



NMS

naqshbandi mevlevi society

love, unity, peace

To whom it may concern

I am writing on behalf of the Naqshbandi Mevlevi Society in support of the *AHRC Research Network proposal, Heavenly Acts: aspects of performance through an interdisciplinary lens*. The purpose of our voluntary organisation is to promote and preserve Eastern Arts and Religious Performance with a live connection with the Naqshbandi and Mevlevi Sufi Orders through a living Saint.

Our group has performed the dance of the Whirling Dervish with Sufi meditation for over ten years. Settings have ranged, internationally, nationally and locally, from multi-faith meetings to the Uniting Hearts Festivals celebrating cultural and artistic diversity. Traditionally the Whirling is a deeply sacred and spiritual gathering that elevates the Dervish (seeker of the way) into a state that draws him nearer to the presence of the Divine.

Sharing such an intimate and personal experience is an important aspect of the Dervish and therefore facilitating engagement and learning is key. We have, as a result, run a number of workshops at local festivals, such as Mind, Body and Spirit festivals in the UK, that allow participants to learn about the meditation technique and how the teaching can heal and bring positive change in the participant's life. The Whirling has never been for entertainment or show, but rather a practice that is sacred and personal. We have tried to convey this with our workshops allowing people who wish to learn more about the experience of partaking and understanding the finer details of this Sufi practice.

We believe that such gatherings can create a positive impact on social cohesion as they allow participants from various faiths to come together and celebrate their diverse beliefs and disciplines.

I am in full support of the project and believe that such an initiative will have a positive impact and create social cohesion and understanding of diverse world of Faiths and Ritual we belong to. Our organisation is more than happy to provide whatever support we can to make this project a success. As an organisation we would welcome the opportunity to share with other faith networks, to share common experiences and approaches and celebrate difference.

Yours sincerely

Imran Ahmad

Naqshbandi Mevlevi Society