charity that aims to provide free opportunities, we rely on feedback from our audiences to demonstrate our impact to our funders or to learn how we can improve. This short questionnaire will take only 2 minutes to complete – thank you in advance.

Yes, I've got 2 minutes, click here

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