

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015 – Shakuntala, A Rock Opera



Shakuntala, A Rock Opera, an exciting and original new take on the classic Indian drama performed by students from the GEMS Modern Academy school in Dubai will make its Edinburgh Festival Fringe debut from 16<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August at the Church Hill Theatre. Written, scored and directed by Group Cultural Coordinator for GEMS Dubai, Kevin Oliver, a seasoned theatre producer in his own right, the Fringe performances mark the first time a school from the UAE has performed at the internationally renowned Festival.

Based on a tale from the pages of the Indian mythology Mahabharata, Shakuntala has been reimagined as a rock opera by Kevin Oliver, with 19 original songs and a cast of 30 singers and dancers featured in the hour long musical production. The entire story is woven together by a narrator set against a backdrop of song and dance. Primed with percussion against tracks ranging from guitar solos to pop and rap Shakuntala is complemented with a monochromatic set design and flowing black and white stylised costumes.

First dramatised by the fifth century Indian poet Kalidisa, it is the story of Shakuntala, a young woman who lives in a hermitage in a forest who falls in love with King Dushyanta, during his visit there. He marries her before returning to his Kingdom, but the maiden is cursed by a sage who erases the King's memory of her and forces her to leave the forest

Discussing the production Oliver commented "Shakantula epitomizes a harmonious kaleidoscope of Eastern Classic and

Western Rock. This simple and fresh tale with its riveting and unforgettable musical score will charm any theatre enthusiast.”

The GEMS Modern Academy was invited to perform at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as part of the American Schools Theatre Festival which traditionally features performances from schools based in North America and Canada. On this occasion, the organisers, who had seen footage of the production in Dubai, were so impressed with the high production values and performances that they invited the GEMS Modern Academy to apply to participate.

Tickets are on sale now and priced at £5.00 and can be purchased from

<https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/shakuntala-a-rock-opera-in-english>