



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative

Statement on the Establishment of the Aga Khan Music Awards

His Highness the Aga Khan announces the establishment of the Aga Khan Music Awards. The Awards programme is created to recognise and further develop exceptional creativity, promise, and enterprise in music and music education in societies across the world in which Muslims have a significant presence. Modelled after the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which was initiated in 1977 and is given every three years to projects that set new standards of excellence in architecture, planning practices, historic preservation and landscape architecture, the Aga Khan Music Awards will premiate distinguished achievement in music creation and performance, as well as ancillary social and educational domains that help ensure the historical continuity of musical heritage while contributing to its revitalisation and renewal. The first awards ceremony is scheduled to take place in Lisbon, Portugal, in March 2019.

“The Aga Khan Music Awards will aspire to fill a unique cultural role,” said His Highness the Aga Khan. Among the world’s many music awards, no extant award or prize focuses on the constellation of devotional music and poetry, indigenous classical music, traditional folk music, and tradition-inspired contemporary music that has flourished in cultures shaped by Islam. These musical genres and styles embody music’s traditional role as a source of spiritual edification, moral inspiration, and social cohesion in societies across the world. At a time when strengthening tolerance and pluralism is an acute worldwide priority, music offers a propitious medium for reaching global audiences.

The Aga Khan Music Awards will recognise, reward and support exceptional talent in the domains of music performance, creation, composition, education, preservation, and revitalisation among others. As recognition from the Music Awards reverberates in the home countries and communities of winners and filters through the global network of arts presenters, social media, and dissemination platforms, the intention is that the awards should have a multiplier effect thus positively influencing both career development opportunities and the availability and quality of music education.

The Music Awards are to be governed by a Steering Committee consisting of global leaders in arts, education, and culture, which will select an independent Master Jury for each award cycle. Jury members will be drawn from a diverse pool of master musicians and composers, festival directors and record producers, impresarios and arts patrons, and distinguished scholars and arts education leaders. A worldwide network of some 100 nominators will propose promising candidates for awards in a range of domains defined by the Steering Committee, the Master Jury and the Awards Secretariat. Criteria for nomination will reflect the focus of the Awards on exceptionality and excellence in

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nominees' fields of endeavour. Finalists will gather for a three-day ceremony featuring concerts, workshops, master classes, roundtables, jam sessions, and the awarding of prizes. A prize fund of \$500,000 will be divided among awardees. Equally significant, award-winners will pursue professional development opportunities arranged in collaboration with the Music Awards during each triennial awards cycle. These opportunities will include commissions for the creation of new works, contracts for recordings and artist management, support for pilot education initiatives, and technical or curatorial consultancies for music archiving, preservation, and dissemination projects.

The Music Awards grew out of the Aga Khan Music Initiative, a programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, whose activities support preservation and promotion of the material, spiritual, and artistic heritage of Muslim societies. As the cultural agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, the Trust leverages cultural heritage as a means of enhancing and catalysing development. The Music Initiative and the Trust for Culture are well positioned to create and manage a platform that showcases the richness, diversity and virtuosity of musical expression in the Muslim world, both historically and in the present. The Aga Khan Music Awards aim to expand the purview and impact of the Music Initiative's work, ongoing since 2000, by using an award format embedded in an itinerant ceremony and celebration to recognise and showcase exceptional musical talent and best practices across genres, geographies, cultures, institutions, languages, and career stages.

For the Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamat, the Music Awards and linked ceremonial events will animate spaces of importance to the network while expanding its impact on local communities and providing greater international visibility for the Music Initiative's music education, presentation, and dissemination programmes. Lisbon, the future seat of the Ismaili Imamat and a city distinguished by its tradition of multiculturalism and tolerance, offers an exemplary location for the inaugural awards ceremony, which will be co-hosted with the Aga Khan Development Network-Portugal, the City of Lisbon and the Lisbon-based Gulbenkian Foundation.