

24/
25



*riyaaz qawwali and
the harlem gospel travelers
singing together: qawwali and gospel*

Thursday, September 26, 2024, 7:30 PM

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

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riyaaz qawwali and the harlem gospel travelers

*singing together:
qawwali and gospel*

This performance is supported in part by gifts from
Ms. Deborah L. Brown and David and Judie Reemsnyder.

*This is the first performance at the Moss Arts Center for both
Riyaz Qawwali and the Harlem Gospel Travelers.*



biographies

riyaaz qawwali

Riyaaz Qawwali performs the gripping music style *qawwali*, or sufi music, and its singers represent the diversity and plurality of South Asia. The ensemble's musicians, who are settled in the United States, hail from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh and represent multiple religious and spiritual backgrounds. Trained in eastern and western classical music, the members have been performing *qawwali* professionally for the past 15 years. With conservative growth and heightened attention to quality, Riyaaz Qawwali has performed across the continental U.S. and Panama and debuted in Europe in 2017.

Riyaaz Qawwali's mission is to expose *qawwali* to new audiences while still paying homage to traditional *qawwali* that has been in existence for 700+ years. The ensemble wants to expand the reach of the genre to new stages and people of other faiths and traditions. The founding members of Riyaaz Qawwali chose the genre because it houses unique musical elements in its repertoire that are not found in any other form of South Asian music. The ensemble combines this with poetry from famous South Asian poets of multiple linguistic and religious backgrounds to create a universal message of oneness. The group incorporates works from poetic

giants like Mirza Ghalib, Amir Khusrow, Bulleh Shah, Mir Taqi Mir, Sant Kabir, and Guru Nanak, and in doing so, hopes to expose these poets' works to new audiences and younger generations. Riyaaz Qawwali also uses numerous languages — including Urdu, Punjabi, Persian, Gujarati, and Hindi — to represent the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists in South Asia. Learn more at riyaazqawwali.com.

the harlem gospel travelers

With a new album, *Rhapsody*, the extraordinary vocalists Ifedayo Gatling, Dennis Bailey, and George Marage are able to fully explore the entire range of music that influenced them. The follow-up to acclaimed 2021 release *Look Up!*, *Rhapsody* is a dive into a lesser-known but hugely important era in the evolution of gospel music.

Starting in the mid-1960s, local gospel groups and singers began incorporating elements of popular soul and funk styles, and in 2006, Chicago-based reissue label Numero Group released *Good God! A Gospel Funk Hymnal*. The Harlem Gospel Travelers' (HGT) longtime friend and mentor Eli Paperboy Reed approached the group with the idea of digging through the Numero catalog and recording some of the gospel funk material, reinterpreted in their own way — from the high-energy, old-school soul of *God's Been Good to Me*, to the hip-hop-inflected *Get Involved*.

The Harlem Gospel Travelers' story began when Gatling and Marage met while studying under Reed's tutelage. The group put out its debut LP, *He's on Time*, to rave reviews in 2019, earning it high profile fans like Elton John and landing it festival slots everywhere from Pilgrimage to Telluride Jazz. Originally a quartet, HGT brought in Bailey and reconfigured as a trio prior to recording *Look Up!*, its first album of all original material.

At a moment when the world is reconsidering the concepts of genre and category and who's allowed to participate in which traditions, HGT is squarely on the cultural pulse. "We always found it difficult to stay in this one lane of what people think gospel is supposed to be," says Gatling. "This record allowed us to hear people that were innovators in their own time, pushing how gospel music sounded, and now we've created this project that is message-wise gospel, but the feeling and the sound can be whatever you want it to be."

tell us what you think!



We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan on Wednesday, October 30, 2024.

bit.ly/qawwali-gospel-feedback

Please note, survey responses are anonymous. If you would like a response to your feedback, please email mossartscenter@vt.edu.

go deeper

What musical and thematic connections and divergences do you hear between *qawwali* and gospel, as performed by Riyaz Qawwali and the Harlem Gospel Travelers? What does the combination of these genres mean to you?

engagement events

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

LEARNING LUNCH AT THE APIDA+ CENTER

Members of Riyaz Qawwali spoke with Virginia Tech students about their musical and professional journeys as a part of this speaker series.

GATHERING WITH AURORA: INTERFAITH LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

In conversation with Sonny K. Mehta, artistic director of Riyaz Qawwali, students in this residential community that describes itself as a “home for the religious, spiritual, secular, and everyone in between” learned about the ensemble’s mission to foster interfaith and intercultural understanding through music.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

JOINT CLASS VISIT: MUSIC COMPOSITION AND THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Blending *qawwali* traditions with contemporary composition was the focus of this conversation between Riyaz Qawwali and Virginia Tech music and sociology students.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

TALK: WHAT IS QAWWALI?

Directly preceding tonight’s performance, audience members learned about the rich musical tradition of qawwali from Mehta.

Special thanks to the APIDA+ Center, Aurora Interfaith Living Learning Community, Nina Ha, JillAnn Knonenborg, and Charles Nichols

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Your gift to the Moss Arts Center helps to support access to the arts, student engagement, and cultural diversity.

Through gifts like yours, we have been able to expand opportunities for PK-12 students in our region, deepen relationships with academic partners, continue to offer \$10 tickets to performances for Virginia Tech students, and provide experiential learning opportunities for students.

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PK-12 PROGRAMS AT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER

Each year, wildly enthusiastic students — from PK through 12th grade — fill our theatre for free matinee performances by artists from all over the world. They explore our visual arts galleries during school tours and create and learn during hands-on workshops with artists. For many students, visiting the Moss Arts Center is the first time they've ever been to a performing arts facility or gallery. Why do kids need access to the arts? Engaging in artistic activities offers a wide range of skills that they will use throughout their lives.

Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

MOSS ARTS CENTER

FALL 2024
EXHIBITION



Never Spoken Again: Rogue Stories of Science and Collections

Curated by David Ayala-Alfonso of the Independent Curators International

Through Sat., Dec. 14, 2024

All galleries

Explore a traveling exhibition that reflects on the birth of modern collections, the art institutions that sustain them, and their contingent origin stories to reveal a universe of erasures, violence, and fortuity. Considering how institutional collections organize our lives, *Never Spoken Again* brings together artists whose works open up a critique of material culture, iconography, and political ecologies.

Free Related Events

Curator's Panel

Fri., Sept. 27, 11 AM

Moss Arts Center Cube

Beyond The Frame

Gallery Tours

Thurs., Oct. 10, Nov. 14,
and Dec. 12, 12 PM

Moss Arts Center Grand Lobby


Michael Rakowitz; *The invisible enemy should not exist – Seated Nude Male Figure, Wearing Belt Around Waist (IM77823) (Recovered, Missing, Stolen Series)*, 2018; Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue, and cardboard; 37.75 x 28.75 x 28.75 inches; courtesy of the artist and Barbara Wien Gallery

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland, and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that the Morrill Land-Grant College Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands in California and other areas in the West.

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Virginia Tech acknowledges that its Blacksburg campus sits partly on land that was previously the site of the Smithfield and Solitude Plantations, owned by members of the Preston family. Between the 1770s and the 1860s, the Prestons and other local White families that owned parcels of what became Virginia Tech also owned hundreds of enslaved people. Enslaved Black people generated resources that financed Virginia Tech's predecessor institution, the Preston and Olin Institute, and they also worked on the construction of its building.




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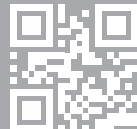
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Did You Know



- The first African-American students found sanctuary and support at the YMCA
- Y leaders assisted with education and integration of regional schools



- 1873 The YMCA forms at VT, focusing on religious and extracurricular activities for students
- 1892 71 out of 177 students of Virginia Tech are members of the YMCA
- 1893 YMCA publishes the first Student Handbook for Virginia Tech
- 1899 The cornerstone for the YMCA building, the first "Hokie Stone" building, is laid
- 1902 The YMCA building opens its doors and serves as the first Student Center at Virginia Tech

- The first female students developed a sense of community and belonging at the Y.
- Lucy Lee Lancaster was in the 1st 5 female graduates and was a champion of the Y.
- She later donated her house to the Y, where our offices are located at 403 Washington St.



First female graduates Mary Ella Carr Bradford (20), Ruth Louise Tennill (20), Sara Lee Lancaster (20), Lucile Louise (20), Carrie Taylor Skiff (20)



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