Asia Society and CaravanSerai
Present

New Sufi Sounds of Pakistan:
Arif Lohar with Arooj Aftab

Saturday, April 28, 2012, 8:00 P.M.

Asia Society
725 Park Avenue at 70th Street
New York City

This program is 2 hours
with no intermission
## New Sufi Sounds of Pakistan

### Performers

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<td>Arooj Afab</td>
<td>lead vocals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhrigu Sahni</td>
<td>acoustic guitar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jorn Bielfeldt</td>
<td>percussion</td>
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<td>Arif Lohar</td>
<td>lead vocals/chimta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qamar Abbas</td>
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<td>Waqas Ali</td>
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<td>Allah Ditta</td>
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<td>Shehzad Azim Ul Hassan</td>
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<td>Shahid Kamal</td>
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<td>Nadeem Ul Hassan</td>
<td>percussion/vocals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fozia</td>
<td>vocals</td>
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### AROOJ AFTAB

Arooj Aftab is a rising Pakistani-American vocalist who interprets mystical Sufi poems and contemporizes the semi-classical musical traditions of Pakistan and India. Her music is reflective of *thumri*, a secular South Asian musical style colored by intricate ornamentation and romantic lyrics of love, loss, and longing. Arooj Aftab restyles the traditional music of her heritage for a sound that is minimalistic, contemplative, and delicate—a sound that she calls “indigenous soul.” Accompanying her on guitar is Boston-based Bhrigu Sahni, a frequent collaborator, originally from India, and Jorn Bielfeldt on percussion.

Arooj Aftab: vocals  
Bhrigu Sahni: guitar  
Jorn Bielfeldt: percussion

### Semi Classical Music

This genre, classified in Pakistan and North India as light classical vocal music. *Thumri* and *ghazal* forms are at the core of the genre. Its primary theme is romantic — persuasive wooing, painful jealousy aroused by a philandering lover, pangs of separation, the ache of remembered pleasures, sweet anticipation of reunion, joyful union. Rooted in a sophisticated civilization that drew no line between eroticism and spirituality, this genre asserts a strong feminine identity in folk poetry laden with unabashed sensuality.
The word *thumri* comes from the original word *thumakna*, which means to dance gracefully. *Thumri* may be traced to 4th century B.C. as an art form for singing love songs. The historic role of the singer-courtesans played a major part in the development of this genre. Renowned singer-courtesans who studied music with renowned music maestros of their time gave the *thumri* such stature that it spilled outside the courtesan’s domain into the repertoire of great male classical vocalist, like Punjabi classical music great Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Now, it is customary for most full-scale classical *khayal* recitals to conclude with a *thumri*.

The *ghazal* poetic form consists of rhyming couplets and a refrain with each line sharing the same meter. The form is ancient, originating in 6th century Arabic verse. It is one of the principal poetic forms from the Indo-Persian-Arabic civilization in the eastern Islamic world.

The *ghazal* spread into South Asia in the 12th century through the influence of Sufi mystics and the royal Muslim courts. Although the *ghazal* is most prominently a form of Dari poetry and Urdu poetry, today it is found in the poetry of many languages of the Pakistan and Indian sub-continent. It is a genre that has the ability for a wide range of expression around its central themes of love and separation and the beauty of love in spite of that pain.

**Man Kunto Maula**  
*(Sufi poet: Amir Khusrau, 13th century; Language: Arabic, Farsi, Urdu)*

*Man kunto Maula, fa Ali-un Maula* is part of a *hadith*, or statement by the Prophet Muhammad, that he made upon his return from his last pilgrimage in 632 AD, a few months before he died. It means, “Whoever accepts me as their spiritual guide, Ali is his spiritual guide as well.” Ali was the Prophet’s cousin and an important figure in Islam. The poem describes the state of being one with love.

**Poem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maula, Maula</td>
<td>Lord, Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Miyaan Ji</td>
<td>O, Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maula, Hoo Allah</td>
<td>Lord, Allah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aflak se laaee jaati hai</td>
<td>A love that is as vast as the sky and the oceans kept hidden in one’s heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seenon mein chhupayee jaati hai</td>
<td>An intoxication that is imbibed through the eyes of the seeker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawheed ki mein saagar se nahin</td>
<td>Whoever glimpsed it went into an ecstatic stateWhoever glimpsed it, glimpsed Divine (love)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aakhon se pilaee jaati hai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jisney dekha marr hi gayaa</td>
<td>In your divine eyes are magical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jisney dekha Maula dikha</td>
<td>Don’t betray me as though I am a stranger to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terey chashmey siyaah mein hai jadoo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghair ka dokha mujhko na dena</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mohabbat Karney Waley
(Ghazal; Poet: Hafeez Hoshiapuri; Language: Urdu)

Poem

Mohabbat karne waale kam nah honge
Teri mehfil mein lekin hum nah honge

Zamaane bhar ke ghum yaa ek tera gham
Ye gham hoga to kitne gham na honge
Teri mehfil mein lekin hum nah honge

Translation

You are the beloved of many
However, I must say, I will not be among your lovers

This is a lifetime of sadness, as I love you the most. Having this sadness removes so many other sadesses
However, I must say, I will not be among your lovers

Aaye Na Baalam (Thumri style; Language: Urdu) / Udhero Na

Poem

Aaye Na Baalam
Kya karoon sajani aaye na baalam
Kya karoon sajani aaye na baalam
Tarapat beeti mori un bin ratiyaan
Aaye na baalam
Kya karoon sajani aaye na baalam
Rowat, rowat kal nahi aaye
Tarap, tarap mohe raam kal nahi aaye
Nisdin mohe birhaa sataye
Yaad aawat jab unki batiyaan
Aaye na baalam
Kya karoon sajani
Aaye na baalam
Aaye na baalam

Udhero Na
Ye aainey mein chehra mera to nahin
Ye aainey mein chehra mera to nahin
Tum bhi dikhai diiyey har char duaar
Kahin, kahin, kahin, kahin
Aakhon mein siley huey ho
Udheron na
Udheron na

Translation

What shall I do my friend, my beloved will not come (to me)
My nights are spent yearning for him
What shall I do my friend, my beloved will not come (to me)

The pangs of separation burn bright in my heart / Like fire on wet wood
Tomorrow doesn’t arrive even as I weep endlessly

I pine without him night and day,
Whenever thoughts of him come to mind
What shall I do my friend, my beloved refuses to come (to me)\n
This obsession is following me
It is everywhere
The images in mirrors are not mine
The images mirrors are not mine
Your image is embedded in my mind’s eye/Your image is stitched into the lining of my eyes
Unravel it
Unravel it
**Baghon Mein Padey Jhooley**  
*Thumri; Language: Urdu*

**Poem**

Baghon mein pade jhoole  
Tum bhool gaye hamako ham  
Tumko nahi bhoole  
Ye raks sitaaron ka  
Sun lo kabhi afsaana  
Taqdeer ke maaron ka  
Saawan ka maheena hai  
Saajan se juda rah kar  
Jeena bhi kya jeena hai  
Raavi ka kinaara hai  
Har mauj ke honthon par  
Afsaana hamaara hai  
Ab aur na tadapao  
Ya hamko bula bhejo  
Ya aap chale aao  
Ya hamko bula bhejo

**Translation**

Swings are swinging in the garden  
While you have forgotten (me)  
I have not forgotten (you), the way you have forgotten us  
This heart is without hope, our love left unfulfilled  
(You stayed away) fearing you would get a bad reputation.

Swings are swinging in the garden  
While you have forgotten (me)  
What is a sky without rain clouds (in the monsoon)  
But a life unfulfilled and incomplete  
Don’t make me pine anymore  
Or ask me to come to you  
Either you come to me  
Or ask me to come to you

---

**Na Ja Balam Pardes**  
*Thumri; language: Urdu*

**Poem**

Na ja balam pardes  
Na ja balam pardes  
Na ja balam pardes  
Na ja balam pardes  
Kab se piya tori raah takat hun  
Kaisey bhejun sanje suhaag  
Na ja balam pardes

**Translation**

Oh my love, please do not leave and go to foreign lands  
Oh my love, please do not leave and go to foreign lands  
How I wait for you, watching the path by which you may arrive  
How do I send you my blessings?  
Oh my love, please do not leave and go to foreign lands

---

**Arif Lohar Ensemble**

Arif Lohar is Pakistan's most treasured singer. Born in the small village of Aach Goch in the Gujrat District of Punjab, Pakistan, Arif Lohar inherited the big talent and traditions of his iconic father, the legendary Pakistani folk singer Alam Lohar. Arif is known for his warm, powerful voice as well as the rich sonic landscape against which he juxtaposes traditional Punjabi songs. While he embraces his heritage, he re-imagines it with contemporary interpretations. Now a legend himself, Arif blends pop and folk stylings to create a sound uniquely his own. Accompanied by his beloved chimta, a traditional percussion instrument, he has contributed significantly to the fusion of classical and contemporary music.
instrument resembling tongs with bells, he continues the tradition of sung story-
telling through folk songs centered on perpetuating knowledge, values and so-
cial commentary as well as, Sufi poems about love and harmony. Arif is backed
by an ensemble of talented Pakistani musicians, some of whom are the sons of
the musicians whose fathers performed with Alam Lohar. The ensemble also
includes Arif’s long time protégé Fozia, a vocalist who goes by one name only.

Arif Lohar: Vocals, chimta
Fozia: Vocals
Allah Ditta: Al Ghoza/Double Reed Flute
Nadeem ul Hassan: Tumkinaari/Drums
Qamar Abbas: Dholak
Shahid Kamal: Harmonium/Keyboard
Shahzad ul Hassan: Dhol
Waqas Ali: Mandolin, Guitar

Punjabi music
Pakistan’s Punjab province takes its name from the five rivers that run through
it. Punj means five and ab means water. The rivers, Beas, Chenab, Jeelum, Ravi
and Sutlej, are all tributaries of the legendary Indus River. The area’s rich soil
makes it ideal farming land. Punjab is known for its historic mix of people from
different backgrounds and nations - including the Greeks, Persians, Mongols
and Afghans - who have created the present rich, layered culture.

Singing and dancing is integral to the way of life for Punjabi villagers and
townsfolk alike. Folk and devotional music is the soul of Punjabi culture and
very often they are intertwined. As Arif Lohar explains it, in many folk ballads
about epic love, there is invariably some reference to the Divine. Folk songs are
about life cycles and celebrations of births, marriages, the seasons, harvests, the
pain of separation, the joy of love. Devotional Sufi music takes the form of
praise songs to the Divine, to the Prophet Muhammad and the great Sufi saints.
Simple imagery is used to express emotions of devotion very often, from every-
day rural life.

A strong tradition of Qissa sahity, or storytelling, is very much part of the
music. The historic epics of Heer Ranjha, Sohni Mahiwal, Sassi Punnu, Mirza
Sahib among others are all part of this tradition. Ballads are often accompani-
ment by the one stringed tūmbā and algozā, double reed flute – originally played
by shepherds. Alam Lohar made the the chimta a popular addition, the metal
tongs with chaene, small metal discs welded on top. The resounding beat of the
dhol and dholak anchors music.

Gradually, the music emerged from the fields and reached more formal
performance arenas such as rural melās, or country fairs, or a saint’s shrine.
Now, many gifted musicians regularly perform in large urban hubs and produce
commercial recordings to great acclaim.
FOZIA, vocals

Aaj Jaaney Ki Zid Na Karo
(Ghazal; Poet: Fayyaz Hashmi, language: Urdu)

In this ghazal of romantic love and yearning, the poet beseeches the loved one not to insist on leaving him after their meeting and instead sit beside him to extend their moment together.

Akhaan Jago Mitti Rehdeean Kinno Haal
(Geet/traditional song, language: Punjabi)

This traditional song expresses the intensity of a love that permeates the poet completely, waking or sleeping as, he cannot get his beloved out of his mind he sees her everywhere.

Mahi Yaar Dee Gharoli / The Friend’s Clay Water Pot
(Kafi; poet: Sachal Sarmast, 1739 – 1829, language: Sindhi)

The kafi is a classical musical composition that is most often used with spiritual praise songs or poems dedicated to the murshid or spiritual guide and the Divine. The poems can also refer to the transitory world and describe the disciple’s pangs of separation and longing for closeness to the Beloved Divine or Murshid. Sometimes, the poem in the kafi form can also describe more secular social or political themes.

This poem, by Sindhi Sufi poet Sachal Sarmast, draws on the imagery of an everyday household chore from medieval times of filling a clay pot with fresh drinking water from the well.

In Sufism, the potter represents the Divine who give shape to clay pots. Water contained in the pot implies life’s sustaining essence.

The poet Sachal Sarmast uses the metaphor of the clay water pot as a symbol for the striving disciple on the spiritual path who, goes through many trials in order to gain proximity to the Divine.

The poetic composition tells the tale about the clay pot’s trials:

_I was beaten, shaken and kneaded like the potter’s clay / Then I was put onto the wheel and churned round and round / Finally, the fire engulfed me; initially it felt as though I was separated from You / Then, as the fire blazed away, my life was consumed in You._
In the Punjab, the famed oral storytelling tradition known as qissa developed from the qasida tradition of Arabs and came to South Asia with the development of Islam and Arab migrants to the region. Qisse are traditional morality tales of epic love, valor and honor that transmit the importance of essential social values. Qisse passed down generationally, infuses Punjabi folk music with depth and richness and can be recited or sung. The tradition is so deeply rooted in Punjabi culture that great Sufis guides are known to quote from the stories in imparting spiritual messages. Such is the case with the qissa of Mirza Sahiban, one of four major tragic romantic stories in Punjabi culture.

The poet Peelu’s story about Mirza and Sahiban, childhood playmates and children of two leaders from the Punjab who fell in love with each other when they grew up. They kept their love secret and Sahiban’s parents arranged her marriage to the son of a powerful family. With her wedding looming, Sahiban sent a message to Mirza and he rescues her. Sahiban’s brothers follow and catch up with them. As Mirza, an accomplished archer, prepares to fight her brothers, Sahiban breaks his arrows knowing he would not miss his target when he shot and her brothers would die. She believed that her brothers, when her brothers got closer, would see how deep her love for Mirza was and would welcome him to their family. The brothers were not swayed and fought Mirza to death. As he lay dying, Mirza told Sahiban that he would not have shot at her brothers and instead would have fired arrows into the air as a warning.

This is a Sufi morality tale or bayaan written by Arif’s father, the legendary singer and poet Alam Lohar. The poem reflects the need to be humble and grateful to the Divine as we are created from clay and return to the earth no matter what our material wealth or accomplishments. He highlights the importance of the Sufi message of remaining loving and peaceful through life.

Arif Lohar’s father, the legendary singer Alam Lohar, is credited with developing the jugni as storytelling style. Jugni literally means a female firefly and is a medium for the poet and singer to share stories about life’s journey in its many aspects and specific commentary. The poems can either be centered on life cycle events or be Sufi poems that are spiritual praise songs. In the context of Sufism, the jugni is a metaphor for the soul and a means to express affinity to the Divine, to the Prophet Muhammad and to Sufi saints. The Sufi context is what the Lohars, Alam and Arif, anchor their jugni repertoire in.
Arif Lohar has taken the *jugni* to new heights of popularity with his contemporary interpretation of *Alif Allah Chambey di Booti*, the 17th century poem by Sufi mystic Sultan Bahu. This *jugni* is a praise song and declaration of the poet’s devotion to the Divine, the Prophet Muhammad and Sufi saints.

**Poem**

*Alif Allah chambay di booti,*  
*tey meray murshid mann vich lai hoo*  
*Ho nafi uss baat da paani dey kay*  

*Har ragaay harjai hoo*  

*Ho joog joog jeevay mera murshid sohna*  

*Hatay jiss ay booti lai ho*  

*Pir meraya jugni ji*  

*Ae way Allah waliyan di jugni ji*  

*Ae way nabi pak di jugni ji*  

*Ae way maula ali wali jugni ji*  

*Ae way meray pir di jugni ji*  

*Ae way saaray sabaz di jugni ji*  

*Dum gutkoon, gootkun...*  

*karay Saeein ae*  

*te kalma nabi da pare sain*  

*Parhay tay kalma nabi da*  

*Parhay saeein pir merya*  

*Jugni taar khaein vich thaal*  

*Chad duniya dey janjaal*  

*Kuch ni nibna bandiya naal*  

*Rakhi saabat sidk amaal*  

*Jugni dig payee vich roi*  

*Othay ro ro kamli hoi*  

*Oddi vaath naye lainda koi*  

*Tey kalmay binna nai mildi toi*  

**Translation**

My spiritual guide has planted the fragrant seed of love in my heart  
Which flourished with modesty, piety and acceptance of his existence  

The Divine is present in every throbbing pulse of mine  
My spiritual guide is ever present  

The one who infused life into me  
I have the spirit of my guide  

The spirit of all the messengers who brought His message to this earth  
The spirit of the Holy Prophet  
The spirit of Ali (the Prophet Muhammad’s cousin) and his followers  
The spirit of my saint  
The spirit of all his words  

Every time I think of you the Divine, I feel breathless  
So I recite the Kalma (the Muslim prayer that attests to the reciter’s belief) whenever I think of the Divine  

O my creation, share whatever you have  
Remove yourself from worldly concerns  
There is nothing that you can get from other human beings that you can take to the after life  
Just keep your actions and intentions pure and true  

So absorbed was the creation that she stumbled into a ditch  
There she wailed relentlessly  
But there was no one who enquired about her  
Remember, there is no salvation for anyone without remembering your Creator
DHAMAL: Dama Dam Mast Qalandar
(Sufi Poet: Khwaja Ghulam Farid; 19th century, Language: Seraiki)

Dhamal, in mystical rituals of Pakistan is the act of mystical circling, the whirling movement similar to that of the Turkish Mevlevi Whirling Dervishes.

This Sufi poem is sung in honor of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, one of the most important Sufi mystics who lived in the 12th and 13th centuries in current day Pakistan’s Southern Sindh province region of Sehwan.

Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (red royal falcon) is the Sufi name given to Syed Muhammed Usman who was from Marwand, Azerbaijan. At 20 years old, he became a Sufi and traveled to and settled in the southern Sindh region of Sehwan in the 13th century in what is current day Pakistan. He went on to become the most popular of all Sufi saints from that period on. He is revered by Hindus as well as Muslims and known to have actively worked for peace between Hindus and Muslims during the course of his life. Hindus regard him as a reincarnated divinity. He is known by several other names with fondness including, Jhule Lal or, the precious one.

Lal, or red, refers to the red robes he wore. Lal is also the word of affection that mothers from the region of Punjab use to refer to a young child. Qalandars are
wandering Sufi mystics who are most prevalent in Central Asia, Pakistan and India. They are known for spreading the message of peace, humanism and love. Shahbaz literally means a falcon but, within this context, is a reference to his soaring spiritual flights. So revered is he, that mystical poems sung throughout the country invoke his name. Lal Shahbaz Qalandar is known to have practiced dhamal, the mystical circling, whirling movement like that of the Turkish Mevlevi Whirling Dervishes. To this day, musicians play large kettledrums (bher) in the courtyard of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar’s tomb and dervishes do the dhamal as part of their spiritual practice every evening after prayers. Some visitors to the shrine, men and women, dance with abandon to the drumbeats to the point of trance.

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<tr>
<td>O laal meri pat rakhio bala jholle laalan Sindri da Sehwan da, sakhi Shabaaz Qalandar</td>
<td>O red robed one, may I always have your benign protection, Jhulelal. O, the lord and friend of Sindh and Sehwan, the red robed one, the Divine-intoxicated Qalandar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dama dam mast Qalandar, Ali dam dam de andar Dam mast qalandar mast mast</td>
<td>The Divine in every breath of mine, all glory to you Breathlessly enraptured, ecstatic Qalandar, ecstatic, ecstatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaar charaag tere baran hamesha, Panjwa mein baaran aayi bala Jhoolle laalan</td>
<td>Your shrine is always lit with four lamps, and here I come to light a fifth lamp in your honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O panjwa mein baalan aei, O panjwa mein baalan aayi bala</td>
<td>Here I come with the fifth O Lord, friend and Master of Sindh and Sehwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhoolle laalan, Sindri da Sehwan da, sakhi Shabaaz Qalandar Dama dam mast Qalandar, Ali dam dam de andar</td>
<td>The red robed friend and Master of Sindh and Sehwan, Divine-intoxicated Qalandar The Divine in every breath of mine, Ali’s breath in mine, glory be to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind Sind peera teri naubat vaaje, Naal vaje ghadiyaal bala jhoolle laalan, O naal vaje, O naal vaje ghadiyaal bala jhoolle laalan</td>
<td>Let the gong bells ring out your esteemed name out loud in Hind (India) and Sindh Let the gong ring out loud for your glory day and night by the watchman and people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Har dam peera teri khair hove</td>
<td>O Lord, may you prevail every time, everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindri da sehvan da sakhi Shabaaz Qalandar / Dama dam mast Qalandar, Ali dam dam de andar</td>
<td>I pray to you to help my boat cross in safety (in the river of life)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This program is part of Asia Society’s ongoing initiative, Creative Voices of Muslim Asia, a multidisciplinary initiative using the arts as a springboard to understand the diversity of Islam as a creative inspiration. Through an integrated program that brings together expertise from across the geographic and cross-disciplinary depth of the entire community and organization, Creative Voices will not only provide a platform for myriad voices and perspectives, but will provide audiences with the context for a deeper understanding of Islamic artists and their societies.
For more information please visit asiasociety.org/creativevoices

Co-presented with Caravanserai: A place where cultures meet, a groundbreaking, multi-year, US national initiative conceived by Arts Midwest that celebrates global diversity while building bridges to a better tomorrow through a series of artistic residencies and public programs. The focus of Caravanserai’s first edition is Pakistan. Since fall 2011, through the spring of 2012, some of Pakistan’s finest artists have toured the US sharing their art and stories about Pakistan with different communities.

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