

Times Litfest Festival Director and Author Namita Devidayal to launch her latest book on Ustad Vilayat Khan at the Royal Opera House, Mumbai

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Namita Devidayal, acclaimed Author of *The Music Room* to launch her latest book on Ustad Vilayat Khan at the Royal Opera House, Mumbai

For Immediate Release

“...when you pick up your sitar, all the ragas and raginis of the universe stand before you and say, “which one of us are you going to honour today?”

Naushad Ali to Ustad Vilayat

Khan

Everyone knows Sitar Maestro Vilayat Khan but no one *knows* Vilayat Khan. Meditative and playful, generous and ruthless, he was many things to many people. He broke hearts and he broke rules. He tinkered as furiously with his car as he did with his instrument, which he transformed technically to create the new sitar standard. And always there was the music, at the centre of his being, protected and unharmed—music that contained the sound of ‘fairies dancing, elephants walking’. Vilayat Khan saw music. He was the man who made the sitar sing.

Westland Publications, The Royal Opera House, Mumbai and Avid Learning present an exclusive evening of music and conversation around the Mumbai launch of ***The Sixth String of Vilayat Khan*** by *Author and Journalist Namita Devidayal*.

Please read below for more about the book and the event:

In this new book, Namita, the author of the acclaimed bestseller, *The Music Room*, recreates the extraordinary life of an artiste who fundamentally and forever changed Indian instrumental music. She follows his footsteps from Calcutta, through Delhi, Bombay, Shimla and Dehradun, to Princeton, USA, where he spent his last years. Filled with previously untold stories about the man and the musician, this is an intimate portrait of an uncommon genius. The book has been hailed as an absolute feat of research—and storytelling.

The evening will feature an exclusive conversation between the author and *Film Editor and Screen Writer Apurva Asrani* followed by readings from the book punctuated with interludes on the sitar performed by Vilayat’s son, **Hidayat Husain Khan**.

Read on for an exclusive statement by the author on her personal journey of discovering the musician and the man:

I discovered very quickly that writing about Vilayat Khan is a bit like chasing a hologram. Everyone has a different memory of him, a different take on the story. He himself was known to be a liberal embellisher of tales. Someone close to him once said: “Woh toh galti se sach bolte hain....He speaks the truth by mistake”.

My journey into his life is an attempt to understand that abiding paradox: how anarchy can coexist with harmony. How pain can be an underlying constant in life but can also be converted into beauty. What I discovered along the way is that the life of a genius is not easy, nor harmonious.

I wondered why I loved Vilayat Khan's music so much and why I could listen to it for hours, despite my short attention span. What resonated with me was the way his music brought together tradition and rebellion. We exist in an intricate web of past moments, present expression and future possibilities and his art seemed to contain that in a seamless way, reminding us of that continuum.

This is the love story of Vilayat Khan and his music.

Earlier in the year, Avid had curated 'The Art of the Sitar', hosted at the NGMA. A lively and spontaneous lecture demonstration by Hidayat Husain Khan, in conversation with Namita on the virtuosity of the sitar, its legacy and its importance as an instrument. This upcoming event is a continuation of our engagement with Vilayat Khan's rare musical legacy.

Literature is an integral part of the culture of any city and Bombay is no different. The Opera House stage has contributed to supporting Literature in all its forms with robust and intelligent programming. We regularly collaborate with the biggest Lit Fests, publishing houses, authors and intellectuals, and important personalities to give events to the city which would long be remembered. Our stage has seen the successful launch of book titles by some of the most prominent and eminent authors including Bachi Karkaria, Rajdeep Sardesai, Shobhaa De, Chandrabhas Choudhury, Ajoy Bose and Meghna Gulzar. The venue has become synonymous with literature and books as a result and we're happy to host yet another important voice on our stage with this upcoming event.


Join us for a lyrical evening that brings to life Vilayat Khan, the man behind the legend, and recontextualises him within the larger milieu of Indian classical music.


Where: Royal Opera House, Mama Parmanand Marg, Mumbai - 400 004


When: Wednesday, 28th November 2018 | 6:00 PM – 6:30 PM – Registrations
6:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Book Launch and Discussion

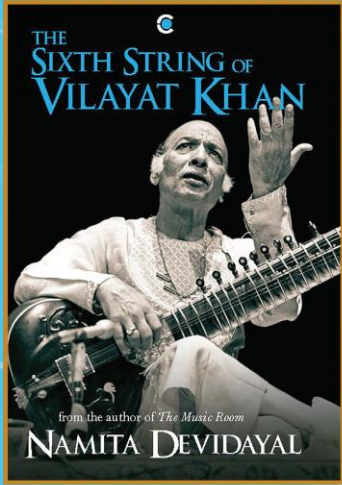
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An exclusive evening of music and conversation celebrating **Namita Devidayal's** new book with the author, **Hidayat Husain Khan** and **Apurva Asrani**


Westland Publications, Royal Opera House, Mumbai and Avid Learning present the Mumbai launch of **The Sixth String of Vilayat Khan**. The book's *Author Namita Devidayal* recreates the extraordinary life of an artiste who changed Indian instrumental music forever. She retraces his footsteps from Calcutta to Princeton, USA. Filled with previously untold stories about the man and the musician, this book has been hailed as an absolute feat of research and storytelling. Conversation between the author and *Film Editor and Screen Writer Apurva Asrani* will be punctuated by readings from the book and interludes on the sitar performed by Vilayat's son, **Hidayat Husain Khan**.

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RSVP: www.avidlearning.in; register@avidlearning.in / +919769937710 (Prior registration required)

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About the Author

Namita Devidayal is the author of *The Music Room* and *Aftertaste*. She is a journalist with The Times of India. She lives in Mumbai.

About the other Speakers

Hidayat Husain Khan is the son of the legendary sitar maestro Ustad Vilayat Khan, Hidayat has been globally acclaimed and, as The London Times aptly says, "the tradition carries on impeccably". Rolling Stones praises him and describes how his music is "Jazzing up the sitar." Hidayat Khan has managed to successfully travel between traditional classical music and innovative contemporary sounds.

Apurva Asrani is a National Award, Filmfare Award & Screen Award winning filmmaker based in Mumbai. He is best known for editing the seminal gangster film *Satya* (1998), for editing & co writing the biopic of Shahid Azmi *Shahid* (2013), and for editing & writing the acclaimed human rights drama *Aligarh* (2016). His most recent work is *Simran* (2017), about a real life bank robber in the US, which he wrote and edited. Apurva graduated as an Aspen Leadership Program fellow in 2018 and he is also an influential voice in the fight for equal rights for the LGBTQ community in India.

About Partners:

Founded in 1962, **Westland** is one of the largest English-language trade publishers in India. Westland's bestselling authors include Chetan Bhagat, Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Ashok Banker, Rujuta Diwekar, Rashmi Bansal, Savi Sharma, Anita and Harsha Bhogle, Namita Devidayal and Preeti Shenoy, among others. It has recently launched a new imprint 'Context', which publishes literary fiction and non-fiction by some of the finest Indian writers, graphic novelists and chroniclers of our times. Westland publishes print books, e-books as well as short reads in genres ranging from popular and literary fiction to business, politics, biography, spirituality, health and cookery. Westland was acquired by Amazon in 2017. Westland brings Amazon Publishing's bestselling international books to the Indian market available in over 1000 outlets.

The Royal Opera House, Mumbai is widely touted as Mumbai's Cultural Crown Jewel and India's only surviving Opera House. The original idea for the space was conceived of in 1908, inaugurated in 1911 by King George V, and eventually completed in 1916. The design incorporated a blend of European and Indian detailing. The space became a cinema in later years before falling into disrepair and shutting by the 1990s. Fittingly, the space has been owned by the Royal Family of Gondal since 1952 and was eventually restored by conservation architect, Abha Narain Lambah under the leadership of His Highness, Maharaja Shri Jyotendrasinhji of Gondal. The Royal Opera House Mumbai, now one of the last remaining Baroque structures in the city, reopened after 25 years in October 2016. The building was included on the 2012 World Monuments Watch to raise awareness about its history and significance, and support preservation efforts. The building has since been recognized with an Award of Merit in the 2017 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The restored facilities feature a 575-seater 3-level auditorium with an orchestra pit and state of the art technological upgradations, including acoustics, stagecraft, lighting and air-conditioning, alongside retaining the old world charm of the proscenium stage, the royal boxes and the magnificent regal chandeliers. Some more enhancements to the venue include a motorized screen, co-axial ceiling speaker system, Four-zone volume control and all round wifi access. Today, it stands as a key performance and creative hub in the city's cultural landscape, while being a premier heritage landmark. *Facebook:* MumbaiOpera *Twitter:* @MumbaiOpera *Instagram:* @mumbaiopera

Avid Learning, a public programming platform and cultural arm of the Essar Group, has conducted over 950 programs and connected with more than 100,000 individuals since its inception in 2009. Driven by the belief that Learning Never Stops, AVID's multiple formats like Workshops, Panel Discussions, Gallery Walkthroughs, and Festival Platforms create a dynamic and interactive atmosphere that stimulates intellectual and creative growth across the fields of Culture & Heritage, Literature, Art and Innovation.

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