

MIRABAI The Barefoot Princess

by Leah Sirkin



CONCERT READING

May 17, 2026

At The Rueff, ACT Strand

1127 Market St. SF

MIRABAI CREATIVE TEAM

Written and Directed by Leah Sirkin

Book, Music and Lyrics by Leah Sirkin

Additional Music and Arrangements by Tano Brock

Additional Arrangements: Siddique Ahmed, Gaayatri Kaundinya

Musical Direction by Ami Nashimoto and Tano Brock

Assistant Director: Grace Wade

Dramaturgy: Grace Wade, Susannah Sirkin

CAST

Ria Patel: Mirabai

Akshaya Lakshmi: Vir Kumari, Udabai, Ensemble

E Talley II: Krishna, Rajput lord, Ensemble

Sheetal Gandhi: Rani, Ensemble

Niloy Gupta: Rana Sangha, Jiv Goswami, Ensemble

Stephen Kanaski: Bhojraj, Ensemble

Aaron McMurrian: Vikramjit, Ensemble

Grace Wade: Ensemble

MUSICIANS

Tano Brock: Keyboard, Guitar

Ami Nashimoto: Music Director, Keyboard, Cello

Steven Brock: Tabla, Kanjira, Frame Drum

E Talley II: Flute

DANCERS

Ishika Seth, Amit Patel, Sheetal Gandhi

Head Sound: Colin Babrich ACT Production Manager: Elizabeth Newton

Author/Director's Note:

I was captivated by the story of Mirabai when I discovered a small book of her poems. After retracing Mirabai's steps in Rajasthan, reading many versions of her poems, and exploring her story through folklore, I began to work on a musical about her life and legacy. The script contains some of her verses translated by Andrew Schelling and Robert Bly. Translations of two Rumi poems by Coleman Barks are also included as Krishna's poetic voice.

My love and appreciation of Indian classical and folk music are also an important part of the inspiration for this project. More music and dance from Hindustani, Carnatic and Rajasthani traditions will be added to an eventual full production.

Many thanks to all the friends and family members who have supported me with this event and the project up until now. I am extremely grateful to my main musical collaborator and son, Tano Brock, who has been instrumental in the development of the project.

Special thanks to Steve Brock, Mira Brock, Susannah Sirkin, Selena Wabl, Siddique Ahmed, Gaayatri Kaundinya, Alam Khan, Madhuvanti Bhide, Roshni Datta, EnacteArts, PlayCafé, Andrew Schelling, Nancy Martin-Kershaw, Paul Dresher and New Performance Traditions.

Leah Sirkin

MIRABAI Song List

PROLOGUE Invocation/Mira Bhajan (devotee)

ACT I

Mirabai of Merta (*Chorus of Women*)

We Are Rajputs (*Rajput Lords*)

Market Song (*Market Women*)

Mirabai of Merta (*Market Women*)

My Destiny (*Mira, Vir Kumari*)

Know Your Place (*Udabai, Rani*)

Do Your Duty (*Bhojraj, Mira, Ensemble*)

Mirabai, Big problem (reprise M of M) (*Udabai, Vikramjit, Rajput Women*)

Don't You See (*Bhojraj, Mira*)

War (*Rajput Lords*)

We Are Rajputs (reprise) (*Rajput Lords*)

Sati (*Rani, Udabai, Vikramjit, Mira, Ensemble*)

ACT II

Mirabai, Solution (reprise) (*Rani, Udabai, Vikramjit*)

Walk Barefoot (*Mira, ensemble*)

Sadhu (*Sadhu*)

Hare Krishna, Radhe Radhe (*Ensemble*)

Guru Jiv (*Ensemble*)

Absolute Reality (*Jiv Goswami, Ensemble*)

No Women Allowed (*JG's attendant*)

Women's Song (*Women*)

Where Are You? (*Mira, Krishna*)

Ever Since She Left (*Rajputs-Ensemble*)

SETTING

The play opens in and around the towns of Merta and Chitoor,
Rajasthan, India, around 1518.

CAST & Creative Team



Akshaya Lakshmi (Udabai/Vir Kumari, Ensemble)

Akshaya Lakshmi is an Indo-Canadian soprano from Fort McMurray, Alberta. Dedicated to diversity and representation, she strives to foster a more inclusive artistic community. She is currently pursuing graduate studies in Voice Performance at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She also holds a Bachelor of Medical Sciences and a University Certificate in Marketing

Akshaya's operatic credits include: Noémie (Cendrillon), Fiordiligi (Cosi fan tutte), Mabel (The Pirates of Penzance), Oberto (Alcina), Papagena (Die Zauberflöte), Musetta (La Bohème), Gretel (Hänsel und Gretel) and more. Her recent musical theatre credits include: Queen of the Night (Diva Diaries), Sister Sophia/Maria US (The Sound of Music), Lilly (Swingtime Canteen), Corine (Triumph of Love) and Diana Barry (Anne of Green Gables). Offstage, she has also worked as a director, choreographer, and music director for numerous productions. Akshaya is so excited to be a part of this production and bring a beloved South Asian story to life!



Ria Patel (Mirabai)

Ria Patel (she/her) is a vibrant musician and a passionate proponent of the arts. She performs a diverse array of repertoire, blending various musical traditions. Ria graduated from the University of the Pacific's Conservatory of Music with a B.M. in Vocal Performance. Her recent roles include Carrie (*Carousel*), Oberto (*Alcina*), and Rapunzel (*Into the Woods*), as well as a premiere of the lead role in a chamber opera titled *The Yellow Wallpaper*. An avid Bay Area singer, she sings with Choral Audacity, Livermore Valley Opera Chorus, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Ria is honored to bring light to the life of Mirabai.



E Talley II (Krishna/Ensemble)

E Talley II (he/him) earned his B.A. from The University of Michigan and his M.F.A. from Wayne State University (Hilberry Repertory Theatre Fellow). Theatre/TV/Film credits include: “Pharaoh” in the musical *Yosef*; “Right Hand” in *The Seven* (adaptation of *Seven Against Thebes*); “Jim” in the national tour of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; “Raymond Parks” in the regional tour of *Rosa's Ride: The Life of Rosa Parks*; Flautist & Rapper in the 2022 Superbowl commercial for the tv series *Bel Air*; “Bartender” in *NCIS: Los Angeles*, among many others. E also currently teaches R&B Line Dancing & Cardio Soul Dance classes at The LGBT Center in Hollywood, CA



Sheetal Gandhi (Rani/Ensemble):

Sheetal Gandhi is a multidisciplinary dance-theater artist, vocalist, and percussionist whose work bridges contemporary performance, North Indian classical Kathak, and Black vernacular forms. She has performed internationally with Cirque du Soleil and appeared in the original Broadway cast of *Bombay Dreams*. Her acclaimed solo work *Bahu-Beti-Biwi* has toured widely, including *Jacob's Pillow*, *REDCAT*, and *The Joyce SoHo*. Gandhi's work explores rhythm, diaspora, and identity through embodied storytelling, often using humor to invite intimacy and connection. She is also an educator and Pilates practitioner dedicated to the integration of art, healing, and lived experience.



Niloy Gupta (Rana, Jiv Goswami, Ensemble):

Niloy Gupta is delighted to join the cast of *Mirabai*. A versatile stage performer and bari-tenor, Niloy recently made his scripted theatrical debut in *Arabian Nights* with Inferno Theatre. He is a seasoned ensemble improviser at San Francisco's Leela Improv, featuring in musical productions such as *Karl The Fugue* and *The Sensationalists*. Niloy has trained extensively at the American Conservatory Theater and Songbird Studios. Beyond the stage, he is an award-winning Toastmasters speaker with a Master's degree from Carnegie Mellon University.



Stephen Kanaski (Bhojraj/Ensemble):

Stephen Kanaski is thrilled to join the team for *Mirabai*. Notable credits include Pippin in *Pippin* (Contra Costa Civic Theatre), Warrior in *Pacific Overtures* (Kunoichi Productions), Cat in the Hat in *Seussical* and Lionel in *Cinderella* (Berkeley Playhouse); Angel in *Rent*, Dr. Frank-n-Furter in *the Rocky Horror Show*, and the Emcee in *Cabaret* (MMTC), Crutchie in *Newsies* (Hillbarn, SFBATCC Featured Actor Nomination), Fox in *Pluck* (Shotgun Players), Anando in the world premiere of *Unpacking in P'Town* and Charles in the regional premiere of *Sons of the Prophet* (TBA Nomination Best Ensemble in a Play) (NCTC), Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors* (PSP).



Aaron McMurrian (Vikramjit/Ensemble):

Aaron McMurrian is excited to be a part of the reading of *Mirabai - The Barefoot Princess*. Aaron loves the music and is excited to bring this story and characters to life. Aaron recently performed in *Korsa Unplugged* in Berkeley at Live Oak Theatre and starred in *Pippin* at Saint Mary's College. He performed in *Korsa's Spring Awakening* at the Douglas Morrison Theatre. You can find Aaron on instagram @svpiis



Grace Wade (Assistant Director/Ensemble)

Grace Wade (she/her) is an actress and classical lyric soprano/belter from Southern California. She has originated the lead in several new works, most recently portraying Juno and Megara in Dana Gioia's translation of Seneca's *The Madness of Hercules*. Other favorite roles include Bianca in *Taming of the Shrew*. A true choir kid at heart, she sang throughout her school years - a soloist at the Southern California Vocal Association's Honor Choir and part of UC Berkeley's Chamber Chorus. After graduating UC Berkeley with a B.A. in Legal Studies, she received the Director's Scholarship at AMDA to pursue her long standing passion for musical theater. She is the winner of Broadway Bound Live Season 2 and an Oakland Theatre Project 2025 Fellow. When not on stage she is reading, writing, and - currently - being really bad at Oracle of Seasons.



Dancers: Ishika Seth & Amit Patel

Amit Patel & Ishika Seth are the Co-Founders and Artistic Directors of Ishami Dance Company. Ishami is a contemporary dance company based in the San Francisco Bay Area that blends South Asian and global dance forms. Our mission is to center queerness, women's voices, and experiences of the South Asian diaspora. We blend tradition with modern storytelling and spark conversations through art. Performance highlights include our production "Pehchaan" that premiered in 2023 in Oakland and toured to New York in 2024 and Chicago in 2025. We received an Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Outstanding Achievement in Music/Sound/Text for "Pehchaan." In the San Francisco Bay Area, Ishami has been featured at the Asian Art Museum, World Arts West Festival, Oakland Asian Cultural Center, Fresh Meat Festival, Queering Dance Festival, and San Francisco Pride. We have collaborated with San Jose State University and organizations including Maitri, Narika, Home of Hope, and Art Together. Amit and Ishika received the Audience's Choice Award for their work at SJDance Co.'s ChoreoProject Awards in 2016 and their dance film "Fragments" won first prize at Nrittam 2020 hosted by Urshilla Dance Company. They premiered "Unearthed: untold Stories of the Ramayana" at ODC Theater in San Francisco in 2022. You can see Ishami's upcoming works at Berkeley Repertory Theater in May, the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, and the FACT/SF Summer Dance Festival in August 2026.

Leah Sirkin (Writer, Composer, Director, Producer)

Leah is a playwright, director and musician in San Francisco. She has created, directed, and performed new work in San Francisco, New York City and Vermont. Trained as an actor and theater creator at the École Jacques Lecoq in Paris and the Experimental Theater Wing of NYU Tisch School of the Arts, Leah's performance experience includes work with the Bread and Puppet Theater, the Balinese-American Dance Theater, California Revels and the Vak Project at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

Leah worked as musical director for the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival and received awards for her direction of the West coast premieres of Ntosake Shange's *Hydraulics Phat Like Mean* and William Finn's *Painting You*. She wrote and directed her first full length musical, *Fallen Buddha* at ETW in NYC and performed her solo music/theater play *Songs and Fears* at The Marsh in San Francisco. Leah was an artist in residence at the Z Space Lab and has directed for the 48-hour Opera Festival.

As a musician, Leah has performed with Helm, the Aswat Arabic Ensemble, The Silk Road Caravan, and her family band, Diaspora. She has performed at the Red Poppy Art House, the De Young and Asian Art Museums, Mills College, the Berkeley World Music Festival, the Great Dickens Fair and other festivals and events in the Bay Area. She is a devoted yoga practitioner and Iyengar trained teacher.

Tano Brock (Arranger, Composer, Music Director, Musician)

Tano Brock is an LA based multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, composer, arranger, and recording engineer. With a unique background in world folk music, combined with a life-long love of pop and classic rock, Tano's skillset is incredibly versatile. His productions range from Latin music and reggaetón, to disco, dance, R&B, and indie-pop. Tano has been the main producer and co-writer for artists like up-and-coming femetón powerhouse La Doña, and indie-pop singer Liv Young. Tano performs live with numerous projects including La Doña, Inspector Gadje, Diaspora and various Balkan, Turkish & Greek bands.

Ami Nashimoto (Music Director, Musician)

Ami Nashimoto is a prominent member of the San Francisco music scene, playing cello with numerous ensembles and bands including Eclecta Strings, Classical Revolution, and the Ami Nashimoto Trio. They play with numerous orchestras and theaters including American Conservatory Theatre, San Francisco Playhouse, and Oakland Theater Project, where she was nominated for the 2024 Bay Area Theatre Critics Award *Featured Performance - Musical* for her multi-instrumental work in *Ghost Quartet*. Ami brings their work as a composer, arranger, music director, and teacher to all of their projects.

Steven Brock (Percussion)

Steven began his study of tabla with the great tabla maestro Pandit Swapan Choudhury in the early 90's at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael. In 2004 he began studying Carnatic percussion on the kanjira (a lizard skin tambourine) with virtuoso Ganesh Kumar, and later with the great master Selvaganesh Vinayakram. More recently he has incorporated frame drum into his drumming repertoire. Steven is also a professional fine art photographer and bookbinder. stevenbrock.com

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