Aga Khan Master Musicians embark on virtual concert tour

Geneva, Switzerland, 13 November 2020 - The Aga Khan Master Musicians (AKMM), a six-person ensemble brought together by the Aga Khan Music Programme to explore how musical innovation can contribute to the revitalisation of cultural heritage, is making its North American debut this week in three specially-produced concert films commissioned and broadcast by prestigious arts presenters: Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College (10 Nov.); the Aga Khan Museum (13 Nov.), and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Asian Art (14 Nov.).

Originally scheduled as live events, the concerts were moved online after the pandemic shut down concert halls around the world. With AKMM’s members grounded in California, Europe, and Tajikistan, the Aga Khan Music Programme organised a technically challenging production process involving recording sessions on three continents during which the artists played their parts while listening through earphones to parts recorded hours earlier by their fellow ensemble members on other continents. Audio and video tracks were subsequently edited together into the three finished films according to specifications of format and duration provided by the commissioning presenters.

“The resiliency and adaptability of musicians across the world during a global pandemic is exemplified through the Aga Khan Music Programme and Aga Khan Museum’s first joint virtual concert of AKMM,” said Amirali Alibhai, Head of Performing Arts at the Aga Khan Museum. “This online presentation celebrates our renewed commitment to build upon and deepen a relationship that began in our first season of performing arts at the Museum in 2014, which we are proud to see continue well into the future, whatever challenges that brings.”

Fairouz Nishanova, Director of the Aga Khan Music Programme, echoed a similar theme in praising the work of the AKMM artists as well as the production team: “These films were a complex undertaking - artistically, technically, and logistically,” she said. “The inspired creativity that infuses both the musical performances and the filmmaking speaks to the exceptional talent that the Music Programme has assembled.”

The Hopkins Center’s broadcast of the film was preceded by a live conversation featuring AKMM member Wu Man and Dartmouth music professor and Aga Khan Music Programme Senior Advisor Ted Levin. In introducing the conversation, Mary Lou Aleskie, Director of the Hopkins Center, noted that “The Hopkins Center’s ongoing relationship with the Aga Khan Music Programme is a cornerstone of our efforts to maintain our commitment to artists around
the globe and enrich our own community’s awareness and appreciation of global traditions and perspectives.”

AKMM consists of Wu Man (pipa), Basel Rajoub (saxophone, duclar), Sirojiddin Juraev (dutar, sato), Feras Charestan (qanun), Abbos Kosimov (frame drums), and Jasser Haj Youssef (viola d’amore). All six artists contributed their own original compositions and arrangements to the programmes performed in the films, which included world premieres of two new pieces by viola d’amore player Jasser Haj Youssef. Other works featured in the films have previously been performed by AKMM in the Diamond Jubilee Concert at London’s Royal Albert Hall in June 2018, at the opening concert of the Aga Khan Music Awards ceremony in March 2019, and at a preview of new works by the Master Musicians at the Ismaili Centre in Lisbon in December 2019.

For more information on the Aga Khan Master Musicians, see: https://www.akdn.org/our-agencies/aga-khan-trust-culture/akmp/creation-performance

To register for the free YouTube Premiere at the Smithsonian Museum of Asian Art (Freer-Sackler Galleries), which goes live at 7:30 pm on Saturday, 14 November, visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aga-khan-master-musicians-tickets-122116905953

To view the concert film presented by the Aga Khan Museum, visit the following link at 7 pm EST on 13 November: https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/programs/aga-khan-master-musicians