

Asia+ Festival's "The Woven Sounds" fuses Persian music with carpet-making to feature Iran's cultural traditions (with photos)

The Asia+ Festival, presented by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, is introducing the "Middle Eastern Series" this year with "The Woven Sounds" concert on October 19 as its first offering. Persian carpet-making is a world-famous craft. Iranian ethnomusicologist and musician Mehdi Aminian will lead his ensemble to perform traditional Persian instruments rarely seen in Hong Kong and revive a folk custom of carpet weavers. Fusing Persian music with carpet-making, the programme features the folklore and cultural traditions of Iran.

In the long history of Persian culture, carpets are a unique symbol and their making has been recognised by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage item. The weavers would turn the patterns of the rugs into lyrics, sing them aloud to let other weavers know the patterns while slipping in casual conversations. This long tradition of pattern singing, called "naqshe-khani", has been passed down through generations.

Aminian, after years of research, has recreated this fading custom on stage. His ensemble will perform traditional Persian instruments rarely featured in Hong Kong, including the ney (flute), setar (stringed instrument) and kamancheh (bowed string instrument). Along with ensemble performances, each instrument will be showcased separately in an improvisation session. The concert's repertoire also has a distinct flavour. For instance, the piece "Silence" is depicted with audible music which exudes an ethereal quality. As a female weaver sings soulfully while working on stage, video footage of other carpet weavers filmed in Iran will also be shown, offering audiences a glimpse into the social landscape of the country.

"The Woven Sounds" concert will be held at 8pm on October 19 at the Sheung Wan Civic Centre Theatre. Tickets priced at \$240, \$300 and \$380 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288, or use the mobile ticketing app "URBTIX".

The programme is performed in Persian and Qashqai. A free meet-the-artist session will be held after the performance on October 19. In addition, a weaving workshop and a documentary screening and sharing session will be held on October 17 and 18 respectively at The Mills, formerly known as Nan Fung Cotton Mills. For details, please refer to asiaplus.gov.hk/2024/en/the-woven-sounds.

The second Asia+ Festival is running from September to November, highlighting the arts and culture of nearly 30 countries from Asia, the

Middle East and Belt and Road regions. Apart from stage programmes, there are also thematic exhibitions, an outdoor carnival, film screenings, outreach activities and more, numbering over 100 in total. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2370 1044 or visit asiaplus.gov.hk/2024/en/.

