



Orchestral Qawwali Project to return to Royal Albert Hall

Two years after its sold-out debut, **Orchestral Qawwali Project**, with lead support from the **Bagri Foundation**, will make its highly anticipated return to the **Royal Albert Hall** on Saturday 24 October. Joining the Hall's associate artists **Rushil Ranjan** and **Abi Sampa** for the event will be the **BBC Concert Orchestra**, **London Voices** and conductor **Melvin Tay**.

Written and directed by critically acclaimed composer and arranger Rushil Ranjan, the Project showcases the soaring vocals of Abi Sampa and re-imagines centuries-old Sufi traditions by blending Western classical and South Asian musical forms alongside Indian classical dance. With a new choral focus, the production will debut brand new repertoire and continue its exploration of universal spirituality, bringing together artists, traditions and communities in celebration of shared human experience.

The announcement also follows the huge success of **AR Rahman's** recent three night residency alongside Ranjan earlier this month.

Rushil Ranjan said, "There are certain voices and sounds that seem to reach for the same thing, even when they come from worlds apart. The Orchestral Qawwali Project began from that idea. This new show will be our most artistically ambitious to date, building on that idea of blurring the lines between these different art forms. The Royal Albert Hall is the only place that this happens at the scale we've dreamt of. We cannot wait for audiences to experience it."

Abi Sampa said, "As a singer, I don't think I'll ever get over how incredible it is to perform on the Royal Albert Hall stage. Our last show redefined who we were as artists and I think this one will do so even more. It's going to be entirely new material that audiences have never heard before. Premiering at a scale that they haven't experienced before. It's a privilege to be able to do it and I can't wait to share it with you all."

Matt Todd, Director of Programming at the Royal Albert Hall, said, "We're proud that the Hall has become a space which regularly brings cultures together for special, shared experiences, and it is

needed more now than ever. The ongoing collaboration with our associate artists Abi and Rushil has been a true testament to that as their Orchestral Qawwali Project celebrates both Indian and Sufi art forms to create exciting new works and arrangements. The concert they both put together in 2024 was truly extraordinary, so we're incredibly excited for this event in October and can't wait to see what they have in store for us this time around."

Dr Alka Bagri, Trustee of the Bagri Foundation, said, "When the Orchestral Qawwali Project first took to the Royal Albert Hall stage in 2024, Rushil Ranjan and Abi Sampa created something truly magical. Their work honours the spiritual depth of qawwali while opening it up to new audiences through orchestral music, Indian classical dance and a profound sense of shared emotion. The Bagri Foundation is delighted to continue this journey with them as they return to the Hall as Associate Artists, and we are proud to champion a project that is both deeply rooted in tradition and boldly contemporary in spirit."

The significance of the 2024 Orchestral Qawwali concert led to both Ranjan and Sampa being appointed as the Hall's associate artists the following year, as the upcoming performance highlights the continuation of the duo's work alongside the Royal Albert Hall to celebrate Sufi music.

Widely regarded as the biggest step forward for the art form in decades, the Orchestral Qawwali Project has experienced a meteoric rise to prominence in recent years, captivating audiences through its unique combination of Sufi poetry, Indian Classical dance, and orchestral arrangements. These combined elements create a deeply universal sound encapsulating qawwali's original intention – to lead the listener to spiritual rapture.

The Bagri Foundation has continued to play a vital role in championing Rushil Ranjan and Abi Sampa's journey, having supported their debut Royal Albert Hall performance in 2024, their current residency and as co-commissioner of their recent collaboration with AR Rahman.

The concert will be recorded and broadcast as a special edition of Friday Night Is Music Night on both BBC Radio 3 and BBC Asian Network on Friday 30th October at 7.30PM

Tickets for **Orchestra Qawwali Project** priced from £30 go on sale at 10am on Friday 22 May from www.royalalberthall.com, with a pre-sale for the venue's Friends and Patrons opening 24 hours earlier.

ENDS

Listings info:

Royal Albert Hall
Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AP
www.royalalberthall.com

Orchestral Qawwali Project

Saturday 24 October, 7:30pm
Tickets from £30

Image: <https://rah.resourcespace.com?r=128247&k=90efbefc64>

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About the Royal Albert Hall:

The Royal Albert Hall is the world's most famous stage. For 155 years, it has played host to legendary artists, from Giuseppe Verdi to Beyoncé.

About the Bangri Foundation:

The Bangri Foundation, established in 1990, is a family foundation driven by a spirit of curiosity. Our vision is to cultivate a meaningful space for Asian culture to thrive, shift perspectives and deepen connections.

The Foundation works within a network of leading cultural organisations who share this mission, to give artists and experts from across Asia, wider visibility on the global stage. We champion diverse artistic initiatives that challenge and inspire us and our audiences. Through grants and strategic partnerships, we realise unique, high-quality programmes which share traditional and contemporary Asian culture.

Recent projects include support for the major exhibition *Asian Bronze: 4000 years of Beauty* at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; *Myths, Dreams and New Realities* featuring 13 emerging Asian artists co-curated with the Saatchi Gallery; a co-production, *Thikra: Night of Remembering*, by Akram Khan Company; and the first retrospective outside of India of Arpita Singh's work at the Serpentine Gallery, London.

In addition to the arts programme, three generations of the family continue to support education, relief work, development and healthcare.

About the BBC Concert Orchestra

The mission of the BBC Concert Orchestra is to bring inspiring musical experiences to everyone, everywhere, with the ensemble's versatility as the key. The orchestra performs at the BBC Proms, regularly at London's Southbank Centre, Nottingham Royal Concert Hall, and at other venues across the UK and beyond. For BBC Radio 3, the BBC CO explores a wide selection of music ranging from classical to contemporary and can be heard weekly on BBC Radio 3's Friday Night Is Music Night. Additionally, the orchestra has performed on countless BBC soundtracks, including Blue Planet and Call the Midwife, and each February the orchestra collaborates with world-leading artists for BBC Radio 2's Piano Room Month for BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds. They are also involved in BBC Ten Pieces, the BBC Young Composer competition and the BBC Open Music programme.

About BBC Asian Network:

BBC Asian Network is the home of British Asian music, culture and stories - a space shaped by the many communities, languages and creative traditions that make up the UK's South Asian diaspora. As the nation's leading Asian music radio station, Asian Network champions British Asian identity, amplifies underrepresented voices and provides a national platform for both emerging and established artists.

The station reflects the breadth and evolution of British Asian sound, showcasing everything from contemporary fusion and global influences to homegrown genres that continue to redefine what Asian music means in the UK today.

A multi-platform broadcaster, Asian Network supports British Asian and international artists across radio, YouTube and social media - reaching over 500,000 weekly listeners and more than two million people online, connecting audiences through shared creativity, culture and storytelling.

About BBC Radio 3

BBC Radio 3 is the home of classical music. From concerts and festivals across the UK, to the annual BBC Proms every summer, the station brings to audiences a wealth of live classical music that you will not hear anywhere else.

Radio 3 also showcases a range of other genres, with British jazz every weeknight courtesy of 'Round Midnight, to global and early music, ambient, electronic, experimental, and all that's in between. Whether it is music to challenge and intrigue, or to relax and contemplate to – we welcome you to join us on BBC Sounds, on your smart speaker, on DAB, and on FM.

Alongside our live music offering, Radio 3's programming includes lively arts debate and news, fascinating documentaries, and essays. We celebrate the breadth – and the best – of music from across the country and, thanks to our membership of the European Broadcasting Union, from across the continent too. BBC Radio 3 brings a fresh perspective to well-loved artistic works and invests in new talent, bringing cutting-edge culture to audiences everywhere. Each year, the station commissions a raft of new pieces from a range of composers, and champions young artists through partnerships and the BBC's own talent development programmes, including the world-renowned New Generation Artists scheme.

Radio 3 is the UK's only broadcaster of live classical concerts, including every note of the BBC Proms – from the Royal Albert Hall and from venues across the UK. Specially-recorded music is at the heart of what the station offers daily, whether in Classical Live on weekday afternoons, Opera on 3 on Saturday nights, to Radio 3 In Concert, Choral Evensong and much more. Our presenters welcome listeners with their wealth of musical knowledge - from Petroc Trelawny, Soweto Kinch, Georgia Mann, Katie Derham, Jools Holland, Tom Service, Tom McKinney to name a few, plus a wide range of guest contributors bringing their range of insight and expertise.

Our BBC Sounds stream Radio 3 Unwind brings a whole new schedule of specially-curated programmes, including Cinematic Soundtracks with Edith Bowman, Classical Unwind with Dr Sian Williams, and Soundwaves celebrating the best of new music with Afrodeutsche, plus our hugely-popular Night Tracks, Ultimate Calm and the Music and Meditation Podcast.

For regular listeners and for those tuning into the station for the first time, there's a Radio 3 for everybody.