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Thursday 1st Aug 02

Shakti in "The Pillow Book" at Arts Theatre



Inimitable, outrageous, scandalous Japanese dancer **Shakti** makes her West End debut for 9 performances of her production, [The Pillow Book](#) at the Arts Theatre from 29th Aug to 7th Sep 02.

A celebration of women's sexuality, **Shakti** ends up completely naked, her body a canvas for beautiful day-glo painted images, whipping herself into an almost-demonic, explosive finale of passion and fire.

It is based on the works of 11th century Japanese poet Sei Shonagon, whose writings of love and liberation also inspired Peter Greenaway's film *The Pillow Book*, starring Euan McGregor. Written at a time when women were not supposed to express their feelings, sexual or otherwise, this is a passionate piece, made even more so by Shakti's highly-charged performance.

The *Pillow Book* spans from the floating world of Kyoto courtesans through rhythms of fiery passion to a performance art finale celebration of female beauty. Against a backdrop of luxurious silk, Shakti's stately entrance is accompanied by a delicate duo of white-clad female attendants. Revealing her flowing red dance robe, they ignite her pulsating, whirling rhythms, rising to a crescendo of sensual expression and emotional force, with anguished movements proclaiming the pain as well as the joy of love. From its teasing beginning to the energetic finale, *The Pillow Book* is an incredibly erotic experience. Halfway through the show, Shakti bears all, allowing herself to be daubed all over in brightly coloured paint, a procedure which is performed with precision by Mieko Nishimura. When the body painting is finished, Shakti continues with her dance, building up to an almost demonic climax.

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Shakti was born in 1957 in Kyoto, Japan to an Indian father and a Japanese mother. Her mother founded the VasantaMala Dance Company and brought Indian dance to Japan while her father founded and directed the Gandhi Institute in Kyoto. Shakti grew up with not only the rich cultural heritage of Japan but of India as well. She studied yoga with her father and dance with her mother and with the foremost gurus of India. While earning an M.A. in Indian Philosophy at Columbia University in New York City, Shakti studied modern dance with Martha Graham, Alvin Ailey and jazz dance with Luigi. Upon returning to Japan, Shakti developed a unique hybrid form of dance blending an array of Eastern dance traditions and yoga with Western jazz and contemporary rock resulting in a exotic, erotic, and shocking effect. She has been performing worldwide to great critical acclaim.

Shakti is the co-ordinator of the Japan Experience which assists and manages Japanese artists abroad. She also runs The Garage which is now one of the most prominent venues in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe hosting over 40 different companies from all over the world. The Garage International is now expanding into Avignon (France) and Adelaide (Australia).

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