
Beautiful World

An Opera inspired by the poetry of the late Sheikh Zayed, created by 80 pupils in five days

Beautiful World was a ground breaking educational project initiated by Cranleigh Abu Dhabi in late 2016, as part of its co-curricular cultural and arts programme.

From the outset, its aspirations were ambitious, focusing on two key goals. Firstly to find a new and innovative way to celebrate UAE culture; and secondly, to inspire and develop children through performance and visual arts.

The project was a pilot and, based on its success, the vision is that the model will be extended to involve and engage a broader section of Abu Dhabi's educational and cultural community in the future.

It all started with the moving poem, Beautiful World, written by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

Beautiful World became the muse for talented Emirati-born calligraphy artist, Narjes Nouredine, and resulted in the creation of a new and exquisite collection of artworks which were exhibited at Cranleigh in association with Abu Dhabi Art in November.

Narjes' exhibition was opened by His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development. It was presented in collaboration with, and curated by Zayed University's College of Arts and Creative Enterprises, where Narjes is a fourth year student.

With Narjes' artworks and the poem as the starting point, the second part of the project saw Cranleigh Abu Dhabi's Head of Performing Arts, Susan Hamilton, work with her fellow Heads of Drama, Dance, Music, Art and Design Technology to take the poem and artworks and use them as inspiration for the creation of an original piece of performance art.

To help them, the Cranleigh team secured the expertise of a team of opera educationalists from London comprising a director, music director, choreographer, designer and two opera singers. Together with Narjes, the extended team worked intensively with 80 students to devise, shape and stage a unique production. Everything, from set design to costumes, and dance choreography to musical libretto, was **created by the students themselves, in less than five days.**

The power of the project lay in the journey; in the lessons of teamwork and leadership, of tenacity and collaboration, commitment and self-expression as well as in the subject matter, which fused the rich heritage and beauty of the UAE with a Western operatic performance style.

The Beautiful World story concluded in December at Abu Dhabi's National Theater with the installation of Narjes' exhibition and a revival performance of the opera under the patronage and in the presence of His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development.

The opera became part of No Limits, a powerful trilogy celebrating 'Heritage, Harmony and Human Potential' which was presented by The Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development as part of its 45th National Day programme. At the end of the performance, Sheikh Nahayan led the standing ovation, joining the Cranleigh team on stage to congratulate them.

Beautiful World was recognised nationally in the UAE in May 2017 when it was awarded Drama/Arts Programme of the Year by Education Journal Middle East.

A documentary film made to capture the project can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/206188826>.



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الإمارات العربية المتحدة
وزارة الثقافة
وتنمية المعرفة
مكتب الوزير

14 December, 2016

Headmaster
Cranleigh School Abu Dhabi
P.O. Box 126888
Abu Dhabi,
U.A.E.

Dear Mr. Brendan Law,

”نحن عشان السماء - No Limits“

On behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for the support that you extended in directly contributing to the resounding success of the production “No Limits - نحن عشان السماء”.

This production, which received astounding community reviews, was created and supported by a true community spirit reinforcing the principles upon which our precious nation has been founded.

As we progress together, we look forward to continuous collaborations that can only enrich, foster harmony and inspire our future generations to create and grow with no limits for the betterment of all cultures and societies.

We wish you prosperity and success at all times.

Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan

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“How marvellous to have pulled it off in such a short time and engaged so many people in the process. Thrilling to see and it must have been very moving for the audience. It begs the question ‘what’s next’ because once you’ve done something like this and set expectations so high, it would be a huge pity not to build on it. BRAVO!!”

Paul Hughes, General Manager BBC Symphony Orchestra

“Congratulations! I hope you feel incredibly pleased. What a marvellously inspiring project! I am so glad I was able to drop in and then see the performance.

Joanne Marsh, Composer (World Premiere at Dubai Opera with BBCSO)

“Wow! I am so pleased that I came last night – please pass my thanks to the whole school community for a brilliant evening. It was well worth the drive from Dubai, and cheered my day considerably.

You must all be very proud, and I sat amongst parents who were so pleased with what had been achieved.

With thanks for the invitation and the magical evening.”

Yvette Judge - Chief Operating Officer - Emirates Literature Foundation

“I wish to express my sincere congratulations for the outstanding production ‘Beautiful World’ – its debut on 14 November and its subsequent presentation as part of ‘No Limits’ at the National Theatre on 6 December, under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahyan.

The production is a remarkable tribute to the global scope of artistic expression and a celebration of cross-cultural creative collaboration. Its technical and artistic qualities were all the more impressive within the context of its creation, which I understand took less than five days.

The intensive process of creating and presenting arts-based work by a multi-cultural group of young people is an extremely effective format of arts education, the experience of which leaves a lasting impression. I commend Cranleigh School for its creative approach and look forward to continuing our collaboration with your fine institution in the future.”

Hoda Al Khamis Kanoo - Founder - Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation

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