

FOLK ARTS RAJASTHAN

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WITH HEART AND HOPE

Dear Folks,

Winter 2008

We enter 2008 with tremendous excitement. Our dreams of preserving and empowering the unique musical legacy that the marginalized Merasi artists have maintained for 37 generations are holding solid!

YES! To the Hearts with Hope 2 Tour March 12 - May 25 2008:

I am thrilled to announce our 2nd musical cultural exchange tour: HWH2.

Kathleen Brown, our tour coordinator, reports FAR's visa petition has been approved and visas are pending. The troupe Merasi will be bringing their invigorating mosaic of sacred Hindu, Sufi, and traditional Folk Music of varied flavors and intensities to schools and public venues. Some of our destinations include The Kennedy Center in DC, a week with the John Lennon Educational Bus and Joe's Pub at the Public Theater in NYC, Baltimore's American Visionary Art Museum, and Maine's Portland Museum of Art.

Help us to increase bookings.

Think about it...you could have the best party/fund raiser in town! Promote cultural exchange in your own home, in your child's school, or in your community. Come celebrate with us by attending a concert with ten friends when we are in your area.

Women's Fair Trade Project: Our dedicated women are creating new traditional items for the HWH2 Tour. To enhance marketability, visitors Marilyn Levin and Sara Dickman imported supplies to facilitate a class adapting earrings for retail sale. The lively afternoon was a great success. The women learned quickly, enjoyed the opportunity to have visitors tremendously, and are now prepared to teach others this new skill.

Visionary Art: Visitors to Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan (LKSS) have been moved by Sarwar's sacred space displaying his extraordinary fossil collection and environmental collage honoring diversity. The American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore is now displaying a life-affirming exhibit of Art installed in October 2007, All Faith's Beautiful. Sarwar's contribution, "My religion is Human Being", includes 29 works on paper. Go visit this special place and experience a spectacular day, through August, 2008.

On the only road to the Sam Dunes National Park in Jaisalmer District sits Asha Artists's Residence, Sarwar's ongoing collaborative Visionary Art and Folk Space. Tour buses are stopping daily by the roadside to allow the tourists inside to photograph the walls of this brilliantly colorful addition to the desert landscape.

The Merasi Counting Book: Barbara Goodbody's inspired idea and support of the creation of an educational book will place The Merasi Counting Book in hands this spring. Artist Indra Banu's marvelous Rajasthani Folk images grace the pages. FAR seeks exhibition space to showcase both the book and Indra's folk art portfolio.

The Merasi School: "*one hand on the pen, one hand on the instrument*" -Sarwar Khan

Daily Literacy Tutorial: Three years into the project 25 core women and children have graduated with basic Hindi and Math skills and a simple English vocabulary. LKSS's building began much needed renovation thanks to a generous grant provided by the Capital Group's Charitable Foundation.

The Merasi School: Recent Brown University graduate Caitie Whelan spent two months this summer in India launching The Merasi School. She has returned to India again this winter to introduce her curriculum with accompanying text. Caitie raised funds

to purchase the building we had rented adjacent to LKSS to house The Merasi School. She also created the compelling website www.merasischool.org. Catie is a thrilling testament to a volunteer's passion, the potential of change, and "the possible" within each one of us.

Scholarship Program: Young English-medium students Asha, Mobeena, and Sitara highlighted their ability and willingness to help by initiating The Merasi School Children's Book reading day. They tutored an energetic storybook reading period where Merasi children came dressed in their best clothes to attend the opportunity to hold a "beautiful book" in their hands for the first time ever. The expressions and sounds in the room were priceless. Our books, donated by friends and purchased from library sales, arrived piecemeal in Karen's bags for years in preparation for such a day. 15-year-old Asha joins teacher Anwar Khan to help strengthen the English component of The Merasi School daily after her own school day ends. The children are enthusiastic about her input.

Deep Thanks to: Stephen and Helene Huyler and Barbara Goodbody for their continued generosity enabling us to power Folk Arts Rajasthan and Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan projects this year. Our first grant from the Capital Group Charitable Foundation is allowing us to stabilize critical structure problems and damages created by unprecedented flooding in 2006. We are also making security and curatorial improvements to the building which houses photographs, instruments, folk and visionary art installations, and provides space for classes, rehearsals, and fair trade. Clair and Rob Oaks's family and her Soul Source Yoga tribe have been diligent fundraisers and enthusiastic supporters of the Merasi. Thank you to all who do what you can, and to quiet and anonymous donors to whom we are deeply grateful.

Year-end or year-beginning request:

Give Today. We are a non-profit organization and continue to need your participation. Help us identify sponsors. Visit our desert initiatives in the carved golden sandstone world of Jaisalmer, Rajasthan and tell your family, friends, associates, and travel agents about your experiences. Great spirits plus an artistic and musical mosaic await you. One visitor in India noted emphatically "Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan is not a museum. It is a House of Joy." Another (after dealing with severe Delhi Belly) proclaimed: "well, we survived and the best was Jaisalmer with all our experiences with the untouchables."

Volunteers: Bring your expertise and creativity to the development of this currently all-volunteer 501(c)3 non-profit organization to facilitate FAR's growth. Make calls, write, research, network, fund-raise, and bring computer and digital skills to our current needs.

Your tax-deductible checks payable to Folk Arts Rajasthan will continue to support groundbreaking opportunities for traditional arts preservation, literacy aspirations, the Hearts with Hope 2 Tour, and fair trade empowerment for women.

Folk Arts Rajasthan is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit, IRS EIN# 20-2025437

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We would love to hear from you. Please call or e-mail karen@folkartsrajasthan.org

With Heart and Hope plus so many thanks.

Karen Lukas, Executive Director

P.S. We look forward to seeing you on the Tour...and bring your friends!

Hearts with Hope 2 Tour schedule will be posted on www.folkartsrajasthan.org