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What: Sidi Goma
Where: Painted Bride Art Center, 230 Vine Street, Philadelphia
When: Saturday, May 9, 8pm
Price: \$25 / \$12.50 for Bride Members

Sidi African-Indians Bring Two Continents and Eight Centuries of Music and Dance to Philadelphia

“ecstatic power... building slowly and steadily to a fever pitch...”
- *The New York Times*

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Painted Bride Art Center offers a rare opportunity to discover the joyful and exuberant devotional music and dance of the hidden and mysterious community of **Sidi African-Indians** from Gujarat, India. The Sidis of Gujarat are a tribal Sufi community of East African origin that came to India eight centuries ago and made Gujarat their home. They carried with them their exceptionally rich musical tradition and kept it alive and flourishing through the generations, unknown to the rest of the world. Their native African music styles, melodic and rhythmic structures, lyrics and musical instruments have mingled with local influences to form this unique art spanning two continents.

Nobody is certain how these people moved from Africa to India. Perhaps they were traders, slaves, or maybe sailors. Regardless, a clear musical connection exists between their old and new homes, testifying to an enigmatic moment of cultural migration. Their music derives heavily from the drum traditions common in East Africa, incorporating chanting and other percussive instrumentation.

The Sidis are Sufi Muslim devotees who honor their African saint and symbolic ancestor, Bhava Gor. Their sacred songs praise the gift of joy he brought from the waves of the sea. Sharing this gift through their music and dance is their divine calling and life-affirming talent. Their performances are not simply concerts, but meticulously choreographed rituals that demonstrate their devotion to their saint. Trance-inducing rhythms give way to dramatic climaxes, such as the smashing of a coconut atop a performer’s head.

Sidi Goma performs in a group of twelve: four lead musicians (drummers/singers) and eight dancers. The program presents an overview of Sidi ritual performance, from the traditional *muezzin* call to prayer to a staged demonstration of a *damal*. It centers on danced *zikrs* (prayers), consisting of joyful, satirical praise dances to Bhava Gor. Intoxicating drum patterns that “speak” the *ziker* prayers in rhythm support the dancers who perform dance solos, gradually reaching an ecstatic crescendo. While the music gets more rapid and excited, the dances unfold with

constantly evolving solo and group acts, including humorous imitations of animals and other creatures. The program also features solos on the *malunga*, an instrument resembling the Brazilian *berimbau*, as well as prayer calls and seated ritual songs (*baithi damal* and *qawwali*).

The group has been busy ever since their international debut, developing their profile steadily, in Europe and beyond, first touring in the UK in 2002, followed by a historic “home-coming” trip to East-Africa (ZIFF 2003), a stunning showcase at WOMEX 2003, and intensive touring in Europe and North America ever since, plus the release of their first CD, *Black Sufis of Gujarat*.

TICKET INFORMATION: Ticket prices vary for all Bride events. Many Bride shows sell out; order tickets in advance 24 hours a day at paintedbride.org or Tuesday – Saturday, 12-6pm at 215.925.9914. Bride members receive 50% off of single tickets. Students and seniors with ID receive a 25% discount. The Bride is located at 230 Vine Street in Old City, Philadelphia.

MISSION: Painted Bride Art Center collaborates with emerging and established artists to create, produce, and present innovative work that affirms the intrinsic value of all cultures and celebrates the transformative power of the arts. Through performances and exhibitions, education and outreach, the Bride creates a forum for engagement centered on contemporary social issues.

PHOTOS, VIDEO, AND INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE.

Contact Oliver Wunsch, Painted Bride Marketing Director, at 215-925-9914 x14 or oliver@paintedbride.org

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