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Interview with Azma Dar

Noor WED 9 MAY & SAT 19 MAY 7.30PM

Princess, musician and writer of children's stories, Noor was recruited by the British Special Operations Executive during World War 2 and sent to Occupied France on a deadly mission as an undercover wireless operator. After the war, the senior officer in charge of recruiting female agents meets the German Major responsible for hunting them, and they piece together Noor's story- one of determination, courage and the power of the imagination.

Q. Why did you set the play in occupied France?

The play is based on a true story so that determined where it was set. Noor is a fascinating true story about a young naïve young girl who was a princess, musician and a writer, who became an undercover agent in occupied France. So I suppose in terms of the setting, I wanted to retain some key aspects of the original stories. I was really drawn to the character as she is an Asian, Muslim woman. I love history and enjoyed researching WW2 and immersing myself in that world in order to have

a strong foundation upon which to develop the story of the play.

Q. Which character did you enjoy developing the most?

Unsurprisingly I suppose I like writing about women and wanted to bring Noor's story into a more contemporary context, so Noor to a large extent would be the character that I enjoyed developing the most. I tried to use the stories that Noor had written herself as a way of getting into her mind and showing her interior world. Another main character, Vera, is also an important, powerful female figure in the play

and it was really interesting learning and writing about her too.

Q. What do you want to communicate to the audience through this play?

I wanted to tell a story of the unique, fascinating journey of a young woman whose life is transformed when she becomes an undercover agent. I wanted to show another role model for young girls today. It brings a different narrative to the table from the same stereotypical images that you see, particularly of Muslim women in western media – either in a conflict or crises setting or oppression and subjection etc.,

Q. How much of your personal experiences have influenced the story of Noor?

I'd say I can relate to some aspects of Noor's character, being a Muslim, Asian woman and, in some ways, being a quiet person with a really vivid inner world- if that doesn't sound too strange...

Directed by *Poonam Brah*