

Rediscover the Legacy of Tawaifs and Baijis: The Courtesan Project Returns to the Royal Opera House, Mumbai

Did you know that tawaifs, the highly skilled courtesans of 18th and 19th-century Awadh, were the trendsetters of their time? They merged Persian and Indian influences, giving us the timeless Kathak dance and soulful dadra and thumri music, setting the standards for elegance and refinement. They were not just artists par excellence, but also esteemed mentors of etiquette and conversation.

For Immediate Release:

Sufi Kathak Centre, Ganga Jamuna Culture Foundation, Royal Opera House, Mumbai, and **Avid Learning** present **Main Tawaif - A Presentation by Manjari Chaturvedi**, under **The Courtesan Project** Series, founded and conceptualized by *Classical Dancer, Creator of Sufi Kathak, and Restorer of the Dance of Tawaifs* **Manjari Chaturvedi**. The performance is a profound exploration of the gender dynamics within the arts, unveiling the pivotal influence of women performers – the enigmatic Tawaifs and Baijis – of North India from the 16th to the 20th century.

Through a mesmerizing blend of evocative monologue, dance, music, and stories, the audio-visual spectacle will delve deep into the heart of history and societal perceptions. It questions the roles of individuals, society, and history in defining the place of women performers, challenging preconceived notions, and striving to honor their invaluable contribution to the world of art and culture. Main Tawaif is an endeavor by a modern-day dancer, Manjari, seeking recognition for the dancers and singers of yesteryears, dedicated to preserving and promoting the intangible cultural heritage of the tawaifs while removing social stigmas associated with courtesans, ultimately recognizing them as artists of unparalleled caliber.

These extraordinary women transitioned from the confines of the kotha to grace the Parsi theatre stages and subsequently became the pioneers of the burgeoning Hindi Film Industry. Their stories have regrettably been relegated to the shadows of history. This concert and the larger Courtesan Project aim to illuminate their art and narratives, bringing to these unsung heroines much-deserved attention, status, and respect.

Manjari Chaturvedi's remarkable collaboration with Avid Learning enters its splendid **sixth chapter**, a journey that commenced in 2019 with the exquisite '**Tehzeeb-e-Tawaif**' symposium, an ode to courtesan culture and the remarkable women performers of India. Their collective creative odyssey has been an artistic testament to the untold stories and legacies of these exceptional women. The Royal Opera House stage is ready after her 2022 unforgettable performance of '**Uff Malka Jaan & The Velvet Courtesans.**'

Do not miss this unique performance infused with the nostalgia of yesteryears and progressively modern thought.

Where: Royal Opera House, Mama Parmanand Marg, Mumbai - 400004

When: Saturday, 18th November 2023 | 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM - Performance

Tickets: www.insider.in (Rs. 499 onwards)

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