

Poetry Meets Passion: Join Us for An Entrancing Evening of Sufi Kalaam at Royal OPERA House, Mumbai

“Oh my Mother, whom shall I tell my torments of separation?

Bread of despair, with a curry of thorns

Kindles a fire of cries in me

I have wandered forests and deserts

But not found that ruby stone [the Beloved]”

- Translated verse from the poetry of 16th-century mystic and fakeer, Madho Lal Hussain

Poet, weaver, mystic, and saint, Shah Hussain created a stir in sixteenth-century Punjab through his unconventional lifestyle and the subversive power of his poetry. Popularly known as Madho Lal Hussain, after he adopted the name of his young lover and disciple, he remains a beguiling, enigmatic figure. His poetry unveils the timeless richness of the Punjabi language. His verses serve as a testament to the enduring continuity of this language, tracing its roots back to the revered mystic Baba Farid in the 12th/13th century, with only subtle variations in idioms and words over time.

His poetic genius shines through his innovative use of the 'kafi' genre, derived from the Arabic word 'kafa,' meaning 'group.' This short poetic structure, with one or two lines serving as a refrain, was designed to be sung, allowing the verses to be set to classical Hindustani ragas.

Royal Opera House, Mumbai in collaboration with **ALSO | ideas | content | design** and **Avid Learning** presents **Mela Chiraga’an - An Evening of Sufi Poetry by Madho Lal Hussain**. The unique ensemble under the **HarooF Baithak** series led by *Vocalist, Composer, and Narrator Radhika Sood*, accompanied by **Neil Mukherjee** on *Guitar* and **Vinayak Netke** on *Tabla* will transport the audiences to realms of transcendence bringing the poet-saint’s profound 'kaafis' (poems) vividly to life. Shah Hussain's timeless verses, imbued with insatiable longing, offer profound insights into the eternal mysteries of love, death, desire, and spiritual sublimation.

Asad Lalljee, *CEO, Avid Learning and Curator, Royal Opera House, Mumbai* says, “At the Opera House, we have made a conscious effort to present and promote classical and contemporary Sufi music and dance and its fascinating subculture on our stage by showcasing a variety of styles and instruments. We have had the privilege to feature Sufi performances by the only non-Asian Qawwali group Fanna-Fi-Allah and the bands Sounds of the Sufis and Imran Khan and Friends. We have also showcased a variety of multidisciplinary performances and styles including Sufi-Folk Fusion and Sufi-Kathak. For our recent third anniversary celebration, we featured an inspired Sufi Qawwali performance by the Warsi Brothers who are one of the finest Qawwal ensembles in India.

This will be Royal Opera House and Avid Learning’s second collaboration with **HarooF: Stringing Verses Together**, a novel series that brings back the era of baithaks and celebrates the tradition of *gayaki* in a warm intimate style spanning genres of sufi kalaam, ghazal, geet, thumri, raag, and Punjabi folk.

Join us for a soul-stirring evening celebrating the revered poet-saint’s enduring legacy with a confluence of poetry, woven with music and narrative.

When: Saturday, 8th June 2024 | 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Where: Royal Opera House, Mumbai

Tickets: www.insider.in | Rs. 499 Onwards

Press: Ayesha Dadachnaji (ayeshah.avid@gmail.com)

ABOUT ARTISTS:

Neil Mukherjee

Neil is a guitarist, award-winning music composer and producer from Kolkata. Founder member of Kolkata rock band Krosswindz, winner of LA Movie awards, Moondance film festival awards for best film score. Neil is trained in both Indian and western systems of music and has over twenty-five years of experience in Bollywood and Tamil film music industry, and has worked with leading Indian music directors which include the likes of Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy and AR Rahman. He currently lives and works in Mumbai as a music composer/producer and session guitar player for the advertising and film industry. www.neilmukho.com

Vinayak Netke

Tabla artist Vinayak Netke began at 5, learning from Acharya Jialal Vasant and Suresh Wadkar. He has composed fusion albums, created music for TV/ads including MTV, Polo and Lloyd. His debut film 'Michael' was screened at Toronto, London, Shanghai fests. Rhythm arranger for National Anthem, Vinayak regularly jams with jazz pianists and Balkan bands in India and Europe. He is also a member of global fusion band RRC. He has accompanied Dr. L Subramaniam, Lata Mangeshkar, Ghazal maestro Ghulam Ali, Smt Kishori Amonkar, Dr N Rajam, among others. And played for composers Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy and Vishal Bhardwaj.

Radhika Sood Nayak

Sufi kalaam vocalist & composer Radhika's love for Sufi music was kindled by 17th century Sufi mystic Baba Bulleh Shah's poetry. Starting her journey with Mumbai Kabir Festival, she has travelled with her songs to Kabir Yatras in Rajasthan, Malwa, Telangana, Delhi and several music festivals. Her first Music video 'Asan □□□□' which was poised to arrive in April 2020 when Covid struck became a fundraising medium through 'Goonj'. Radhika's collaborations with Lahore based artistes has shaped two music videos woven around the poetry of 16th century Sufi faqeer Shah Hussain. This poet has also inspired a music video collaboration with handloom artistes from Kachchh in Gujarat. After an MBA from XLRI Jamshedpur, Radhika worked in Unilever and ANZ Grindlays for a few years before deciding to immerse herself in music.