

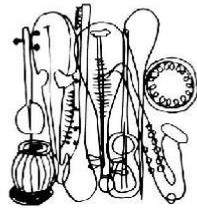


AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative

### Silk Route encounters in Jaipur

*Aga Khan Ensemble performed at the 10th Anniversary ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival with support from the Aga Khan Foundation*



AGA KHAN  
**ENSEMBLE**

**Jaipur, India, January 2017** - Musical artists from the countries along the fabled Silk Route came together to perform as the Aga Khan Ensemble at the Hotel Clarks Amer on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of January. The performance, which was a part of the ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival, is the result of a pioneering initiative of the Aga Khan Music Initiative, with support from the Aga Khan Foundation.



*Aga Khan Ensemble performed at the ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival. The Ensemble featured a lineup of Basel Rajoub, Salar Nader, Homayoun Sakhi, Wu Man, Feras Charestan and Andrea Piccioni*  
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The Aga Khan Ensemble is a collective of master musicians who create new music inspired by their own deep roots in the cultural heritage of the Middle East and Mediterranean Basin, South Asia, Central Asia, West Africa, and China. These master musicians are the Aga Khan Music Initiative's leading artistic collaborators—venerated performers and composer-arrangers who appear on the world's most prestigious stages while also serving as teachers, mentors and curators who enrich the Music Initiative's interregional network of education programmes. Linking countries and continents, and present and past through explorations of diverse forms of classical, folk, jazz, and contemporary concert music, the ensemble contributes strongly to the Music Initiative's mission to invigorate cultural and intellectual pluralism in the nations it serves. In forging this contribution, the Aga Khan Ensemble brings to life a new body of artistic work that is at once seamless, surprising, and exuberantly original.

The January performance continues and solidifies the partnership between the Aga Khan Music Initiative and the ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival (established in 2015). The partnership, which is supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, is committed to presenting a new body of music by the master artists that form the Aga Khan Music Initiative roster.

Besides performances at ZEE Jaipur, the Aga Khan Ensemble presented its new repertoire at the Aga Khan Academy in Hyderabad on the on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January and Mumbai's Royal Opera House on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January.

Aga Khan Ensemble's January line-up included :



**Homayoun Sakhi**, a master performer on the Afghan *rubab* as well as a composer who brings together Eastern and Western musical languages and instruments. Born in Kabul into one of Afghanistan's leading musical families, Sakhi is the heir to a musical lineage that began in the 1860s, when the ruler of Kabul, Amir Sher Ali Khan, brought classically trained musicians from India to perform at his court. Sakhi performs Afghan folk and popular music as well as North Indian classical music (raga). His composer credits include "Rainbow," for Afghan rubab, Indian and Central Asian percussion, and string quartet.



**Wu Man**, a world-renowned performer on the *pipa*, a four-stringed Chinese lute with ancient roots that, due in large part to her efforts, has become a leading instrument of contemporary music in both East and West. Wu Man performs both traditional and contemporary music on the pipa, and many new works have been commissioned specially for her. She was a founding member of the Silk Road Ensemble, created by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and has played an active role in cross-cultural music making, in particular with members of China's Uyghur minority.



**Basel Rajoub**, a saxophonist and composer improviser whose inspirations include traditional Middle Eastern rhythms and melodies as well as jazz. Born in Aleppo, Syria, Rajoub graduated from the Damascus High Institute of Music and creates new music that brings together musicians from the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and Europe. A winner of Radio Monte Carlo's Moyeen-Orient Music Award, Rajoub divides his time between performing, teaching, composing, and recording.



**Salar Nader**, the master *tabla* player who was born in Hamburg, Germany, to Afghan parents forced to flee their home during the Russian-Afghan war. As a child, Nader moved to San Francisco, where, at age seven he began studying with the legendary tabla virtuoso Ustad Zakir Hussain. Nader has performed in an eclectic range of ensembles and international music projects. He has also been active as a teacher of *tabla*, both in the United States and in Afghanistan, where he has helped to revive and revitalise indigenous musical traditions.



**Andrea Piccioni**, a native of Rome, who is a master performer on frame drums—single-headed drums, sometimes with jingles, played with the hands rather than with sticks. After mastering the Southern Italian tamburello, Piccioni studied frame drum rhythms and performance techniques from the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. Piccioni is an experienced teacher as well as the artistic director of Frame Drums Italia International Festival.



**Feras Charestan, who** is from the city of Al-Hasakeh, in the northeast of Syria, and studied *qanun* at the High Institute of Music in Damascus. He has performed as a qanun soloist with symphony orchestras and has been a member of popular bands as well as contemporary music ensembles that are creating new music rooted in Middle Eastern traditions.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival was held from 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> January. As in the past decade, plurality and inclusiveness are at the core of the Festival’s programming, which reflects a diversity of ideas, languages and nationalities of the authors, thinkers and performers that the Festival brings together from across South Asia and the world. For more information, please see the notes.

For more information about the Aga Khan Music Initiative, please contact: [akmi@akdn.org](mailto:akmi@akdn.org) or [info@akdn.org](mailto:info@akdn.org)

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## NOTES

The *Aga Khan Music Initiative* (AKMI) is an interregional music and arts education programme launched by His Highness the Aga Khan to support talented musicians and music educators working to preserve, transmit, and further develop their musical heritage in contemporary forms. The Music Initiative is a programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture,

which serves as the cultural development agency of the Aga Khan Development Network. The Music Initiative began its work in Central Asia, with projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and subsequently expanded to include artists and audiences in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and West Africa.

The Music Initiative works with a global partnership network of arts presenters, cultural organisations, and academic institutions to curate concerts, festivals, artist-in-residence programmes, and workshops featuring musicians in the Music Initiative's artist roster and new work developed by them. These performance events present artists who have distinguished themselves as musical innovators, whether working within the framework of traditional repertoires and styles, contemporized expressions of traditional material, or intercultural collaboration. Education is at the centre of the Music Initiative's activities, and education projects have ranged from operating talent-support centres and organising intercultural creative laboratories to developing new teaching and learning methodologies and materials.

The *Aga Khan Foundation* (AKF) is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals to improve their living conditions and opportunities, especially in Central and South Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. AKDN institutions have been assisting India's development for over 100 years.

The Aga Khan Foundation's mission is to develop and promote creative, community driven solutions to the long-term problems of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and ill health. Its programmes span education, health and rural and urban development and cutting across all of its work is a strong commitment to community participation, empowerment of women, pluralism and social inclusion, and human resource development.

AKF has been working in India since 1973 and is currently active in seven states. To date, its support for community-led programmes has helped 1.2 million children learn to read and enabled over 10,000 community-based organisations to reach out and improve the quality of life of 1.3 million of India's poorest.

The world's largest free festival of its kind, the *ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival* has been described as the "greatest literary show on Earth". Celebrating writers from across the world, the Festival has hosted some of the best regarded and loved names ranging from Nobel Laureates and Man Booker Prize winners to star debuts including Amish Tripathi, Eleanor Catton, Hanif Kureishi, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Ian McEwan, JM Coetzee, Mohammed Hanif, Oprah Winfrey, Orhan Pamuk, Pico Iyer, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Wole Soyinka, as well as renowned Indian language writers such as Girish Karnad, Mahasweta Devi, MT Vasudevan Nair, Uday Prakash and UR Ananthamurthy.

### **Writers and Festival Directors**

Writers and Festival Directors Namita Gokhale and William Dalrymple invite speakers to take part in the five-day programme set against the backdrop of Rajasthan's stunning cultural heritage and the Digg Palace in the state capital Jaipur.

Equity and democracy run through the Festival's veins, placing some of the world's greatest minds, humanitarians, historians, politicians, business leaders, sports people and entertainers from all walks of life together on stage. This free and egalitarian access to these renowned thinkers and writers is a powerful statement in a country where access to such individuals remains the privilege of a few. The ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival provides a potentially life-changing opportunity for audiences from Rajasthan, across India and the world to learn from and exchange ideas with contemporary literary stalwarts. The ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival is a flagship event of Teamwork Arts, which produces over 25 highly acclaimed performing

arts, visual arts and literary festivals across more than 40 cities globally, and is produced by Sanjoy K. Roy.

In 2014, ZEE JLF spread its wings beyond the borders of India with an annual event in May in London. In 2015, it headed across the pond to Boulder, Colorado where it hosts a similar event every September. For more information, please see its website: [www.jaipurliteraturefestival.org](http://www.jaipurliteraturefestival.org)

Read online at: <http://www.akdn.org/press-release/silk-route-encounters-jaipur>