

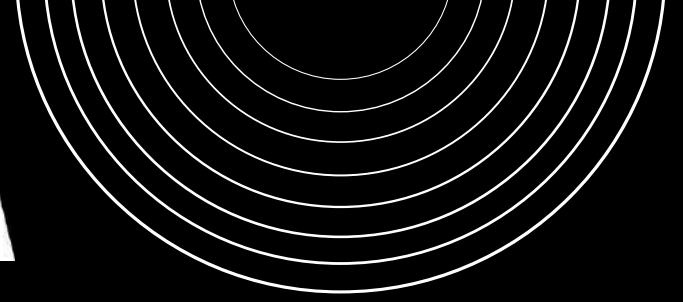
# MAHABHARATA

A row of women's faces, likely actresses, looking forward with serious expressions. They are wearing traditional Indian attire, including jewelry like earrings, necklaces, and headpieces. The background is a gradient of warm colors, possibly representing a sunset or a dramatic sky.

WRITTEN AND ADAPTED BY RAVI JAIN AND MIRIAM FERNANDES  
A WHY NOT THEATRE PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH BARBICAN, LONDON  
ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED AND PRESENTED BY THE SHAW FESTIVAL



# MAHABHARATA



The Mahabharata is a Sanskrit epic -- the story of a divided family whose conflict results in a catastrophic war that nearly ends the world. It is over 4,000 years old with more than 100,000 verses that shape many of the myths and philosophies of Indian culture. To this day, the stories are told in the kitchens and temples of more than 1 billion people of India, as well as the diaspora around the world.

Incorporating two large-scale theatre works (Mahabharata: Karma [Part 1] and Mahabharata: Dharma [Part 2]) bridged by a community meal (Khana), Why Not Theatre's Mahabharata is a visually-stunning spectacle that brings audiences on a journey through the past in order to write a thrilling new future.

The production will premiere March 9th, 2023 at the Shaw Festival in Niagara-On-The-Lake, Canada and will tour to the UK in Fall 2023.



# MAHABHARATA: karma (part 1)

## The Life We Inherit

King Janamejaya is holding a ritual sacrifice in which he will kill all the snakes in the world to avenge his father's death.

In hopes of ending this cycle of revenge, a storyteller is summoned to tell the tale of the Mahabharata; beginning with the rival Pandava and Kaurava clans, and the choices that lead to their infamous Game of Dice.

Through playful narration, with live music, the Ensemble tells the stories of humans struggling to build a just world in the face of competition, jealousy, and rage.



## **MAHABHARATA: dharma (part 2)**

### **The Life We Choose**

King Janamejaya is told of the war fought by his ancestors – its devastating destruction of the planet, the mass extinction that followed, and of the survivors left behind to rebuild.

Using captivating projections, dynamic soundscapes, and poetic stage design, Part 2 includes a 15-minute Sanskrit opera adaptation of the Bhagavad Gita. King Janamejaya is confronted with the battle of Kurukshetra, and the battle inside his own heart.

Are we destined to repeat the mistakes of our ancestors?





# khana

## (Community Meal)

Mahabharata is a story that one learns over a lifetime; it needs to be absorbed and digested.

To delve deeper into the philosophical riddles of the Pandava family's thirteen years of exile, the audience gathers to share a traditional Indian meal between plays.

Hosted by a charming storyteller, participants experience a tale from the Mahabharata as people have over millennia, around the dinner table.

# MINI DOCUMENTARIES:

*Mahabharata's* Music, Khana, and Movement Learn more about three essential components of Why Not Theatre's retelling of the *Mahabharata*.

Movement in *Mahabharata*



Music in *Mahabharata*



Khana and Kahani



Bhagavad Gita Opera (Workshop)



MAHABHARATA  
TRAILER

# MAHABHARATA ensemble

Why Not Theatre's retelling stars a cast composed entirely of performers from the South Asian diaspora and presents a complex hybrid of cultures, balancing East and West, traditional and contemporary.



**Ravi Jain**  
Canada



**Miriam Fernandes**  
Canada



**Anaka  
Maharaj-Sandhu**  
Canada



**Darren Kupan**  
United Kingdom



**Ellora Patnaik**  
Canada



**Goldy Notay**  
United Kingdom



**Harmage  
Singh Kalirai**  
United Kingdom



**Jay Emmanuel**  
Australia



**Meher Pavri**  
Canada



**Munish Sharma**  
Canada



**Navtej Sandhu**  
Canada



**Neil D'Souza**  
United Kingdom



**Sakuntala Ramanee**  
United Kingdom



**Shawn Ahmed**  
Canada



**Sukaina Venugopal**  
Malaysia

\*creative team for future touring engagements is subject to change





## touring requirements

- **Touring team:** Approximately 40 creative team members, including 19 performers and 6 musicians.
- **House size:** Well suited to mid-sized (600+ seats) or large-sized theaters (800+ seats).
- **Extras:** Open to pre-show/post-show conversations with the artists, workshops, panel discussions.
- **Booking:** Fall 2024 onwards.

# technical requirements

## Full tech rider available upon request

- Requires a proscenium stage with wing space and an upstage crossover.
- Ideal proscenium opening would be 40' wide and at least 53' deep from apron line (45' from plaster line) to the rear projection hanging position.
- Scenery (clearing fire curtain) will extend to the apron.
- Requires a black marley dancefloor fitted to the stage.
- Mahabharata occupies a total of fifteen (15) scenic, hard masking, and video linesets in addition to electrics, and soft goods for company scenery - all of which must have the option to fly during the run.
- The fly gallery must be able to accommodate a minimum 26' trim height for scenic elements that fly on deck and disappear completely beyond the proscenium; about four (4) scenic linesets will need to extend below working height.





# about **whynot** theatre

We shake up the status quo to make the world we want to see. A world where everyone can achieve their full potential. We question everything. Rethink how stories are told. And who gets to tell them. We believe in art. It's how we make change.

## **make**

We make world class theatre at the intersection of innovation and equity.

## **share**

We share our resources to support a new generation of artistic leaders.

## **provoke**

We provoke systems change, removing barriers of access to participation in the arts.

We push boundaries, build community, and find new ways. We represent Toronto, at home and on the world stage. Founded in 2007, we are growing rapidly, led by Ravi Jain, Karen Tisch, and Miriam Fernandes.

david lieberman { ARTIST'S REPRESENTATIVES

**For more information about  
Mahabharata, and to request  
a full touring rider, please  
contact Allen Moon at  
[Allen@dlartists.com](mailto:Allen@dlartists.com)**



# whynot

## let's change the story, for good.


To learn more about Why Not Theatre, visit [whynot.theatre](http://whynot.theatre)

### production partners

**SHAW  
FESTIVAL**

**NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE  
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS**  
Canada is our stage. Le Canada en scène.

**OCAF  
FMCO** ONTARIO CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS FUND  
LE FONDS POUR LES MANIFESTATIONS  
CULTURELLES DE L'ONTARIO

**Ontario** 

 Canada Council  
for the Arts Conseil des arts  
du Canada

**New  
Chapter**  
2017 and Beyond

 the  
wuchien michael than  
foundation

 Lindy Green  
Family Foundation

**barbican**

**Kingfisher  
Foundation**

**THE  
SLAUGHT**  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

**Deb Barrett & Jim Leech**

#### Photography Credits

Page 1: Mahabharata images by Peter Andrew Luszyk. Design by Key Gordon. Image courtesy of the Shaw Festival. Page 2: Darren Kuppan, Goldy Notay, Harmage Singh Kalirai, Sukania Venugopal in Mahabharata: Karma (Part 1), Photo by David Cooper. Page 3: Ensemble of Mahabharata in Mahabharata: Karma (Part 1), Photo by David Cooper. Page 4: Shawn Ahmed and Sukania Venugopal in Mahabharata: Karma (Part 1), Photo by David Cooper. Page 5: Neil D'Souza, Meher Pavri, and Anaka Maharaj-Sandhu in Mahabharata: Dharma (Part 2), Photo by David Cooper. Page 6: Khana community meal rehearsal, photo by Dahlia Katz. Page 7: Mahabharata cast headshots provided. Page 8: World Premiere Team of Mahabharata, photo by Dahlia Katz. Page 9: Harmage Singh Kalirai as Dhritarashtra, photo by David Cooper. Page 10: Bahareh Yaraghi, by Michael Tan (Salt-Water Moon, 2017). Page 11: Ensemble of Mahabharata in Mahabharata: Karma (Part 1), Photo by David Cooper.