

SAMA

SAMA & INDUS MUSIC PRESENT



Mystic Voices Tradition

In Praise Of Khusrau

A Programme Of Traditional Sufi Qawwali



*Recipient of the Patron's Award
Aga Khan Music Awards 2025*

Photo Credit: Sebastian Schutyser / AKMP

Qawwal Warsi Brothers

From Hyderabad, India

15 April—11 May 2026

UK DEBUT TOUR 2026

**London, West Bromwich, Nottingham, Leeds, Southampton,
Manchester, Leicester, Bristol, Cambridge and Bradford**

Programme

SAMA & Indus Music are
pleased to present the debut
tour of Qawwal Warsi Brothers
to the UK between
15 April and 10 May 2026

“Qawwali is a centuries-old devotional art form that blends poetry, music and spiritual expression into a powerful collective experience. Rooted in the Sufi traditions of the Indian subcontinent, it uses rhythmic clapping, soaring vocals and repetitive melodic patterns to evoke a state of wajd, a heightened spiritual ecstasy.”

—The Times, India Nov 2025



Photo Credit: Sebastian Schutyser / AKMP

Programme

Kings Place — 10 May 2026

**Tonight's Qawwali Programme will be drawn from this list.
Requests will be sung time permitting.**

Naat — Allah Hoo
Zamin Ali/Amjad Hyderabad

Man Kunto Maula – Both versions
Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Nami Da Nam
Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Bahot Kathin He Dagar Panghat ki
Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Mohe Apne Hi Rang Me Rang De
Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Maula Salim Chisti
Aziz Ahmed Khan Warsi

Phool Rahi Sakal Bana
Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Sallal La Ho Alyhi Wa Salam
Bedam Sha Warsi

Kab Tak Mere Maula
Aziz Ahmed Khan Warsi

Chaap Tilak
Hazrat Amir Khusrau

Dama Dum Mast Qalandar
Bu Ali Shah Qalanadar

Rang
Hazrat Amir Khusrat



Photo Credit: Sebastian Schutyser / AKMP

Qawwal Warsi Brothers

The qawwals traditionally perform at shrines (dargahs) as it serves as both worship and storytelling, carrying verses of saints, poets and mystics. Its call-and-response structure, harmonium-led arrangements and richly layered improvisations demand rigorous training, yet its appeal lies in its emotional accessibility. Over time, qawwali has travelled from shrines to global stages, retaining its devotional core while adapting to contemporary audiences.

The Warsis come from the legendary Qawaal Bachhey lineage. This highly regarded musical family traces its roots to the original ensemble trained by the poet-musician Amir Khusrau, who lived in the 13th and 14th centuries and is widely seen as the founder of qawwali. The Warsi brothers continue to honour this tradition as they faithfully render Hazrat Amir Khusrau's classical repertoire. Their work keeps the centuries-old spiritual and musical heritage alive for new audiences in India and around the world.

The touring group trace their ancestry back to the 13th-century and are considered today the leading singers of the Sufi Qawwali tradition. Their songs are of thousands of years of mystic poetry, which have been passed on from generation to generation.

The songs, which constitute the qawwali repertoire, are in a number of languages. Those from the classical period are in dialects of north India like **Braj Bhasha, Awadhi, Purbi** and the others which continue to have huge influence on qawwali with the rich tradition of **Urdu, Punjabi, Persian** and **Saraiki**.

As India's renowned artists, the Warsi Brothers- Naseer Ahmed Khan Warsi and Nazeer Ahmed Khan Warsi- were honoured at the prestigious Aga Khan Music Awards 2025 which was held in London in November 2025 at the South Bank Centre.

In its citation, the jury recognised the duo **“for the energetic preservation and onward transmission of the spiritual and musical legacy of Amir Khusrau to multigenerational audiences at the highest level of musical excellence.”**

This recognition also comes at a time when traditional music faces challenges from rapid modernisation. Artists like the Warsi brothers help bridge the past and present by presenting authentic, high-quality performances on national and international stages. Their work ensures that qawwali remains vibrant and relevant for younger generations.

The Warsi Brothers are widely regarded as among the finest living custodians of traditional qawwali in the subcontinent. They trained under their grandfather Padma Shri

Aziz Ahmad Khan Warsi, they represent the classical rigour and devotional depth of the Delhi Gharana. Based in Hyderabad, their family has long served as court musicians for the erstwhile Nizam.

The Warsi Brothers' contribution places a spotlight on India's long-standing role as a centre of classical and devotional arts. Their powerful performances, rich vocals, and mastery of classical compositions have made them central figures in the preservation of this art form. Their qawwali performances reflect a tradition rooted in the teachings of Sufism, where music is a form of devotion and spiritual expression.



Photo Credit: Sebastian Schutyser / AKMP

The Qawwali Tradition History

Qawwali was little known beyond South Asia until the late 20th century. Although, there have been many good qawwali performances in the mid-1970s, through the Sabri Brothers, Aziz Ahmed Warsi, Jaffar Hussain Khan, it was not until the late '80s that the music gained a truly global audience, primarily through the work of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan who has been widely recognized as the finest qawwal of the second half of the 20th century.

Nusrat eventually attracted the attention of the motion-picture and world-music industries with his virtuosic and energetic performances, toured on the world-music concert circuit, and ultimately, garnered for qawwali a diverse and widespread listenership.

The globalization of qawwali has brought a number of significant changes to the tradition. Most notably, performances now take place in nonreligious contexts for mixed audiences of men and women. Moreover, the musical forms, instrumentation, and texts often are adjusted specifically to satisfy the tastes and expectations of international audiences. What has remained unaltered, however, is the music's spiritual essence.

Notes on Qawwali

The qawwali performance have typically of eight or nine persons, including lead singers, harmoniums tabla dholak and a chorus who repeat key verses, and who aid percussion by hand-clapping audiences.

In a performance the lead qawwal engages with and responds to the listeners, elevating them to a state of spiritual ecstasy through ever intensifying, accelerating repetitions of especially evocative phrases. This interaction between the lead singer and the audience is central to any successful qawwali performance.

As a musical genre, qawwali is closely linked to the Hindustani classical tradition of the Asian subcontinent. It draws from the same pool of melodic frameworks (ragas) and metric patterns (talas) as classical music, and it uses a formal structure similar to that of the khayal song genre. Like khayal, qawwali performances feature a mixture of evenly paced metric refrains and rhythmically flexible solo vocal improvisations, which make extensive use of melisma (singing of more than one pitch to a single syllable). Moreover, a significant portion of any performance is built from traditional solmization syllables (syllables assigned to specific pitches or sounds) and

other vocables (syllables without linguistic meaning). It is during the improvisational sections—particularly within fast-paced passages called tarana—that the lead qawwal engages with and responds to the listeners, elevating them to a state of spiritual ecstasy through ever intensifying, accelerating repetitions of especially evocative phrases. This interaction between the lead singer and the audience is central to any successful qawwali performance.

Qawwals sing very loudly and forcefully, which allows them to extend their chest voice to much higher frequencies than those used in Western singing, even though this usually causes a more noisy or strained sound than would be acceptable in the West.



Photo Credit: Sebastian Schutyser / AKMP

Qawwal Warsi Brothers

Lead singer/harmonium

Naseer Ahmed Khan Warsi

Nazeer Ahmed Khan Warsi

Chorus singers

Aziz Ahmed Khan Warsi, Murtaza Ahmed Khan Warsi, Sami Ahmed Khan Warsi and Abdul Bari

Tabla

Muhtesham Ahmed Khan Warsi

Dholak

Syed Habib



Turning the Page: A Producer's Journey: Jay Visvadeva, Hon Artistic Director, SAMA

For the past 55 years, I have passionately advocated for the artistic traditions of South Asia, working through many entities in the creative industry: **Sanskritik Festival, APAM, SAMA, Navras Records, Indus Music and Sachal Music.**

During my tenure, **SAMA** became one of the UK's oldest and most influential arts networks in the field of traditional and contemporary South Asian arts, presenting a wide variety of Indian classical, orchestral, and contemporary music—including jazz and other world music projects. SAMA will continue under a new team from this point onwards.

I have curated and produced over **3,750** events and festivals, presented more than **4,000** artists at over **500** venues across **143** cities and towns in the UK and abroad. My legacy continues through the recording of over **3,700** hours of music and **2,000** hours of film footage. The list of artists I've presented includes some of the greatest names in the performing arts of South Asia and beyond.

Through the Navras label—one of the leading companies I co-founded and continue to advise—over **500** hours of work have been released in various formats, including digital downloads, CDs, and DVDs. Many of SAMA's curated concerts have also been released via the Navras YouTube channel, which now has over **115,000** subscribers and features more than **200** videos, collectively garnering over **40 million** views worldwide. All archival material is being released via Sony India.

My work in the arts has given me comprehensive experience across all aspects

of the creative industries, including festival curation, relationship management with numerous record labels, digital aggregators, and publishers, as well as an understanding of entertainment law globally.

In my early days, I was involved with the Sanskritik Festival of Arts of India from **1970** to **1977**. This annual festival—the first of its kind—ran for 18 years until 1988 and presented a wide spectrum of Indian vocal, instrumental, and dance traditions. I worked closely with many of the artists.

In **1977**, I formed my own company, presenting regular monthly programmes and working across all genres of South Asian arts—a practice I continue to this day.

In **1992**, I co-founded Navras Records with my colleagues Vibhaker Baxi and the late Kirit Baxi. It became one of the world's finest classical music labels, having released over 500 titles on both CD and DVD formats. Between **1992 – 2003**, Navras Records, was one of the principal sponsors of SAMA Concerts. The entire catalogue has now been digitised and is being released through Sony Music India.

Over the last **five decades**, I have programmed a wide range of classical, traditional, and contemporary arts throughout the UK, including flagship venues such as the **Royal**

Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, and Barbican Centre, helping to create a critical mass and audience for South Asian classical music. Between **2013 and 2014**, my international work included collaboration, Sachal Jazz Ensemble and Wynton Marsalis, performing at Jazz at Lincoln Center (New York), London, and the Marciac Jazz Festival. The Sachal label will be relaunched soon.

In **2024**, SAMA presented four major concerts at three of the Southbank Centre's prestigious halls, showcasing 100 artists over a four-day period (7–10 March), under the banner of "South Asian Sounds." This included regional events in Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham. The artistic groups presented were a 52 member Afghan Youth Orchestra, Malini Awasthi, Ustads Nishat & Irshad Khan, Khiyo, Chahat Mehmood Ali Khan & Shahbaz Hussain,

In **2025**, as a part of the **Mystic Tradition Festival**, SAMA anchored a major UK tour of Qawwals Najmuddin Saifuddin & Group. Followed by **The Shared Values Festival**, featuring Pandit Arnab Chakrabarty sarod and Ustad Daud Khan Sadozai on the Rubab.

This year in **2026**, SAMA together in collaboration with Indus Music, we are proud to present for the first time the **Qawwal Warsi Brothers** on their UK Debut Tour. Since January 2025, I have been working on

SAMA's vast archive, encompassing decades of work in the arts. The work will culminate in writing a trilogy of books that reflect my life's extensive and rich experience—an effort that will contribute, to the legacy I hope to leave for future generations.

Jay Visvadeva

Hon. Artistic Director

www.sama.co.uk



SAMA has produced over **3,750** events, presented **4,000** artistes in **143** cities round the UK and the world. It has recorded over **3,500** hours music and **1,500** hours film footage. Over **500** hours recordings on physical and digital platforms have been released on the **Navras** label – now the catalogue is released via **Sony India**. The **Navras** Youtube channel has over **115K** subscribers base with **200** videos and has aggregated over **40M** views on its platform.

The **Sachal** label too which is currently anchored by **SAMA** has released **26** albums – it is soon to be re-launched. Sachal Music's album '**Jazz and All That**', dedicated to the iconic Jazz great Dave Brubeck, which showcased the best of East meets West. Their previous album '**Sachal Jazz: Interpretations of Jazz Standards**', topped the world charts.



INDUS MUSIC was created in 2009 and is considered to be one of the very few influential arts organisations established to capture melody, acoustic harmony and rhythms from around the world. Over a 16 year period it has worked with a variety of genres, Western and Indian classical, Jazz, World Music & Dance. INDUS MUSIC was created in 2009 and is considered to be one of the very few influential arts organisations established to capture melody, acoustic harmony and rhythms from around the world. Over a 16 year period it has worked with a variety of genres, Western and Indian classical, Jazz, World Music & Dance.

Tour Dates

Wed 15 April / 7pm	Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London
Fri 17 April / 7pm	Town Hall, West Bromwich
Sat 18 April / 7:30pm	Nottingham Arts Theatre, Nottingham
Sun 19 April / 5:30pm	Howard Assembly Room, Leeds
Sat 25 April / 7pm	Turner Sims, Southampton
Fri 1 May / 7:30pm	Stoller Hall, Manchester
Sat 2 May / 7pm	The Peepul Centre, Leicester
Sun 3 May / 8pm	Bristol Beacon, Bristol
Mon 4 May / 7pm	Cambridge Junction, Cambridge
Fri 8 May / 7:30pm	Bradford Arts Centre, Bradford
Sun 10 May / 7pm	Kings Place, London

