



AGA KHAN MUSIC AWARDS

Press release

For immediate release

Aga Khan Music Award laureates receive US\$ 500,000 prize

Award presented to ten laureates across six categories



Lisbon, Portugal, 31 March 2019 – The Aga Khan Music Awards concluded with the announcement of the Award in the performance category, the awarding of US\$ 500,000 in prizes and a final concert that brought together ten laureates, six categories and 13 countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America in a showcase for diversity and pluralism through music. A Patron’s Award was also conferred.

The Awards were presented by His Highness the Aga Khan, President of the Portuguese Republic Professor Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, and Prince Ayn Khan.

“This prize is a start of a long journey together. You and us, thinking of peace in the world, multilateralism, dialogue, a common fight against intolerance, and music is a great way of doing this,” said the President.

“The technological forces that are reshaping our world now mean that neighbours who live on the other side of the planet are as close to us as our neighbours who live across the street,” said His Highness the Aga Khan in his remarks. “In such a world, peace and progress require that we promote a pluralist agenda, that we invest in a cosmopolitan ethic. These Music Awards aim to be an investment in that promotion.”

The Music Awards were established by His Highness the Aga Khan to recognise exceptional creativity, promise, and enterprise in musical performance, creation, education, preservation and revitalisation in societies across the world in which Muslims have a significant presence.

Earlier in the day, eminent figures in the realm of arts and music came together to participate in discussions relating to the concept, vision, and impact of the Awards. Taking the form of a panel discussion, the Seminar covered topics relating to several distinct yet connected themes, including the strategy behind the Awards, the role of music in development, the revitalisation of cultural heritage, and the Awards’ future vision. The panel was composed of members of the Master Jury, Steering Committee, and Secretariat, and was moderated by Sir Jonathan Mills, Director of the Edinburgh International Culture Summit.

Sharing his experience after watching the concerts held in the **Performance** category yesterday, Ara Guzelimian, Provost and Dean of the Juilliard School in New York City remarked, “I simply feel better about the world, and if that’s a gift that the Awards give us, then there can be no better gift.” The Award in the Performance category, announced late last night, was presented to Egyptian oud player and singer Mustafa Said. Mustafa is also a

composer, musicologist and music teacher who, from an early age, learnt to read and write music in Braille.

Finalists for the Award in Performance played in front of the Master Jury on 30 March and included: Ahmad Al Khatib, oud (Palestine); Shahou Andalibi, Persian *ney* (Iran); Nai Barghouti, vocal and flute (Palestine); Huda Asfour, oud and *qanun* (Palestine); Sougata Roy Chowdhury, *sarod* (India); Burak Kaynarca, oud (Turkey); Asin Khan Langa, vocal and *sarangi* (India); Ejaz Sher Ali Khan, vocal and harmonium (Pakistan); Arash Mohafez, santur (Iran); Abeer Nehme, vocal (Lebanon); Reza Parvizade, *kamancheh* (Iran); Mohamad Osman, oud and *buzuq* (Syria); Mustafa Said, oud (Egypt); and Nasim Siabishahrivar, vocal (Iran).

Full biographies of laureates and finalists are available [here](#).

Other winners awarded on the night included the following Finalists:

In the category of **Creation**, the Award was presented to Azerbaijani composer and pianist Franghiz Ali-Zadeh who has produced a prolific body of classical concert music that draws inspiration from Azerbaijan's venerable musical and literary traditions.

In the category of **Education**, the Award was presented to The Omnibus Ensemble, based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Ensemble is working to create an artistic rapprochement between local classical maqom traditions and languages of contemporary music.

In the category of **Social Inclusion**, the Award went to Badiia Bouhrizi, also known by her stage name Neysatu, a singer-songwriter and composer from Tunisia who has used her musical talent to promote social justice and the values of pluralism and democracy.

In the category of **Preservation, Revitalisation, Dissemination** the Award was presented to two laureates: Farhod Halimov, a singer, multi-instrumentalist, and composer from Samarkand, Uzbekistan who is preserving the traditional classical song repertoire of Samarkand; and The Gurminj Museum of Musical Instruments, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, which is working to preserve and revitalise the musical heritage of Central Asian peoples and cultures, in particular, the Pamiri Ismaili musical culture of Tajikistan.

The category of **Distinguished and Enduring Contributions to Music** was awarded to three laureates: Oumou Sangaré, a celebrated Malian singer-songwriter known for her commitment to the training and career development of young people in the music professions; Ballake Sissoko, a Malian kora player and composer who has developed the art of the kora in ways that are creative and innovative while also firmly rooted in tradition; and Dariush Talai, an Iranian tar and setar player, musicologist, composer, and educator, recognised for his exceptional commitment to transmitting the classical performance tradition of the tar through his diverse activities as an artist, educator, and scholar.

A special **Patron's Award** was also conferred on Mohammad Reza Shajarian in recognition of his enduring contribution to the musical heritage of humanity, his peerless musical mastery, and his sustained social impact as a performer and teacher, both within Iran and beyond its borders.

The Aga Khan Music Awards Master Jury includes: Jean During, an Ethnomusicologist, Senior Research Fellow emeritus, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; David Harrington: Founding member and first violinist, Kronos Quartet; Salima Hashmi: Painter and curator, former principal, National College of Arts, Lahore; Nouri Iskandar: Composer, musicologist, former director, Arab Institute of Music, Aleppo; and Akram Khan: Choreographer and artistic director, Akram Khan Company.

Full biographies of Master Jury members are available [here](#).

To ensure impartiality in the Award nomination and selection process, individuals and projects affiliated with His Highness the Aga Khan, the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), as well as members of the Awards Steering Committee, Secretariat, and Master Jury, were deemed ineligible for consideration.

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NOTE

The *Aga Khan Music Awards* (AKMA) emerged from the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI), an interregional music and arts education programme with worldwide performance, outreach, mentoring and artistic production activities. Launched to support talented musicians and music educators working to preserve, transmit, and further develop their musical heritage in contemporary forms, the Music Initiative began its work in Central Asia, subsequently expanding its cultural development activities to include artistic communities and audiences in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

The Initiative promotes the revitalisation of cultural heritage both as a source of livelihood for musicians and as a means to strengthen pluralism in nations where it is challenged by social, political, and economic constraints. Its projects have included publication of a comprehensive textbook, *The Music of Central Asia* (Indiana University Press, 2016), a 10-volume CD-DVD anthology, *Music of Central Asia*, co-produced with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, a worldwide performance and outreach program that nurtures “East-East” as well as “East-West” musical collaborations, and a network of music schools and centres that develop innovative music curricula and curriculum materials in the Music Initiative’s regions of activity. (<https://www.akdn.org/akmi>).

Aga Khan Music Awards Secretariat and Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) management

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Read online: <https://www.akdn.org/press-release/aga-khan-music-award-laureates-receive-us-500000-prize>