

# stories over art

middle east & beyond

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#1



ART & DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | FASHION | INTERVIEWS | COMMENTARY | FILM | MUSIC | PERFORMANCE | PHOTOGRAPHY | FEATURES | REVIEWS

# EDITOR'S NOTE



Masarratfatima Sulaimani/ Murruration/UAE

This edit note was not written by AI.

If I were asked to pick the two strongest or the only elements around which life revolves or should revolve, I'd choose arts and stories any day. The pull of these two draws me to art forms of all kinds and, of course, to artists/es, and that's what's led to our monthly magazine, stories over art.

In a world that often overlooks the significance of art, we stand firm in our belief that it is essential, more so than anything else. Yet, amidst the beauty and transcendence of art lies a stark reality: being an artist, artiste, or creator is a solitary and arduous journey. However, in the face of these challenges, artists persevere. They pour their hearts and souls into their craft, driven by an unwavering passion to make sense of the world around them. It is this resilience, this refusal to be silenced, that inspires us all.

Here, we aspire to offer more than just words on a portal or pages of a monthly magazine. We offer a sanctuary where artists are celebrated, their struggles acknowledged, and their voices amplified. Join us in honoring

the creative souls who dare to dream, create, and challenge the status quo.

Join us as we embark on a journey to celebrate the magic of art and ignite meaningful conversations that resonate with art lovers everywhere. Let your creativity shine and become part of the vibrant tapestry of stories over art!

P.S: In an era of ChatGPT and Paywalls, we're daring to create original content and offer it to our readers without a fee. Your support would go a long way. Subscribe to the portal, and meet us on socials as well.



Purva  
founder-editor  
hello@storiesoverart.com

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## CONTACTS

**Purva Grover**, Founder–Editor  
**Dolly Goel**, Art Director

hello@storiesoverart.com  
storiesoverart.com

All queries should be addressed to  
hello@storiesoverart.com  
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# THEATRE: REVIEW

If you missed the show in June 2024, what can we say?  
We're sorry! Dubai, UAE, lived the summer romance with GREASE,  
the musical presented by Musical Theatre Dubai (MTDXB),  
an adult community theatre group.



## THEATRE: REVIEW

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How does one critique a party, especially a fun party? One that starts with grown-ups behaving like teens (children, too), getting excited at the idea of devouring Chupa Chups and Orea\* — knowing that while everyone's watching, no one is judging. One can't. Especially when the party ends up with a handful of us (adults) slow-dance walking our way out of the party halls (read: auditorium, Hartland International School, Dubai) while the other patiently grin and wait for us (them) to finish flaunting their dance moves, so they can exit! Instead, one can provide a rushed glimpse into what happened at the party you missed but may have a chance to attend!

Let's rewind for a moment, though — it's no secret because the party dates back to circa 1978 (movie) — recall the love story of Danny and Sandy at Rydell High School? Recall the oh-so-cool John Travolta and oh-so-delicate Olivia Newton-John. And now come back to the present — here's how and what went at GREASE, presented by Musical Theatre Dubai (MTDXB), an adult community theatre group, on a balmy Tuesday evening (June 11, 2024, Press Night).

We gathered in our fashionable best and took our seats, and minutes later, wondered if we should have dressed up in our retro outfits — or instead, were we just envious of the beauty, charm, detailing, and aptness of the cast's costumes on the stage. 50 UAE-based singers, actors, and dancers dressed to play the part. Each one's outfit, from the ribbons in the head to the floral prints on the dresses, the leather jackets to the satin nightwear, the



high-waist flared skirts to the bow ties — was perfect, and even in 2024, nothing felt out of place or forced, as they narrated this musical set in the 1950s. The production team, a massive shout out for getting us into the vibe (it took the crew and cast six months to put together the show, and they left us in awe of their talent!).

Now, it's tough to adapt a stage musical into a movie, which was done back in the 70s. It's more challenging to keep bringing the musical back after many have watched the film and when multiple versions of the musical have been around for a while — but this team seems to like challenges — for MTDXB's party on the stage was just what the Dubai theatre scene needs, this even when times have changed so drastically, from jukeboxes to music streaming apps! While we are at the jukebox, the slight re-invention of the voice (character/radio presenter) on the box was brilliant. We did love Vincent "Vince" Fontaine's outfit (flamboyant pink blazer and socks) — as he reminded us of house rules subtly, nudged us to spread the word on the show to friends and family, and made us laugh with his antics, dialogue delivery and more.

There are many notable mentions, as each one on the stage, behind, and the live orchestra deserves massive applause. However, we know readers have fading patience, so we'll quickly run through a few highlights of the musical party.

- Hold on! Did they get the Greased Lightnin': the car on the stage? The attention to detail would make OCDs like us grin — they even got the apt license plate. The coconut shells, the cream on the beverages, everything was perfect.
- T-Birds GREASER gang — Doody, Sonny, Putzie, and his best friend Kenickie — yes, men dressed up with attitude (cigarettes behind ears) and 'like that' once upon a time. Who did we love more? Please don't make us choose. C-C-C-C-C-C. A-A-A-A Minor. F-F-F-F-F-F. G-G-G-G-G7. We've always loved men who can play the guitar, right?
- The crew's use of the stage area and the auditorium space was brilliant — no action felt forced, even as they entered from the back doors, danced, sang, and sat on the stairs in the aisle!
- Hello, The Pink Ladies — Frenchy, Marty,



Jan, and leader Rizzo — Mean Girls need inspiration, and you know where to find it. Frenchy had her heart, Rizzo had the oomph, Marty was a ‘mood’, Jan, we feel you!

- Cha-Cha, you had us googling dance classes in Dubai!
- Patty, where does an actor get this kind of energy? We’re returning to watch you again. And yes, Eugene, of course, you too.
- Angel with wings: We never thought angels could look glamorous and dance and sing so dearly!

We can’t tell you all now because we’re hopeful they will return on stage after their run in June 2024. But here’s what we can leave you with — When the summer ends, Sandy frets that they may never meet again, but Danny tells her that their love is “only the beginning.” For us, this is only the beginning, for musicals are here to stay in Dubai, and yes, the next time someone tells you that only NYC has a Broadway vibe, point them to Dubai.

Ultimately, Danny becomes a letterman (high school sports participant), and Sandy transforms into a GREASER girl. In 2024, you may want to change the script a bit,

but if you are willing to go with the flow — let classics be classics, then enjoy them for what they are or were! A few words of friendly advice: The production was a tad bold for what the Dubai audience is used to seeing (hello, Playboy magazine, no; hello, ‘beverages’ on stage, no; hello, kids in the audience; no!)

As for why we called it a party, we all tapped our feet and danced as part of the curtain call (and a little more), and on our music apps, we’re once again back to the era — Summer lovin’, had me a blast; Summer lovin’, happened so fast; Tell me more, tell me more.

\*We picked our share on the ground floor of the auditorium: it was complementary, and no one judged our sweet tooth or dance moves!



Purva Grover is an author, journalist, and creative entrepreneur. She is the founder–editor of *storiesoverart.com*, a sanctuary for all who find solace, inspiration, and purpose in art. In a world that often overlooks the significance of art, she stands firm in her belief that it is essential, more so than anything else.





# BREATHING WITH TREES

Whatever I am making, I stay present and engaged with the moment and feeling or subject in front of me, connecting through the senses, be that of smell, touch, or sound through breath, and becoming deeply aware and alert in my body with a clear mind to express and capture the essence of the life force or soul of the natural world.

*Brooke-Walder Gallery, London, recently presented the inaugural solo exhibition Breathing with Trees by British artist Annie-Rose Fiddian-Green. Within the exhibition, Fiddian-Green returned to drawing in its purest form and offering an alternative view of what the artist considers the "enchantment of the ever-changing earth." Fiddian-Green continues exploring ancient trees' emotional essence and tangible presence, weaving together her meticulous study of drawing and reflection on nature. Crafted against the backdrop of spring in Surrey, the landscape serves as a wellspring of inspiration for Fiddian-Green's palette, motifs, and subjects, encompassing swirling lines that swell with the rhythm of nature's heartbeat.*

During an age where the modern world demands an increasing pull away from the natural world, it is paradoxically even more essential to keep our connection with nature

and come closer to it. Again, it is proven that the human brain releases dopamine, which combats stress when amongst nature, particularly amongst trees. It is easy to notice this on a daily or minor level when gardening, or after a short walk, or simply sitting under a tree in the park and looking up at its leaves. As someone who struggles with the battles of the mind, trees have become a constant refuge for me. My love for the trees has guided my research into the science of how the trees communicate through mycelium and how drawing could express this magical concept time and time again; I have returned to the trees as a source of grounding in my work, but also literally rerouting myself to the earth, especially after periods of travel and exploration in other countries and other realms. Through my art practice, working outside, directly in front of the trees, brings me into the whole sensory experience of

## BREATHING WITH TREES

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nature, thus cutting out of the busy chatter of the mind and into the magical world in front of me. Working in the plein air is an excellent tool for letting nature guide your work, calm and balance your spirit, and bring you back into the body.

How can we learn to be more like nature — trusting, following the seasons, and flowing with more connection to the place that allows us to breathe? Trees are a direct link to this. I like to draw freely and loosely, to engage deeply with trees' physicality and ever-moving nature. My drawing technique for the trees is the same as how I draw the human body. I realized the many similarities between the human body and the trees. Both exchange oxygen. Both are constantly growing, changing, and aging. Both need water and food, and both need light. The simplicity of their being is a beautiful guide to simplicity, and in many ways, humans have become so removed from it. Still, I find a lovely tonic to cool the overactive part of the brain by walking and seeing what nature can tell you and what she can teach you.

Breathwork yoga and meditation have

become central in my life and led me to India, where I became a qualified yoga teacher and breathwork coach. These practices directly relate to my art-making process. They create more space in the mind and the body, allowing my very physical drawing and painting processes even more dynamism and expansion. The abstract expressionists have influenced me since I trained at City and Guilds Art School, where I explored action painting in its purest form. This still informs my work. My drawings often use the whole body's energy in response to the scale and power of ancient trees.

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In 2024, there's a notable surge in art that centers around the theme of nature, symbolizing a collective reconnection with our environment. British artist Annie-Rose Fiddian-Green contributes an exclusive piece, offering guidance to emerging artists on the reasons for and methods of drawing inspiration from nature.





## INTERVIEW

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# MOEIN AL BASTAKI

A stage illusionist, mentalist, and close-up magician in the Arab World — say hello to “The Real Aladdin.” Moein, who lives in Dubai, performs across the UAE and internationally; his talent and dedication have made him one of the most respected performers in his field in the Middle East.



## INTERVIEW

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Moein Al Bastaki's work is pure entertainment; he has no supernatural powers and doesn't claim to have them. He has an exciting story about his connection with the Gulf and India, and from whom he learned the trade tricks. His grandfather and his crew would collect pearls from the Gulf waters, then travel by traditional dhows (sailing vessels) to the Indian coast; once they arrived in the Indian port, Surat, they would trade pearls with local merchants and traders. These pearls would often be used in jewelry or other luxury items, and the trade played a significant role in the historical connections between the Gulf region and India. The magician Moein's grandfather learned from was one of the students of the most revered PC Sorcar. When Moein was a bit older, his grandfather taught him the magic; the rest is history.

Moein has introduced numerous new illusions to the Arab world, continually identifying and creating new tricks to astound his audiences. Armed with his elegant charm and sophisticated humor, he never fails to leave every spectator in disbelief at his mastery of this fascinating art. He has appeared on many TV shows, including MBC and Dubai One. He has performed for several high-profile Arab and international celebrities over recent years, including John Travolta, Mike Tyson, and John Cena.

**What's your earliest memory of creating art?**

I tried some tricks while performing for my family; it was my worst performance!

**If you could collaborate with any artist, living or dead, who would it be and why?**

I would love to collaborate with David Copperfield and show him what the Arabian Night Magic Show would be like.

**How do you come up with the titles for your pieces?**

It is usually connected to the specific organization, person, or TV show that wants us to perform.

**What's the most unusual source of inspiration you've ever had?**

My culture and family, the atmosphere and history of my origins, and my

grandfather's stories.

**Which would you choose if you could only use three colors, instruments, or software for the rest of your life?**

The ability to continue to read people's minds, mesmerize people, and the color red because it is the color of love.

**What piece of art do you take the most pride in and why?**

Mentalism and hypnosis. Mentalism because it was always my childhood dream to be able to know what people are thinking about, and hypnosis to help myself and others to combat their phobias.

**Do you have any quirky rituals or habits when you're in your creative zone?**

I call my mother and ask how her day was. Other than that, I go through the whole flow of the show and rehearse it in my head.

**If your art had a soundtrack, what would be the top three songs on it?**

It will be a scary, suspenseful music; and The Greatest Showman if I am feeling happy.





WHEN MOEIN WAS A BIT OLDER, HIS GRANDFATHER TAUGHT HIM THE MAGIC; THE REST IS HISTORY.

**What's your favorite art-related joke or punch?**

Bringing the husband/wife conflict to my magic and making it relevant to the audience.

**How do you deal with a creative block?**

I take a break from it, watch a movie, and not think about it, and the next day, the answer comes to me.

**What's the most memorable reaction someone has had to your work?**

Running away from the theatre, leaving all their belongings on their seat, and not even coming back to collect them.

**If you could turn any book into a piece of art, which one would it be?**

The Secret by Rhonda Byrne.

**What's one piece of advice you'd give to AI aspiring to replace artists?**

Please mind your business and stop interfering with mine

**What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?**

Being a father and focusing on my children.

**What's the strangest place you've ever found inspiration for a piece?**

Maldives. It is a magical and majestic place that keeps my mind away from anything and everything.

**Can you describe your art in three words?**

Was that real?

**What's your favorite part about the process of creating art?**

I meditate, sit in my garden, enjoy the fountain, the trees, and the birds singing while sipping my coffee to throw the troubles back into the world and find my answer.

**If you could have your artwork displayed anywhere in the world, where would it be?**

Vegas (USA) to prove that talent from this part of the world could also attract lots of people to the theatre.

**What's one thing people would be surprised to learn about you as an artist?**

That I am a banker by day.







## GREEN: FILMS

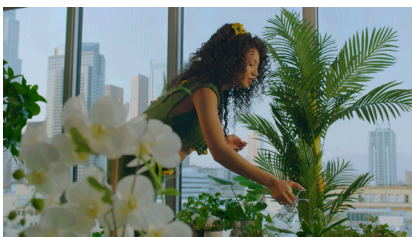
The film begins with a quote by John Lennon: “A dream we dream alone is only a dream; a dream you dream together is reality.” This quote embodies the power of art and film and how they work together toward a common purpose.

CONNECTION, a short film shot in India, Pakistan, Ghana, LA, and Hong Kong, is a compelling testament to the power of small changes. It has been chosen for the esteemed Valley Film Festival, the influential Green Festival, and the Canadian Fashion Film Festival. This film reminds us that our individual actions, no matter how small, can have a significant impact on our environment.

There was a memorable quote from the movie “The Beach (2002),” directed by one of our favorite directors, Danny Boyle: “For mine is a generation that circles the globe and searches for something we haven’t tried before. So never refuse an invitation, never resist the unfamiliar...”

Our latest film, “Connection,” was born out of this spirit of adventure, echoing the philosophy of “The Beach.” We embarked on a global journey, exploring the unfamiliar and seeking the best way to narrate a modern tale about our relationship with our disintegrating yet stunning home, planet Earth.

Our research led us to environmental hotspots that vividly told our story: the



sweatshops of Southern India, the plastic-infested environs of Ghana-Africa, the 'one with the Earth' village life in Hanza Valley, Pakistan, and the electric over-consumption of Hong Kong. The message is clear: as a human race, we are all 'connected,' and our actions, positive or negative, have a chain reaction of environmental causes and effects across our globe.

As filmmakers, we absolutely tried something we hadn't tried before — finding creators (through Instagram and friends) across the globe in these environmental hot spots and guiding their creativity remotely via detailed storyboards, over Zoom and WhatsApp to make key parts of the film.

We also colored outside of our normal cinematic lines by making the film following green protocols. Through our production, we wished to practice what we preached — to tell a story of a self-interested fashion influencer who only cares about profits and her own goals, ultimately awakening and transforming to discover that her daily environmental actions have a global impact.

We decided: no plastic bottles on set; we'll recycle, only use metal water bottles, strive to use compostable packaging,

reuse props, design handmade fashion constructed out of cotton and sustainable fabrics, and responsibly handle our production waste. It was truly remarkable how much the crew positively responded in an industry notorious for its wasteful practices. Going green also made the film more fun to produce.

The seed of "Connection" was an invitation by influential Italian cinema journalist and artistic director Silvia Bizio to screen an environmental-themed film to make a difference in the world amongst cinema legends like Matt Dillon, Marisa Tomei, Director Terry Gilliam, Mathew Modine, and others at Ora Fest! in Italy.

Since that initial screening, we filmmakers have realized that human beings from all walks of life and educational levels are all too happy to contribute and make a difference. You just have to open their eyes, which is what we do best at Dream Team Directors.

As part of every screening, we illustrate how our simple daily actions such as shutting off the lights when they aren't being used, bringing our bags to the supermarket, and avoiding using single-use plastics which pollute our oceans—the source of 70 percent or more of our oxygen

on Earth as well as not supporting wasteful fast fashion... are amongst the solutions. Further, these simple actions multiplied by millions or billions of people doing them allow us to change the destiny of our planet positively.

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Daniel Lir and Bayou Bennett, AKA The Dream Team, are on a mission to uplift the world through cinematic, inspiring storytelling at the highest level. Over their 15 years of collaboration, the duo writers/directors/producers have won over 75 awards and worked with an unrivaled client list, including Oscar nominees Michelle Pfeiffer, Mark Ruffalo, Juliette Lewis, and Jane Fonda, as well as brands and celebrities such as Coldplay, Lindsey Stirling, John Legend, and Norman Reedus. They contribute an exclusive piece, offering suggestions on making a green film and stressing how green is more than a 'buzzword' in fashion, architecture, and cinema.

## THEATRE: REVIEW

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Spirits in Arabic, a fun web of mishaps, spoke of mental health. The play was a testament to the cast's dedication and energy, making it a delightful experience.



I was graciously invited to the June 6, 2024, performance of the Arabic play *Spirits* at the Theatre of Digital Arts (TODA), Dubai. As the play was in Arabic, I initially questioned whether attending was worthwhile. However, I was pleasantly intrigued to learn that English subtitles were projected onto the head of the stage — a unique and engaging feature that added a new dimension to the live production experience.

The play starts with a cast of amusing characters, each with peculiarities, eagerly awaiting a senior doctor's visit to a mental health facility. This comedic ensemble, including a cook, a lawyer, a model, a doctor, a former prisoner, a matron, a scarecrow, a guard, and a girl who had failed at multiple suicide attempts, weaved a hilarious tapestry of misunderstandings and mishaps. Including a fake exorcist also added a layer of thought-provoking commentary on age-old superstitions and mental health, keeping the audience entertained and amused.

Although finer nuances of the dialogues and jokes (since I need help to understand Arabic!) were lost on me, the play was well-directed. The pacing and blocking were done well. Characterizations were considered, and the actors did a fine job engaging the audience. The audience laughed and enjoyed the slapstick moves of the silly situations. I particularly enjoyed the look of the scarecrow, which had a wooden pole on his shoulder hidden under the shirt, and his hands were moving freely to create a visually funny physicality for



the character. Somewhere in the middle, we were confused about where the story was going and why some characters seemed to lack a significant purpose. This became clear at the end when it was revealed that the protagonist was being treated for mental illness.

The play was a testament to the cast's dedication and energy, making it a delightful experience. Despite some timing issues with the subtitles, the play's overall entertainment value was not diminished, leaving the audience in high spirits. All in all, it is an entertaining watch. Take a bow, Tariq, Noha, and The Prologue Productions team.



Rashmi Kotriwala is a well-known name in the UAE's performing arts circle. Over the last 12 years, she has directed several award-winning plays and acted in and produced plays, festivals, and entertainment events in Dubai, Doha, and India. She teaches drama at her platform, EnAct. She also co-founded a popular community theatre space in Dubai.

## FILMS: CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 2024

Shyam Benegal announced the release of his film “Manthan” (1976), restored by the Film Heritage Foundation in association with the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. in 50 cities and over 100 cinemas across India in June 2024



Benegal shared a few details about the making of the remarkable film produced by 500,000 farmers and its restoration by FHF Director Shivendra Singh Dungarpur. We are sure all Smita fans checked out Manthan in theatres this summer.

### Smita’s Magic at Cannes.

The 77th Cannes Film Festival 2024 will remain special for me; why? Simply because it is the people who make it unique. My fan-girl moment started as a kid when I first saw Smita in Jait-re-jait—a Marathi classic released in 1977—and my journey will continue until I am on this earth, admiring the powerhouse “Smita Patil.”

Cannes was memorable for two distinct reasons. One is that Prateik Patil Babbar—son of late actress Smita Patil and actor Raj Babbar—attended a screening of Manthan with none other than Naseeruddin Shah, who also played the role of “Bhola” in the movie. I can only attempt to empathize with the golden moments of watching “Manthan” with the duo Prateik and Naseeruddin Shah trying to be close to Smita with her work and legacy.

### Manthan, the masterpiece.

What is death? It is merely a separation of existence. People whom we love continue to live in our hearts. Manthan would never have been such a masterpiece without the contribution of all the stakeholders. This feature would be incomplete without mentioning Girish

Karnad, who played Dr. Manohar Rao.

The star cast of Manthan is a powerhouse house by itself. To see Naseeruddin Shah reliving those moments on a global platform with Smita’s son is nothing short of nostalgia, which will linger on for a few more decades.

Smita attended the Cannes Film Festival in 1976 with Shabana Azmi and Shyam Benegal for the film Nishant. “Manthan,” directed by Shyam Benegal, remains a cornerstone of Indian cinema, celebrated for its poignant storytelling and social relevance.

For those unfamiliar, “Manthan”—released in 1976—is set against the backdrop of the White Revolution in India, a movement aimed at transforming the country’s dairy industry. The film portrays the struggles and triumphs of rural dairy farmers as they come together to form a cooperative, challenging the exploitative structures that have long held them back.

Smita Patil’s riveting performance as a resilient and compassionate villager, Bindu, breathed life into the narrative, making her an enduring icon in Indian cinema.

### The film itself became a symbol of collective effort and empowerment.

The significance of “Manthan” extends beyond its cinematic achievements; it also encapsulates a critical moment in India’s socio-economic history. The film itself became a symbol of collective effort and empowerment. The authenticity and

grassroots involvement lend “Manthan” an unparalleled sense of realism and relatability, making it a timeless piece of art.

Decades after its release, “Manthan” resonates with audiences, reflecting rural communities’ ongoing struggles and aspirations. The film’s enduring relevance is a testament to its powerful narrative, brilliant performances, and honest portrayal of social issues. Smita Patil’s legacy, bolstered by her role in “Manthan,” continues to inspire and influence new generations of actors and filmmakers. In a rapidly changing world, “Manthan” is a reminder of the power of collective action and the enduring spirit of resilience.

You should not miss Preeti Sagar’s famous Hindi track “Mero game Katha party, Jaha doodh ki nadiya bathe, Jaha loyal toh koh gaye Mhare ghar angina na bolo na.” Smita’s haunting attire of earthy, vibrant red and black ghagra-choli while playing the character of “Bindu” will be eternal.



Sandhya D’Mello loves to cover movies, theatre, and art and subtly lives her aspiration to find life and love that bonds humanity.

## MUSIC: REVIEW

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Mame Khan in Dubai: I'd hoped to hear traditional Rajasthani folk songs (but the concert left me disappointed)

It was a late afternoon in mid-May (2024) when I received a Platinumlist link to Mame Khan Live from a dear friend amid the many WhatsApp messages on a busy day. I was excited as this was the first time a Rajasthani folk artist performed a concert in Dubai.

Recently, regional music has taken Bollywood by storm, with genres like Rajasthani, Baul, Bhojpuri, and Punjabi adding a unique flavor to new scores. So when I saw that the latest musical sensation from Rajasthan was going to perform live in Dubai, I didn't want to miss it.

The show was on 19th May at the Zabeel Theatre in the Zabeel Saray Hotel. On that day, with my whole family in tow, I sat in my designated seat in the large, beautiful auditorium. Mame Khan began the concert with an *alaap*, setting the stage for what we hoped would be a lovely night. He entered wearing a black costume, a colorful gold jacket, a *topi*, and sunglasses — a look that reminded me of Mika Singh. From the first song, Mame encouraged the crowd to sing along for most of the performance, which disrupted the flow of the music and the show. While it's common for singers to involve the audience in a live show, it's usually done for one or two songs, not throughout the entire concert.

Another point of contention was his song selection. Apart from his popular Bollywood tracks, he mainly sang Sufi songs like "Aafreen" with a Rajasthani accent, which didn't resonate with me. I had hoped to hear traditional Rajasthani folk songs. Moreover, his attempts to communicate with the crowd in English felt forced. His songs were a fusion of Western and Indian music, but I wanted



to experience his Manganiyar music legacy, which spans 16 generations. As a fellow Rajasthani, I yearned to connect with my roots through his music but was disappointed.

Despite these critiques, there was much to celebrate. The singing was top-notch, the guitarist was outstanding, and the other musicians, mainly the *Khartal* player, were excellent. The concert concluded with a brilliantly executed *jugalbandi* involving all the troupe musicians.

This experience taught me that artists need to stay true to their authentic selves. Audiences come to see them because they appreciate their unique craft, not to witness a diluted version of someone else.



Rashmi Kotriwala is a well-known name in the UAE's performing arts circle. Over the last 12 years, she has directed several award-winning plays and acted in and produced plays, festivals, and entertainment events in Dubai, Doha, and India. She teaches drama at her platform, EnAct. She also co-founded a popular community theatre space in Dubai.

# KEEPING ARABIC MUSIC ALIVE

As we embrace the vibrant summer of 2024, let's celebrate and sustain the legacy of Arabic music. Together, as musicians and listeners, we have the power to ensure that Arabic music continues to thrive, inspire, and unite for generations to come.

For musicians like me, innovation is the key to keeping Arabic music alive. By blending traditional Arabic melodies with contemporary beats, we can create a soundscape that resonates with today's audience while preserving its essence.

As someone who has primarily focused on Western music throughout his career, venturing into Arabic music has been an exciting new journey. My latest work, which includes the remix of ABU's "3 Daqat", marks a significant step in this direction. The track, which debuted in the top three of the UAE's iTunes charts, exemplifies the appetite for traditional sounds infused with modern energy.

**Innovation is the key.**

My remix of "3 Daqat" does just that, combining the infectious rhythms and house beats with the beloved original to create something timeless and progressive. This fusion pays homage to our musical heritage and makes it accessible and exciting for new listeners.

**Listeners support goes a long way.**

Listeners play an equally crucial role. Their enthusiasm and support keep this music alive. Every time a listener streams a song, shares it with friends, or attends a live performance, they contribute to the vitality of Arabic music. Their appreciation encourages artists like me to continue creating and pushing the boundaries.

The global reception of "3 Daqat" has shown me the cross-cultural appeal of Arabic music. Playing this remix in clubs worldwide and seeing the joy it brings has been gratifying. This universal connection drives me to blend these sounds, bridge cultural gaps, and unite people through music.

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Jack Sleiman, a Lebanese music lover known for his multifaceted talents as a DJ, producer, and radio host, contributes an exclusive piece offering suggestions on how each of us, musicians/listeners, can keep Arabic music alive in today's times.







## DESIGN

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Her Highness Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Chairperson of the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) and Member of The Executive Council of Dubai, inaugurated the first permanent campus of 'L'ÉCOLE Middle East' in strategic partnership with Dubai Design District (d3), a global creative ecosystem part of TECOM Group PJSC. A prestigious school of jewelry arts accessible to everyone, the new campus marks a significant milestone in L'ÉCOLE's plan to expand its global footprint, enhance its impact in the region, and engage a broader audience by leveraging Dubai's rich cultural diversity. L'ÉCOLE Middle East has launched its operations by introducing 13 public courses and opening its first regional exhibition, 'Gold and Treasures: 3000 Years of Chinese Ornaments,' 10 August (2024). Meticulously researched, the courses at L'ÉCOLE Middle East provide a unique opportunity to explore jewelry design's art, history, and intricacies under the guidance of expert instructors and industry professionals.





## CONCERT

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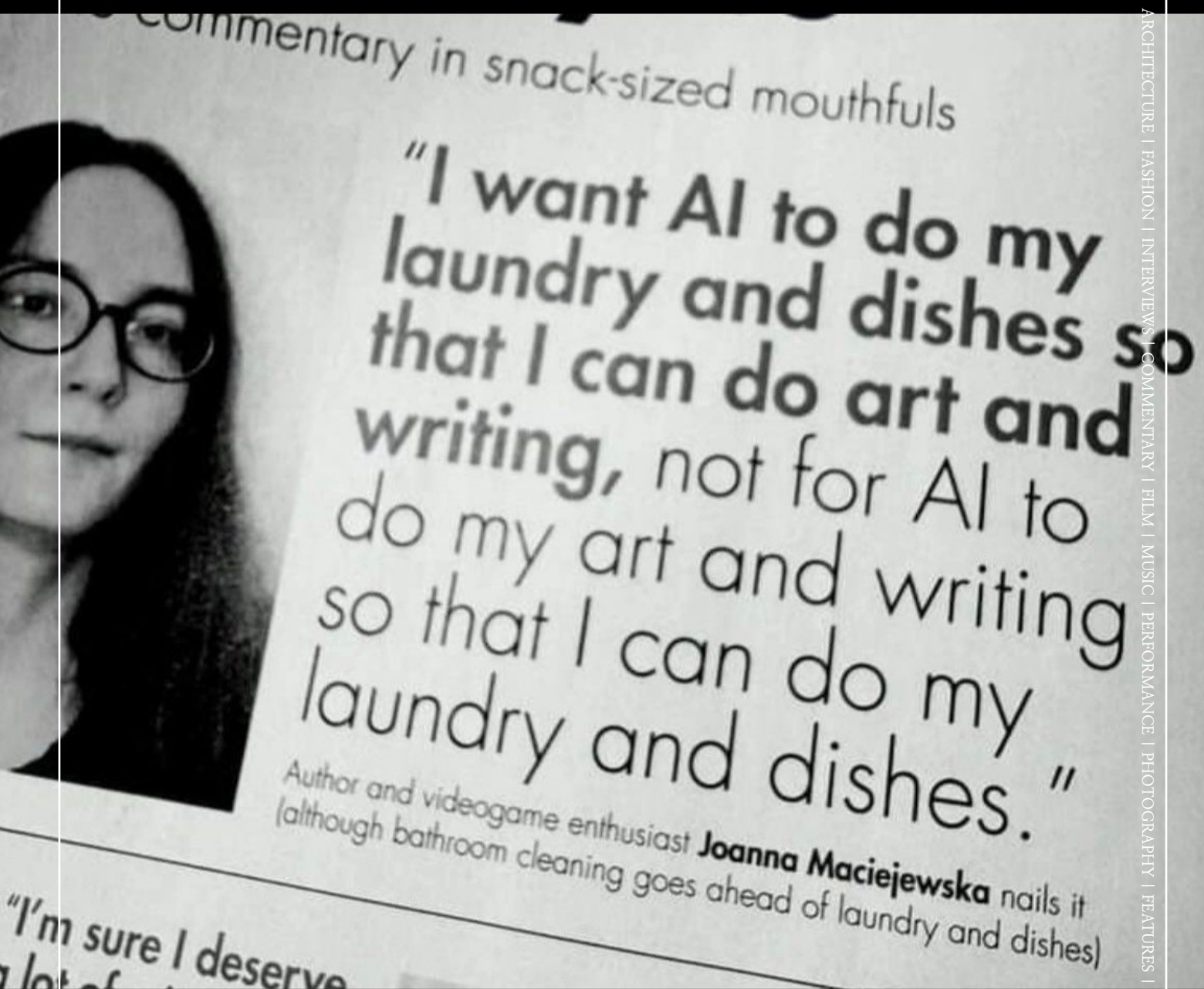
Internationally renowned pianist Lang Lang will play the iconic movie soundtracks from Walt Disney's magical world in a newly reimagined show at the Etihad Arena, Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, on 22 November 2024. Lang Lang has been delighting audiences around the world with his take on the music of Disney movie soundtracks, from the contemporary "Let It Go" from 'Frozen' and "You'll Be in My Heart" from 'Tarzan' to the timeless favorites "Someday My Prince Will Come" from 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,' "The Bare Necessities" from 'The Jungle Book' and "Chim Chim Cheree" from 'Mary Poppins.' Lang Lang expressed his excitement, saying, "As a young child, animation sparked my imagination and transported me to other worlds. The music was a big part of the experience and led to my lifelong love of classical music." Accompanied by a full orchestra and joined by special guests, Lang Lang will create a musical and visual spectacle. This is not just a concert; it's a grand celebration of Disney's most famous songs, which promises an experience that will leave you in awe.

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middle east & beyond

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