



LAKHA KHAN

TRADIZIONALE / FOLK / SUFI

RAJASTHAN (INDIA)

"No frills needed; just great playing from an Indian master" - Simon Broughton, - Songlines

Una leggenda vivente e il maestro indiscusso dei sindhi sarangi - Un tesoro nazionale, a 68 Lakha Khan è il vincitore del premio Sanata Natak Akademi per il suo contributo alla musica folk del Rajasthan e forse il più grande esponente del sindhi sarangi. Nato nel villaggio di Raneri nel distretto di Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India, in una famiglia di musicisti tradizionali della comunità dei Manganiyar, è stato addestrato in tenera età a rendere le composizioni della scuola Multan dei Manganiyars.

Le sue prime esibizioni pubbliche sono risalgono alla fine degli anni '60 e '70 in India, e sotto la guida del rinomato etnomusicologo Komal Kothari, e Lakha Khan ha fatto tour in Europa, Regno Unito, Russia e Giappone nei primi anni '90. Ha ripreso la tournée internazionale nel 2013 con il suo primo tour americano con tre tour americani e due tour europei in Belgio, Danimarca e Svezia. Oggi, Lakha Khan è uno degli ultimi Manganiyars rimasti a padroneggiare questo strumento complesso e a portare avanti la tradizione musicale secolare della musica popolare e sufi del Rajasthan e del popolo Multani.

La sua musica è davvero laica ed abbraccia sia i domini classici che quelli folk, con un vasto repertorio di canzoni che include bhajan Meera, kalaams sufi, melodie popolari hindi, e storie antiche e orali della regione, che attraversano il sub-continente indiano occidentale. Canta in più di sei lingue tra cui l'Hindi, Marwari, Sindhi, Punjabi e Multani. Dotato di una voce potente e melodica che complimenta perfettamente il suo strumento, la musica di Lakha Khan trascende i confini e invoca un'unità spirituale nell'ascoltatore. È accompagnato dal figlio Dane Khan sul dholak - il tamburo popolare indiano a doppia testa.

- Premio Sangeet Natak Akademi per il suo contributo alla musica popolare del Rajasthan, riconoscimento della Fondazione Marudhara (Kolkata)
- Si esibì al festival di Edinburgh Folk Music Festival (2011), al Amarrass Desert Music Festival (2011, 2014), al Sensational India Festival al Peabody Essex Museum (2013), al festival Old and New Dreams, Chicago (2014), Europa Primavera 2016 (Svezia, Danimarca, Belgio)
- Tre tour americani coast-to coast nel 2013, 2014 e 2017, tra cui concerti esauriti a New York City (Elebash Hall), Pittsburgh, e spettacoli all'Università di Indiana, Bloomington, Università americana, Washington DC, Università di Iowa, Università del Wisconsin -Madison.
- I suoi album 'At Home: Lakha Khan' (Amarrass Records, 2012) e 'Lakha Khan: Live in Nashville' (Amarrass Records, 2014) hanno ricevuto recensioni entusiastiche da fROOTS ("Top 5 Rajasthani albums"), Songlines (4 stelle per entrambi gli album), The Chicago Tribune, Nashville Scene...
- Artista in primo piano su "Mitha Bol" (2011, Amarrass Records), nominato "Folk Album of the Year" al Global Indian Music Awards 2012

Groupe Size: 2 musicians + 1 manager

- Lakha Khan: Sindhi Sarangi / Voce
- Dane Khan: Dholak



NEW DELHI

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MAKING MUSIC
SUSTAINABLE

STREAMING: lakhakhan.bandcamp.com/album/at-home-lakha-khan
FOTO STAMPA: <https://app.box.com/s/pwb80pkfet96m1gicl84>

DISCOGRAFIA:



AT HOME
2013, AMARRASS RECORDS
"Incandescent Sufi voices that incite ecstasy" - Songlines ★★★★★



LIVE IN NASHVILLE
2013, AMARRASS RECORDS
"No frills needed; just great playing from an Indian master" - Simon Broughton, - Songlines

Kontakt:

Marisa Segala +45-25 61 82 82
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LAKHA KHAN

PLAYED AT

ESPACE SENGHOR - Bruxelles, Belgium

VIKTORIEATEARN, MIX MUSIK, Malmö, Sweden

EDINBURGH FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL, Scotland

AMARRASS DESERT MUSIC FESTIVAL, New Dehli, India

SENSATIONAL INDIA FESTIVAL, Peabody Essex Museum,

OLD AND NEW DREAMS FESTIVAL, Chicago, USA

TWO COAST-TO-COAST US TOURS - 2013 and 2014

TESTIMONIALS

"In the master's hand, the Sufi-influenced melody he coaxes from it (the sarangi) is transformative" - *Michael Sullivan on National Public Radio (NPR) Weekend Edition.*

4 Stars for Lakha Khan: Live in Nashville - *Songlines#106*

"His songbook contains the roots of India's national popular music"
- *Aaron Cohen, Chicago Tribune*

"At Home is a superb set of field recordings"
- *Peter Margasak, Chicago Reader*

"Lakha Khan's At Home documents the master musician's art with a series of field recordings." - *Edd Hurt, Nashville Scene*

"Respect and almost reverence" "Having been part of the state feels like a privilege." - *Alexander Agrell*

"... we witnessed wild and expressive art from the two from the small town far in Rajasthan's desert." - *Torben Holleufer, Gaffa*

VIDEO

Live in Nashville:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=34&v=wYe7Yu86zd4

At Home:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldqFP5iNr5Y>

"Raag Shree" - Viktoriaeatern, Malmö:

"Rag Shree" è un raga nord indiano molto antico e raramente rappresentato, interpretato da Lakha Khan il 23 marzo 2016 a Viktoriaeatern, Malmö, Svezia in omaggio alle vittime degli attacchi terroristici di Bruxelles, Belgio nel marzo 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moBKujeAmil>

"Barsalo" - at Viktoriaeatern, Malmö:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB3zLsNpD-w>

AWARDS

SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI AWARD for his contribution to Rajasthani folk music, Marudhara Foundation (Kolkata) recognition

STREAMING

Bandcamp:

<http://lakhakhan.bandcamp.com/album/at-home-lakha-khan>

IN PRIMO PIANO IN:

'Mitha Bol' (2011, Amarrass Records), nominato 'Folk Album of the Year' al Global Indian Music Awards 2012

FOTO STAMPA

<https://app.box.com/s/pwb8opkft96m1gicl84>

RAJASTHANI FOLK MUSIC

Reviving Rajasthan's Folk

As traditional patronage dwindles, Rajasthan's traditional musicians are devising new and inventive ways to find different audiences. **Eloise Stevens** talks to Lakha and Kutle Khan



At the tranquil hub of the Lodi Garden Restaurant in central Delhi, Lakha Khan swoops the bow of his *sarangi* into the first melancholic notes of the acclaimed 'Kesariya Balam'. All he can see from the stage are the lanterns hanging like fireflies from the trees. The audience, he knows, sits serenely beneath them, attentively nibbling on pitta bread and babaganoush. Before he has even begun the verse, an elderly, suited gentleman has placed 1,000 rupees – five days' minimum wage – before his crossed legs.

As a 70-year-old member of the Manganiyar community, an ancient musical caste from Rajasthan, Lakha Khan is delighted that his community's traditional folk songs are being recognised in this way. Since medieval times, the low-caste Manganiyars, among other musical communities, such as the Langas and the Dholis, have been performing for the high-class Rajputs, auspiciously called upon to inaugurate their births, marriages and funerals. The majority of their songs were tales of local folk legends or of worship to the

huge pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses, but it was recitals of their patrons' genealogies that were their greatest trump card. These oral family trees, into which are woven a number of Rajput conquests, are the official validation of these families' power. The musicians would be rewarded with enough food for the year, but if they had really excelled themselves, they might find a camel or a sum of gold delivered to their door a few days later.

Yet since Independence, this sort of patronage has been ebbing away. Many Rajputs are migrating to the cities where they no longer need to call on traditional musicians, and are quickly gaining a taste for Bollywood and Westernised music. Lakha Khan is painfully aware that the token of appreciation placed before him is a direct result of 'Kesariya Balam', which skyrocketed in popularity after featuring in the hit Bollywood film *Dor*.

As Bollywood permeates even the furthest flung corners of India, it is the glitzier versions of these folk songs that stick in both the musicians' and the listeners' imaginations. Consequently the traditional repertoire is gradually shrinking, especially in the hotels and desert resorts of Rajasthan, where musicians are eager to please urban and international tourists with renditions of the 'hits'. But Lakha-ji is determined to continue playing the vast traditional repertoire, songs he has been learning since first picking up a sarangi aged 12. "We can't forget the old song book," he says about these *ragas*, "I want to get them out as much as possible."

Fortunately for Lakha, a master of the Sindh sarangi, an ancient 27-stringed instrument that originated in Sindh Pakistan, he has full reign of his output. His talent, under the guidance of the late ethnomusicologist Komal Kothari, and now the record label Amarrass, has earned him a loyal and robust audience. Yet not, as one might expect, in India. Aside from the fact that Western



Main image: Kutle Khan and friends playing at last year's Songlines Music Travel trip; above: Lakha Khan performing in Delhi

Duncan Campbell

New from BUDA



EFREN LOPEZ
El Fill del Llop
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First solo album by Efrén Lopez, the talented multi-instrumentalist who has notably played alongside Stelios Petrakis and Bijan Chemirani, and in L'Ham de Foc, Aman Aman, etc. Catalonia, Spain, Turkey, Greece...



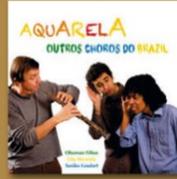
PALENQUE LA PAPAYERA
Ramon en Palenque
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Stemming from the Colombian diaspora in Switzerland, Palenque la Papayera present Colombia's Caribbean tradition.



DJELI MOUSSA CONDÉ
Womama
860269

With this audacious repertoire that takes African music into new realms, Djeli asserts his maturity as a singer, between traditional and modern music



AQUARELA
Outros Chros do Brasil
860270

Three virtuoso musicians, two Brazilians, Edu Miranda (bandolim) and Tuniko Goulart (guitar) and a Frenchman, Oboman Fillon (oboe, oboe d'amore, English horn)



KALA JULA: SAMBA DIABATÉ & VINCENT ZANETTI
Sangoyi
860267

When they created the duo, Samba and Vincent called it 'Kala Jula' (the nomadic archer) as a tribute to the ancestors of the Diabate griots. But a part of his byname was missing. Tradition has added the qualificative 'sangoyi' ('ardent') – a direct reference to the passionate and intense character of his ancestors' speech



STELIOS PETRAKIS QUARTET
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Another rich, original, acoustic album by the amazing Cretan « lyra » player & quartet, with Greek, Turkish & Bulgarian roots. Plus bonus DVD



TAREK ABDALLAH
Wasla
4704634

Virtuoso Egyptian master with riqq (Arab tambourine) accompaniment by the great Adel Shams el Din, presents 3 engrossing classically-based « wasla » compositions



BKO QUINTET
Bamako Today
3796618

Malian griot guitar, Bambara lute, and master percussionists fuse an urban style rooted in rural tradition. Plus bonus DVD

and Bollywood music is increasingly preferred for celebrations, caste prejudice still simmers away at his rural gigs. "In the US, the UK and France, the audience really knows and understands the music – even without the language," Lakha Khan claims.

It's difficult to know, however, if Lakha-ji's hard work and dedication will be able to set the precedent for a steady income for future generations. Though he has taught his two sons, one has given up playing due to an accident while the other has taken to driving a cab to make a living, but has since returned to accompanying his father on the *dholak* drum and is hopeful for his own son, who is constantly listening at his grandfather's feet, experimenting on the instrument whenever Lakha-ji leaves it unattended. It remains to be seen if he is talented enough to make a living in the fickle music industry, let alone just by playing the traditional repertoire.

Someone who has crafted a glittering career in the realm of Indian pop is fellow Manganiyar musician, Kutle Khan. He quickly realised that playing traditional songs in their original arrangements was not going to garner him any attention, so he set about adapting them.

Just like the intricate *havelis* (merchant houses) of Jaisalmer, with their delicate stonework, traditional Rajasthani folk music is, both rhythmically and melodically, highly ornate. Many of the songs are composed in irregular time signatures, with five, nine or 14 beats, and layered with vocals that soar up and down the raga scales with astonishing elasticity. "I really love the old songs," Kutle explains, "But young people don't want old songs. Nobody understands these 10-beat songs. They say, 'What is this? Kutle, finish!' So what we do?" Sitting on his rooftop, with the Jaisalmer fort rising impressively from the sandcastle city in the background, Kutle regales me with his rather colourful solution.

"Moumal was a very beautiful princess from Jaisalmer..." She had many suitors but was reluctant to marry, and so placed a tiger and a great vat of yoghurt outside her door, declaring that anyone who could drink the yoghurt and fight the tiger would have her hand in marriage. "How can you drink 10 litres of yoghurt? Not possible. But one guy from Amarkot,



unplugging music

Mehendra, comes along." Mehendra so successfully hypnotises the tiger that he manages to convince it to drink the yoghurt, allowing Mehendra to stroll into Moumal's room and propose to her.

The original song is beautifully tender, its 14-beat rhythm adding further grit to Mehendra's determination to woo his princess. But Kutle's new version, 'Twilight', a collaboration with Delhi-based electronic duo Midival Punditz, is a thumping 4-beat rendition with almost 350,000 views on YouTube.

When asked if he is doing this for commercial reasons or for artistic ones, he instantly replies, "artistic." A brief pause. "Artist tactic." Clearly he remains divided on the legacy this may be leaving for the next generation. He has observed how Bollywood songs are rapidly becoming the dominant repertoire of his children and is concerned for the traditional songs. His own repertoire is already vastly smaller than his father's. "Old songs are not dead now but maybe I think, in 200 years time, they'll be gone." Interestingly, according to a study by Komal Kothari, literacy seems to be inversely proportional to memory of these songs. As Manganiyar men are increasingly educated, so their ability to retain lyrics and melodies in their heads seems to diminish. To counter this, Kutle is currently planning to set up a school and studio in Jaisalmer to teach the local Manganiyar children the traditional songs, ensuring they learn the complex rhythms and melodies. He is receiving support from benefactors based in Jaipur, Delhi and Mumbai as well, but progress appears slow.

His touring schedule is jam-packed with destinations as diverse as Canada and Dubai, leaving him only a few days a month at home in Jaisalmer. It would seem that, professionally, his approach is the most viable compromise between the traditional repertoire and the innovated songs. Purists and faithful patrons undoubtedly mourn this shift, as well as the decline of the traditional repertoire, "but as long as you are getting some of the songs out, people are getting to know about them," says Ashutosh of Amarrass. "Those who want to will do their research and find the original tunes, but they weren't aware of what to look for until now."

As long as these songs, both old and new, retain their virtuosity and acoustic diversity, they are all the more likely to keep their faithful, if not mainstream, audience. It is that intangible desert soul that may just be the key to the survival of this ancient heritage. The Manganiyars', Langas' and Dholis' music, as Kutle would say, is an "automatic God gift," and that's not the kind of gift that gets given away too lightly. ♦

+ DATES *The Songlines Music Travel trip to Rajasthan in October includes a performance by Kutle Khan. See p18*



Lakha Khan

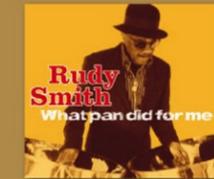
Amarrass Records

New from Discovery



ANNA & ELIZABETH
Anna & Elizabeth
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Elizabeth LaPrelle, from Virginia, and Baltimore-based Anna Roberts-Gevalt are highly compelling singers, and musicians, shedding new light on old time and Appalachian folk traditions.



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Caprice CAP21839

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MEC YEK
Super Diver City
Choux de Bruxelles CHOU1502

Mec Yek, the Roma duo, with members of Jaune Toujours, present new & reworked traditional songs + an Amy Winehouse cover - all mixed by Shazalazakoo, the Balkan Beats duo.



SLANG & PURBAYAN CHATTERJEE
Pace of Mind
Zig Zag World SL.005

The fiery Belgian jazz-world-rock trio join forces with the acclaimed, young, Indian sitar player, with breath-taking results. Reviewed in this issue.



CURRO PINANA
El Alma Lastimada y Otros Poemas
Karonte KAR7740

The outstanding Flamenco singer delivers interpretations of verses by the 11th Century Sephardic Jewish poet, Ibn Gabirol, in this 3rd album of his acclaimed trilogy.



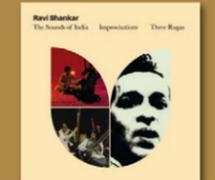
VARDAN HOVANISSIAN / EMRE GULTEKIN
Adana
Muziek Publique MUZIEK006

Two master musicians: Armenian duduk player & Turkish saz player + guests, offer their inspired, poignant tribute on the centenary of the Armenian genocide. Reviewed in this issue.



DINA EL WEDIDI
Turning Back
Kirkelig Kulturverks FXCD406

The Egyptian singer, musician, songwriter & actress fuses Bossa Nova, Arabic, jazz & world music - with guests Gilberto Gil & the group Mazaher. Reviewed in this issue.



RAVI SHANKAR
Sounds of India + Improvisations + Three Ragas
Minuet 428406

3 complete albums recorded between 1956 & 1962, on a remastered 2CD set, with guests Bud Shank, Gary Peacock, & Louis Hayes on 'Improvisations'. Reviewed in this issue.

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ARTS & STYLES

A Film Star Reassesses Commitment to Acting

By PATRICK HEALY

Jake Gyllenhaal made a deal with himself 10 years ago: for every three movies he made, he would perform in a play.

It was a deal he didn't honor.

He was 21 back then, on a high from his London stage debut as a sensitive slacker in Kenneth Lonergan's "This Is Our Youth," the sort of sad, moping character that had turned him into an indie darling in movies like "Donnie Darko" and "Lovely & Amazing." But going off to do plays isn't part of the Hollywood fast track for young actors still proving themselves at the box office. So Mr. Gyllenhaal tested for the Spider-Man and Batman franchises and other roles that might transform him into an action hero or leading man.

What happened? The critically derided disaster movie "The Day After Tomorrow" happened. The much-mocked "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" happened. Acclaimed films happened, too, like "Brokeback Mountain" and "Zodiac." But Mr. Gyllenhaal was uneasy.

"I wasn't really listening to myself about the kinds of projects I wanted to do," he said. "I had to figure out what kind of an actor I wanted to be and feel confident going for that."

He has now come to a few conclusions, and they were evident in July at a table reading for his first outing in New York theater, "If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet," a dark comedy about an overweight British teenager and her troubled family. The project itself was telling: the play, which has begun performances from Roundabout Theater Company, is an Off Broadway ensemble work by a little-known writer rather than a famous Broadway drama — the stage vehicles of choice for Hollywood stars these days.

Mr. Gyllenhaal studied at Columbia University in New York for two years before dropping out to become a movie star, and some directors on earlier films, like Ang Lee of "Brokeback Mountain," have described him as a freestyle

actor more than a methodical one.

Mr. Gyllenhaal, who was nominated for a supporting actor Oscar for "Brokeback," said he still experiments with his take on characters from scene to scene. But acting rigor is increasingly his goal.

"Early in your career it's hard to know everything for yourself, and asking questions isn't always a welcome thing in Hollywood, where everyone seems like they know what they're doing," he said. "Around the time I hit 30, I asked myself if I was respecting acting as a craft."

He recently wrapped a role as a history teacher in another coming film, "An Enemy," for which he emailed frequently with one of his old Columbia professors about the art of delivering classroom lectures. He spent five months observing and training with Los Angeles police officers for his new movie, the September release "End of Watch," in which he plays a hotshot cop with street smarts in South Central Los Angeles.

His commitment to "End of Watch" was so complete that John Lesher, one of its producers, decided to make Mr. Gyllenhaal an executive producer.

Growing up in Los Angeles, with frequent trips to New York to see relatives, Mr. Gyllenhaal was a theatergoer long before he stood on a stage. Sitting in the cheap seats as a boy, he was dazzled by Patti LuPone vamping through the opening number "I Get a Kick Out of You" in "Anything Goes" for Lincoln Center Theater; he then promptly fell asleep.

"What I loved most about working in London, in the theater, there was a real appreciation of potential," he said. "No one comes out of the gate 100 percent perfect. No one. I have a great sense of comfort onstage because I know taking risks is appreciated."

From his work on "If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet," he expects intensity. "I want to come home at the end of the day and be wiped out and feel I've torn my heart out from acting and feel fulfilled," he said.

Jake Gyllenhaal, far right, with Brian F. O'Byrne, a Tony winner, rehearsing "If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet."



TODD HEISLER/THE NEW YORK TIMES



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SANJIT DAS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Two Indians want to widen the audience for the Manganiyars. Lakha Khan, right, playing the sarangi.

Preserving the Folk Music of India

By NIDA NAJAR

RANERI, India — In this village 640 kilometers southwest of New Delhi, where women wash dishes in the sand to conserve water, and electricity is scarce, Lakha Khan sat on the floor of a stone hut. There, he coaxed a bright, dizzyingly fast melody from his violinlike sarangi.

Mr. Khan, 66, is one of the few remaining Sindhi sarangi players among the Manganiyars, a caste of hereditary Muslim musicians who live in this desert state of Rajasthan. He plays for hours, usually with no more company than a couple of passing goats.

But recently he had an audience of two: Ashutosh Sharma and Ankur Malhotra, who were crouching over their gear, including a five-channel mixer and two analog recorders.

"There's an exuberance or just kind of a lack of inhibition when they're performing at home," Mr. Malhotra said of the Manganiyars, whose music is a mix of traditional melodies and arresting vocals. "Here these performances are genuine and real and filled with emotion."

Mr. Sharma and Mr. Malhotra, both 37, want to preserve the music of the Manganiyars, whose songs — devotionals and stories of births, deaths and love, often about the Hindu families that are their patrons — have no written record. The two men said they were inspired by Alan Lomax, the musicologist who more than half a century ago traveled the American South recording previously unknown blues musicians.

They hope to preserve the music and to bring it to a wider audience through a small, independent record label they began, Amarrass Records. Yet they realize that trying to popularize Manganiyar music is a daunting task in India, where most young people would rather download Bollywood ringtones than listen to an ancient folk music.

Mr. Malhotra and Mr. Sharma are



Sakar Khan, center, with his son Firoze, right, has toured the world with his kamancha, a Manganiyar stringed instrument.

undeterred. They grew up in New Delhi, listening to Sufi and Hindi music. As they got older, they turned to Western rock, though the music was difficult to find. Mr. Sharma's father, a British Airways pilot, brought him Grateful Dead and Rolling Stones records he got during trips to the United States and Britain.

Later, Mr. Sharma began a travel agency in New Delhi. Mr. Malhotra moved to the United States, earned a Master of Business Administration degree and created an education technology start-up. But the men became "fed up," as Mr. Sharma put it, by the lack of music in their lives.

This spring, they stayed at Mr. Khan's house for three days. "When he gets up in the morning and feels like singing a certain song a certain way, we're there," Mr. Malhotra said. "That doesn't happen in a studio."

Later, they drove 160 kilometers to the village of Hamira, the home of Sakar Khan, 76. He is a master of the kamancha, an ancient stringed instrument played with a bow — a signature of the Manganiyars. He

has toured the world with his instrument.

Mr. Malhotra and Mr. Sharma have underwritten their project with profits from Mr. Sharma's travel agency. They raised money to cover some of their production costs, less than \$3,000, on Kickstarter, a crowd funding Web site, and they received about \$30,000 from one of Mr. Malhotra's business school advisers.

Roysten Abel, the director of "Manganiyar Seduction," a theater show presented in New York two years ago, said Mr. Sharma and Mr. Malhotra will have to make the music more contemporary. "That's the only way India will go international," he said.

Mr. Sharma and Mr. Malhotra said that no matter how long they sit listening to aging masters, a valuable part of the centuries-old tradition will inevitably be lost. "They are keepers of the oral tradition, along with their own history," Mr. Malhotra said. "It's all in their own heads. And 20 percent gets lost in a generation."

Lakha Khan At Home

Amarrass Records (66 mins)

★★★★★

Wherever I play my sarangi, that's my home



Amarrass Records' *At Home* albums feature some of India's great folk musicians recorded in their

home environment. They have a special intimacy, which include bits of conversation and noises. Lakha Khan is a Rajasthani musician of the Manganiyar musicians' caste and plays the Sindhi sarangi — Sindh being the southern state of Pakistan, just over the border, with which Rajasthan shares many characteristics. It's a box-like bowed instrument with four main playing strings, stopped with the fingernails, and two sets of sympathetic strings, giving it a full, silky tone. Lakha Khan plays a couple of beautiful instrumentals, but the sarangi is generally used for accompanying vocals. Here he mainly sings Sufi songs by the Punjabi poet Bulleh Shah and Sindhi poet Shah Abdul Latif. He roughly scrapes the strings for emphasis and plays lyrical or dance-like phrases between vocals. He's accompanied on *dholak* drum by his sons Dane and Pappu. This is a real treasure.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *khq Dulara*

Lakha Khan Live in Nashville

Amarrass Records (72 mins)

★★★★★

No frills needed; just great playing from an Indian master



This is a live recording of a 2013 concert on Lakha Khan's debut American tour, given in a

Presbyterian church in Nashville, Tennessee. Lakha Khan is a superb Indian folk musician, who sings and plays the *sindhi sarangi*, a gorgeous bowed instrument from Rajasthan. To begin, he pulls his bow across a lower string and slides his finger up to the starting note. It's an arresting opening and immediately draws you into this sinewy but lyrical music from the desert. The many reverberating sympathetic strings give the melodies a rich sonic aura. The *sindhi sarangi* comes from the neighboring Pakistani state of Sindh, but there are now few players and no makers left, so Rajasthani maestros such as Lakha Khan are crucial tradition bearers.

It's an instrumental that starts the concert, but he follows it with Sufi songs, Hindu *bhajans* and folk and classical *ragas*. Accompaniment is provided by his son Dane Khan on *dholak* (drum). What is gratifying about this CD is that it presents unadorned Indian folk music with total confidence — and quite rightly so, because Lakha Khan is just as good a musician as a classical cellist or violinist. The warm silken tone of the *sarangi* is like a halo around his voice; I hope we get a chance to see him in the UK before too long.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Kachi Ghodlo*

4.11

Music for livelihoods

Music-making is an integral part of the everyday South Asian experience. Religious rituals, harvest ceremonies, the change of seasons, rites of passage – birth, marriage, celebrations, death, festivals – all provide ceremonial occasions for musical expression. Rapid socio-economic change has brought both erosion, as well as new patterns of negotiation with patron, client and market, where traditional relations find newer locations of belonging and new markets open up. In this context, a few odd routes off the beaten track have begun to claim attention, just as new ambitions have been articulated for mainstream record labels.

Ashutosh Sharma, one of the co-founders of **the innovative Amarrass Records label**, thinks that Indian folk music “is like the black music scene was in the 1950s and early 1960s in the United States, where artists had to earn their name in Europe before being acclaimed at home.” Amarrass, unlike

Bangladesh, does not rely on state funds but engages with the market to salvage powerful yet neglected musical forms by pushing music through fair trade arrangements (50-50 splitting of income with artists); archiving and recording folk music; and creating awareness, building capacity and marketing opportunities. New cross-over, local experiences are beginning to find resonance. Amarrass “At Home” sessions include single-take unplugged-like gigs with artists, whose feel is impossible to capture in studios in urban locales or in festivals abroad. In its Desert Music Festival of 2011, performing side by side with traditional Manganiyar musicians were the acclaimed Vieux Farka Toure and Madou Sidiki Diabate. In 2012, it was Bombino and Baba Zula with the newly created “Barmer Boys” and the Siddhis from Gujarat who created unique trans-local musical experiences. The “Manganiyar Seductions” (a musical and visual experience) drew rave reviews wherever it performed in India and abroad and sold more than 1,500 copies for Amarrass. Sakar Khan, now 76, who plays the spike fiddle (*kamancha*), was recently decorated by the Government of India. Shankara Suthar, “the best Kamancha maker in India” according to Ashutosh, now responds to online demands for *kamanchas* “instead of having to make furniture in Pune for a living”, a little like Bangladesh’s own Golam Fakir, who earlier used to earn his living by carrying dead bodies from the police station to the morgue and is now a well-known folk performer. The Bant Singh Project was another unique collaboration between the radical Dalit Sikh protest folk singer Bant Singh and three electronic musicians who came to record sessions at his village of Burj Jhabbar in the Punjab Mansa District.

Such heart-warming stories apart, the market is still only an emergent one. Unlike Bollywood or Indian classical music, folk music has yet to find a sustainable niche in the market. If it were left to the market alone, perhaps these, too, would be dying traditions. On the other hand, the state seems to be unable to incentivize quality folk music and state-run performances that do not reach out to wider mass-based platforms. So when Mame Khan, a Manganiyar, performs at the upmarket Turquoise Cottage in Delhi, jamming with guitarists providing newer riffs and keeping up with his solo journeys, it is not just a spine-tingling musical experience but also an uncannily cultural and economic one. Manganiyars (a name derived from *mangna*, “to beg”) are hereditary dependent castes that perform music services at rites for their patrons, in return for gifts of clothes or money or, sometimes, a share in the harvest. Their art is one of those delicately poised cultural forms whose inheritors are either the torch bearers of newer forms of articulation or the pall-bearers of an entire way of being in a world that is changing faster than their needs and where newer idioms and motifs find popular attention.

