

Mela 2004

Contributed by Administrator
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Mela 2004 - a summary report
The Mela festival was held at the City Hall Square on the 21st -22nd of August and the program started from around noon and lasted until late evening both days. During these two days the Mela was visited by 70 000 people, and the feedback has been positive. Both the media who covered Mela and the visitors of Mela have called the Oslo Mela 2004 a huge success.

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Sher Mian Dad qawwal stod for the pre-festival concert on the 19th of August in Jacob Church Concert Hall. This was materialized with the generous help from the Government of Punjab which facilitated their travel to Norway. Probably never in Norwegian history has anyone managed to put together Islamic and Christian lyrics and music together in a church. We feel proud to have managed it this year. It was also a great honour for Horizon Foundation to have H. E. the Crown Princess of Norway, Mette-Marit to be present at the inauguration concert on Friday the 20th in one of the capital's prestigious Hall, the Aula. His Excellency, Mr. Shahbaz the Ambassador of Pakistan to Norway and Chief Councillor of Oslo Mr. Erling Lae made speeches at this occasion.

For this festival Horizon Foundation presented several artistic co-operations between musicians from Pakistan and Norway, based on their various backgrounds. The subcontinent represents linguistic, cultural, and musical diversity which challenge our conceptions of what is "authentic". We considered it to be important that the Oslo Mela should be a meeting place for artists working within a variety of artistic traditions.

For the Oslo Mela there were 5 different co-operations between musicians from different countries and music genres. One of them was Sher Mian Dad from Pakistan and the group Transjoik from Norway. Sher Mian Dad, a qawwal vocalist who embodies a rare combination of classical qawwali and the understanding of modern expression, and Transjoik who play ambient electronica music with Sami song tradition joik as an integrated part, played together and gave an amazing concert. This cooperation will not end with Mela – Tansjoik will this month travel to Pakistan and together with Sher Mian Dad perform at the Lahore Festival. Another cooperation, which we are proud to have presented was between the Pakistani sitarist Ashraf Sharif Khan and the Norwegian accordionist Stian Carstensen. Perhaps for the first time ever these two instruments were played together. Ashraf Sharif Khan is one of the new generation's raga masters and has played all over the world. Stian Carstensen started out as a jazz guitarist and is now known as a talented multi-instrumentalist, influenced among others by East European folk music.

The remaining three cooperation were between the tabla master Ustad Tari Khan and the Norwegian folk musicians Anne Hytta, who play the Hardanger Fiddle, between the Norwegian saxophonist Trygve Seim and Pakistani's vocalist Shafkat Ali and between Kohinoor, the upcoming pop musician in Norway and one of the best tabla player in Norway, Jai Shankar.

As mentioned earlier, the meeting place is important for the Oslo Mela, but the meetings are not restricted to only include professional musicians from around the world. An important part of Oslo Mela is also to let the Mela audience meet artist. By this we wish to encourage new and young artists to further develop their talents and perhaps make some youth see that an artistic education might be a possibility. At the City Hall Square we also had a big tent, the Iqra-tent, where organizations and institutions from within the field of culture, leisure time, education, and media presented themselves. This in order to strenghten the experience of Mela as a meeting place and to broaden the mind of the youth.

Further on, Horizon Foundation sees it as important to bring some attention to Norwegian artist with a minority background. Our project, the Indo-jazz fusion is an example. Shri Lal Shankar, Jai Shankar and Rohini Shankar has for a numbers of years been active as musicians and music teachers. Jai Shankar is especially known for participating in several crossover projects. For the Oslo Mela the three of them were engaged for a workshop called "Indo-jazz fusion"; which led to a concert at the City Hall Square.

The uniqueness of this workshop can be emphasised by mentioning the participant of to upcoming and talented musicians with Pakistani background living in Oslo. Sikhander Khan amazed the professional raga musicians visiting from Pakistan with his vocal talents. The same is the case of the young tabla player Ahmad Safi.

Also several local young artists with Pakistani background performed at the stage; Among them were two dance groups 1Unity and Beats, Dj Nad had his show, the pop musician Shaz performed some of his songs and two local designers had their own fashion show. Horizon Foundation also sees it as important to give local artist the chance to perform for a larger audience.

Perhaps the young audience in particular had looked forward to see and hear two of Pakistan's biggest pop-star,

Humera Arshad and Jawad Ahmad. This was done in cooperation with PTV Prime, which also included the performance of the Pakistani boy band SK1 from London.

Not only local artist and professional musicians performed at Oslo Mela; Tehreema Mitha is a dancer and choreographer who has developed her own artistic expression by fusing classical Bharatanatyam and contemporary dance. She danced both at the inauguration ceremony and at the City Hall Square. Mela 2004 hosted another dance performance the Indian group, Rang Puhar. With its 15 members and costumes they attracted a lot of attention.

The ship, Innvik, which during the Mela was anchored by the City Hall Square, was venue for fairy tales, classical concerts and puppet performance. Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop in Lahore has been one for the cooperating partners from Pakistan. RPTW's Artistic Director Faizaan Peerzada was engaged as this years Festival Artistic Director. He has made efforts to strengthen the graphic designing and has great impact on theatre and music to children in Pakistan. At Innvik, Faizaan acted together with the Italian puppeteer Elisabeta Potasso in a play called "Fire Earth Water", which they created together. The play shows the creation of earth through the uniting of the four elements; earth, fire, water, and wind. The play was shown both on Saturday and Sunday.

At the City Hall there was an exhibition of images of Pakistan. The photographer Sami-ur Rehman presented a microcosm of Pakistan. The exhibition aimed at conveying the photographer's fondness for the nature and people of Pakistan to a Norwegian audience.

There were of course, several stalls displaying a range of Pakistani arts and crafts, authentic home made Pakistani food, and kites, or get henna painting on their hands. And for creating the right atmosphere, Gongha and Mithu Sain walked around the City Hall Square playing their dhol. The Square was also visited by two maharajas from London who were especially exciting for the children. Horizon foundation was also able to have a real Pakistani decorated truck at the square, which attracted a lot of people. This all together created our own Mela - atmosphere, which was taken in by 70 000 people.

We are now making a report of the Mela and Horizon's activities in 2004.

Horizon has also started the preparations for the next festival, which will be held in 2005 as a part of the centennial anniversary. This festival will be a "larger" or an "expanded" Mela, including several minority groups in Norway. Artists from Pakistan will also be invited