**Nancy Poole PR press release
07957 342 850 ∙ nancy@nancypoolepr.com**

**Kali Theatre presents
WAR PLAYS
7 Plays | 70 Years**

***Global stories of courage and hope amid the chaos and displacement of war***

written by **Rukhsana Ahmad, Nushin Arbabzadah, Azma Dar, Bettina Gracias, Nimmi Harasgama, Sayan Kent** and **Anu Kumar**

directors include **Helena Bell, Poonam Brah, Pooja Ghai, Aileen Gonsalves** and **Tessa Walker**

**from 8 to 19 May 2018 at Tristan Bates Theatre** (Press access to any performance by arrangement)

**To mark the 70th year since the ground-breaking Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Kali Theatre presents a festival of compelling new plays inspired by women’s experiences of global conflict spanning Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Tibet, Bangladesh and occupied France.**

The two week festival features seven staged readings of full-length new plays from some of the most original voices in new theatre writing, accompanied by Speak Out Events, panel discussions with leading female journalists and human rights activists.

Led by the company’s new Artistic Director **Helena Bell**, *War Plays* is Kali’s first specially commissioned season of plays. The first in a series of biennial Kali Theatre festivals, it brings together a wealth of female theatre practitioners from playwrights to directors, behind-the-scenes teams, and designer Rajha Shakiry (*Nine Night* at National Theatre, *Misty* at Bush).

**Helena Bell, Artistic Director, Kali Theatre:**‘*I was deeply moved when I read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 after taking three years to draft. I was struck by its incredibly progressive, utopian vision with the uplifting message of equality for all. Seventy years on, Kali marks the moment by exploring women’s stories within the war that triggered it and subsequent human rights transgressions in conflicts around the world. It is important that the festival is framed within the hopeful messages of the Declaration: that we all have the right to freedom of expression and to participate in cultural life. I am excited that this festival offers an opportunity for audiences to experience plays by our many superb playwrights.’*

**PLAYS

Tue 8 May 19.30 & Sat 12 May 19.30**

**FROM KABUL TO KUNDUZ** by Rukhsana Ahmad, directed by Helena Bell

*Determined to reconnect with his past and obsessed with memories of his long-lost brother, young Afghan refugee Saeed Khattak ventures from London to Kabul. He is soon caught up in the paranoia, suspicion and violence of contemporary Afghanistan. Forced to travel from Kabul to Kunduz, he must face up to the realities of a changed world.*

**Sat 12 May 14.30 (+ Speak Out Event: Afghanistan. Details below)**

**AFGHAN GIRLS DON’T CRY** by Nushin Arbabzadah, directed by Helena Bell

*Layla, a young Afghan woman living in London, is told by her mother that a celebrated Afghan diplomat she saw interviewed on the BBC is a rapist and the murderer of Layla’s father. Pushed by her mother to seek revenge, Layla returns to Kabul only to discover a much darker and more dangerous truth about her own family.*

**Thur 10 May 19.30 & Thur 17 May 19.30**

**NOOR** by Azma Dar, directed by Poonam Brah

*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.*

**Mon 14 May 19.30 & Fri 18 May 19.30**

**LHASA** by Bettina Gracias, director tbc
*Ama, a feisty Tibetan woman, is fighting to keep her guest house, homeland and traditions. Her son Karma wants her to leave Tibet with him and his Chinese girlfriend, to seek refuge in India near the Dalai Lama where they could live without prejudice. But Ama stubbornly continues to resist the colonisers, and suspects her one guest - a troubled monk - of being a Chinese spy.*

**Wed 16 May 19.30 & Sat 19 May 14.30 (+ Speak Out Event: Sri Lanka. Details below)**

**MY HOMEMADE KITE** by Nimmi Harasgama, directed by Pooja Ghai

After being tortured during the Sri Lankan conflict, Krishnaveni has begun a new life in the UK. Here she must live with the stigma of being an asylum seeker and the lingering effects of her experiences. This topical new play is based on real life interviews and stories from victims of torture.

**Fri 11 May 19.30 & Tue 15 May 19.30**

**HECUBA BIRANGONA** by Sayan Kent, directed Tessa Walker

The 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War triggered genocide, a huge refugee crisis and the mass rape of women and girls. *Hecuba Birangona* draws on the myths of Hecuba and The Trojan women to tell the story of five women being held in a prison camp. They have survived the war but as the Indian Army and Freedom fighters approach they must get through one last day...

**Wed 9 May 19.30 & Sat 19 May 19.30**

**FREEDOM** by Anu Kumar, directed by Aileen Gonsalves

January 2017. Maya has come to work as a doctor in a UN Displaced People’s Camp near ISIS controlled Mosul in Iraq. Initially she feels free to have left her life in England, but as she meets local women and joins their journeys she discovers that freedom can mean many things.

**SPEAK OUT EVENTS**

**12 May, 16:30
AFGHANISTAN:** Award winning journalist **Nadene Ghouri** talks about her experiences covering Afghanistan alongside award winning photojournalist **Kate Holt**, who has covered war zones for numerous UK newspapers. They will be joined by **Elaha Walizadeh**, co-founder of Afghan Women in the Diaspora and **Dr Ayesha Ahmad**, a therapist working with victims of trauma and gender based violence during conflict.

**19 May, 16:30
SRI LANKA:** Director **Pooja Ghai** and writer **Nimmi Harasgama** discuss her play My *Homemade Kite* and the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka.

**PRESS CONTACT: Nancy Poole on 07957 342 850 /** **nancy@nancypoolepr.com**

**(Notes to Editors and Listings Details overleaf)**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

 **LISTINGS DETAILS:**

**Venue:** Tristan Bates Theatre, 1A Tower Street, London WC2H 9NP

**Dates:** 8-19 May **Tickets: readings** £12 (£5 concessions) / Speak Out Events £5 **Box office:** 020 3841 6611 / tristanbateshtheatre.co.uk

**SOCIAL MEDIA:**Twitter: @KaliTheatreUK#WarPlays

Facebook: KaliTheatreUK
Instagram: @kalitheatreuk

**KALI THEATRE** *Intrepid plays by fearless women since 1991.*

Kali Theatre produces thought-provoking, contemporary new writing by South Asian women which reflects and comments on our lives today. Kali's award winning productions have won rave reviews, sold out performances, and inspired audiences throughout the UK and beyond.

**HELENA BELL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, KALI THEATRE**

Helena joined Kali Theatre as Artistic Director in December 2017. Her extensive career (spanning over 25 years) has focused entirely on developing, directing and touring new theatre writing. She was Artistic Director of Pursued by a Bear Productions from 2006 until 2016 and Co-Artistic Director of Brighton’s Alarmist Theatre from 1988 to 1998. Her freelance directing and dramaturgical work includes early plays for Kali such as *River on Fire* by Rukhsana Ahmad (shortlisted for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award; produced at Lyric, Hammersmith & UK tour) and *Love Comes In At The Window* (double bill by Ahmad and Anu Kumar - Oval House, London & National Tour). More recently she directed Satinder Chohan’s acclaimed Olympic Year play - *Kabaddi, Kabaddi, Kabaddi* as a co-production between PBAB and Kali (Arcola Theatre & National Tour) and in 2015 Veronica Dewan’s *She Is Not Herself* for Kali at Tristan Bates, London. Helena’s inaugural production as Kali’s Artistic Director was *Ready or Not* by Naylah Ahmed (Arcola & National Tour).