

WorldCanvass – Embracing Complexity: Islamic Art and Culture
Transcript – Part 2

- Joan Kjaer: Hello, and welcome to WorldCanvass from International Programs at the University of Iowa. I'm Joan Kjaer. We're coming to you from MERGE in downtown Iowa City. As part of the Embracing Complexity Project, headed up by Hancher,, we are exploring Islamic art, traditions, and the many varieties of cultural expression that exists among Muslim peoples all over the world.
- Two of our guests in this segment are students in the university and the third is a faculty member who has embarked on a documentary film project about being Muslim in Iowa. I'll introduce our guests just now. Anne Marie Nest is just next to me, and as I mentioned, she's a faculty member in the University of Iowa Department of Theatre Arts. Nice to have you here.
- Anne Marie Nest: Thank you for having me.
- Joan Kjaer: You bet. Next to her is Salma Haider. Salma is a University of Iowa undergraduate student and she's also President of the Muslim Students Association at the University of Iowa. Thank you, Salma. At the far end, we have Cuma Ozkan, who is the Embracing Complexity Research fellow at Hancher. He's also working on his PhD in religious studies with a focus on Islam in China. Nice to have you here, Cuma.
- Cuma Ozkan: Thank you.
- Joan Kjaer: Yes. Ann Marie, let's start with you. I mentioned that you and a number of your students are working on a documentary project about being Muslim in Iowa- Tell us about it.
- Anne Marie Nest: Yes, it's a documentary play, not a film, and most people have heard of documentary films of course and seen many, but a documentary play interviews people within a culture on either side of an issue, and then takes those interviews, sometimes verbatim, sometimes a composite, we're using more verbatim, and then we edit those into some sort of dramatic format. That's what we're doing right now. Myself along with nine independent study students are interviewing throughout Iowa city and Cedar Rapids and we're traveling out to Des Moines and Elkader and Dubuque. We hope to hit quite a few different spots in Iowa so that we can give them a complex picture of what are Muslim community here in Iowa is in particular.
- Joan Kjaer: How have you chosen locations? How have you found the people you're interviewing and working with?
- Anne Marie Nest: Well, it's great because at the end of every interview I say, "Okay, who else should I talk to?" People are generously giving me their friend's name and then I approach them, and so it's crawled out from there. In Des Moines, I happen to be friends with a state rep and so he's really helped me connect with people in Des Moines. In Elkader, which some of you probably know, but it was founded by a man who really admired, and I'm going to butcher the pronunciations, so the Abd al-Qadir. He was an Algerian, Islamic scholar and also soldier, and his principles of bringing peace and connection between cultures and religions is what this they've created a ... He named the city after because he was such a fan or admirer of him, and so he shortened the name Elkader and now in 1973 they became a sister city with Mascara and Algeria. They have this interesting history there and a great forum there, so I've connected with the forum director there and we're going to interview some people in that town, and then just contacting Islamic centers and mosques within the cities.

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- Joan Kjaer: Do you go into the conversation with a set of formulated questions or do you just begin a conversation and see where it takes you?
- Anne Marie Nest: It's more begin a conversation. I do start with one question, which is when did you or your family arrive in Iowa and why did you come to Iowa? From there, it's really about, "Oh, tell me more about that," that's great because people have so many amazing stories to tell and just giving the time and space to tell the stories, it really leads itself. I've been so lucky and so inspired by the stories that I've heard.
- Joan Kjaer: Is there any one story you could just give us a hint of?
- Anne Marie Nest: Let's see ... Yes, I interviewed ... It's anonymous, I don't let people know who I've interviewed and their names will not be used in the presentations so I can't tell you who this was, but it was a beautiful love story about meeting his wife in Egypt and the divinity or the destiny that was in that meeting, and then I interviewed his wife and she told almost the exact same story, which is pretty amazing, and I had chills hearing what a beautiful story it was. Yeah, that's one that sticks with me.
- Joan Kjaer: When would you expect to be presenting this play that you're working on?
- Anne Marie Nest: We're going to have a public reading at Hancher on April 10th, and that will be a work in progress so we're hoping that people will come and engage in a dialogue after about, did we get it right? Which stories are missing? What can we do to make it an even stronger play?
- Joan Kjaer: Have any of these people you've been talking with so far talked at all about recent years where there has been more public concern in some quarters about the Muslim community in the United States?
- Anne Marie Nest: Yes, it's interesting, it's on a generational divide for those that were alive in 9/11 or ... I shouldn't just say alive but old enough to have that mean something in their lives, they talk about that being a turning point for them. That for me was really striking because I was living in New York at the time and so it was amazing how much the tides turned after that incident, and then they do talk about the current president and how things have changed under that administration as well.
- Joan Kjaer: Well, let me just break off and talk to Salma for a second. Salma, you're from Cedar Rapids?
- Salma Haider: Cedar Falls. A
- Joan Kjaer: Cedar Falls, excuse me. Cedar Falls and before that New York?
- Salma Haider: Yeah.
- Joan Kjaer: Yeah, yeah. So you're a senior. What are you studying here?
- Salma Haider: Psychology and premed.
- Joan Kjaer: Psychology and premed, yeah. You are this year the President of the Muslim Students Association, have you been involved with that group throughout your whole time here at Iowa?
- Salma Haider: Yeah, since I was a freshman.
- Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Why did you join that student org?
- Salma Haider: Well, I joined it mainly because my friends are in it, so I was like, "Oh, okay, let's all hang out," but then as I got more involved, I just wanted to represent the Muslim body on campus.

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- Joan Kjaer: Yeah. How many Muslim students are there, at least associated with your organization? Do you know?
- Salma Haider: We have 13 exact members and around 50 general members.
- Joan Kjaer: I know that you have certain holidays that you celebrate, you had a big event not too long ago at Hancher, maybe you can tell us about that.
- Salma Haider: Yeah. We just had the Eid dinner on September 10th, and yeah, it was wonderful time.
- Joan Kjaer: Is the main effort of the student organization to put on events to share your culture, your ideas, your music, and so on? Do you have more coming up in the next months?
- Salma Haider: Nothing similar to that event, but we are planning a mom and dad dinner to appreciate our parents.
- Joan Kjaer: Let's talk a little bit about what your perception is as a Muslim student on campus, a Muslim woman on campus, do people ask you about your background? Do you volunteer your own heritage?
- Salma Haider: No, people actually don't ask me. I guess mainly when people think of a Muslim woman, they think of a girl wearing a hijab, like, "Okay, she's Muslim." But, yeah, people-
- Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Have you encountered any of those feelings of an unsafe moment here in the last few years?
- Salma Haider: I personally haven't, but I've had friends who they felt unsafe after recent events and everything. They were like all, "Oh, we're afraid to walk alone by ourselves." They're just afraid that their hijabs might be pulled off, just things like that, which it's very sad, but ... Yeah.
- Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Also, it's good that you have the organization, you come together, you can talk about things that are issues. The University of Iowa president and others on campus and throughout campus have affirmed the fact that Muslim students, that everyone, is welcome on this campus, and our community leaders have done the same thing, does that give you some comfort?
- Salma Haider: Yeah, yeah. We, actually, a couple months ago, we received three beautiful letters just showing support and just saying that, "Hey, we're here for you. Let's get dinner as organizations and just come together." Yeah, it's really nice.
- Joan Kjaer: Yeah, that's good. Well, for now, let's just move down to Cuma at the end. Hello. I know you've lived here in Iowa for some years while you're been studying and you're working now on this Embracing Complexity Project with Hancher, although your main area of study is in religious studies. Tell us what the project is all about.
- Cuma Ozkan: Sure. I'm the research fellow for the whole project, so we did it for the duration of one and a half year of program. I will conduct a research study that examines the effects of art on changing people's perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes. I have mainly four different groups of student bodies in two different cohorts, so all different groups of students have different backgrounds or in each group there's a unifying theme. So over the one year, I'm going to ask for them to join events, and after joining events, they will send me the journal reflecting the year's experiences. I will collect their journals and then scientifically analyze to see if I have seen any changes over time, and that's going to be a very scientific

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research, which is approved by IRB and I hope to publish in academic journals and let's see how the arts change people's perception, attitudes, or behaviors.

Joan Kjaer: Yes. The way you explained it to me in an earlier conversation is that you will have a control group that will just attend the events and not all of the associated lectures and whatnot-

Cuma Ozkan: Yes, that's what I mean by two cohorts. In cohort one, students only join 10 events, which means they attend live performances in addition to meetings with artists in public settings, so they will have a chance to hear the artists, their own art, so they'll explain what they do during the live performances.

In the second cohort, they will only attend live art performances. In that case, I will have a chance to compare the effects of meeting with artists who increase participants' understandings of arts performance. In this case, Niyaz is going to perform not in English-- all of songs will be in different languages, but they had five different public meetings over this week so they explained it very well what they do, what they want to seek to accomplish. The other second cohort did not have a chance to listen what they do, so basically I will look at the journals of two students who went to a live art performance and then I will analyze what are the differences or similarities.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah, that sounds terrific. I think your students are lucky to have a chance to do this. That will go on through the entire period of the Embracing Complexity project?

Cuma Ozkan: Yes, es..... about selecting artists so, I mean, there is this understanding of the Muslim world, which gives the sense of a unified Islam, which is not historically true. So the concept of the Muslim world has originated in the 19th century in a particular political climate, which was not ... The ideal of a Muslim world has not existed at all, so intellectuals later embraced, it is a more imaginary idea so I also included some of the events that are organized by student orgs, which also shows the diversity among Muslims and these other cultures so they will have a chance to engage with this ... diverse Islamic culture.

I will also look at the influence of experiencing this diversity to decrease Islamophobia because then we have the idea of Islam is unified when something happened in one part of the Muslim world, we instantly think that all Muslims do the same thing. When something happens in the Middle East, we will think naturally that that also represents a Muslim in Indonesia, but that's not the case. So I also want to examine to what extent knowing that Islam is a very diverse religion can decrease Islamophobia.

Joan Kjaer: I think that's so important. You sent me a note earlier on and you said, profound ignorance of diversity about Muslims leads to sweeping generalizations about Islam and Muslims based on single incidents, and I think we can all say that we know that to be true. So I think this is a great collaborative effort. Have you and Marie worked on projects like this before that are specific to a subset of people, something very specific to a certain group?

Anne Marie Nest: Yeah, and documentary theater in particular. Yes, I worked on a project that was commissioned by the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis about the refugee community in Minneapolis because it's been marked a safe haven, and then one of the first documentary theater pieces I did was interviewing middle school

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kids about what it is like to be in middle school and then we created a rock musical called Life in the Middle based on this.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. Great. What are the particular challenges? Obviously, you said that you're not going to reveal the identities of the people you've talked with, but as you think about making it into a play, something to be performed, are you trying to mix really difficult, heartrending stories in with those moments of love and happiness that, obviously, show a little bit of diversity in the full experience of a person's life?

Anne Marie Nest: Yes. Yes, and I think the difficulty is that in a play often there's a conflict, an action that happens, and then something that gets resolved, so how can you make a play based on just a collage of experiences? I'm not sure yet how that will happen, but it usually ends up working out quite wonderfully. It's always hard for people in the beginning to trust me with their harder stories and so my work has been about getting people to feel comfortable enough with me to not just tell me how great they think Iowa is and how accepting Iowans are, but maybe about some of the challenges that they've encountered. Some people are much more open than others and, certainly, there's a difference between people living in Iowa city and people that have spent time in small-town or rural Iowa.

The other big challenge with the project is just actually what Cuma was saying, which is the diversity with the Muslim community just in Iowa ... I don't think of Iowa City as being a very diverse place, I come from New York City, but now that I'm deep into this project, it's amazing to me in the Islamic Center up in Cedar Rapids, the imam told me that there were over 20 different languages spoken in that one mosque. I don't think I'm going to be able to represent the entire diversity, but I will do my best.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah, yeah. Salma, when the news came out earlier in the year about the travel restrictions and so on, there was a lot of concern... certain students were out of the country and wondered if they could make it back in and so on. Was this something that you and your friends had to deal with, or at least had feelings about, I suspect?

Salma Haider: I know a lot of my friends were concerned for some of their friends. I personally didn't have any friends that were directly affected by it, but, yeah, of course, it was a concern.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And on campus?

Salma Haider: I personally haven't had many interactions with people faced by this, but I know there was a student who wrote an amazing article about it and it did get published in many different places and, yeah, we really appreciated that. Yeah, it raised a concern.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah.

Anne Marie Nest: I interviewed them at that the Muslim student Association. Salma was so kind to set up an interview with the entire group or many of the exec members, and one of the only things they talked about was how hard it was for them traveling in airports and being 'randomly selected' to be profiled.

Joan Kjaer: Yeah. (To Cuma) How long have you been here at the University of Iowa?

Cuma Ozkan: I came to Iowa in 2010 to pursue my MA, and since then I've been here on and off. I went to China for research for two years, but other than that ... Yeah.

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- Joan Kjaer: Yeah, yeah. Where are you from originally?
- Cuma Ozkan: I'm from originally Turkey. I grew up there. I completed my BA there and then I worked a little bit and then-
- Joan Kjaer: Yeah, yeah. Can you tell us a little bit of that what you're researching in regard to Islam in China?
- Cuma Ozkan: Sure. I am a historian by training, I deal with texts, and I contextually analyze texts written by Chinese-Muslims in the 16th-century. In China, there were a lot of Confucian or Buddhists texts which were used to explain Islam, and I did my MA on Chinese religions. I also teach a course on Chinese religion as well. So I try to look at how Muslims used these non-Muslim concepts to explain Islam, so how they preserve the Islamic identity in connection with dominant Chinese religious, political, intellectual environment.
- Joan Kjaer: Wow. Most of your research then happens in the archives in China?
- Cuma Ozkan: Yes, I've already collected the documents that I'm going to read, so now I'm in my office reading Chinese documents and writing.
- Joan Kjaer: Well, I can't thank you all enough for coming to talk with us this afternoon. Cuma Ozkan and Salma Haider and Anne Marie Nest, thank you very much. I hope that all of you can stay with us for the last segment here. In this next segment, we're going to hear music, music of Niyaz, a wonderful performing group from ... An Iranian Canadian group, and we'll get them set up in just a second here, but please give a hand to our guests.

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Joan Kjaer: Hello, I'm Joan Kjaer. This is WorldCanvass from International Programs at the University of Iowa. Our program tonight is exploring the rich world of Islamic art and culture. Just a slight taste of it. There's not too much we can do in an hour and a half, but we hope to inspire you to learn more and find more. We are in MERGE in downtown Iowa City, and you're welcome to join us for these live programs if you like. Our guests in this segment of the program are Hancher guests tomorrow night, but tonight they're ours, and they are the Iranian Canadian musical group Niyaz. You see many of the members of the group here in front of you, and just next to me is Azam Ali. Thank you for being here.

Azam Ali: Thank you.

Joan: Azam is a vocalist and composer and two time JUNO award nominee. If you don't know about the JUNOs, they are the Canadian music industry's most prestigious recognition for excellence in recorded music. Also joining us, members of the band, and the guy just in front of me here is Loga Ramin Torkian. He's a multi-instrumentalist and composer, also a JUNO award nominee. And as we get going here, I'll ask you to introduce the other members of the band, but it's so nice to have you all here. I have read a little bit about your group, and of course it's all inspiring, and you have many videos we can watch online, but I have read that some people have called Niyaz part of a 21st century global trance tradition. Does that make sense to you?

Azam: It does.

Joan: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So what does that imply? A sort of a mystical sense to the music you do?

Azam: Well, our music is a sort of bridge between the past and the present. We pretty much draw from a lot of ancient Sufi poetry as well as very old folk music from the Persian Gulf. I was born in Iran and raised in India, and then I moved to the United States in 1985 and then moved to Canada for seven years and then back again to the United States. I'm collecting passports. So if anyone wants to adopt me, I'll take another passport. A big part of why we got into doing the music that we do is that we wanted to remain connected to our roots and traditions that were precious to us, but at the same time make a home for ourselves in the country we were now living in. It's kind of like creating a new home for ourselves, because once you live outside of your homeland long enough, you can neither go back or you can't go forward. There's a sense of not really belonging anywhere. And the art becomes a platform to create a sort of new architecture, a new home, and that's what this has become for us. This band is really special to me. They are my family. I love each of them so much. I will just quickly just say who's here. Gabriel Ethier, who is on keyboards, is from Quebec. We met in Montreal when we moved there eight years ago, and he has been performing with us. Sinon Arodu actually just arrived from Istanbul, Turkey yesterday. He plays two wonderful instruments. He's a virtuoso at his young age. He's really an incredible composer and musician. We met, and it was just an instant bond, so now he's part of our albums, and we try to bring him whenever we travel around the world. It doesn't matter where we are. Ravinan Peli (?) is on tabla, and he is from Canada. He lives in Toronto, and as you will hear, he's a master on that drum. I don't think I need to introduce the tabla. It's kind of well-known Hindustani instrument.

Here on the kaman, it's a very unique instrument that was designed for Loga Ramin Torkian, and he was born in Iran and also moved to the US as a teenager. This basically is an instrument that was created by an American instrument maker, and it is fretted in a way for him to be able to play eastern scales on it.

So we have these very traditional instruments, and we blend them with a lot of electronic music. So the idea behind blending the electronic music is to be able to reconcile these very opposing concepts of east and west and modern and ancient. And I'm always intrigued by that is can we reconcile them, so it's kind of an ongoing journey.

Also, for us, even though we are not practicing Muslims, none of us on the stage are, we come from Islamic cultures. Not Quebec, of course, or Toronto. But both for Sinan and for Loga and myself, we come from Islamic cultures, and I think one thing that has become very important for us is to be able to travel and speak about the work that we do and to create in the minds of people this distinction between Islam and the culture of Islam.

It always really bothers me when people say Islamic tradition this and Islamic tradition that, so one of the things, we've been here now for a week, and we've been talking non-stop with students and some amazing discussions about feminism in the east, about Sufism and Islam and music and technology, and one of the things that I like to repeat, and I will before we begin performing I would just like to say that, is that the term Islamic tradition or Islamic culture is, for me, a very wrong term because it's so broad.

You cannot paint that region with just one huge brushstroke. You are looking at nations that are very, very different. You look at Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and each of those countries have histories that are very old. You have these ethnic and religious minority groups that have been thriving within those empires, so to speak, for such a long time, and it's a very, very complex part of the world. Each part of these countries ... Also, you have to consider that what makes them different is their, let's say, class systems, patriarchy, poverty. All of these come into play. You really cannot say this one thing is Islamic culture or this is Islam, and that's one of the very important thing I like to talk about.

For us, for example, we are very much influenced by Sufism, which is the mystical aspect of Islam. Some say it predates Islam, some say it doesn't. I am also greatly influenced by the Turkish Alevi tradition, which is another form of the mystical aspect of Islam, and actually Sinan's family comes from the Alevi tradition in Turkey.

The songs, which will now bring me nicely to the song that we are going to perform right now is a very old Alevi folk song that is basically a devotional love song about a man singing to God and saying that you have put me on this beautiful earth and you have given me all that I could ever desire, but you failed to show me the one thing, and that is the path towards you. So it kind of captures the sentiment of longing and yearning and this need for truth so to speak, which I feel the individual soul is constantly seeking. This aspect of our music, we try to retain even though it's very modern, but we are very much intrigued by the ... when you say trance tradition, I think it comes back to this because Sufism is very much intertwined with the trance tradition, so to speak, because it is through music we are able to communicate on a higher level and experience a kind of innate knowledge and truth that is indescribable in the sort of mundane language of words, let's say.

Joan: Thank you so much, Azam.

Azam: I'm sorry if I made it too long.

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Joan: Not at all. Not at all.

Azam: There's so much to cover.

Joan: Thank you so much, and now we're very much looking forward to the performance. I'll just move off the stage.

Azam: Thanks you. So are we gonna do two songs back to back?

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Azam: So the first song is a Turkish folk song. The second song is going to be actually in Urdu. I grew up in India, and ... Oh, we're gonna do ...Okay. So if we have time, we'll do the Urdu piece, but the second piece is based on a very old folk song from Afghanistan, which is in Farsi or Dari which is a similar dialect in Farsi.

Joan: Wonderful, thank you. So this is Niyaz.

Azam: So, hope you enjoy it. Don't go anywhere. Stay here.

Joan: Okay.

Azam: Thank you.
(singing)
Thank you.
(singing)
Thank you. Thank you.

Joan: Thank you. So tell us about the second song. You told us about the first one, looking for a pathway.

Azam: So, the second one is more of a fun sort of folk song. It's more about the coming of spring and everything will be green again. It's a much more celebratory song.

Joan: Yeah, yeah, yeah. In these minutes we have left, can you tell us something about the Fourth Light project that you'll be performing at Hancher tomorrow.

Azam: Yes. The Fourth Light project is a new, immersive, multimedia project that we have created. When I introduced the musicians, there's one very important person that I need to introduce as well who is pivotal to the Fourth Light project, and now that we're on the subject I can introduce her. Tanya Evanson, who is the whirling dervish, she's a very, very big part of this show. She's hiding. She's really amazing. Actually when we were thinking to start this project, we were throwing around a bunch of ideas about ... Every album that Niyaz does, we focus on one poet, Sufi poet. And even though we do folk songs, we focus at least three or four songs in that project on one particular poet. Our first one was on Rumi. Our second one was on Amir Khusrow Dehlavi. The third one, actually, we kind of went a little all over the place, and then when we were talking about the fourth one, Tanya said let's do it on Rabia Al Basri, and it was like a light just went off.

So Rabia Al Basri is a very important character connected to the Fourth Light project. She was the first Sufi-- female Sufi-- saint and poet, born in the eighth century in what would be considered modern day Iraq today. Back then, we did not have the geographical borders that were created, but it would be considered modern Iraq. She was a very remarkable woman and in many ways. If people are interested, I would highly recommend looking her up on the Internet. We know her in Iran and Turkey and Afghanistan, Central Asia as Rabia Al Basri, but in the Arab world she's known as Rabia Al Adawiyya. So you can look her up, and for me she was the first feminist of the Middle East, as far as I'm concerned. We are very much inspired by her. Unfortunately, most of her poetry was lost in time, but a few that did survive, a few phrases here and there, we kind of took it and wove it into the projects.

So the Fourth Light project kind of loosely goes through the arch of her life. There's three movements. There's a black movement, a red movement, and a white movement, and each is marked by Tanya in her robes. The whirling dervish. Black because Rabia Al Basri was born into darkness in a very poor family. They could not afford even oil to light the lamp to see the child that was born. She grew up. Some say she was sold into slavery, some say that's not the case. We don't know. Scholars don't seem to agree on what happened to her. Regardless, at this stage of her life, she ends up marrying, and at one point the husband lets her go because he sees there is something very divine about her. She does go and live the life of a recluse and goes into the desert, and when she comes back, she pretty much achieved enlightenment, and she reveals a lot of poetry, and she comes up with the most important philosophy, which lies at the heart of modern day Sufism, and that is the concept of divine love, that you love for the sake of love itself and not out of the promise of heaven or the fear of hell. So she came back to reveal that.

The red movement is about her struggle for freedom, and then the white is liberation and enlightenment. This kind of loosely follows that. In terms of the show itself, it's a very, very modern and technical show. It will be what you have heard today, live music with Tanya, and we have incorporated a very cutting edge visual art into this musical performance. So, it's visual art that is interacting with the music as well as with the movements of Tanya and a few of the musicians. You have what we describe as a digital sonography. It's an environment. You come in there, and you're in an environment where music, dance, visual art, they all kind of merge, and hopefully you are taken to a place where ... what is our ultimate goal is where people can get to a state where cultural and religious boundaries just disappear and only thing that is left is humanity.

Joan: Wow. So that's tomorrow night at Hancher, and hopefully many people will be able to go. Boy, we are so grateful that you're here this afternoon. Could we talk you into a third song as we leave the program?

Azam: Of course, of course.

Joan: Good, good, good, good.

Azam: Urdu. Ah, we have an Urdu request. Actually, this song is very important for me also because the poetry was written by Kaifi Azmi. He was a very famous Urdu poet, 20th century poet. He belonged to ... he was a leftist in India. He wrote this poem, it's called Oarat, which means woman, and he wrote it for his wife. It is a really remarkable poem because he wrote this in the '50s. We're talking about at time when India had not even achieved independence yet. The poem is long and very beautiful and very powerful, and it's so potent. I can't translate the whole thing, but I will just translate the chorus because that's the most powerful part of it.

Basically what he says in the chorus is [urdu 00:26:50] which means rise, my beloved, you should walk beside me. So he sang this for his wife, and every verse of this poem is about saying that women are so much more than the place that they were given in society. He's telling his wife that you are my equal, and you should rise and walk alongside me, not behind me. This poem just ... it's so powerful for me, and that's the song that we'll perform next.

Joan: Okay. Wonderful. Wonderful. Because there will be such a high at the end of this performance, let me say my goodbyes now, and then we'll let Niyaz finish up this part of the program. Thank you all for coming here this afternoon to see WorldCanvass and to hear our guests. The next program is on October 18th in the same room. Reception

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ahead of time at 5:00 and the program at 5:30, and it's on journalism and a free press in the age of fake news. So we have a lot of good guests coming for that, and we hope you can join us.

Azam: Can I come back?

Joan: You can come back. Thank you.

Azam: Thank you so much for having us and speaking with us.

Joan: Thank you so much.

Azam: (singing)