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Katayoun Goudarzi and Shujaat Khan to Release **SPRING**, 10/8

September 5 8:30 2013

by Classical Music News Desk

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Persian poet and Sufi saint Rumi could find transcendence in the simplest sound or word, an ability that still resonates today.

"It is said that Rumi was often captivated and inspired by dancing and singing his poetry until it induced a state of mystical intoxication, the practice called samâ. Scholar Franklin Lewis mentions in his Rumi Past and Present, East and West that 'Samâ became Rumi's food of divine love, and he played it on and on. It brought on tranquility and made his imagination flow in thousands of lines of verse,"explains US-based Persian vocalist **Katayoun Goudarzi**, who has been reading, studying, and performing Rumi's poems since she first heard them as a child in Iran.

The beautiful and lasting imprint of Rumi's jubilation remains in his words, words that have inspired generations of Persian singers, writers, musicians, and thinkers. This legacy lies at the heart of **Spring** (release: October 8, 2013), the latest collaborative work of **Katayoun Goudarzi** and Grammy Award nominated master North Indian sitar player Shujaat Husain Khan.

Though hailing from different cultural backgrounds, they have found the meeting point of Rumi's sounds and sense-for the two entwine, meant to resonate aloud and together-and the musical creativity of the Subcontinent.

Pieces like "Sanamâ," "My Insane Heart," and the title track reveal the depth of this engagement and the strength of Goudarzi and **Shujaat Khan's** unlikely musical dialogue, as **Shujaat Khan's** sitar and lithe baritone move beautifully with Goudarzi's sensuous alto singing voice and intense recitation. Joining them are tabla player Abhiman Kaushal, who artfully complements the underpinning pulse of Rumi's poetry, and Ajay Prasanna, whose flute adds another expressive, evocative voice.

"Spring was an incredibly joyful project for me and excitingly different from what I had done in the past to some degree," **Shujaat Khan** recalls fondly, "and it evolved so beautifully that Katayoun and I decided not to edit out any pieces that was recorded."

Rumi's work is still performed avidly in Iran and by Persians around the world-and still sparks excited debate and lively discussion. Each inflection, each breath can carry and shift the poem's meaning. Yet at the same time, the poems leave ample room for interpretation and inspiration, a spark **Katayoun Goudarzi** found easy to share with **Shujaat Khan**, whose instrumental style on the sitar is said to echo the contours of the human voice.

Many of the poems on **Spring** deal with love -its torments and loss ("Sanamâ"), its overwhelming sweetness ("At Last")-and love's ties to the realm of the spirit. Of the poems on Goudarzi draws on for **Spring**, the profound philosophical foundation underlying Rumi's work unfolds most powerfully in "Dast-zanân," where the poet assertively insists he should not be reduced to worldly things. "After stating what he is not, Rumi goes back to what really does matter and what really defines being," notes Goudarzi. And love-be it sensual or elevated-becomes a means for embracing that.



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A unity of purpose and vision brought Goudarzi and Shujaat Khan together several years ago. Fast friends as well as frequent collaborators, they have found an intriguing, innovative way to work together.

"We talk about the meaning of each verse, go through the whole poem, then discuss which phrase to repeat," Goudarzi recounts. "Shujaat composes a melody for it and asks me to sing it. He may hum and then play on his instrument, so I can get it settled in my head, and then I can feel how the poetry is supposed to fall.

Goudarzi and Shujaat Khan both thrive on the spontaneity of their conversation, eschewing lengthy rehearsals or discussions for the in-the-moment expression that feels utterly right for Rumi's work.

"I simply closed my eyes, and sang and recited from heart, as that is the only way I know how to do it." Goudarzi recalls, thinking back to some of the sessions that became Spring. "It just felt so right that we didn't want to touch anything after we finished."

"When certain musicians gather, we speak a language, and there are no words," reflects Shujaat Khan. "We are conversing and we can feel each other's emotions changing. It's so beautiful and so unbelievable, being together with wonderful musicians and exchanging opinions musically."

"You can evolve together, as long as everyone is good at their own craft," concludes Goudarzi. "When you work with someone like Shujaat who's at the top of his game, you can actually give the ideas you have shape, in a way that's wonderfully creative."

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