

Sanam Marvi / Stunning Sufi diva

“Our lives have become so fast-paced that people feel an emptiness within and are searching for inner peace,” says Sanam Marvi, the young and brilliant vocal interpreter of South Asia’s spiritual, folk, and classical poetry. “There is comfort to be found in the wisdom of Sufis, and in the couplets on divine love and devotion of our great poets.”

An in-demand performer too rarely heard outside émigré circles, Sanam Marvi will make her first extended tour to major venues in the U.S. as part of Center Stage Pakistan, in the Spring of 2017, a development she welcomes. “I simply want to spread the beauty of Sufi kalam [poetry] to all corners of the world,” she notes. “I want everyone to hear the message of Islam and truth.”

Marvi’s performances balance immediacy and elegant ornamentation, lending new light to her well-loved South Asian repertoire of sufi, ghazal, qawwali and folk songs. She can urge with sweeping clarion calls or beckon with nuance, with an intense beauty even those less familiar with her mastered genres will feel, as international performances in notable venues like Paris’s Theatre de la Ville, Morocco’s Fes Festival of Sacred Music, and Toronto’s Aga Khan Museum attest.

Born in 1986, in the small city of Hyderabad, in Sindh, Pakistan, by the age of 7, Marvi began singing with her father, Faqir Ghulam Rasool, during festivals and ceremonies held at shrines throughout Pakistan’s Sindh and Punjab provinces. She continued her studies under noted gurus, including Ustad Fateh Ali Khan at the Gwailor gharana (school). Now a rising star across the subcontinent, Marvi made a breakout performance on Pakistan national television in 2009. Her masterful and revelatory interpretations of the sub-continent’s mystics reach across cultural borders and generations to offer solace in our uncertain and often troubled times.