



Classical celebration of cross-cultural composers

by ASJAD NAZIR

THIS year's Leeds Lieder Festival, taking place from April 13 to 21, is filled with musically rich shows across the city that includes the world premiere of *Punjabi Proverbs* at the Sikh Centre.

The brand-new work by Cheryl Frances-Hoad features soprano Nina Kanter, baritone Oscar Castellino and pianist Keval Shah.

Written especially for the 2024 festival, the event on April 16 celebrates the cross-cultural art of British and Indian composers and poets.

Eastern Eye caught up with acclaimed soprano Kanter to discuss the unique show, her love for opera and creative inspirations.

What first connected you to music?

I come from a musical family and grew up surrounded by classical music. My grandmother was a Czech pianist who gave me my first piano lessons.

My parents took me and my sister (also a singer) to concerts and operas even as young children. We sang in children's choirs and took part in lots of music summer schools. We were very lucky in that way.

What specifically drew you to opera?

I fell in love with opera as an undergraduate, particularly the raw emotional power of operatic voices.

I was used to singing choral music in churches, which is all about control and

blending as a group. Opera is something completely different: the extremes of human emotion portrayed with big musical brushstrokes. When it's done well, the audience feels this passion too, even in a big theatre.

Can you tell us about the *Punjabi Proverbs* show?

This is my first time collaborating with the pianist Keval Shah and baritone Oscar Castellino and it has been fantastic working with them.

We have put together this programme to showcase the dialogue between Indian and western classical music in song and poetry.

As we are performing in the Sikh Cultural Centre, we wanted to focus on writers with links to the Sikh community, such as (Ra-

bindranath) Tagore, Kabir and Mirabai, set by British and Indian-American composers. These works complement the new songs. We are really excited to be premiering *Punjabi Proverbs* by Cheryl Frances-Hoad, written especially for this concert.

What excites you most about this particular programme?

It has been really exciting for us to put together this programme, which showcases artistic exchange between Indian and western classical styles, and to perform it for a local audience.

It is always great to work on projects like this which push boundaries, while bringing communities together.

How does this project compare to your other works?

I have performed concerts of Indian and western classical songs before in India and sang a little in the Indian classical vocal style for those.

This programme is focused specifically on Sikh culture and connections with British and American composers.

Who do you hope will enjoy the show?

We hope that this concert will speak to everyone, but particularly the local Sikh community who is giving us the opportunity to perform in its centre.

We are privileged to perform this programme in that space and hope that we can do it justice.

Have you learned anything new while working on this show?

It's been wonderful to discover this repertoire. It will be my first time singing in Punjabi and Hindi, so that is an exciting challenge for me.

I'm also happy to get a chance to work on singing in the Indian classical vocal style alongside western classical.

Do you experience nervousness before performing?

I do get nervous, but have learned to manage this. Also, nerves are a sign of caring deeply about the music.

What inspires you creatively?

I am inspired by artists who dare to push boundaries and do something new, whether that be in programming, composing or performing.

I also feel inspired when I work in community music settings, which often



ANGELIC VOICE:
Nina Kanter

gives you an instant connection with an audience. The power of music is very present in those settings.

What do you think is the secret to generating power and emotion in your voice as a soprano?

I think that connecting with text and storytelling is key to this. If you feel the emotions of the narrative, this will translate into your singing and the audience will feel this.

Why should we all come and watch the *Punjabi Proverbs* show?

Many reasons. The concert on April 16

will give the audience a chance to hear a world premiere of new songs, alongside works which are not so often performed and speak to each other across cultures and time.

The Sikh Centre will be the perfect venue to experience the show.

We are hoping the concert will showcase part of the history of Indian and western classical musical dialogue, and that this is still developing in exciting new ways.

Punjabi Proverbs at the Sikh Centre, 192 Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 4HZ on April 16. www.leedslieder.org.uk

WHAT'S ON

■ Please check before booking or attending.

LIVE PERFORMANCE

MEHEK

When: Until Sunday, April 7
Where: Peepul Centre, Orchardson Avenue, Leicester LE4 6DP
What: Leading dancers Aakash Odedra and Aditi Mangaldas present a show centred around a love story between mature woman and a younger man. Check website for further tour dates in Birmingham (9), London (12-13), Salford (16) and Newcastle (19)
www.aditimangaldasdance.com

ROSHNI

When: Saturday, April 6
Where: Belgrade Theatre, Belgrade Square, Coventry CV1 1GS
What: An intimate crafting of dance and live music, made up of three distinctive and engaging pieces, which explore the highs and lows of life today.
www.belgrade.co.uk

THE SONU NIGAM SHOW

When: Sunday, April 7
Where: Resorts World Arena, Perimeter Road, Birmingham B40 1NT
What: Popular Indian singer Sonu Nigam concludes another UK tour with a full live band, performing his greatest hits along with much-loved classics.
www.resortsworldarena.co.uk

NITIN SAWHNEY

When: Monday and Tuesday, April 8 - 9
Where: Town Hall, Victoria Square, Birmingham B3 3DQ; and Brighton Dome, Church St, Brighton BN1 1UE
What: The acclaimed British Asian music maestro presents his latest show with a full live band.
www.bmusic.co.uk

BRIDGERTON MEETS BOLLYWOOD STRINGS

When: Friday, April 12
Where: The City Rooms, 16 Hotel Street, Leicester LE1 5AW
What: Bollywood Strings will take you on a journey of love and dance, featur-

ing songs from *Bridgerton*, Bollywood films and all-time Indian classics.
www.eventbrite.co.uk

NRITYA UTSAVA

When: Sunday, April 14
Where: The Bhavan, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HE
What: A grand evening of dance featuring technical pieces as well as Abhinaya pieces of the Kathak repertoire.
www.bhavan.net

BRIGHTSTARS GEETMALA

When: Saturday, April 20
Where: Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 2UE
What: Bollywood concert with full live band, headlined by acclaimed Indian singers Gauri Kavi and Sanjay Sarwant, featuring evergreen hits.
www.trafalgartickets.com

ALWAYS & FOREVER

When: Sunday, April 21
Where: The Y Theatre, 7 East Street, Leicester LE1 6EY
What: A melodious tribute to late great Bollywood legends Mohammed Rafi and Kishore Kumar, featuring Shahid Abbas Khan, Abira Shah, Anj Chauhan and Nimesh Sanghoi.
www.luventertainment.co.uk

AFREEN AFREEN

When: Friday, April 26
Where: Brent Hub Enterprise Centre, 6 Hillside, London NW10 8BN
What: An evening of Sufi music featuring Qalandar Qawwali Band. Tickets include dinner along with great food and live music.
www.planyourentertainment.com

THEATRE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A TEENAGE ARMAGEDDON

When: Until Sunday, April 28
Where: Garrick Theatre, 2 Charing Cross Road, London, WC2H 0HH
What: *Bridgerton* actress Charithra Chandran makes her West End debut

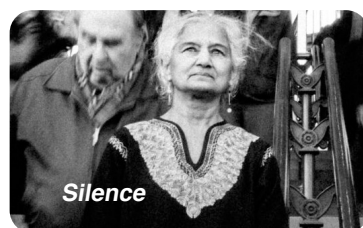
in this rollercoaster story of a teenage misfit dealing with the death of her sister and challenges of growing up.
www.thegarricktheatre.co.uk

MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE

When: Until Saturday, April 6
Where: Grand Theatre, 33 Church Street, Blackpool FY1 1HT
What: Bold stage version of Hanif Kureishi's Oscar-nominated screenplay about a British Pakistani living during Thatcher's Britain who transforms a run-down laundrette and finds love in the most unlikely place.
www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk

MRS KAPOOR'S DAUGHTER'S WEDDING 2 MAURITIUS

When: Saturday, April 6 - Sunday, April 7
Where: Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 2UE
What: Another chance to see the fun-filled follow up to popular theatre play *Mrs Kapoor's Daughter's Wedding*, which sees a dysfunctional family planning a destination wedding.
www.trafalgartickets.com



SILENCE

When: Saturday, April 6 - Saturday, April 13
Where: Queen's Theatre, Billet Lane, Hornchurch RM11 1QT
What: Theatre adaptation of Kavita Puri's acclaimed book *Partition Voices: Untold British Stories*, which is inspired by remarkable personal testimonies of people who lived through the last days of the British Raj.
www.taratheatre.com

COMEDY

ROMESH RANGANATHAN: HUSTLE

When: Wednesday, April 10 - Thursday, April 11
Where: Empire Theatre, Lime Street, Liverpool L1 1JE
What: The stand-up comedian continues his mammoth UK tour with the new stand-up show examining the human condition. Check website for further tour dates and availability.
www.romeshranganathan.co.uk

THE MUSLIMS ARE COMING

When: Sunday, April 14
Where: Frog and Bucket Comedy Club, 102 Oldham Street, Manchester M4 1LJ
What: The popular stand-up comedy show starts another UK tour with top talents Tez Ilyas, Faizan Shah, Aatif Nawaz and Nabil Abdulrashid.
www.luventertainment.co.uk

INDIA VS PAKISTAN - STAND-UP COMEDY SHOW

When: Sunday, April 21
Where: Pinner Village Hall, Chapel Lane, Pinner HA5 1AA
What: Hindi/Urdu stand-up comedy night featuring the hilarious duo, Salman Malik and Ankit Grover.
www.eventbrite.com

EVENTS

MUSLIM SINGLES MIXER

When: Sunday, April 21
Where: Chai Inc, The Cheetham Hill Shopping Centre, Manchester M8 5EL
What: A fun and relaxed in-person event designed for single Muslims aged 23-37 to meet, connect, and potentially find your life partner.
www.eventbrite.com

INDIAN SUPPERCLUB

When: Saturday, April 6
Where: River Heights, 90 High Street, London E15 2FU
What: A three-course tasting menu of Dakhni Indian cuisine in a relaxed friendly atmosphere, accompanied by soothing melodies of vintage Bollywood vinyl records.
www.eventbrite.com

CLASSES

BOLLYWOOD DANCE CLASS

When: Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20, 27
Where: CRATE, 35 Saint James Street, London E17 7FY
What: Fun Bollywood dance class focusing on movement and mindfulness.
www.eventbrite.com

SRI LANKAN COOKERY CLASS

When: Monday, April 8
Where: Migrateful Cookery School, Corporation Row, London EC1R 0HU
What: Chef Shereem teaches delicious, authentic Sri Lankan cooking followed by a sit-down meal in a family friendly atmosphere.
www.eventbrite.com

SIMPLE INDIAN COOKERY COURSE

When: Saturday, April 20
Where: Hounslow, London
What: A practical homestyle cooking course on how to prepare a variety of Indian dishes using spices.
www.cookingwithmonisha.com

INDIAN HATHA YOGA, PRANAYAMA & MANTRA

When: Saturday, April 27
Where: Globe House Yoga, The Tanneries Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3XL
What: A two-hour hands-on immersive Hatha Yoga workshop teaching different Pranayama breathing techniques, asanas, and transformative mantra meditation.
www.eventbrite.com



Salman Malik