



NEWS RELEASE

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From Obscurity to Collaborations with Marsalis and Strep

Pakistani Jazz Ensemble with a Phenomenal Story Launches Season Celebrating Muslim Diversity

Miami, Oct. 16, 2017 – Miami Dade College’s (MDC) MDC Live Arts, Miami’s most eclectic performing arts series, launches their 2017-18 Season, *Ojala/ Inshallah: Wishes from the Muslim World*, with **Song of Lahore**, a thrilling concert by **The Sachal Ensemble** at 8 p.m., on **Saturday, Nov. 4**, at the **Olympia Theater**.

Inspired by the acclaimed documentary film of the same name by two-time Academy Award-winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Andy Schocken, **Song of Lahore** concert offers cross-cultural re-creations of iconic songs by Duke Ellington, The Beatles, Dave Brubeck and Henry Mancini, as well as traditional Pakistani folk songs. And as remarkable as their sound is— it is the story behind it that is truly awe-inspiring.

The musicians of The Sachal Ensemble come from the Pakistani city of Lahore, for hundreds of years a thriving center of the arts. By the 1960s and 1970s, it was the home of “Lollywood,” the Pakistani equivalent of India’s Bollywood film production center, employing many musicians who were virtuosos on their instruments and had developed a distinctive sound and sensibility. But in 1977, with the establishment of a conservative regime, non-religious music was discouraged or forbidden. Esteemed musicians were soon out of work and facing persecution, having to hide their instruments away to take jobs in coffee shops or driving rickshaws.

“We were losing our instruments, losing our musicians, losing our culture – something had to be done about it,” said Sachal Ensemble Producer, **Izzat Majeed**.

In the early 2000s, Izzat Majeed convened a devoted group of surviving Lahori musicians to rehearse and record privately within his Sachal Studios – to revive their tradition. They made recordings of classical and folk music at first; but, with local listeners for the music having dwindled away, the group began to make music for a global audience, outside Pakistan. As a child, Majeed had seen the Dave Brubeck Quartet when the group stopped in Lahore on a 1950s State Department “Jazz Ambassadors” tour, leading to his lifelong love of jazz. Blending their age-old tradition with American jazz, The Sachal Ensemble created a YouTube sensation with an infectious version of “Take Five,” the iconic Brubeck hit. Brubeck himself said of the Sachal interpretation, “It’s the most interesting and different recording of ‘Take Five’ that I’ve ever heard.” The viral hit led to the Ensemble being invited to collaborate with Wynton Marsalis and his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in New York City – an intense but ultimately jubilant experience captured in the documentary.

Since then, Universal Music Classics released an East-meets-West companion album inspired by the sounds and story of the film. Produced by Grammy Award-winner Eli Wolf (Norah Jones, Robert Glasper), the album features The Sachal Ensemble in genre-bending collaborations with artists from across genres, cultures and countries, expressing a message of understanding and hope – a message central to MDC Live Arts *Ojala/ Inshallah* season, which aims at disrupting stereotypes surrounding Muslim identity. To this end, the ensemble’s Nijaat Ali articulates it best: “God willing, this will help the entire world see that Pakistanis are artists, not terrorists.”

“We are thrilled to open our season with this show—not only for its artistic merit, compelling story, and unifying message, but also as rare opportunity to offer a taste of home to members of South Florida’s Pakistani community,” said MDC’s Live Arts Executive Director, **Kathryn Garcia**.

WHAT: The Sachal Ensemble: Song of Lahore

WHEN: Saturday, Nov. 4, at 8 p.m.

WHERE: Olympia Theater
174 E. Flagler St.

- >> [Click here](#) for photos
- >> [Click here](#) for documentary trailer
- >> [Click here](#) for music video

To purchase tickets, and learn more about the 2017-18 MDC Live Arts Season, call 305-237-3010, or visit mdclivearts.org. Tickets are \$55, \$38, \$25 plus fees.

MDC Live Arts is Miami's most eclectic performing arts series. Created in 1990 as Cultura del Lobo, MDC Live Arts has a celebrated history of bringing extraordinary national and international performing artists to Miami. The annual series presents today's most exciting artists and designs meaningful engagement between these artists, the students of MDC, and the greater community. MDC Live Arts seeks artists from across the globe who push boundaries and honor traditions relevant to Miami's diverse community, and aims to offer audiences opportunities to discover new ideas, perspectives and forms of expression. For more information, please visit www.mdclivearts.org.

Ojalá/Inshallah: Wishes from The Muslim World is made possible by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art's Building Bridges Program. **The Building Bridges Program** is the grant-making arm of the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, which is an extension of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The program supports national efforts to advance relationships, increase understanding, and reduce bias between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The mission of DDFIA is to promote the study, understanding and appreciation of Muslim arts and cultures. For more information, please visit www.ddcf.org/what-we-fund/building-bridges.

The programs of MDC Live Arts are made possible with the generous support of: Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council; the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; the National Endowment for the Arts; and National Performance Network (NPN). MDC Live Arts is a Partner of the National Performance Network (NPN). Major NPN contributors include the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Amal is a National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network (NPN/VAN) Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by MDC Live Arts in partnership with Su Teatro, MACLA and NPN/VAN.

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