

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015 – Umrao the noble courtesan



A vast, open hall, decorated in gilded carvings and seeped in the opulence of the Mughal period. Centre stage she stands alone. Courtesan, Tawa'if – the embodiment a world of refinement, a master of the arts, an object of desire – prepares to tell her tragic story, now legend..

The classic 18th Century legend of Umrao Jaan, the most desired courtesan of Mughal India, arrives at the Edinburgh Fringe this year. Broadening The Fringe's cultural base in the form of a beautifully performed lesson in Indian history, music, culture and dance, Umrao – The Noble Courtesan offers something different to discerning Fringe audiences.

Kidnapped and sold to a brothel as a child, Umrao is trained in the arts and rises to become the most famous courtesans of her time. Yet as she grows older, Umrao finds herself trapped in a gilded cage. Dreaming of escape, she falls for a wealthy nobleman whose love she believes will set her free... A tale of loss, rejection and hope, Umrao the Noble Courtesan fearlessly shows the dark realities of human trafficking and female exploitation, whilst exploring the modern feminist ideas of female sexual power and self-liberation.

Originally an Urdu novel, further immortalized in film in the 1981 classic Umrao Jaan, this new production offers a stripped down, gritty, retelling of the tragedy. Well known across South Asia, Umrao Jaan's story has been reworked by the Asian Music Circuit for Western audiences. Directed by Vasilios Arabos and written by Simon Mundy in collaboration with Arabos, the new production recreates the atmosphere of the

grand, yet intimate spaces filled with music, dance and poetry in which the courtesans of the Mughal period performed.

A rich tale, brought to life through commanding performances, lavish costumes, an atmospheric original score composed and directed by Viram Jasani, and mesmerising kathak dance sequences, Umrao – The Noble Courtesan evokes the elegant ambiance of the Mughal era, offering audiences a unique chance to rediscover anew the lost traditions of a bygone era.

Web: <http://www.amc.org.uk>

LISTING INFORMATION

Venue: Assembly George Square, Studio One, EH8 9JZ

Time: 12:10 Running Time: 80mins

Dates: 06 – 31 August. Previews 4 & 5 August. No shows 5th, 17th, & 18th August.

[Tickets](#): Weekdays £10, Weekends £12

Bookings: assemblyfestival.com, 0131 623 3030 or Assembly box offices at Assembly Hall and Assembly Roxy, Assembly George Square and Assembly Checkpoint

Submitted by [Bea Mahmood](#)

