First Qatar National Music Competition set to make stars out of Qatar's rising musical talents.

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Doha, Qatar: In what promises to be a springboard into the international arena for the country's musical prodigies, Moving Young Artists (MYA), the Qatar-based non-profit foundation that has been nurturing and inspiring young local talent for more than three years, will host a grand, one-of-its-kind musical spectacle in October, this year.

The Qatar National Music Competition (QNMC), under the patronage of Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, seeks to create a competitive platform that would encourage the finest in music creativity and performance in Qatar. Chiefly sponsored by Vodafone Qatar and in collaboration with Katara and the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO), the competition will be a significant artistic event on the national and international stage and will showcase the best of Qatar's musical talent, thereby emerging as an inspiration to Qatar's youth.

The much-awaited event will be held from October 15 to October 19 at the Katara Drama Theatre, culminating in a gala concert and felicitation of the prize winners on October 19, the concluding day at the Katara Opera House. Split into various categories, the competition is open to anyone involved with music and younger than the age of 18; for registration details, please visit www.qnmc.org. To keep the contest fair, the categories are sub-divided according to the participants' age — 11 and under, 14 and under, and 18 and under — and instrument of choice — solo piano, solo winds, solo strings, solo vocal, percussion/harp/guitar, and composition.

Featuring both Arabic (sub-divided into singing, instrumental, and Arabic composition, and also according to age) and Western music categories, QNMC will throw open the stage for both performing musicians and young composers. There will also be a Special Needs category for differently abled children.

The age limit for participants is 18 years old except for one distinctive category, which is open only for Qatari citizens. Joris Laenen, co-founder, MYA, said, "Our vision for QNMC is to play its part in propelling Qatar onto the international music festival stage. Since Qatar doesn't yet have a long history of music education, QNMC would like to also offer adult Qatari musicians this opportunity to present their talent." For those who are more of a team player than a lone ranger, QNMC has a plan cut out for them, too. As a group, one can compete in the category of Choirs and Ensembles/Takht. "We are especially proud to include in QNMC a Concerto category, the winner of which will receive the honour to perform as a soloist with Qatar's own world-class orchestra, QPO," Laenen said.

Whether it is sports or music, a competitor needs commitment, discipline, personal sacrifice, and heart; all of which are necessary to achieve success in challenging domains, points out Sonja Park, co-founder, MYA. "For many, success will be the participation; for others, it will be lifting the trophy. With each passing year, these trophies will become synonymous with a time-honoured tradition of quality and achievement awarded for exemplary performances in a competition boasting of a world-class reputation. The trophies, therefore, will symbolise an enduring legacy for Qatar, capturing the significance of music as an important pillar of arts education for its people."

Prizes will be in no short supply at QNMC. In each category, three winners will be awarded medals. Every participant will receive a certificate of merit for their performance. The Grand Prize, reserved for the best performance in the entire competition, will be provided by Vodafone. A special award for best performance by a Qatari artist will be provided by the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

Three winners of the Concerto category will be granted an opportunity to perform in a concert with QPO, as a soloist. Some of the chosen few will also be invited to record in the state-of-the-art Katara Studios.

Ramping up the reach and scale of the competition, several embassies have pledged their support and involvement by handing out a long line of signature awards: Switzerland, Singapore, Spain, Germany, France, Russia, the UK, Republic of Korea, India, The Netherlands, Sweden, Indonesia and Kazakhstan.

Apart from Park, who serves as Artistic Director, and Laenen, who will helm the Winds and Ensemble category, the jury will comprise Qatar's music heavyweights such as Kurt Meister, Executive Director of QPO, who will adjudge the Concerto category, and the Qatari multi-talent Dana Alfardan, who will be the judge of Composition and Song-writing. Also, a few other internationally renowned music personalities

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are set to soon join the jury. The event is also sponsored by Marsa Malaz Kempinski, The Pearl - Doha, IDKatar, Al Maktab Al Qatari Al Hollandi, Ali Bin Ali Group, Jumpzone, Commverse, and Steinway Gallery Dubai/CDC.

MYA, which aspires to develop music education programmes for children, believes that music participation is an integral element in the fabric of an enduring society. It is out of a desire to inspire a deep love and knowledge of music with the Qatari community that MYA has put together this first edition of QNMC.

It is through this far-reaching vision that QNMC will contribute to the Qatar National Vision 2030 by helping develop Qatar's human, social, and economic goals, by strengthening collective desire and will, and creating a mindset for excellence among the youth, Park and Laenen feel. "Competitors will need to be innovative and creative to participate in many of the competitions," Park pointed out.

"Music education is a key ingredient of an overall balanced education," she continued. "It is a way and means of expressing one's culture and identity, either as an individual or as a group. Besides, there are numerous, well-documented and scientifically proven benefits of learning music such as how musical training helps develop language and reasoning, improves memory, concentration, hand-eye coordination and motor skills, emotional intelligence, and better self-confidence," said Park. The great Plato would have certainly agreed with Park, for he once said, "I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning."

For further information, please visit:

www.qnmc.org

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