



President Sulaiman Shahabuddin  
The Aga Khan University  
Karachi, Pakistan

11 May 2022

Dear President Shahabuddin,

It is with immense pleasure that I write to nominate Mr. Afraaz Adam Alnoor Mulji for a Doctor of Humane Letters (DHL) Honoris Causa at the Aga Khan University (AKU) for his groundbreaking research, teaching, and performance practice, which has made significant contributions to the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, ethnomusicology, and pedagogical studies. Throughout his illustrious career, Mr. Mulji's innumerable outputs have seamlessly aligned with the AKU's mission to develop human capacities through the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and application through service. Specifically, his work merits this honor because of his creation of new knowledge, the true interdisciplinarity of his oeuvre, and its impacts in the real world.

Afraaz Mulji is the very definition of the *uomo universale*, or renaissance man, as coined by Leon Battista Alberti in the fifteenth century. As a musician, he has both mastered music theory and performance, emulating masters from Johann Sebastian Bach to Art Tatum, and infusing his own experiences, interpretations, and valences onto the piano and other instruments, creating whole new sounds, sets of techniques, and methods of understanding genre. Having performed for the Aga Khan Museum, the prestigious Cecilia Concerts in Nova Scotia, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Mr. Mulji has formed his own sub-field of musicological ontology grounded in pedagogical and epistemological knowledge. As Professor Hans-Ola Ericsson notes, Afraaz has fashioned himself into a 'choreographer of contextual paradoxes', creating a space in academia for his own unique vision where no such space previously existed.

I call Afraaz Mulji a renaissance man because he has not only created new knowledge, new genres, and new discourses in academic thought, but because his work is truly interdisciplinary from its inception. Having taught and lectured in history, linguistics, cultural studies, and fine art - to name only a few of the fields he has impacted - Mr. Mulji's compositions, writings, and experiential performances have reached vast audiences - from students at the University of Dar es Salaam to the Serenity Project in Prague, to the global reach of the Aga Khan Museum and the Aga Khan Music Program.

In addition to creating new knowledge - that is, new genres, discourses, and intellectual spaces - and to reaching through, across, and beyond the boundaries of multiple

academic disciplines, Afraaz Mulji's work has made significant impact in the worlds of art, academia, and in the eyes of those concerned with the human condition. I came to know Mr. Mulji through his Conceptualism podcast, a YouTube series featuring an array of distinguished guests participating in open-ended dialogues - a rarity in our current world which is so quick to categorize and thus to diminish. Mr. Mulji's Conceptualism podcast series brings to bear his considerable intellectual and artistic offerings, forms synchronistic partnerships with artists of considerable stature, and disseminates these to a world hungry for new ways of understanding some of the critical issues of our time, and new modes of artistic and intellectual expression with which to embark on these important explorations.

In awarding Mr. Mulji a Doctor of Humane Letters (DHL) honoris causa, the Aga Khan University will not only be recognizing the impressive body of work created by this remarkably talented polymath, but you will also be cementing his status as an intellectual, a thinker, and an artist who is fiercely dedicated to applying his considerable gifts to improving the human condition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fayyaz A. Vellani', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fayyaz A. Vellani, PhD  
Lecturer in Critical Writing  
Hill College House Fellow  
Faculty Director, College House Research Program