



OUTCASTE

a stage play

by

Avin Shah

Octagon Theatre, Bolton

Reveal Festival

April 2019

& on Tour

"A visually strong, culturally relevant story."

**Mark Norfolk - Best Film & Director,
Kosovo Festival**

THE PLAY

Outcaste by Avin Shah (BBC Radio 4's *Tommies*) is a play for the theatre, initially conceived with support from Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Further developed by the **Finborough Theatre**, it was performed as a public reading at **Vibrant 2017 - A Festival of Finborough Playwrights.**



1914: An Army village in British India, boasting centuries of warrior tradition. Yasmin, an illiterate Untouchable, tries to escape the brutal repression of the Hindu caste system, by converting to Islam. But her blasphemous act causes outrage within a hostile community.

Forming a taboo alliance with an ostracized Brahmin woman, the two women manage to earn a living, becoming unlikely recruiters for the War in Europe. Yet even their struggle for survival breaks society's rigid conventions and reignites old feuds. The village elders can no longer tolerate Yasmin's transgressions and decide to crush her...

.....

At the outbreak of the First World War, thousands of men left their villages in Northern India to fight for glory. *Outcaste* is about the forgotten lives of the women they left behind to fend for themselves.

Exploring freedom of religion and its repression, illiteracy and superstition, class and hierarchies, censorship and prejudice, *Outcaste* tells the story of a young woman's attempt to find her place in a society that rejects her.

*"An outstanding work of drama.
Avin has a real talent for drawing the metaphysical threads
out of ordinary lives.
So a story about ordinary people trying to get by in life
becomes a story about Life itself."*

**Ian Briggs @ Vibrant 2017
(Screenwriter, Doctor Who)**

EVOLUTION

To commemorate the WWI Centenary **in 2014**, Avin wrote and produced the Radio Drama Podcast, *Subterranean Sepoys* for Tara Arts, supported by the **Heritage Lottery Fund**. Click the poster (below left) for the podcast.



“...This was fantastic, congratulations to everyone involved. Wonderful stuff...”

Marina Calderone
(Director, BBC Radio 4)

“...Away from entrenchment of nationalism or politics but connected on a simple human level which can relate to us today.”

Rez Kabir
(Actor & Drama Tutor)

Subterranean Sepoys was also performed as a public reading at the National Theatre’s Watch This Space Festival on London’s South Bank.

“...I was fascinated by the insights it gave into the lives of the Indian soldiers and the fundamental concept of loyalty...”

David Hunter
(Producer, BBC Radio Drama)



In 2015, Arts Council England supported R & D Workshops to develop a stage play based on a similar theme.

1914 Recruitment Poster:
**“WHO WILL TAKE THIS MONEY,
UNIFORM & RIFLE?”**

To infuse his story with historical and cultural authenticity, Avin brought together the National Army Museum and UK Punjab Heritage Association with theatre practitioners, WWI historians, Indian folk musicians and a composer.

[VIDEO HERE of how Outcaste emerged](#)



THE TEAM

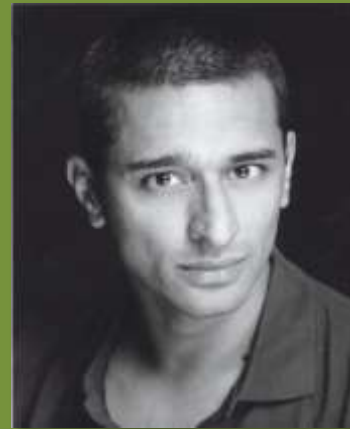


Avin Shah (Playwright) currently writes for BBC Radio 4's drama series *Tommies*, set during WWI.

In 2014, he wrote and produced his first radio play, *Subterranean Sepoys*, for Tara Arts, directed its two public readings for the National Theatre and was long-listed for BBC Writers' Room Prize.

In 2013 he was a finalist in Film London's Borough Film Fund for his comedy short film script: *Strictly Halal*.

He has worked as an actor for over 20 years including in theatre at the RSC, National Theatre, Manchester Royal Exchange, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Edinburgh Lyceum, and in London's West End. He's appeared frequently on TV and radio and in several feature-films – recently *Everest (Working Title)* – and is a popular avatar in the cult video game *Assassins Creed*.



Fay Lomas (Director) is currently directing *The Crucible* (Royal & Derngate) and *The Winter's Tale* (St Peter's Church, Northampton).

She was Resident Assistant Director at the Royal and Derngate in 2017, where she has also directed *MotherTongue Tales* and was the Young Cast Director on *Grapes of Wrath*.

She has directed at Southwark Playhouse, Theatre 503, the Vault Festival, Camden Fringe, the Space, the Bread and Roses, Oxford Playhouse, the Finborough Theatre and the French Institute, and as an assistant director at the Print Room, Sheffield Crucible and Bath Theatre Royal.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT



During the tour, we will deliver a programme of outreach workshops to stimulate interest and audience development. The specific aims are to:

1. Give participants an insight into the dynamics of developing and scripting dramatic work using archive research as our primary source.

2. Challenge people to interpret the world of the colonial army village, its significance in British-Indian shared heritage, and how soldiers from two mutually alien cultures adapted to each other in such close proximity between India and the Western Front.



The workshops have been developed from outreach run by Avin during the evolution of his 2014 project, *Subterranean Sepoys*, where participants interpreted material and collections from the National Archives, Imperial War Museum and British Library. The project was cited as a case study of best practice and summarised on the Heritage Lottery Fund's [website](#).

Or you can visit the dedicated website [HERE](#).

“Suddenly I could see how I could write more authentically, since the workshop exposed me to feelings and emotions I might never have otherwise experienced and importantly located them in my body rather than confining them to my head.”

Premila Trivedi
(Workshop Participant, Tara Arts)



PRACTICAL INFO

TOURING DATES:	13 May – 15 June 2019
VENUES:	Studio Space
STAGING SPACE:	3m (h) x 5m (w) x 5 (d)
RUNNING TIME:	2 hours 10 mins (including 20 min. interval)
NIGHTS:	1 - 4
DEAL:	Guarantee, or guarantee against split
GET IN / GET OUT:	Same day as first / last performances. 2 hours
COMPANY:	7 (6 actors, 1 stage manager)
MARKETING:	Brochure copy, images, digital press pack, flyers + posters
SOUND:	Recorded music and sound FX
LIGHTING:	Flexible lighting plan – scaled up or down to suit venue
OPTIONALS:	Post-show Q&As. Drama-based outreach workshops.
AGE GUIDANCE:	14+

CONTACT:

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"It is refreshing to see a new play that commits to grappling with life-and-death socio-economic issues and unflinchingly examines historic brutalities that still resonate today.

Stacia St. Owens
@ **Vibrant 2017**
(Author)



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