

Songlines: Iranian music album 'Luka' named among world's top 10

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian musician Mohsen Sharifian's album 'Luka' was named as one of the top 10 bagpipe albums globally by the renowned music magazine, Songlines, in their May 2024 issue. Songlines is a UK-based magazine that covers world music, ranging from ancient to contemporary sounds. They feature different genres, showcase the best albums worldwide, introduce talented artists, and present annual awards. Sharifian's 'Luka' was chosen alongside works by renowned artists like Irish uilleann piper Davy Spillane, a Grammy Award winner, ISNA reported. Chris Wiley, a journalist at Songlines, describes Sharifian and his album as follows: "A multi-instrumentalist and composer born in Bushehr, southern Iran, Sharifian is one of the country's foremost artists in preserving and promoting local traditional music and dance. His bagpipe takes center stage in this superb collection, where percussive rhythms and intoxicating melodies create a mesmerizing atmosphere." Songlines, founded in 1999 in the UK, specializes in world music and has become a go-to source for music enthusiasts and scholars alike. In 2013, they recognized the collaboration between Iranian kamancheh player Kayhan Kalhor and Turkish baglama player Erdal Erzincan, listing their album among the top 10 releases of that year. Released in March 2022, 'Luka' is a culmination of Sharifian's experiences leading the Lian Music Group.

At the album's unveiling, Sharifian shared the inspiration behind the name: "While exploring the soothing songs of the waves and winds as narrated by captains and sailors of the south, I discovered different melodies on the arid shores of the Persian Gulf! These were the chants of desert nomads, used to tame camels. When a camel gets into gear, it becomes intoxicated! Wilder than any sea! In the ancient port of Bushehr, camels are called 'Luka' and the camel drivers as 'jat.' Jats would lead the Lukas with songs..." "Luka," Sharifian's 19th multimedia work, features 10 carefully selected pieces from the Lian Music Group's most beloved repertoire. The album's lyrics are folk poems chosen from the rich tradition of southern Iran's poetry.

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Iran's theatrical work 'Quiet' wins three prizes in Moscow

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The Iranian theatrical production 'Quiet,' directed by Esmacel Shafiee, received three awards at the 28th International Theater Festival "Russkaya Klassika" in Moscow. The multi-national play, presented by Iran's Chayka Theater Group, received accolades for Best Director, Best Duet Performance, and an Honorary Diploma for its contribution to bridging Eastern and Russian cultures, ISNA reported. The Best Director award was presented to Shafiee, a member of the faculty at the University of Tehran. The Best Duet Performance award was given to Iranian actresses Mina Emami and Farzaneh Meydani, who delivered a great performance that left a lasting impression on the festival attendees and judges. According to the report, the play features a diverse cast, including actors from Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. 'Quiet' previously won a special prize at the 2023 The 13th Russian Festival of Performing Arts for Children - Harlequin, showcasing its impact on audiences and critics alike. Shafiee, who conducted the actors' rehearsals online, explored new ways of creating art across borders.



Pro-Palestinian protesters occupy parts of Brooklyn Museum



Pro-Palestinian protesters took over parts of the Brooklyn Museum on Friday, hanging a banner above the main entrance, occupying much of the lobby and scuffling with police, witnesses said. The art museum in the New York City borough of Brooklyn said it closed an hour early because of the disruption, including skirmishes between police and protesters that took place inside and outside the building. Some arrests were made but a New York Police Department spokesperson said there would be no official count until after the protest concluded. A demonstration continued outside the museum hours after the initial confrontation, but the spokesperson could not say whether any protesters remained inside, Reuters reported. One of the arrests was of a man who defaced an outdoor sculpture with graffiti, a Reuters witness said. Several protesters scrawled messages on the OY/YO sculpture on the plaza outside the entrance.

"There was damage to existing and newly installed artwork on our plaza," a museum spokesperson said in an email. "Protesters entered the building, and our public safety staff were physically and verbally harassed. "Out of a concern for the building, our collections, and our staff, the decision was made to close the building an hour early," and the public was asked to vacate peacefully, the statement said. Hundreds of demonstrators were marching through Brooklyn when some of them rushed the entrance, according to the Reuters witness. Security guards prevented many from entering but some managed to get inside. A banner was hung from atop the neoclassical facade proclaiming, "Free Palestine, Divest From Genocide." A pro-Palestinian organization named Within Our Lifetime urged demonstrators to "flood Brooklyn Museum for Gaza." It said activists occupied the museum to compel it to disclose any Israel-related investments and to divest any such funding.

Pro-Palestinian protesters march, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza, in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, US, on May 31, 2024. ● REUTERS

Demonstrations against Israel's prosecution of the war in Gaza have continued in the United States, largely on university campuses. At Columbia University in upper Manhattan, demonstrators on Friday set up an encampment on campus during an alumni reunion to show support for Palestinians. Video on social media showed campus security taking down the tents. As of Friday night, police were not involved, as they had been in taking down the camp and evicting or arresting protesters twice before. "We are aware of the encampment erected this evening and are monitoring the situation. We remain committed to hosting a successful weekend for our alumni," Columbia spokesperson Samantha Slater said in a statement.

First Iranian book award to be held in Austria next year

The first Iranian Book Award in Austria, organized by the cultural representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vienna, is set to take place in 2025. The award aims to strengthen cultural ties between Iran and Austria and support Iranian studies in German-speaking countries. The award will recognize the best books written in German over the past 20 years, focusing on one of nine main topics: Islamic wisdom and philosophy, Shia religion, Iranian-Islamic culture, Iranian art and literature, Persian language, Iranian history, Iranian antiquities, tourist attractions of Iran, and the Islamic Revolution. According to the organizers, the award is a way to promote Iranian culture and literature in German-speaking regions and to encourage Austrian Iranologists and other scholars to continue their research and writing in this field. Authors and publishers are invited to submit their entries to the secretariat of the cultural event by September 31, 2024. The closing ceremony and announcement of the winners will take place in Vienna in February 2025.

