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A Swiss song of
Love for Oman

● KABEER YOUSUF

When Saskia Stauble, a Swiss woman, visited the Sultanate about nine months ago, she felt some positive energy gushing forth within her.

She had this unusual feeling as she was returning to her hotel with a friend and pianist, Michael Odermatt.

In the evening, they strolled on a beach and visited some mountains.

All the while, the otherwise lively Stauble was subdued.

She hardly uttered a word to her friend or the cabbie who were trying to cheer her up.

As they returned to the hotel in the evening, she began to weep for no reason.

She pulled out a paper and pen, and scribbled a few words about what she felt...

*“Walk with me the wonderful beach; Salt in the air
Run, run, you don't care
Jump in the water – feel the wave – I know you are so brave
You know all what you have is your memories
Let me see your eyes then I see your soul”*

As she finished penning these lines, she had overcome her emotions.

She fell asleep.

The next morning, Stauble started off from where she had stopped.

*“The Sultan of this country is the light of the sun; In his eyes you see the power of Oman
The colour of Oman is love; Respect and passion is the way – every day
The colour of Oman is love
You touch my heart with your smile; Be a part of this style
Like the nature of this land
In Muscat you find a beautiful place”.*

Michael sensed the birth of beautiful, highly emotional stanzas.

Soon, they returned to Switzerland, where she recited her poem at Chateau Gutsch, a boutique hotel overlooking the city of Luzern and Lake Lucerne, to an elite European crowd.

Before the duo ended their last one, a standing ovation, and hugs and kisses followed.

An inspired Stauble decided to bring out a musical album on Oman.

They visited the Sultanate again.

At the City Seasons Hotel, they are giving final touches to their album, 'Colour of Oman', which will soon hit the charts and the satellite frequencies of Oman TV and Radio.

Stauble doesn't hold a degree in music from any university nor does she have any background in music.

She worked in hotels and restaurants back home until 2010, but she was always passionate about singing.

However, fate struck her in the form of a brain stroke.

Doctors declared that she was “half



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deeply in love with music and need a partner who can be with me and scale newer heights in music.”

“I received replies from hundreds of musicians, some of whom I met at different places but none could strike an emotional chord with me.

When Michael, a pianist known to me, said, ‘I can’, I felt a sincere soul in him, and here we are.”

The Swiss duo has travelled to more than seven countries.

Their performance was well received even before they visited Oman.

“One of our friends who knows our passion (for music) asked us if we had visited Oman.

We gave it a thought.

Early this year, we made our first visit and the rest is history,” they said.

As they continued to compose their music album, we bade them adieu.

The following lines followed us with the evening breeze of Muscat...

“Arabian Nights, Arabian Days; Smell the coffee;

You feel this is the city to be

The colour of Oman is love, respect and

passion is the way – every day

Home, sweet home, be never – never alone

Light and wisdom is the way – every day

The colour of Oman is love”

@culture

Unbeatable, they play 'garba-dandiya' on wheelchairs

● QUAID NAJMI

At several suburban Navratri venues in Mumbai, revellers suddenly stop in their tracks to view and admire a young man and a woman as they join the ongoing 10-day dance festivities — on wheelchairs.

The duo occupies centre-stage at venues teeming with several thousands of dancers, and seated in their wheelchairs, they swing to the lilting tunes and musical beats — but with hand movements (garba) and later with dandiya (sticks). There is also a deaf girl who can barely hear the cacophony around her, but she quietly “follows” the dance-steps of the individual before her and virtually melts into the crowds.

The trio belong to 'Rasleela — Master the Art of Garba' dance troupe run by hotelier-cum-choreographer Hardik Mehta in the Kandivali suburb. “Probably inspired by the success of our paralympians and other prominent personalities who have conquered their physical disabilities, these three students have mustered great courage to do something which they love,” Mehta said.

The students are: Siddhi Shah, 30, working as a senior executive in a private company, Dhaval



Teacher Hardik Mehta with students at Rasleela dancing class in Mumbai.

Shah, 26, working as a realtor — both wheelchair-bound — and hearing-disabled Jesal Shah, 30, an interior designer. All of them live in the suburbs.

The trio learnt of Rasleela through its social media networks and got in touch with Mehta who terms it “as the most unexpected request” for learning navratri dances.

“I was hesitant initially, but when I saw their passion to learn dance and challenge their own

disability, I took up the gauntlet. I even decided to waive off the course fees for them and they have not disappointed me,” Mehta smiled.

To enable Siddhi and Dhaval make the best of the opportunity, Mehta and his team of teachers designed special “hand movements” — instead of normal dancing steps — which could be performed sitting in their wheelchair.

It clicked with the duo.



Hardik Mehta with student Siddhi Shah.

They managed to pick it up so well that they now confidently travel with a 45-member Rasleela troupe to various top navratri venues during the ongoing season.

Both Siddhi and Dhaval are guided to a central location and they join the dancers — seated in their wheelchairs — to the loud blaring music and even live orchestra performances at some of the major venues.

But dancing requires immense stamina; so they perform the rhythmic hand movements for 15-20 minutes, take a short break of five minutes, and resume, Mehta explained.

Enjoying the navratri for the first time with her newly-imbibed talent, Siddhi is all energetic, loves moving around on the wheelchair to join different groups of revellers at various venues — and recently even travelled for a session to Surat, Gujarat, he adds proudly.

“I now feel I belong to the huge navratri family; I have learnt a lot of easy and difficult hand movements.

It was tough, but there cannot be excuses for anything,” said Siddhi, who is also an avid traveller.

“It was only after joining this class that I felt confident — especially with Mehta who took so much trouble to train me,” Dhaval said.

Jesal's hearing disability was a major dampener for her sheer passion for dancing, especially during navratri, and she joined Mehta's classes in 2015.

“She uses a hearing aid in normal course, but it's of little use in the open grounds... she could easily get out of rhythm or bump into the others dancing around her. — IANS