

APRIL 23

7:30 PM THURSDAY

**MEMORIAL HALL
BEASLEY-CURTIS AUDITORIUM**

**APPROXIMATELY 110 MINUTES,
INCLUDING INTERMISSION**



KIRAN AHLUWALIA

REZ ABBASI, guitar

RUSSELL CARTER, drums

NITIN MITTA, tabla

LOUIS SIMAO, organ keyboard/
accordion

PERFORMANCE BENEFACTOR
LISA CHURCH

FROM THE AGE OF SEVEN, KIRAN AHLUWALIA HAS APPROACHED MUSIC

DIFFERENTLY. Born and raised in India before immigrating to Canada, Ahluwalia surrounded herself with many different styles of Indian music. But it wasn't until after her move to Toronto that she began embracing her musical heritage while also exploring Western blues, rock, R&B, jazz, and the sounds of Mali, West Africa. "When you take different styles and merge them together, and you don't want a simple cut and paste, then you're really developing a new hybrid genre," Ahluwalia says. "It's incredibly invigorating when I feel a connection in expressions from different cultures and then figure out ways to connect them seamlessly in my music. Those

moments of discovery are nothing short of sublime. It's really the essence of everything for me."

There was a time when Ahluwalia wasn't sure she would pursue her talent for blending sounds. In the early 90s—after graduating from the University of Toronto and returning to India for a decade of intense study of music with her classical guru, Padma Talwalkar, and her ghazal guru, Vithal Rao—she found her way back to Canada where she got her MBA in finance and began working as a trader. She considered ending her musical career there, but was haunted by deathbed visions of herself filled with the intense regret of not having lived her passion. With renewed zeal, she left her career and threw herself into musical endeavors.

Ahluwalia's original compositions embody the essence of Indian music while embracing influences from West African blues, to the nuances of jazz, and more. Her seven uniquely blended albums have earned her numerous awards, including two JUNOs (Canadian Grammys). The *Vancouver Sun* writes, "Ahluwalia continues to

knock down the partitions that separate us from each other, all while connecting audiences with new amalgamations of music."

With masterful lyrics exploring everything from fighting the wars that rage within ourselves to realizing female desire by throwing away shame, Ahluwalia creates boundary-breaking songs that invite us to explore the human condition. Her five-piece band consisting of electric guitar, accordion/organ, drum kit, and tabla (a pair of squat, round drums) is able to traverse genres as quickly as Ahluwalia can blend them.

Her latest album, *7 Billion (Six Degrees)*, is shaped by two major forces: the beautiful harmonies and addictive guitar riffs of Ahluwalia's life partner, award-winning, Pakistani-born NYC jazz guitarist Rez Abbasi, and the trancy rhythms masterfully played on tabla and drum kit. Her songs speak about the unattainable, the beloved, and the divine. As the *Seattle Times* said, "Ahluwalia is busy honing a transnational sound as fresh as tomorrow." •