

## Press pack: *Glorious* by Rajni Shah Projects

### **About *Glorious***

*Glorious* is the third and final part in a trilogy of work by Rajni Shah and company and is a significant departure from its predecessors as it uses the form of musical theatre, and is being developed uniquely for each town or city in which it is being presented.

The project takes place over 3-6 months in each location. It involves a series of playful letter-writing activities in public spaces followed by a rehearsal process with two sets of local volunteers: a local musical group of any genre, who reinterpret the *Glorious* score under the supervision of Musical Director Suzie Shrubbs; and a group of 6-10 local residents who create their own monologues during a series of workshops with the company.

The project culminates in one unique performance, during which local residents read their own monologues, and local musicians perform the music alongside the company.

Following each show the company continues to share documentation, writing and images with all volunteers in each location and works with writer Mary Paterson to collect stories from all participants, which will be published as the *Glorious Storybook* (2012), an innovative publication mapping the *Glorious* journey.

**Creative team:** [Lucille Acevedo-Jones](#) (costume), [Lucy Cash](#), Karen Christopher, [Sheila Ghelani](#), [Mary Paterson](#) (writer), [Ben & Max Ringham](#) (composers), [Rajni Shah](#) (director) and Chahine Yavroyan (lighting design)

**Technical Director:** Steve Wald, with Marty Langthorne and Beky Stoddart (Re-lights)

**Musical Director:** Suzie Shrubbs

**Documentation (film):** [Becky Edmunds](#)

**Producer:** Rajni Shah

**Project Director:** Helena Suarez

**Commissioned by** SPILL Festival at the Barbican, London. **Co-commissioned by** Live at LICA (Nuffield Theatre Lancaster), Wunderbar Festival and InBetween Time Productions

**Supported by** Arts Council England, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Jerwood Charitable Foundation, PRS for Music Foundation, Royal Victoria Hall Foundation and many generous individuals.

### **Tour dates & locations**

**August 2010** – at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern as part of **Duckie's Performance & Cocktails**, London (performance of Songs of Letters, the first song composed for *Glorious*)

**December 2010** – Act One at Chisenhale Dance Space, London and Songs at Cube as part of **InBetween Time Festival**, Bristol

**February 2011** – *Glorious* (preview) at Nottingham Arts Theatre as part of Dance4's **Nottdance Festival**, Nottingham

**April 2011** – *Glorious* (premiere) at the **Barbican** as part of **SPILL Festival 2011**

**November 2011** – *Glorious* at Northumbria University Theatre as part of **Wunderbar Festival**, Newcastle

**May 2012** – *Glorious* at **Un Pas de Trop**, Maison Folies, Mons, Belgium

**June 2012** – *Write a Letter to a Stranger* at **PULSE Festival**, Ipswich

**November 2012** – *Glorious* at **SPILL Festival**, Ipswich

**December 2012** – *Glorious* at **Live At LICA** (formerly Nuffield Theatre Lancaster)

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### Media Selection



Black & White images - photos by Oliver Dalby from *Glorious* at Nottdance Festival, Nottingham  
Colour images - photos by Pari Naderi from *Glorious* at SPILL Festival, Barbican, London

Download a selection of **images** from the show for press use:

<http://bit.ly/glorious-images>

**Please make sure to include the image credit – if you would like to request different images, please contact [producer@rajnishah.com](mailto:producer@rajnishah.com)**

Watch a short **video clip** about the show at its premiere as part of SPILL Festival 2011 at the Barbican, London – shot and edited by SPILL TV:

<http://bit.ly/glorious-clip>

Hear some **extracts of music from live shows** visit this link:

<http://bit.ly/glorious-music>

Read **articles** about *Glorious* written by Rajni Shah:

- Total Theatre - <http://bit.ly/glorious-total-theatre> (PDF download)
- Exeunt Magazine - <http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/glorious/>

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### **About Rajni Shah Projects**

**Rajni Shah Projects** was incorporated in 2010 but has been producing high quality, risk-taking performances in public spaces and theatres for the past twelve years under the leadership of Rajni Shah. The company has a reputation for delivering political, socially engaged creative projects that are visually striking, highly accessible and open to interpretation and participation by diverse audiences.

### **Previous work by Rajni Shah and collaborators:**

#### **Glorious - a musical in three acts (2011)**

The third in a loose trilogy examining cultural identity, *Glorious* explores what it means to live in a place, and the messy but beautiful business of becoming a community

#### **Hope (2009)**

Rajni performed as part of SPIELART's Woodstock of Political Thinking event in Munich, with a short piece entitled *Hope*

#### **Dinner with America (2008)**

The second in a trilogy of performances addressing the complexities of cultural identity in the 21st century. It toured 2008-2009.

#### **give what you can, take what you need (2008)**

A playful exploration of notions of community and conversation through gift exchange. It toured in 2008-2009 alongside *Dinner with America*

#### **Altars of us all / speaking to strangers (2008)**

A public intervention as part of the 'mis-guides' by Wrights and Sites at the Belluard Bollwerk International festival in Fribourg, Switzerland

#### **Mr Quiver (2005)**

The first in a trilogy of performance installations questioning cultural identity, *Mr Quiver* provides an unusual take on questions of representation, ethnicity and what it might mean to be British

#### **The Awkward Position (2002)**

Erupting unexpectedly into beautiful, entangled dance, or into exquisite, tense stillness, *The Awkward Position* took a fresh look at that age-old question, what are we doing here?

#### **The Most Unlikely People Confess to their Dream (2001)**

A series of intimate solos incorporating performance art, installation, writing, dance and original music, in which each performer's dream was mapped onto the body of another

#### **Upon a Blighted Star (2001)**

Short duet conceived as a direct response to the events of September 11th and reactions to these events within the United States of America

#### **As If Traveling Through Snow (2000)**

A Winter show, *As If Traveling Through Snow* was an hour-long duet exploring separateness and the longing for union

#### **Hold Each As We Fall (1999)**

Rajni's first full-length show, *hold each as we fall* was performed by Gemma Brockis, Meredith Evans, Triona Kennedy and Rajni Shah

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### *About the creative team*

**Lucille Acevedo-Jones** is a costume and set designer working in theatre, film and TV. She has worked as a designer and core collaborator with Rajni for seven years; other work includes designs for Royal Shakespeare Company, BBC, Phantom Productions, and Objective Productions.

**Lucy Cash** works in performance and film, most recently with Goat Island performance company, Bodies in Flight, Rajni Shah Theatre, Retina Dance, Anna Krzystek, Athina Vahla and Oblivia. She is an Associate Artist of both South East Dance and Artsadmin.

**Karen Christopher** is a collaborative performance deviser, performer, and teacher. She was a member of Chicago-based performance company Goat Island for 20 years touring and teaching internationally until the group disbanded in 2009.

**Becky Edmunds** is a specialist dance and performance videographer, and has collaborated with artists and organisations to produce video documentation, including Pacitti Company, Walker Dance Park Music, Ricochet Dance Productions, Blast Theory and Independent Dance.

**Sheila Ghelani** makes solo performance and installation work as well as working collaboratively as a Blast Theory Associate Artist and a longstanding member of Pacitti Company.

**Mary Paterson** is a writer based in London, with a specialism in Live Art and Performance. She is co-director of Open Dialogues, and has been widely published in the UK and abroad.

**Ben and Max Ringham** are Olivier-nominated composers for theatre, and also founders of the award-winning pop band, Superthriller. Theatre highlights include work for the National Theatre, Donmar, Crucible Sheffield and Shunt.

**Rajni Shah** has performed in the UK, Europe and the USA. She is an Artsadmin Associate Artist, a member of the national Activator Network, and the Deputy Chair of New Work Network.

**Suzie Shrubbs** is a musician, director, and teacher who plays and teaches oboe, cor anglais, and piano. She specialises in working with a range of professional and non-professional musicians.

**Helena Suarez** has worked as a Technology and Communications Specialist for non-profits including the Global Call Against Poverty and Amnesty International for the past ten years. She is now working as a Pilates Instructor and independent arts producer.

**Steve Wald** has worked as a technical director and production manager for over 30 years. Most recently he has worked with Bobby Baker, Franko B, Geraldine Pilgrim, Graeme Miller, Curious, Jocelyn Pook, Rajni Shah, Stan Won't Dance, and Tate Modern (Performance Programme).

**Chahine Yavroyan** has designed lighting for theatre, dance, buildings and opera - most recently with Bobby Baker, Manchester International Festival, Paines Plough, The Royal Court, Jasmin Vardimon, Candoco and Jocelyn Pook. He is a longstanding member of the People Show.

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## Questions...

1. How does *Glorious* fit in the context of Rajni Shah's previous work?
2. Why a musical?
3. How does the company meet participants?
4. What's the audience's role in *Glorious*?
5. How is *Glorious* funded?
6. What are the *Glorious Storybook* and *Glorious People* online social network?
7. Critical response to *Glorious*

### 1. How does *Glorious* fit in the context of Rajni Shah's previous work?

With each piece in the trilogy, I've tried to respond to something that felt urgent in that moment. The first piece, *Mr Quiver* (2005-2008) was very much about borders, about immigration, segregation, and the breaking down of cultural assumptions. The second, *Dinner With America* (2007-2009), dealt with the ideals and fictions we long for in the creation of our own cultural identities, examined through the prism of 'America'.

In this final piece, I wanted to explore the sense of not knowing that pervades European societies today – both the fear and the space for hope that have emerged primarily as a result of our increased awareness of climate change and the dramatic impact of the financial collapse.

Since 2006, in addition to the large-scale works we've made for theatre and gallery spaces, we've been making small interventions around the ideas of gift and generosity in shopping malls and libraries and precincts. I wondered whether we might bring those two strands of work closer together - the work we were doing in shopping malls, and the work we were doing in theatres. This was also an important factor in making *Glorious*.

### 2. Why a musical?

I was interested in working with a form that immediately communicates with a vast number of people, but that often represents some kind of utopia or dystopia. I wanted to know what might happen if we made a musical that embraces the unknown and the unknowable, and that celebrates the quiet, everyday voices of ordinary people.

I've always loved musicals, and when I was younger I performed with the Oxford Operatic Youth Theatre and the National Youth Music Theatre. But I found the world of musical theatre intimidating, and I moved away from it when I began making work. Now I want to reclaim that territory, and see what happens if I collide the musical form with the more experimental performance aesthetic that I have developed with my company.

### 3. How does the company meet participants?

Together with our festival or venue partner, Rajni Shah Projects identifies a community with whom we would like to work. We visit the spaces this community inhabits: a market, a shopping centre, a library, a disused shop, a bus station. Once we have identified a location, we invite passers-by to take part in a simple letter-writing exercise, facilitating a letter exchange between strangers. Some of those strangers are keen to find out more, and will become performers in the

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show. Others might become audience. There is no age restriction, though the company has not worked with anyone under seven years of age.

We recruit musicians in partnership with our venue or festival partner, either through a call-out or by invitation. We are looking for musicians who are based in the area, and who are excited by the project - regardless of style or experience. Suzie Shrubb (Musical Director) then develops a rehearsal schedule to fit around the group's regular rehearsals or classes.

### 4. How is *Glorious* funded?

*Glorious* is funded by Arts Council England, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Jerwood Charitable Foundation, PRS for Music Foundation, Royal Victoria Hall Foundation and 75 individual donations via a crowdfunding initiative.

Rajni Shah Projects were one of the first UK independent art organisations to raise funds through 'crowdfunding' via online contributions. All contributors were invited to be part of the *Glorious People* (private) social network and participate in the project in any other way they are able to.

You can see the online fundraising page on <http://indiegogo.com/glorious>

### 5. What are the *Glorious Storybook* and *Glorious People* social network?

The *Glorious Storybook* is a document of the *Glorious* journey as the project tours the UK and internationally. It will gather anecdotes, thoughts, memories and scraps from participants, company members, presenters and audiences and pull them together in a beautiful, innovative publication with an unusual map format. The Storybook will be published in late 2012.

The *Glorious People* social network is a space for everybody involved in *Glorious* to keep in touch with the company and with each other. A space for playing, thinking and exchanging views. A virtual homestead for the *Glorious* community.