

Brighton Early Music Festival 2024

CONNECTIONS bremf.org.uk



Sunday 13 October, 7pm
St Martin's Church

ORIGINS

Exploring ancient roots and connections via music, dance and stories from the greater Mediterranean, India and West Africa

Aradhana Arts

Sanju Sahai *tabla*

Jaymini Sahai *Kathak dance*

Debipriya Sircar *voice, sitar*

Idrîsî Ensemble

Thomas Fournil, Dunja Botic, Eliza Oakes, Noémie Ducimetièrre *singers*

BREMF Community Choir

Andrew Robinson *director*

Suntou Susso *voice, kora*

Palaye Seck *West African dance*

Participants from a lion dance course directed by Palaye Seck

Adam Courting *narrator*

**SOUTH EAST
DANCE**



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LOTTERY FUNDED

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North Indian classical music and Kathak dance	Aradhana Arts
Music of the ancient Mediterranean including two never-recorded chants	Idrīsī Ensemble BREMFB Community Choir
Interval	
Music and dance from The Gambia and Senegal, West Africa	Suntou Susso, Palaye Seck Lion dance course participants
Finale: ancient Syriac chant <i>Bar Maryam</i>	All musical performers

The 2024 Festival was curated and programmed by artistic director Deborah Roberts BEM who died on 9 September. We are so grateful to Deborah for her creative, innovative and fearless programming, always seeking to bring the music she loved to new audiences.

Origins is an event exploring the ancient roots and connections which run through music, dance and storytelling across continents. With segments featuring musicians and dancers from the greater Mediterranean, Northern India and West Africa, this project was imagined and developed by BREMF's late artistic director Deborah Roberts.

Growing out of previous collaborations including last year's **The Whispering Dome**, which went on to win a REMA European Early Music Award, we are delighted to be joined by kora player Suntou Susso and dancer Palaye Seck. We are also welcoming back Sanju Sahai, Debipriya Sircar and dancer Jaymini Sahai from Aradhana Arts, whose Indian music and Kathak dance we enjoyed as part of our outdoor events at Royal Spa in Queen's Park in 2021 and 2022. The final musical collaboration will be between the BREMF Community Choir and Idrīsī Ensemble, who have spent some time this year exploring ancient music of the Mediterranean. Bringing it all together, we are joined by narrator and storyteller Adam Courting to weave the different tales into one story for all humanity.

Deborah's words in the introduction to the 2024 brochure feel very relevant to this event which underlines her strong sense that music connects us across cultures, continents and time:

"We live in a beautifully interconnected universe and never has it been more important for us to be aware of that... pushing away boundaries in both space and time, and realising the extent to which music has always connected universally felt emotions with the beauty we see in both the natural world, and in the many artforms we have created over millennia. This is the heritage of every human and it has always been [my] passion."

We are delighted to have worked in partnership with South East Dance on this project, with participants from a free six-week dance course led by Palaye Seck taking part this evening.

The performers

Sanju Sahai (also known as Vishnu Sahai) is one of the finest and most sought-after Tabla players of his generation. Belonging to the Benares Gharana (lineage) and being the 6th generation of Tabla players in the lineage (son of the legendary Pandit Sharda Sahai Ji), he began playing at an early age. A phenomenal and outstanding Tabla player, he has accompanied many of India's legendary musicians and dancers and is well known for mesmerising and captivating his audience with his power, virtuosity and complete spontaneity. His meteoric rise in popularity in the field of traditional Indian Classical music has led Sanju to collaborate regularly with different genres such as jazz, Egyptian, flamenco, opera, Western Classical, hip hop, folk, blues music and the world of contemporary music and dance.

Jaymini Sahai is a Kathak artist based in the UK. She is passionate about performing and teaching dance as well as creating new innovative dance projects. Beginning her Kathak training in the UK in 1983 under the guidance of Nilima Devi Ji, Jaymini gained her diploma in Kathak in 1995 and since then she has performed nationally and internationally in both professional productions and community events. Jaymini has taken further training in Kathak with Padamshree Guru Pratap Pawar Ji and most recently is under the guidance of the beautifully graceful Vidushi Mamta Maharaj Ji, daughter of the world renowned Pandit Birju Maharaj Ji. In 2010 she set up Aradhana Arts, which aims to preserve the traditions of Kathak dance in the UK.

aradhana.org.uk

Debipriya Sircar (née Das) was born and brought up in London. She began learning music at the age of 4 from her mother and her early gurus were the late Pandit Manesh Chandra Kansara (sitar) and the late Sri Golak Mohan Choudhury (vocal). Since 2003, Debipriya has been a disciple of Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty, one of the finest exponents of North Indian Classical Vocal music and has received vocal training at workshops conducted in the UK. Based in Stratford (East London), Debipriya combines her music with a full-time job as a Flow Cytometrist at The Francis Crick Institute in London.

Pioneering a fresh approach to historical performance, the **Idrisî Ensemble** performs medieval repertoire from period manuscripts, together with UNESCO-protected and endangered traditions. They sing the Mediterranean, not as a border between distinct identities, but as a space of exchange, communion and evolution. Through their research in medieval literature, music archaeology, and postcolonial historiography, they aim to complicate modern notions of identity and alterity. As the sole UK ensemble specialised in the performance of Old Roman chant, they offer a unique glimpse into the vocal traditions of late antiquity.

idrисиensemble.com

BREMF Community Choir is an enthusiastic and friendly group dedicated to studying and performing a wide range of repertoire from medieval through to classical periods, as well as traditional and folk music from around the world.

bremf.org.uk/ensembles/bcc

Suntou Susso is a multi-instrumentalist – kora player, percussionist, singer and composer from The Gambia who was born a Griot. His primary instrument, the kora is a harp-lute with 22 strings and is unique to the Griots of the Mandinka people. Coming from a 700-year-old tradition, Griots play an important cultural role as peacekeepers and oral historians, transmitting and preserving a people's culture through the generations using song, music and poetry. Suntou performs frequently as a solo artist playing traditional kora; leading his six-piece band whose music is rooted in Mandinka musical traditions whilst strongly infused with jazz, funk and soul; or as part of a folk duo that blends British and Gambian musical traditions, among other impressive collaborations and projects. Suntou's musical abilities are considered unique for his generation.

suntoususso.com

Palaye Seck is a talented dancer, choreographer, performer, dance teacher and skilled craftsman – making and repairing drums – from Dakar, Senegal. He dedicated his life to promoting and preserving traditional African dance and music. Growing up in a culture that values ancestral traditions while still embracing modernity, he has developed a unique style that bridges the gap between past and present. Palaye founded his own dance company, One Heart Culture Dance Group, and moved to Gambia, where he and his group found success entertaining tourists and locals alike. He also danced with the Youssou Ndour Culture Dance Group. In 2010, Palaye moved to the UK, where he continues to teach and perform traditional African dance and music.

oneheartlionofafricacompany.com

Adam Courting is a Kenyan storyteller and Forest School facilitator (The Garden Classroom, Greenwise People), born in Camden, north London. He currently co-hosts a monthly community storytelling event around a fire circle in Bethnal Green, East London under the banner 'Tongues in Trees.' His interests lie in the exploration of identity, communication through narrative, and theories of change and development in the professional, social and natural worlds. Creatively he has enjoyed a decade of work as an actor, improviser, writer, puppeteer, voice actor, producer, and deviser. As a practitioner he is keen to promote and support more inclusive understanding and practice, diversity of thought, and expression of creativity. He is also a trustee of Green Shoes Arts.