THURSDAY 10 JULY

RUMI

WATER & GOLD

HALEH LIZA GAFORI
ALICE PURTON - CELLO

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THURSDAY 10 JULY at 7.30PM

RUMI — WATER and GOLD

Haleh Liza Gafori

Alice Purton – Cello

“Like the reed,
stripped of its tassels
and hollowed out,

we are headless,
empty enough to carry the music
that wants to move through us.”

– Rumi

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PROGRAMME

Selected poems from

***GOLD*, 2025**
Translated by Haleh Liza Gafori

Colorless, nameless, free · 5–6
Your laughter turns the world to paradise · 10–11
We exited the battleground and crooked valley of thorns · 22–23
Where the water of life flows · 24
Whatever the ways of the world · 25
How could I have known this longing would drive me mad · 29–30
I saw myself sharp as a thorn · 34–35
The spring of souls is here · 49–50
Full of yourself · 53
Come out, come close! · 70

***WATER*, 2025**
Translated by Haleh Liza Gafori

You show your face, your flushed face · 1
I travelled to every city · 5–6
World of water and mud · 10–11
Like the reed · 12
To brood is to wander through a grove · 16
Beloved, when your sweetness rains down · 24
What is *sama*? · 34–35
I wasn't always this Love-drunk · 40–41
Didn't I tell you · 44–45
Fresh, blissful–the moment · 46
I was dead. I came to life · 76–79
When I leave this body · 80

It is rare to find someone who has not encountered the poetry of Rumi. Whether recited at the pulpit for spiritual illumination, or framed as a social media graphic for self-motivation, the 13th century lyricist is one of the most quoted and translated writers across history. Despite being penned some 800 years ago, Rumi's work is a perennial source of consolation, cheer and catharsis. Predominantly written in Persian, Rumi also used Turkish, Arabic and Greek in his verse, a linguistic fluidity that has naturally led to his work inspiring diverse poetic traditions – his influence is evident in the literary legacies of the Ottoman, Turkish, Chagati, Pashto, Urdu, Bengali and Kurdish languages.

Rumi was born in either Balkh – present-day Afghanistan – or Wakhsh – known as Sangtuda in present-day Tajikistan. Philosophical leadership was in his blood: his father Bahā ud-Dīn Walad was a theologian, jurist and mystic in the Wakhsh area. Inheriting his father's position as the head of a *madrassa* (religious school) upon his death, Rumi practiced Sufism for nine years until embarking on a public life in 1241 – as a Hanafi *faqih (*Islamic jurist); Maturidi theologian; and Molvi (Islamic teacher), giving sermons in the mosques of Konya.

It was during this time that Rumi would meet the person that would transform his life – the wandering dervish Shams-e Tabrizi. Their first encounter in 1245 marked a turning point in Rumi's life, heralding a relationship of intense devotion and soul-awakening. The story holds that Shams taught Rumi in seclusion for 40 days, transforming him from a traditional scholar, to an ecstatic poet dedicated to an ascetic existence.

In December 1248, whilst in conversation with Rumi, Shams was called to the back door of the building they were in – he exited, and was never seen again. Of the abundant rumours supposing the cause of his disappearance, the three most popular are that he was killed for blasphemy; that he was murdered by Rumi's youngest son; or that – wanderer in his essence – he simply chose to move on. In denial over Shams' death for 40 days, this bereavement inspired much of Rumi's most famous work – the *Divan-i Kabir*, or Diwan

Shams Tabrizi – a lyrical outpouring of his love and grief. Transcending national borders and ethnic divisions, cultural conventions and religious sectarianism, the work comprises 44,292 lines – including 3,229 ghazals and 1,983 quatrains in Persian, 19 Arabic quatrains, 30 Turkish couplets and 14 couplets in Greek.

Over the last 12 years of his life, Rumi dedicated himself to dictating the six volumes of his masterwork the *Masnavi* to his scribe and favourite student Hussam-e Chalabi. An epic amalgamation of allegory and aphorisms, tales of the everyday and instances of exegesis, the *Masnavi*'s 25,000 couplets are foundational within the Islamic philosophical tradition, and mystical poeticism.

Upon his death in December 1273, Rumi was buried in Konya and laid to rest alongside his father; his shrine – the so-called "Green Tomb", today the Mevlâna Museum – is an enduring site of pilgrimage. Honouring his legacy, Rumi's followers and his son Sultan Walad founded the Mevlevi Order. The group is famous for the Sufi dance known as the Sama ceremony – the source of their alternate name, the order of the Whirling Dervishes.

We are thrilled to welcome distinguished translator, acclaimed vocalist and musician Haleh Liza Gafori, bringing to life a selection from her celebrated translations of Rumi's poetry *WATER* and *GOLD* – two volumes of 54 poems each, largely drawn from the *Divan-e Shams-e*. Traversing all sides of Rumi's poetic personalities – from the confessional, critical and commanding, to the jubilant, dazzling and provoking – Gafori's translations illuminate Rumi's vision of the world as one governed by love in all its various forms, rooted in connection and communion.

To read Rumi's poetry is to pay heed to all that he learnt, taught and was; his unique way of being in and seeing the world comes across in his rousing imagery, prophetic witticism and clarion voice. Joined by cellist Alice Purton, Gafori's special blend of music and lyric echoes Rumi's own marvellous talent for poiesis – gathering people and ideas together, bringing forth propulsive messages of human liberation.

Rumi (1207–1273) was born in or near the city of Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan. Aged 11 Rumi and his family left Balkh ahead of Mongol invaders, beginning a decade-long journey across Central Asia to present-day Turkey. Following in the professional footsteps of his father, Rumi became Konya's most eminent preacher and Islamic theologian. In 1244, he left behind his prodigious career to befriend the mystic vagabond Shams of Tabriz – his guide into the heart of Sufism, whose teachings and ecstatic, tumultuous friendship ignited his poetic voice. Rumi's major works are the Masnavi, a six-volume collection of mystical teachings in rhyming couplets, and the Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi, a collection of lyric poetry dedicated to his spiritual mentor. He died and was buried in Konya.

Haleh Liza Gafori is a translator, performance artist, poet, and musician born in New York City of Persian descent. Her acclaimed books of translations of poems by Rumi, *GOLD* (2022) and *WATER* (2025), were published by New York Review of Books. A 2024 MacDowell fellow and 2023 recipient of the NYSCA grant, Gafori has created a cross-media performance piece weaving translations, commentary, and song. Gafori offers these performances as well as lectures, readings, and workshops at institutions such as Stanford University, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Sarah Lawrence College, and Lincoln Center. Her work has been published by Harvard Review, The Paris Review, Literary Hub, Columbia University Press, and others. Her translations have been incorporated in the curricula of universities across the US.

Alice Purton is a London-based cellist, vocalist, composer and improviser. Specialising in contemporary chamber music, she performs regularly with her ensembles Distractfold, Plus Minus, Trio Atem and Ensemble Kopernikus – a flexible ensemble that explores core and lesser-known classical repertoire. Alice performs at renowned festivals and venues such as Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and Gare du Nord, Basel; as well as cello and vocals for recording sessions and pop performances – collaborations include with Jamie Callum, Mica Levi and Ana Silvera. She has been broadcast on BBC Radios 1, 3 and 6, and Resonance FM.

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UPCOMING LIVE EVENTS

Sat 12 July at 7.30pm
Reich Repetitions
Colin Currie Group

Fri 18 July at 7.30pm
J S Bach Keyboard Music
James McVinnie

Thurs 31 July at 7.30pm
J Dilla — Donuts
with Fraser T Smith, Yomi Sode & more

Thurs 7 & Fri 8 August at 7pm
Multi-Story Orchestra
Love in Many Forms

Weds 13 August at 7.30pm
Listen World! Thomas Mann & New Tomorrows
Nikolaj Schultz, Charlie Fox, Mohsen Mohamed & more

From Weds 13 August
The Listening Room — Susan Sontag

Fri 15 & Sat 16 August at 7.30pm
Eve Stainton
The Joystick and The Reins
(World Premiere)

Sat 30 August at 7.30pm
London Symphony Orchestra
Music by Grażyna Bacewicz, Sally Beamish, Tchaikovsky & Caroline Shaw

Weds 3 September at 7.30pm
J S Bach Complete Cello Suites
Sheku Kanneh-Mason & Sæunn Thorsteindottír

Fri 5 September at 7.30pm
Switched-On Bach
Virtuoso Electronic Performances of Wendy Carlos
James McVinnie Ensemble

Sun 7 September at 7pm
J S Bach Goldberg Variations
Jean Rondeau Harpsichord

Sat 13 September at 7pm
Rachmaninoff —The Complete Piano Concertos
Philharmonia Orchestra, soloists Ryan Wang, Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, Boris Giltburg, Junyan Chen
conducted by Charlotte Corderoy

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Thurs 18 & Fri 19 September at 7.30pm
Oliver Leith
Garland (World Premiere)
performed by 12 Ensemble & orchestra, GBSR Duo, EXAUDI, Musarc, soprano Patricia Auchterlonie, & the massed voices of the Bold Chorus led by Oli Kitching
conducted by Naomi Woo & Jack Sheen with choral refrains written by Charlie Fox

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Bold Tendencies is a not-for-profit arts organisation established in the rooftop spaces of Peckham's Multi-Storey Car Park in 2007. It has transformed a disused building in the heart of South London into an iconic, much-loved place of culture and assembly with spectacular views out over the city and pioneering architecture project Frank's Cafe. Supporting a new generation of creative voices alongside acclaimed international artists, it delivers an ambitious annual programme of Visual Arts, Creative Learning and Live Events open to the public, offering access, participation and enjoyment of the arts for everyone.

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