

# KHIYO

## Information Sheet



[www.facebook.com/khiyoband](http://www.facebook.com/khiyoband)  
[www.khiyo.com](http://www.khiyo.com)

Khiyo is a London-based band that gives Bengali heritage music a modern, fresh sound. The band's repertoire is drawn from Bengali folk, film, protest songs and other traditional genres such as [Nazrul](#) and [Rabindra Sangeet](#). Khiyo is fast developing a reputation as a formidable live band, headlining at the Purcell Room as part of the South Bank's 2013 Alchemy Festival. The band is currently completing its debut album for release in summer 2014.

In December 2012, Khiyo released the [music video](#) for its version of Nobel Prize winning poet Rabindranath Tagore's *Amar Shonar Bangla*. The song, also the national anthem of Bangladesh, caused controversy for several reasons including use of western instruments, seated musicians and vocal stylings – particularly the vocals coming in from the middle of the song. The video went viral among Bengalis worldwide, with Facebook and Bengali blogs taking up the slack for YouTube, which was banned in Bangladesh at the time. Against the backdrop of political turmoil caused by the verdicts on war criminals from Bangladesh's 1971 War of Independence, Khiyo was accused of sedition for 'distorting' the anthem by one of the most well known musicians in Bangladesh. The controversy flared further as more of the biggest names in Bangladeshi music weighed in for and against the band's version of the song. The band quickly became national news in the country, appearing on most major TV channels, newspapers and on radio. In addition to being on the news, Khiyo has spawned a TV comedy sketch and opened up debate about the song's place in the hearts of Bengalis in neighbouring West Bengal in India.

Khiyo was formed in 2007 as a collaboration between British-Bangladeshi vocalist Sohini Alam and composer/multi-instrumentalist Oliver Weeks to explore new ways of presenting traditional Bengali music whilst preserving its essence. The band's sound mixes powerful and expressive interpretations of the classics with dynamic and original arrangements that draw on South Asian and Western folk and classical traditions, rock, blues and jazz.

Khiyo is named after a letter of the Bengali alphabet, the 'Khiyo' ( ঝি ). It is a unique letter that, whilst being a combination of two letters, has an identity of its own. Similarly, though the band's members draw on many different musical backgrounds, the amalgamation of the whole has a singularly identifiable sound.

Contact: Oliver Weeks 07813 936 839  
or E-mail: [info@khiyo.com](mailto:info@khiyo.com)

[Watch Amar Shonar Bangla](#)

[Listen to some of Khiyo's music](#)



**Press & Links:**

“Lucid and Evocative” – [Pulse](#)

“Their exceptional presentation and intelligent musical arrangement has caused a sensation in the music world.” – [The Daily Ittefaq](#) (link in Bengali)

“If the new generation continues in this way, for those of us who are trying to preserve our cultural heritage, it will count as a thing of joy.” – eminent Tagore singer Mita Huq, *Prothom Alo*

[Oh Media, what have you done?](#)

[Link](#) (via Facebook) to a Bangladeshi TV report on the controversy.

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### **Khiyo Current Live Lineup:**

Vocals:	Sohini Alam
Guitars/Piano:	Oliver Weeks
Upright & Electric Bass:	Ben Hillyard
Tabla:	Himanish Goswami
Drums:	David Ingamells
String Player:	Various

### **Individual Band Member Biographies:**

**Oliver Weeks** studied composition at Clare College, Cambridge with Robin Holloway and has recently completed a PhD in composition at the Royal Academy of Music. His music has been performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the BBC Singers and others. Oliver was Cambridge University Musical Society's inaugural composer-in-residence 2011-12. He has conducted fieldwork in West Bengal, writing his dissertation on *Baul Gaan* and *Rabindra Sangeet* in Bengal in the 19th century. Several of his classical works also centre on Bengali texts. He works with numerous bands, including Astrohenge, for which he plays piano and live electronics.

**Sohini Alam** is a British vocalist of Bangladeshi descent whose musical repertoire includes folk, patriotic, modern and traditional Bengali songs with a specialisation in Nazrul Sangeet. She has branched out into multi-lingual music in bands, for dance, and for theatre. A third generation vocalist, Sohini trained in music with her mother, Hiron Alam and then her aunts, internationally renowned Nazrul singers Jannat Ara and Ferdous Ara. She is a founding member of the arts company Komola Collective and is also the lead vocalist for Kishon Khan's Afro-Cuban-Bengali jazz band Lokkhi Terra. She has been acclaimed for her work with Tara Arts and has provided vocals for Jocelyn Pook's score of Akram Khan's Olivier Award-winning dance piece *DESH*.

**Ben Hillyard** has a wide musical range both as a composer and performer, covering styles from western orchestral music to jazz and rock, taking in funk, electronica and folk along the way. He has created music for several theatre projects in Australia. In the UK, he has been busy mainly as a performer, including playing support for pop legends Take That and touring with The James Taylor Quartet.

**Himanish Goswami** is a young and dynamic tabla player based in the UK. Son of renowned devotional and folk singer, Himangshu Goswami, Himanish is a disciple of Pt. Kumar Bose of the Benares Gharana. Although, his main area of skill and passion lies in Indian classical music, he is adept at accompanying in other forms such as semi-classical, folk, devotional and world music.

**David Ingamells** started to play the drum kit at the age of seven. In 2009 he was awarded a place to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Martin Hathaway, Scott Stroman and Malcolm Edmonstone. He is currently a Fellow of the Guildhall School. He graduated from the Guildhall in 2013 with a First Class Honours and was awarded both the Chartered Surveyors' Prize and the Yamaha Jazz Scholarship in the same year.

Musicians on the upcoming Khiyo album include Derek Scurll, Danyal Dhondy, Hassan Mohyeddin, Soumik Datta, Rosalind Acton, Jane Gordon, Haider Rahman, Labik Kamal Gaurob and Victoria Sutherland.

**Rooming:**

6 band members - 4 male, 2 females or 5 males, 1 female (depending on string player). No couples. Room sharing is fine between the male band members.

**Tech Rider:**

1 x lead vocalist

1 x Double Bass. DI or through a bass amp – an amp can be provided, we can share backline or go straight into the desk.

Full drum kit (drummer can bring own kit or share hardware).

Two mics (stereo pair) on the tabla, one on each drum.

1 x Violin, Viola or Cello (mic needed)

**Guitars (all played by same player):**

2 x Acoustic Guitars (DI) One player plays all the acoustic & electric guitars.

1 x Electric Guitar (mic on the amp). The guitarist can bring own amplifier if necessary or share backline. Preferred amp model is Fender Blues Junior or similar. (Low wattage amp needed – around 15W). An alternative for small venues is that the guitarist uses a Blackstar valve pedal with speaker simulator directly into the PA.

If there is an acoustic upright or grand piano available at the venue, we would use that. The guitarist can double on piano for some songs. If an acoustic piano isn't available then we'll do the songs in question on guitar. Electronic keyboards (even high-end ones) have been found to not suit the band's sound.

We try to keep the onstage volume quite low due to the large number of acoustic instruments. Our drummer is able to play very subtly and the guitar amp is kept on a low setting.

We have also been able to perform in the past at very small, intimate venues with the band completely unamplified and only with a small amount of reinforcement on the vocal. Also we are able to do stripped-down, 'acoustic' gigs depending on suitability of the venue, consisting of voice/guitar, voice/guitar/bass, voice/guitar/bass/table etc. Please ask for details.

### Sample Lyrics (Translated from the Bengali):

#### **Amar Shonar Bangla (My Golden Bengal)**

What beauty, what shade, what love and tenderness -  
How you spread your sari at the banyan's foot, on the river-bank.

Mother, your message in my ears is like nectar,  
Ah! Ecstasy! Mother, your message in my ears is like nectar,  
Mother, if your face turns angry, I swim in tears.  
Golden Bengal, I love you.

Your skies, your breezes, play an everlasting flutesong in my being.  
Golden Bengal, I love you.

O mother, the scents in your mango-groves in spring drive me mad,  
Ah! Ecstasy! O mother, the scents in your mango-groves in spring send me mad,  
O mother, what enchanting smiles I see in your full fields in autumn.  
Golden Bengal, I love you.

*- Words and Melody by Rabindranath Tagore & Gagan Harkara*

#### **Amar Protibaader Bhasha (The Language of My Protest)**

The language of my protest  
The fire of my resistance  
It burns twice as strong  
And is twice as terrible in retaliation

It tears the web of a hundred conspiracies  
It brings freedom and light  
It brings meaning to hundreds, thousands, millions of souls  
The language of my protest  
The fire of my resistance

In the poison of every breath  
I breathe the language of the world's exploited  
Like a terrible explosion that comes in the roar of destruction

I am the companion of revolution and rebellion everywhere  
I am committed to struggle around the world for the sake of the freedom of mankind

My blood flows in many countries, in many ports  
In a hundred deserts and caverns  
On the peaks of mountains  
In the search for peace and unity  
It brings freedom and light  
It brings meaning to hundreds, thousands, millions of souls  
The language of my protest  
The fire of my resistance

*- Words & Melody by Salil Chowdhury*

**Bareer Kachhe Arshi Nogor**  
**(Near My Home There is a Mirror City)**

Near my home there is a mirror city  
My neighbour lives there  
My neighbour lives there in a house  
I have never seen him, not even for a day.

The village is surrounded by fathomless water  
There is no bank in sight and no boat to take me across  
I wish to see him  
But how do I get there?  
I have never seen him, not even for a day.

What can I say about this neighbour of mine?  
He has no hands, no feet, no neck, no head  
One moment he is in the air  
The next moment he is afloat in the water  
I have never seen him, not even for a day.

If my neighbour would but touch me  
All my pains would go away  
He and Lalon live in the same house  
But we remain a million miles apart  
I have never seen him, not even for a day.

Near my home there is a mirror city  
My neighbour lives there  
My neighbour lives there in a house  
I have never seen him, not even for a day

*- Words & Melody by Lalon Shah*