

A First-of-its-kind Musical on the Oral Intangible Traditions of Punjab comes to Royal Opera House, Mumbai this December 2021.

For Immediate Release

Time has come to get back to the old normal and bring the stage back to life!

Once again, Royal Opera House, Mumbai is pleased to announce that its doors are now open and we bring to everyone a very special evening conceptualized by Manjari Chaturvedi.

Please read on for more details on the program:

Everyone knows that the brilliant actor Madhuri Dixit danced to the popular song *mera piya ghar aaya*. But do people know it was written in the 17th century by Baba Bulleh Shah in Punjab?

Come personally and experience the source from where we get our popular music!

Sufi Kathak Foundation, Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation, Royal Opera House, Mumbai and Avid Learning present **O' Jugni Punjab Di**, a theatrical dance production which revives the rich heritage and mystical Sufi traditions of Punjab as never seen before and recreates the spirit of Punjab in Mumbai! This multidisciplinary performance will consist of live dance, musical and storytelling elements which will be led by *Dancer and Choreographer Manjari Chaturvedi* and will feature *Qawwal Ustad Ranjhan Ali* and *Actors Balkar Sidhu and Jasvir Kumar*.

Credited with over 400 classical dance concerts in 30 countries, Manjari Chaturvedi has conceptualised this theatrical dance production that will incorporate live music, Sufi singing, dance and storytelling narration, interspersed with episodic audio-visuals.

This performance will re-enliven the rich heritage of the mystical traditions of Punjab as never seen before. From transcendent dance to the poetry of Punjab, this evening will recreate the dance of the mystics and revive the age-old Punjabi female archetype of Jugni. The character of Jugni is rooted in defiance and rebellion, a deeply transgressive woman that brings a fiery woman character back into popular vocabulary. As a figure, she signifies free spirited feminine energy.

As Manjari explains, "*Jugni* is an age-old narrative device used in Punjabi folk music. The popularity of *Jugni* has always touched the hearts of the Punjabi diaspora and became a permanent part of Punjabi folklore.

This special evening will not only spotlight and celebrate the tradition of *jugni*, but will also bring the poetry of Sufi greats like Sultan Bahu, Baba Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah into the fold through the talents of Ranjhan Ali and Balkar Sidhu, in order to explore the central feminine force created by these spiritual poets. Manjari, will skillfully encapsulate the emotive essence of Sufiana verses and bring alive the timeless wisdom of these poets through her dance, body movements, agile footwork and gestures.

This is our fourth collaboration with Manjari Chaturvedi and the Sufi Kathak Foundation, with whom we have presented an enlightening symposium and performance that celebrated courtesan culture and women performers in India, a symposium and performance that celebrated the traditional art form of Qawwali last year on our stage. More recently, we collaborated on a special evening of poetry and dance celebrating 150 years of Mirza Ghalib and the legend of Nawab Jaan and dance of the royal courts.

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 multi-disciplinary performances and styles including Sufi-Folk Fusion and Sufi-Kathak. For our recent third anniversary celebration we featured an inspired Sufi Qawwali performance by Warsi Brothers who are one of the finest Qawwal ensembles

in India. Most recently, we presented another impressive Sufi concept experience, Haroof featuring the talented vocalist Radhika Sood Nayak, as well as an enchanting Qawwali performance comprising live renditions of age-old compositions by Khanqahi Qawwals led by Danish Husain Badayuni.

Join us to celebrate the age-old heritage of Punjab and rediscover the region's treasure trove of incredible poetry, music and dance!

WHERE: Royal Opera House, Mama Parmanand Marg, Mumbai – 400 004

WHEN: Saturday, 18th December 2021 | 6:00 PM

TICKETS: www.insider.in (₹499/- onwards)

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A first of its kind musical on Punjab is all set to recreate the spirit in Mumbai! A theatrical dance production which revives the rich heritage and mystical Sufi traditions of Punjab as never seen before. This multidisciplinary performance will consist of live dance, music and storytelling elements which will be led by *Dancer & Choreographer*, **Manjari Chaturvedi**, *Qawwal*, **Ustad Ranjhan Ali** and *Actors*, **Balkar Sidhu** and **Jasvir Kumar**.

Join us to experience the tradition of Jugni and encapsulate the emotive essence of Sufiana verses and bring alive the timeless wisdom of these poets.

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Supported by:

Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation



About The Performers

Classical Dancer, Director & Choreographer, TedX Speaker, Environmentalist & Cultural Academia **Manjari Chaturvedi** is the leading exponent of classical dance in India. She is an unusual dancer that has blazed her own path, that no one traversed earlier, in the field of performing arts. She has taken the traditional form of Kathak to a different level altogether and has created her own style, her own brand of dance. Over 400 concerts in 20 years in more than 30 countries with 405 musicians, her work is vast, Her productions as a dancer are projects that are meticulously researched, documented. Manjari has extensively worked on gender sensitive subjects through her medium of dance, exploring the many traditions woven into poetry, music and dance. She is the founder of concept the series of Understanding Qawwali and The Qawwali Photo Project. Through her work for last twenty years on Qawwali, currently there are more than 300 artists associated with the Sufi Kathak Foundation and she is working on actively archiving and documenting the music form in its traditional form.

Janaab Ranjhan Ali belongs to the Benaras Gharana of Punjab, hails from Amritsar and is singing Qawwali from the age of 12 years with his group all over India. He has taken the training of Qawwali from his Ustaaad Janaab Sheetal Khan Shahab. He made his group in year 2006 and has sung Qawwalis on every dargah of Punjab. He sings Khwaja Ghulam Farid, Baba Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain, Amir Khusrau, Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya and many such Sufi Saints.

Presently working as Vice-Chairman of Chandigarh Sangeet Natak Akademi, **Balkar Sidhu** has achieved enormously in the field of folk dances of Punjab, theatre, films and commercial world. He has represented India in a number of International festivals at Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, etc. In the past, he has also given coaching to school, college and university students in Bhangra, Gidha, Jhoomar, Sammi and Luddi. Sidhu Ji has also contributed to the literary world by publishing some plays like Sassi Punnu, Bath Peya Sona, etc. He has been awarded Punjab Government Folk Artiste Award in the field of Punjabi Folk Dance (Bhangra) in 2020 and Life Time Achievement Award in the field of Traditional Folk Dance, Theatre-2016 by Chandigarh Sangeet Natak Akademi, Chandigarh.

Jasvir Kumar is a resident of Chandigarh. He has acted in 158 plays directed by varied directors of India and around 5000 street shows in different cities of India. Besides being an actor, he himself is a director as well as a stage manager. He has directed 7 plays of some of the writers like Ravindera Nath Tagore, Baldev Singh Moga, etc. He has also worked extensively with Alankar Theatre, Chandigarh School of Drama, Yugantar Kala Manch, etc. Moreover, he has participated in a number of national and regional theatre festivals. He has also been awarded Rashtrapati Award (Bharat Scout & Guide) in 2001 and National Award in Acting (Ustaaad Bismillah Khan) in 2013.

About Partners

The Sufi Kathak Foundation is a non-profit registered society in India (Regd. 61883, exempt from tax under section 80G and 12A and registered under FCRA). The Foundation is headed by its Founder & President, Manjari Chaturvedi, a leading exponent of classical Indian Kathak & creator of Sufi Kathak dance. She has a deep interest & in-depth knowledge on performance art & with her own experience of 20 years, with more than 300 performances in 24 countries, she leads the research projects. The General Body of the Foundation comprises of other 10 eminent academicians, lawyers, marketing heads, art & cultural activists & personalities. Sufi Kathak Foundation in 10 years has conducted 38 festivals /seminars/ concerts involving 402 artists to create awareness about India's intangible heritage in music and dance and preserve the gradually fading 700-year Sufi Traditions in Music and Dance. SKF aims to create a world of cultural unity, by spreading the secular message of the Sufis and also help in initiating children and orienting the youth to become self-employed through arts - dance and music. It provides assistance and support to needy artists and students by giving scholarships, pensions and medical support, in order to enable them to pursue classical music and dance. SKF seeks to evolve a humanist outlook and create centers, organize training classes, workshops and musical concerts to promote Sufi music, Qawwali, Sufi Kathak, and folk & classical dance across the world. Sufi Kathak Foundation has also worked with the Government of India and State Governments for various cultural concerts organized by them and through its concerts the foundation has tried to relive the past eras, thereby representing our rich cultural heritage. Sufi Kathak Foundation has also conceptualized

and organized cultural festivals which explored the inter-religious issues through music and dance and brought together references of different religions on the same plane of confluence, for the audiences to experience. The 22 Khwaja Project that explores the lives of Sufi Saints is a unique secular initiative that has never appeared before the masses and adds to the list of successful initiatives taken by the Foundation. “The Courtesan Project”, is the flagship dance revival concept by Sufi Kathak Foundation. “The Courtesan Project” is a labor of love, and a culmination of passion, research and mission to bring alive the stories of women largely forgotten by the history. www.sufikathakfoundation.com

The Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation enables non-profit organisations and social entrepreneurs to make a positive, lasting and sustainable impact on society. Inspired by the vision of a socially, culturally and economically vibrant India, the Foundation supports civil society initiatives in sectors such as health, education, livelihoods, governance and civic issues, art and culture and youth and urbanisation. Besides supporting socially and economically challenged communities, it also strives to encourage excellence. Established in 2002 with an endowment from the philanthropist Mr. Narotam Sekhsaria, the Foundation supports socially committed individuals and organisations to work towards the change they want to see. Since its inception, the Foundation has striven towards supporting actions which accelerate that change.

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 23 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.

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Avid Learning, the cultural philanthropy arm of the Essar Group founded in 2009 has, over the past decade, grown into one of Mumbai’s leading public programming platforms and is firmly entrenched in the country’s wider cultural ecosystem. Our thoughtfully curated and diverse events embrace the spirit of collaboration to bring together the best of Indian and international writers, artists, intellectuals, cultural experts, policymakers and industry leaders across Visual Art, Literature, Culture and Heritage, Education, Design & Technology and the Performing Arts through engaging and dynamic formats like panel discussions, workshops & master classes, roundtables, lecture demonstrations, festival platforms, symposiums & conferences, multidisciplinary performances and walkthroughs. To date, AVID has conducted over **1400** programs and connected with more than **150,000+** individuals, a widely eclectic group of life-long learners including students, patrons, practitioners, influencers, thought leaders and cultural & creative enthusiasts in Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Bangalore, Goa and Gujarat. We have also made our mark internationally, with events and collaborations in Dubai and New York. We regularly collaborate and partner with institutions, organisations and initiatives like the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), (CSMVS) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), one of the apex bodies that impact cultural policy and the creative sector as a whole. We have been at the helm of programming at the Royal Opera House, Mumbai India’s only surviving Opera House since its reopening in 2016. We believe in the importance of arts for social change and we regularly offer our support and platforms for Social Advocacy. In April 2020, we launched AVID Online, an online further learning campaign on our social media platforms for our followers to engage with a range of varied topics across the breadth of the arts. Our eclectic faculty of experts, thought leaders, practitioners and innovators continue to share their learnings, expertise and knowledge on our social media platforms with tailored content featured weekly for AVID’s online community and beyond. In collaboration with long-term and new partners, we have since

dimensionalised the campaign by re-introducing our existing offline formats and IPs and enhancing them for digital engagement. We have taken our content live with engaging masterclasses and virtual panel discussions and also built robust tangential campaigns and series in support of worthy causes and highlighting topical issues.

AVID continues to give truth to our belief that **#LearningNeverStops**

Stay tuned to our social media channels to know more about upcoming programmes on AVID Online and remember #LearningNeverStops

Website: <https://www.avidlearning.in/>

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