

## **Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra plays out Great British Festival 2016**

*Shakespeare-themed concert concludes fortnight of cultural events*

**Doha, 23 March 2016:** The third edition of the Great British Festival Qatar drew to a close on Saturday evening with a special performance of music from the various plays of iconic British playwright William Shakespeare by the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra. The performance, which was held at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), formed part of a year-long programme of cultural celebrations which is being delivered around the world by the British Council to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

The concert was conducted by Aleksandr Markovic and featured the pianist Elisso Bokvadze, who was sponsored by the Georgian Embassy as part of the ongoing cultural relations programme between Qatar and Georgia. Aleksandr Markovic has recently been appointed as Music Director of the UK's Opera North, one of the UK's finest regional opera companies, and will take up this position in September 2016. The concert involved performances of musical arrangements from a number of productions of Shakespeare's plays, including Tchaikovsky's *Romeo & Juliet*, Richard Strauss' *Macbeth* and Otto Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

The UK Ambassador to Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Ajay Sharma, commented: "I am delighted the Great British Festival has once again given people here in Qatar a chance to enjoy what Britain has to offer. The fantastic performance on Saturday by the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra of music from Shakespeare was a fitting way to close the year's events. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the Festival events over the past two weeks."

The Director of the British Council in Qatar, Frank Fitzpatrick, commented: "The British Festival has again given us the opportunity to showcase UK knowledge and expertise across our work in education, the arts, science and sport this year and has enabled us to increase understanding and engagement with young people in both our countries."

Organised by the British Embassy and the British Council, this year's fortnight of celebrations featured a celebration of the International Women's Day, a 5-a-side schools' football tournament, a Study in the UK exhibition, a special edition of Café Scientifique, a range of themed activities in hotels, a number of traditional British spring fêtes, a series of retail partnerships and a variety of special cultural events to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare.

In addition to the concert at the QNCC, a number of theatrical events were held to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Shakespeare. The world-famous Reduced Shakespeare Company performed a sell-out show during which they showcased all of Shakespeare's plays in 97 minutes.

To highlight Shakespeare's contribution to the arts, Qatar Airways also offered festival attendees the opportunity to win two return flights on its new direct route to

Birmingham to enjoy a Shakespeare Experience in Stratford-Upon-Avon, with free accommodation included. Stratford-Upon-Avon is the birthplace of Shakespeare, and only 60km from Birmingham.

The cultural partner of this year's Great British Festival was Katara Cultural Village, while Qatar Shell, Ezdan Holding Group, Park House Community Initiative and Blue Rubicon were official sponsors.

**ENDS**

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