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Musical tribute to the resilience of women

The Scheherazade Initiative India

Kavita, New Delhi

For years, wide-eyed children have listened to the enchanting tales of the Arabian Nights, also known as One Thousand and One Nights. Not everyone knows about its narrator, Persian queen Scheherazade, who cured her murderous husband King Shahrayar of his proclivity to behead a new wife every dawn. Her clever stratagem was to tell him a new story before sunrise, a rich storehouse of stories that came to be known as the Arabian Nights. The stories not only enthralled him but helped her save herself from the fate of her predecessors.

For George Mathew, artistic director of Music For Life International, there is deeper meaning to the story of Scheherazade. "Scheherazade, as the narrator of the Tales of the 1001 Arabian Nights, is an archetypal figure. For a millennium, her legend has been an inspiration for composers, poets, writers, painters, sculptors and other artists. She is a powerful symbol of the resilience of women and girls everywhere in the face of horrific violence."

Using the legend of Scheherazade as a take-off point, Music For Life International teamed up with UN Women India and UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women to present "The Scheherazade Initiative India: A Concert Celebrating the Resilience of Women and Girls in the Face of Violence".



The concert of chamber music in New Delhi featured a number of musicians --former concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in New York -- Elmira Darvarova on the violin, Chandrima Roy Majumdar (sard); Mark Kuss, Smithsonian Institution Resident Artist (piano); George Mathew (piano) and soprano Aude Priya Wacziarg in rarely heard works by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Lili Boulanger, Sylvie Bodorová, Giuseppe Verdi, Igor Stravinsky and others.

The Scheherazade Initiative is a series of concerts held in Washington, New York, New Delhi and other cities with the aim of fund raising for catalysing transformative change and generating public awareness about gender-based violence. The last stop of the initiative will be at the magnificent Carnegie Hall in New York on January 26, 2015.