

Oawwali: Devotional Music of the Sufis to perform Oct. 1 in Mandeville Auditorium at UCSD

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OAWWALI: DEVOTIONAL MUSIC OF THE SUFIS TO PERFORM OCT. 1 IN MANDEVILLE AUDITORIUM AT UCSD

"We sometimes go into a trance during our performance, so moved are we by the text and the music," says Mehr Ali, lead vocalist for Qawwali: Devotional Music of the Sufis, whose music is designed to induce states of ecstasy in listeners to bring them closer to the divine.

Qawwali: Devotional Music of the Sufis will perform at 8 p.m. Oct. 1 in Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

Qawwali blends Iranian and Central Asian poetic, philosophical and musical elements into a North Indian base, combining popular music with classical traditions.

Qawwali is derived from the Arabic word *qaw*, meaning belief or credo. Qawwali is spiritual in essence and used to attain a trance-like experience. It is the music of the Muslims (Sufis) who practiced mysticism. Qawwali musicians feel their music brings harmony and peace to the soul and projects the message of love and unity for all.

In addition to lead vocalist Mehr Ali, the all-male ensemble includes, vocals and harmonium, Sher Ali and Mashug Ali; vocalist Sardar Ali; tabla, Amjad Ali Khan, and chorus, Abdul Rashid, Razaqat Ali, Badar Munir, Shaukat Ali, Maqsood Hasan, Sadat Ali Saqib, Arif Ali and Dilbar Hussain.

Physically, Qawwali musicians are seated in two roughly parallel rows on the floor at the same level as the audience. The back row consists of the chorus, who also rhythmically clap their hands, with one tabla-player in the middle. The front row has the lead singer on the right, with two accompanying singers to his left.

The instruments include a pair of hand-pumped harmoniums, either a dholak (a double-headed drum) or a tabla (a set of two small drums) and often a large earthenware pot.

The Qawwali generally chooses one text by a single poet (Amir Khusrau in Persian, Bullhe Shah in Punjabi, or a contemporary poet), but may highlight it by couplets from other poems by the same poet. The strong voice of Mehr Ali is supported by the sweeter, almost feminine, voice of his younger brother, Sher Ali. Their voices are balanced by vocalists Mashug Ali and Sardar Ali.

Vigorous, forceful hand-clapping by the chorus and audience participation are important elements in a Qawwali performance. The musicians often repeat and dwell on portions which strike the greatest response in the audience.

Persons who have experienced the trance brought on by Qawwali have mentioned a feeling of flying. Flight is also the imagery used in Sufi texts in their attempt to achieve divine union.

Qawwali originated with the Sufis in the 10th century and blossomed into recognizable form in the 13th century when poet and mystic Amir Khusrau (1254-1325) combined Indian, Iranian, Hindu and Muslim music. Another form of Qawwali developed around the 16th century between Iran, Central Asia and India. This form, Panjabi ang, presents the texts of Panjabi Sufi poetry and folk songs woven into melodies and rhythms.

Mehr and Sher Ali and ensemble believe that Qawwali goes beyond the limitations of orthodox religion and is a universal invitation to all living beings to share in the powerful emotion of pure love, the pain of separation, and the joy of union.

Tickets for Qawwali: Devotional Music of the Sufis are \$19 general admission, \$17 for faculty, staff and senior citizens, and \$14 for students. Tickets are available at the UCSD Box Office, 534-8497, and at Ticketmaster outlets at 220-8497. The performance is sponsored by the UCSD University Events Office. For information on the entire season of events sponsored by the University Events Office, visit the website, <http://ueo.ucsd.edu>, or call the UCSD University Events Office at 534-4090.

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