



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative

Press Release

For Immediate Release

## **Classical Masters of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan perform at London's Wigmore Hall**



**London, United Kingdom, 14 July 2016** - “Classical Masters of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan,” the second concert in a three-part series at London’s prestigious Wigmore Hall entitled “The Other Classical Musics” was held today. The concert, which was co-produced by the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI), brought together Tajik stringed instrument virtuoso Sirojiddin Juraev with the legendary Azerbaijani singer Alim Qasimov, his daughter,

vocalist Fargana Qasimova, and the Qasimov Ensemble, which accompanies the two vocalists on traditional Azerbaijani instruments.

“The Other Classical Musics,” featuring music from different regions of the Muslim world, was launched in March 2016, and takes its title from the eponymous book, edited by British music critic Michael Church and published in 2015 by the Boydell Press with support from AKMI. Church’s edited volume comprises a survey of 15 “Great Traditions” of classical music from around the world, of which European classical music is only one. Others include the classical raga systems of North and South India; the Central Asian shashmaqom; Persian classical dastgah; and the classical maqām of the Arab world.

Alim Qasimov is the world’s most renowned interpreter of mugham, the Azerbaijani “dialect” of a vast domain of sophisticated art song and instrumental music that evolved over at least a millenium in the Eastern Mediterranean, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, North Africa, and Central Asia. Sirojiddin Juraev, born and raised near the city of Khujand, in the Ferghana Valley of Northern Tajikistan, is a master performer of the same domain of art song and instrumental music, but in its Tajik and Uzbek “dialect,” known as maqom. In facilitating a musical meeting between Sirojiddin Juraev and the Qasimovs, the Aga Khan Music Initiative aims to reanimate vestigial connections between mugham and maqom, and hence between two culturally congruent musical traditions linked by common historical roots that reach back to the era known as the Golden Age of Islam, which flourished in medieval Baghdad in the time of the ‘Abassid Caliphate.

“I am grateful to the Aga Khan Music Initiative for the opportunity to explore cross-cultural musical creativity at a deep level through this collaboration,” said Sirojiddin Juraev of his appearance at Wigmore. “This is only the latest of a long series of activities—concert tours, workshops, recordings, and masterclasses— sponsored by AKMI that have expanded my musical horizons and brought me into contact with some of the great musicians of our time.” Juraev, a master performer on the two-stringed dutar and other indigenous stringed instruments played in Tajikistan, was one of eight students who completed a rigorous five-year programme in classical Tajik music at the Academy of Maqom, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, an innovative educational project sponsored by AKMI. Juraev has gone on to become one of

Tajikistan's leading musicians performing tradition-based music. He is also an active composer, and his programme at the Wigmore Hall included several of his own original compositions and arrangements.

AKMI has worked with Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova since 2005, presenting them in prestigious concert halls around the world as well as on the CD-DVD recording "Alim and Fargana Qasimov: Spiritual Songs of Azerbaijan," which comprises vol. 6 of the 10-part CD-DVD anthology "The Music of Central Asia," released by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and co-produced by the Aga Khan Music Initiative.

"It is a privilege for the Aga Khan Music Initiative to collaborate with the Wigmore Hall on the curation and production of The Other Classical Musics," said Fairouz Nishanova, Director of the Aga Khan Music Initiative. "The outstanding musicians from Muslim cultures whom we are joining forces with Wigmore to present to London audiences reaffirm that musical creativity, spirituality and innovation stand as one of Islam's greatest contributions to world civilisation."

The third and final concert in "The Other Classical Musics" series will take place on 2 December 2016. Titled "Contemporary Music from the Ends of the Silk Road," the concert will feature Chinese pipa master Wu Man, Uyghur singer-songwriter Sanubar Tursun, and Syrian saxophonist and composer Basel Rajoub and his Soriana Project.

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