

Wednesday, Sep 28, 2011

## Pooja Goswami Pavan's "kaise keh duuN (How Shall I Say?)" : Indian treasure from St. Paul

By [Dwight Hobbes](#), [Sounding Off On Sound](#)  
July 18, 2011



Every once in a blue moon, a truly new and different listening experience comes along. Something way off the beaten track. [Pooja Goswami Pavan](#)'s *kaise keh duuN (How Shall I Say?)* on St. Paul label Innova Recordings is one such surprising delight.

It's music spawned in India, performed by a Twin Cities based artist of amazing ability. Those versed in such things will knowledgably appreciate that Pavan, in a litany of sterling accomplishments, trained in Hindustani classical music, received a Ph.D. in music from the University of Delhi and can sing Thumri, Dadra, Ghazal, and Bhajan, as well as folk-inspired genres Hori, Chaiti, Kajri, and Sawani. If none of that rings a bell, don't worry, you'll still be able to enjoy this splendid CD.

Music that springs from the heart and soul doesn't require an educated listener, just a pair of ears and the willingness to go where the experience takes you. Pooja Goswami Pavan fascinates, an engaging vocalist with gorgeous tonality. The exquisite phrasing lifts, dips, spirals, stretches out at times, lofty. Nothing whatsoever like Western singing, it gives the impression of being stream-of-consciousness. Pavan threads tantalizing melodies, a river-like flow complemented by string instruments (sarangi, tanpura) and reed-keyboard (harmonium) that sort of hang in the air with a lean, unearthly allure. All in contrast to steady, insistent percussion (tabla) that patters like rainfall. It makes for a low-key, most striking combination that can leave you contentedly staring into space, almost spellbound. Nine listeners out of ten won't understand a word she sings (lyric

translations are in the liner notes). Still, you'll have no trouble at all feeling her passion, no problem being intrigued, moved.

Incidentally, the translated lyrics are, to say the least, evocative, poetic. Example, the verses for “kabhi kahaa na,” penned by Qamar Jalalabadi. “Never did I say a word to anyone about your episode/ Wonder how the world became privy to it/ So many flowers bloomed when I prayed for spring/ That nowhere did I find a spot for my nest/ It has been heard, you do not go to the soirees of others/ At your wish, shall I adorn my humble abode today/ Quietly, they buried me and left, no farewells, nor goodbyes/ In a split fraction, what happened to the world/ There, from where the mention of fidelity was made to the world/ From that very place, you became oblivious to my episode.” The rest are just as rich in compelling immediacy.

There are seven selections, dubbed “throwback love songs from North India.” They run together seamlessly, sounding to the layman like movements of the same composition. What they all have in common is a subtle quality of remarkably soothing grace.

The accompanying artists on *kaise keh duuN (How Shall I Say?)* with Pooja Goswami Pavan, providing beautiful backup, are Pandit Sudhir Pande (tabla), Ustad Mahmood Dholpuri, Vinay Mishra (harmonium), Murad Ali Khan (sarangi), and Sunil Goswami (tanpura).

Innova Recordings specializes in, as [the label's website](#) states, “work that is unlikely to find a home in the mainstream record industry. We focus on world class music—regardless of its genre that commercial labels overlook.” Which, indeed, is a good thing. Because such commitment to craft ensures that an invaluable artist like Pooja Goswami Pavan is brought to light.

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