

## Fate does a fancy pirouette and reunites two old mates

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It's a small world ... Abul Hashem Mridha, left, with Mosharaf Hossain and Anwara Khan, and Akram Khan, right. Photo: Marco Del Grande

AKRAM KHAN has worked with Kylie Minogue, Juliette Binoche and the French prima ballerina Sylvie Guillem, but none of these meetings amazed him as much as his chance encounter with a Sydney taxi driver.

After a performance with Binoche at the Opera House last year, the dancer and choreographer got into a taxi and called his father at home in London. They spoke Bengali,

his father's native tongue.

After the conversation, the driver, Abul Hashem Mridha, asked if he was from Bangladesh.

"Then he asked if my father was Mosharaf Hossain Khan from the village of Algichar," said Khan.

"I was kind of spooked, and then he said, 'I know your father. I've been looking for him for 30 years.'"

Mr Mridha and Khan's father grew up together in Algichar, a remote village with a population of 2000. They lost touch after the Khans migrated to Britain but Mr Mridha knew through the Bangladeshi newspapers that his friend's son was a famous dancer.

"When he got in my taxi, he said he was in the Opera House making the dancing program," he said. "Then I realised: this is the boy. He is Akram. He is our Akram."

Back in Sydney, performing his solo show, Gnosis, at the Opera House, Khan has brought his parents to be reunited with their old friend. They will see the show together tonight.

Since arriving in Sydney, the Khans have discovered a network of friends and family in and around Lakemba. There are several families from Algichar living in Sydney. "We are invited everywhere," said Mosharaf Hossain Khan. "Some of them I have never met but I know their parents and grandparents. Everyone is so happy to hear of us again."

Mr Mridha, determined to stay in touch, is planning a trip to London next year.

"This is a great thing in my life," he said. "My grandfather and his grandfather were very close friends. We feel a blood relationship. The world is very big, but also very small."

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