



PRESS RELEASE

Watermans and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations present a new play **GAUHAR**

A drama with songs in Hindustani

Written by Mahesh Dattani

Directed by Lillete Dubey

Primetime Theatre Company presents the UK premiere of *Gauhar*, a new drama inspired by the true story of Gauhar Jaan (1873-1930) one of India's foremost recording artists and a feisty independent woman whose personal life was as mesmerizing as her professional one.

Gauhar Jaan, born Eileen Angelina Yeoward, had an Armenian Christian father, whilst her mother, Victoria was born in India. Her parents split up when she was five and Gauhar was raised by her mother, who converted to Islam and was known as Malika Jaan.

Her mother was trained in music, dance and poetry and groomed her daughter within the same tradition. This close and complex relationship with her mother and the abandonment by her father form the core of the drama.

Gauhar Jaan excelled at music, dancing, singing, reciting poetry and her talent soon brought her to the attention of the nobility of the time. At the time, the only route open to women artists was to become a 'tawaif' – a high class courtesan – and Gauhar Jaan was much sought after and could command huge rates for performing in the royal courts of North India. She was accomplished at singing several genres of Hindustani classical music and was known for her larger than life, ostentatious behaviour and tempestuous personal life.

She was in her time one of the most famous vocalists in India and came to the notice of Fred Gaisberg, a recording engineer with the Gramophone Company of London, who had come to India to find voices to add to the newly discovered gramophone record.

She was talented scouted by him and made her first record in 1902. It is said she recorded over 600 songs from 1902 -20 in many Indian languages and used to sign off with aplomb saying 'My name is Gauhar Jaan'. She also invented the three minute format for classical music but this was the time limit of the recording technology of the day. Her voice survives to this day. She also performed a duet

at the Delhi



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Durbar of 1911 held for the coronation of George V (grandfather of the present Queen)!

Willful, proud, sassy, and talented, this is the remarkable story of an early Diva of the Indian music industry!

Inspired by Vikram Sampath's book, **My name is Gauhar Jaan: The life and times of a Musician**, the play is written by Mahesh Dattani (a regular collaborator with The Primetime Theatre Company).

Gauhar features live singing and a talented cast of seven actors. Rajeshwari Sachdev and Zila Khan (daughter of Ustad maestro, Vilayat Khan), play the lead at different ages; while Denzil Smith doubles up as Fred Gaisberg and her father, William Robert Yeoward. Danny Sura, Gillian Pinto, Rajeev Siddhartha and Parinaz Jal, complete the team.

The music was played by Farooque Khan, Shambhu Lahari & Lokesh Kumar Gandharv and recorded for the production.

Set and Lighting Designer - Salim Akhtar

Costume Designer- Pia Benegal (daughter of acclaimed film-maker, Shyam Benegal).

Kathak - Uma Dogra

Listings Information

Tuesday 11 – Sat 15 October, 7.45pm

(Press Night Tuesday 11 October 7.45pm)

Matinee Sat 15 October 3pm

Tickets: £17.50, £15.00 (£15.00, £12.50)

Box Office: 020 8232 1010

www.watermans.org.uk

The show runs for 2 hours plus intermission. The story is in English but the songs are performed in Hindustani.

Age Guidance 12+

About Primetime Theatre Company

Primetime Theatre Company was set up in 1991 by Lillete Dubey, an acclaimed actress of theatre, film and television. She has recently appeared in two series of *Indian Summers* playing Mrs. Dalal and 'Mrs Kapoor' in *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* & *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*.

She has appeared in over fifty Bollywood and international films including: *Monsoon Wedding*, *Zubaida*, *Baghbhan*, *The Lunchbox*, *Chasme Buddor*– to name a few.

As Artistic Director of Primetime Theatre Company, she has directed over 33 productions and several of them have been presented at Watermans, London & in over 75 cities in India & across the globe.

The writer of the play, Mahesh Dattani, is an award winning playwright, who is one of India's most exciting

contemporary writers for the stage.

The play has done over 30 shows across India to much acclaim.

About Watermans

Watermans is the major arts centre in West London. Its high quality programme is designed to appeal to all communities and incorporates independent cinema, children's theatre, new media arts and a range of creative workshops and courses. As well as this, Watermans delivers an extensive learning and participation programme for young people, typically focused on creative skills development, raising aspirations and introducing young people to creative employment opportunities.

Watermans also programmes and delivers an outdoor arts season in Bell Square, a permanent outdoor arts space in Hounslow town centre which is now in its third year. It also leads the Circulate outer London outdoor arts touring and Creative People & Places Hounslow, part of a major Arts Council England investment in engaging people in the Arts in areas of low engagement.

For logos please see our website where you can download mono or colour versions.

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