



MANASHNI GAVASHNI KUNASHNI

A Musical Journey into
Zoroastrian Identity

29 May 2026 | 7 pm | Kings Place

KINGS PLACE

 **SOAS**
University of London

Commissioned by



SHAPOORJI PALLONJI INSTITUTE
OF ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES

SOAS University of London

Supported by

**SOAS Impact and
Knowledge
Exchange Fund**



The World Zoroastrian Organisation



Foreword

This evening's concert forms part of the ongoing Artist in Residence Fellowship of the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS, a growing platform through which artistic practice and academic inquiry are brought into dialogue. Conceived as a space for collaboration between artists, researchers and community members, the Fellowship explores how creative expression can engage complex questions of identity, memory and religious life.

If the inaugural residency invited reflection on identity, heritage and materiality, this second iteration turns to musical practice as a means of inquiry, led by Jonathan Galton, Artist in Residence for 2025/26. A composer, pianist and anthropologist, Galton brings an interdisciplinary approach that bridges artistic practice and critical scholarship. His work is shaped by long term engagement with South Asian communities and by an interest in how music operates within social worlds, making him uniquely placed to explore the entanglements of sound and identity.

The programme of this evening emerges from the question: *How has music shaped Zoroastrian identity?* The concert recalls earlier forms of communal performance while reimagining them within a contemporary context. The inclusion of newly commissioned work alongside established repertoire underscores a commitment to fostering creative responses that both draw on and reinterpret tradition.

Grounded in principles of dialogue, accessibility and knowledge exchange, this initiative reflects the Fellowship's ambition to create an inclusive space where different generations, disciplines and perspectives can meet, challenging fixed categories and opening up new ways of thinking about religion and identity.

We are deeply grateful to the artists, collaborators and community members who have contributed their time, insight and creativity to this project. We also thank Kings Place for hosting the performance, the Impact and Knowledge Exchange team at SOAS for their financial support and valuable guidance.

With sincere appreciation and in continued dialogue,

Mariano Errichiello

Shapoorji Pallonji Lecturer in Zoroastrianism

Co-Chair and Executive Director of the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies

SOAS University of London

Curatorial Note

When I was first approached by the SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies to be their 2025/26 Artist in Residence, with a brief to focus on music and sound, my mind immediately went in two directions. On the one hand you have the Parsis' proximity to the British colonial rulers which led them to become the flag bearers of Western classical music in India. On the other hand, you have a rich body of ancient Avestan sacred texts with an inherent musicality of their own.

How do we think about these very different ideas together?

Reading about the well-established, if little-known history of variety concerts organised by Parsi music clubs in nineteenth-century Bombay, now Mumbai, I knew that we had to organise something similar in London.

Those concerts featured Hindustani classical music and (apparently!) popular songs in Burmese. Ours is slightly different, with Shakespeare songs - theatre is another Parsi preoccupation, after all - and a violin-voice dialogue that draws on the community's historic Iranian roots. Throw in an award-winning actress, an ethnomusicologist, an opera-singing priest and a couple of pianists, and we have something unique but unmistakably SOAS.

Above all, it was a joy to discover *monajats*, intimate 'conversations with God' in vernacular languages including Gujarati. It is a matter of debate how much this tradition draws on similar Islamic traditions, but whatever their origins, *monajats* are now firmly part of the Zoroastrian world. It has been an honour to work with composer Kahan Taraporevala as he has reimagined three *monajats* into art songs for baritone and piano, the third incorporating a violin part and chorus.

I have thoroughly enjoyed bringing together such a talented group of musicians to make this a reality. My heartfelt thanks go to all of them and to Natasha Dalal Lord, without whose invaluable input this concert would not have been possible. Sincere thanks also go to Mariano Errichiello for his tireless support and to the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies for funding the residency.

Jonathan Galton

Lecturer in Sociology

UCL Social Research Institute



Programme

Shakespeare Songs Op. 23 no. 1, 2, 4 and 5

(Composer: Roger Quilter)

'Fear no More the Heat o' the Sun'

'Under the Greenwood Tree'

'Take, o Take those Lips Away'

'Hey, ho, the Wind and the Rain'

Baritone – Frazan Kotwal

Piano – Jonathan Galton

Two Rhapsodies Op 79 for solo piano

(Composer: Johannes Brahms)

Piano – Firoze Madon

Banner of Kaveh

Violin – Fra Rustumji

Spoken Word – Amir Massoumian

'Morgen!' from Four Lieder Op. 27

(Composer: Richard Strauss)

Baritone – Frazan Kotwal

Violin – Fra Rustumji

Piano – Jonathan Galton

INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES

'The House of Song'

Raiomond Mirza in conversation with Jonathan Galton

'Prayer' (inspired by Ashem Vohu)

Viola – Fra Rustumji

Piano – Jonathan Galton

'Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni' (World Premiere) (Composer: Kahan Taraporevala)

'O Dadgar O Davar'

'Karu Chhoo O Dadgar'

'Khudavind Khavind'

Baritone – Frazan Kotwal

Piano – Jonathan Galton

Violin – Fra Rustumji (Khudavind Khavind only)

The Ava Choir (Khudavind Khavind only)

Performers, Composers, Organisers and Host

Nina Wadia OBE (Host) is renowned for her timeless Emmy winning sketch show *Goodness Gracious Me*, as well as for playing Zainab Masood in *Eastenders* which won her the 'Best Comedy Performance' and 'Best Onscreen Partnership' at the British Soap Awards.

Television credits include international Netflix hit *The Sandman*, Stephen Merchant's *The Outlaws*, *Death In Paradise*, *Midsomer Murders* and *Still Open All Hours* with Sir David Jason.

On film Nina starred opposite Tim Robbins in *Code 46*, Disney's *Aladdin* with Will Smith, *Bend It Like Beckham* and Bollywood hit *Namaste London*.

She has hosted *The One Show*, *The Wright Stuff*, *Remembrance Day Ceremonies* alongside Sir Michael Palin and has been a regular presenter on BBC's *Sunday Morning Live*.

Stage credits include working with Sir Mark Rylance in *Macbeth*, the West End's *Bleak Expectations*, *The Vagina Monologues*, and leading the national tour of *Now! That's What I Call A Musical*.

Kahan Taraporevala is an award-winning composer, a producer and an educator.

Born in 1999 and growing up in Mumbai and Singapore, he studied the piano from age five. Striving to bring people together through the transformative power of music, Kahan's compositions aim to engender meaningful conversations that transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Kahan's works have been performed by choirs and ensembles in the United States, Canada, and India. Kahan has a BM in Music Composition (Founders Scholar) with a Minor in Conducting from the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University (2022) and an MM in Music Composition from the University of North Texas (UNT) College of Music (2024). He is currently pursuing a PhD in composition at UNT.

Ervad Frazan Adil Kotwal is an Indian-German baritone born and raised in Mumbai and now based in Stuttgart.

A graduate of the State University of Music and Performing Arts Stuttgart, he completed both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees with distinction under Prof. Ulrike Sonntag. He is currently mentored by Sir Simon Keenlyside, Catherine Foster and Jack LiVigni.

He has performed leading roles across Europe, including the title role in Don Giovanni, Count Almaviva (Le nozze di Figaro), Marcello (La Bohème), Belcore (L'elisir d'amore) etc. earning praise for his rich, nuanced tone and commanding stage presence. Equally at home in concert and Lied, his repertoire spans Mahler, Schubert, and Strauss.

Recent highlights include a sold-out debut recital at the Royal Opera House Mumbai.

Alongside his stage work, he connects with a global audience of over 120,000 followers on Instagram, sharing opera with new and younger listeners.

Fra Rustumji is a London-based freelance musician.

She works with orchestras in London and the U.K., but she particularly loves cross-genre and experimental work. Highlight projects include: *Xenos* (Akram Khan Company), *Quiet Songs* (Finn Beames & Company: winner of the 2024 Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award), *V for Viola and Dancer* (Joss Arnott Dance), immersive installations with Roddy Skeaping and the collective (Barbican Pit Lab, and miscellaneous Manor House warehouses), *The Virtuous Circle* (Paraorchestra, BBC Proms), *Three Women* (From the Lips to the Moon).

She leads the English Touring Opera orchestra and is also a member of the Aphasia New Music Group.

Firoze Madon is an award-winning British concert pianist, performing solo recitals, concerti and chamber music across the UK and Europe.

He has appeared at prestigious venues including Wigmore Hall, Cadogan Hall, Southbank Centre and Philharmonie de Paris. Firoze has received numerous prizes, most recently winning First Prize at the Globe International Piano Competition 2026 in the Netherlands and First Prize at the Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra's Young Soloist Competition 2025. Firoze also won the Pianist's Prize at the prestigious Kathleen Ferrier Awards 2024 and first came to national attention as a Keyboard Category Finalist in BBC Young Musician 2022, with his performance broadcast on BBC Four and BBC Radio 3.

Firoze's early musical development was at the Purcell School, where he studied piano with Patsy Toh and took lessons in violin and composition. He is currently studying at the Royal College of Music in London, under the tutelage of Professors Dmitri Alexeev and Vitaly Pisarenko and is generously supported by the Kendall Taylor Scholarship.

Amir Massoumian is a social anthropologist, currently employed as a Senior Teaching Fellow in Anthropology at SOAS University of London.

Amir has taught Farsi and has translated various bodies of work involving Iranian hip-hop lyrics to English. His academic work focuses on political affects, far-right movements, masculinity and research ethics. His doctoral research examined UKIP supporters, Traditionalists and far-right sociality in London.

Amir has worked as a Research Fellow on the Archives of Solidarity project which combined ethnographic research and creative practice to explore asylum, migration and local histories of support around Napier Barracks.

Raiomond Mirza is a producer, composer, writer, podcaster and entrepreneur.

His portfolio of careers and achievements are at the nexus of music, storytelling, cinema and tech. He earned his PhD from SOAS University of London for discovering a previously lost 3,500 year old tradition of Persian religious music.

The feature films, tv shows and web series he has produced and scored include the Netflix UK top 10 film *Strangeways Here We Come*.

Raiomond's music for film, TV and radio is available on all streaming platforms.

He was nominated for BBC's new talent award, his composition for the play *Story Story* was played for the Queen on her last African tour and he scored and wrote songs for India's first indie feature *Manorama: Six Feet Under*.

He co-founded Wilow, the vertical drama app whose mission it is to transform the film/tv distribution landscape.

Natasha Dalal Lord was born and raised in a musical family in London where she learnt the piano and found joy in singing in various choirs. She later trained as a pharmacist and built a career in healthcare, but music has always been a part of her life.

When she moved to India she discovered the Mehli Mehta Music Foundation and was a dedicated teacher there for ten years. She led the wonderful Discover Music program for children aged between 2 and 6 and taught theory of music in a fun and creative way. She was very involved in all the choirs and also brought music to communities through outreach work.

Natasha gained valuable teaching experience at Panday School Primary and at Westwind pre-school in Mumbai. She advocates that introducing music at a young age supports cognitive development, creativity and confidence in children.

Jonathan Galton is a pianist and composer and the 2025/26 Shapoorji Pallonji Artist in Residence.

Recent albums include *All The Years*, for solo piano, and *Conversations for Violin and Piano*. He has written numerous songs for soprano, while more unusual works include a trio for the unexpected combination of violin, trumpet and piano, and a piano duet inspired by birdsong over running water. He regularly performs in London and further afield.

Jonathan is also a Lecturer in Sociology at the UCL Social Research Institute and, in 2023, published the ethnographic monograph *Fake Gods and False History: Being Indian in a Contested Mumbai Neighbourhood* (UCL Press). His second book, on Islam and British leftwing politics, will be published by Policy Press in 2027 and is based on postdoctoral research funded by the Leverhulme Trust.



The Ava Choir has been specially recruited for tonight's concert by Natasha Dalal Lord. Singers include members of the Zoroastrian Parsi community alongside other enthusiastic musicians who have generously agreed to take part in bringing Kahan Taraporevala's 'Khudavind Khavind' to life. Singers include:

Friyan Bajan
Liam Edwin Bradbury
Ava Canteenwala
Leila Cruickshank
Zain Cruickshank
Natasha Dalal Lord
Payandeh Daruwalla
Rukhshana Daruwalla
Farah Doctor
Iyanah Engineer
Rajiv Karia
Freyana Lord
Kiya Lord
Shazneen Munshi
Behram Printer
Malcolm Printer
Farida Seddon
Katy Taraporevala
Helena Wadia
Shernaz Wadia



In Appreciation

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