ARTS

"All the world is birthday cake, so take a piece, but not too much."
IT'S ALL TOO MUCH THE BEATLES

Roshni celebrates South Asian culture through dance and music

BY MAYA CHATTERJEE
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

The South Asian Society on Saturday performed Roshni, one of Yale's largest South Asian undergraduate cultural showcases.

Roshni was held in Woolsey Hall and featured performances from Yale's South Asian dance and music groups, including Rangeela, Jashan Bangra, Kaala, Dhvani and Navarasa. The showcase also presented individual and duet numbers, as well as group acts from each class year. The event's program noted that the show's namesake "in several South Asian languages means light and symbolizes positivity and hope."

Ayshi Sen '28 — a co-chair of the South Asian Society cultural committee — reflected the sense of positivity and hope in her remarks.

Roshni, she said, "is a huge display of camaraderie. I would say that the energy around the showcase was hard to describe in words. Everyone was so excited, and I know a lot of the dance teams are looking forward to this all year."

Anjal Jain '26 echoed Sen's sentiment. "Overall, the energy is so great in Woolsey. Everyone's cheering for everyone. All the dance groups are supporting each other."

Sen explained that the preparation for the event began over summer and required extensive coordination between the society's board, performance groups and individual performers.

Despite the logistical demands, Sen emphasized that the groups' collaborative spirit turned the process into an enjoyable endeavor.

Sen also expressed appreciation for the performers, who she said are the heart of Roshni.

"We couldn't do it without the teams and all of their hard work, and everyone who wants to do individual acts and perform," she said. "For a lot of them, this is their big fall showcase. For the last two weeks before the show, teams will practice every single day for hours."

Yale Jashan Bhangra co-captain, Isha Mahadeshwar '27, described the group's preparation for Roshni, which included six hours of practice a week. According to Mahadeshwar, Jashan Bangra aims to spread Punjabi culture both on campus and outside of Yale. At Roshni, they performed a high-energy sequence that blended American songs with Bhangra classics.

For this year's Roshni, the team aimed to add new formations to their dance sequence, "to bring a more modern take to Bhangra," Mahadeshwar said.

"Something that we really tried to do this year is add a lot more moving 3-D formations into our set," she said. "They take a lot more time to clean up and synchronize, but I think hopefully it was worth it."

Mahadeshwar and others described how their performance groups have become meaningful sources of friendship and community throughout their time at Yale.

Jain shared Mahadeshwar's sentiment about the groups she belongs to, Kaala and Dhvani.

"I remember that when I first came in as a freshman, it was very intimidating for me to find community and spaces where I felt like I belonged. Kaala and Dhvani really provided me with a community that I felt like I could relate to, resonate with, and also make friends through dance and music," Jain said.

Roshni serves as a means to bring the various groups together to form a collective sense of South Asian culture.

"Coming into Yale and moving away from home, Roshni is the first showcase of seeing South Asian culture being brought to stage," Sen said.

For her individual act — a medley of Hindi songs — Jain invited Dhvani alum Maanasa Nandigam '25 to perform with her.

"I asked if she wanted to come and recreate what we had done last year for her senior act. It shows that even beyond Yale, this community still prevails," Jain said.

Sen emphasized Roshni's inclusive spirit, noting that the event is meant to extend beyond the South Asian community. She described the demographics of the large crowd, which ranged from first-year counselors supporting their first years to roommates cheering on their friends.

"Even though it is the biggest South Asian cultural showcase, everyone comes regardless of background," Sen said.

Roshni is one of two South Asian Society-coordinated cultural showcases, the second being Dhamaal, which will take place in the spring.



LUKE HUH, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The annual showcase highlighted South Asian culture through performances from various dance and music groups.

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Grace Hopper alumni serenade the college with '60s jazz songs



HANNAH LIU, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
History professor Jay Gitlin '71 and alumna Nancy Walecki '21 performed a pre-Woodstock themed concert at Head of College Samuel Moyn's house Monday evening.

BY HANNAH LIU
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Generations of Yale alumni filled the home of Samuel Moyn, Grace Hopper's head of college, to listen to the sounds of swing and bossa nova on Monday evening.

The "Before Woodstock: Love Songs of the Early Sixties" concert featured Hopper alumni Jay Gitlin '71 on piano and Nancy Walecki '21 on vocals as part of a jazz quintet.

"We're really enthusiastic for people here to get a chance to hear this concert," Gitlin said. "It's music that a lot of people don't get to hear much anymore, and for students, many of them only have a vague acquaintance with these songs, and they're beautiful songs."

Opening with "The Girl from Ipanema" and closing on Grammy Award-winning "The Shadow of Your Smile," Gitlin and the band played a variety of jazz songs including "Lollipops and Roses" and "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow."

The ensemble also performed one purely instrumental piece, featuring solos from all four instrumentalists and a "basie ending" — a classic jazz piano progression.

Hopper student Olivia Catayong '28 appreciated the chance to be able to hear jazz music in a small ensemble setting with alumni from her college.

"After the one song that they sang by Carole King, I turned to Derek, who was sitting here, and I was like, 'I think this is the best music I've ever heard,'" Catayong said. "I really like live music, I like bossa nova, and to watch this kind of music is really cool. He's right — you don't get much of this on campus."

In addition to Gitlin and Walecki, the quintet consisted of Jim Clark on saxophone, Joe Foster on drums and Steve Taylor on bass — members of Gitlin's music group Bales & Gitlin Music.

While this was the first time the alumni had performed together on campus, it was an act years in the making.

Gitlin, a senior lecturer of history at Yale, was Walecki's senior thesis advisor. Walecki, a history major who grew up around her family's music store, recalled spontaneously playing songs with Gitlin in the Davenport common room during her senior year.

During her time at Yale, Walecki and Gitlin often talked about putting on a concert together. In January, Gitlin reached out to Walecki with the news that the Yale Club of New York City was interested in hosting the pair for a performance in September and proposed the pre-Woodstock era theme.

Walecki eagerly accepted the opportunity to perform with her former advisor, and expressed her gratitude to learn more from the professor post-graduation. After the September performance, Gitlin proposed doing the set again for their college.

"We had always talked about how it would be fun to do a performance in Hopper because we're both Hopper alumni," Walecki said. She described their Hopper performance as a "reprise" of the Yale Club act, but with added sentiment: "It's fun because it's something we talked about doing for many years."

Though Gitlin is currently a fellow of Davenport college, Hopper still holds a special place in the professor's heart, he said.

"It's really fun for both of us," Gitlin said. "When I go to Hopper, it still feels very homey and familiar to me."

Grace Hopper College is located at 189 Elm St.

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Comedian Vir Das talks identity and humor at Yale Record event

BY SARINA SANGHVI
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The Yale Record, the campus humor magazine, hosted Emmy-winning comedian Vir Das for a Wednesday evening conversation about his recent book and career.

Moderated by Record chair Devika Kothari '27, the conversation brought together the Yale community for a discussion about Das's new memoir, his creative process and his perspective as an Indian comedian who performs globally.

"Everyone can stand to gain from having more vulnerability and authenticity in their lives, and especially with Vir Das, he really was the pinnacle of being authentic and making audiences think," Zavian Valedón '27, the staff director of The Record, said.

Das's recent book, "The Outsider: A Memoir for Misfits," uses personal anecdotes and humor to explore the comedian's experience living in India, Nigeria and the United States. His memoir discusses how being a continuous outsider formed his perspectives of belonging and self-acceptance. Early in the conversation, he mentioned that his book is currently on the bestseller list in India.

Reflecting on his journey, Das discussed his experience previously busking in Harvard Square while doing an acting program at the American Repertory Theater. He said those moments of anonymity before he gained fame helped shape his perspective on being a liminal figure.

He also spoke candidly about his identity as an Indian comedian in the United States, emphasizing the importance of breaking stereotypes and challenging simplifications.

"I just try to be very authentic to my Indian experience, which by the way is very diverse," Das said. "There is no one Indian experience."

Das gave the audience a glimpse into his creative process, explaining that he writes for about three hours every morning, often starting with ideas from his dreams the previous night.

"Ten pages will come from one page, and then I'll take that one page to a comedy club and go back and rewrite and that eventually turns into one minute of comedy," Das said.

He noted that when people come to watch comedy shows, they are doing it for the collective experience of coming together to enjoy something, not necessarily just to hear the comedian. If the audience is the instrument and orchestra, Das feels he is, at best, the conductor.

During the question-and-answer portion of the event, Das discussed his ongoing relationship with success. Despite reaching several milestones, such as writing a book, directing a movie and performing at India's largest comedy venue, he said he does not see success as stationary.

"If you are always searching for things that scare you, the label of success will never find you," Das said.

Earlier in his life, Das had originally planned to get a master's and doctorate in Shakespeare and to become a professor, he said. However, shortly before joining a Shakespeare master's program at the University of Alabama, he did a stand-up comedy show in Delhi and decided to drop out after two months.

"The second I got off that stage I knew I was never going to get a PhD," Das said.

After the discussion, attendees lined up for book signing and shared their thoughts on the event.

Many audience members had been following Das for years through social media, his Netflix specials or watching his stand-up performances, and were excited to see him at Yale, they said.

Students who attended the talk said they appreciated seeing a reflective side of Das.

"I really appreciate how he balances real world issues with his comedy, and it was really insightful to hear him speak on that in this more conversation-based interview," Gloria Kunnapilly '27 said.



SARINA SANGHVI, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
On Wednesday evening, The Yale Record hosted Vir Das, an Emmy-winning comedian, author and actor, for a conversation and a book signing.

Kothari said he decided to reach out to Das' team after seeing that he was scheduled to perform at the Lincoln Center Theater in New York City.

"It was such a shot in the dark, I wasn't even expecting a response, and thought if we got one, it would be a no," Kothari wrote to the News. "The next thing I know, they wanted to talk to us, and then everything fell into place."

The Record secured funding from Trumbull College, Ezra Stiles College, the South Asian Studies Council and the Office of International Students and Scholars to put on the event, Kothari wrote.

According to Kothari, the Yale Record plans to continue inviting artists and comedians to campus.

The Record was founded in 1872.

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