

One World, Unity with Elegance

THREE creative forces came together to work on the concept for Muscat's latest fashion charity event, **One World, Unity with Elegance** — Karen Green, artistic director and producer; Abba Omar, ambassador of South Africa; and Michael Bos, director of the interfaith Al Amana Centre. Another key player is Bridget Ganguly from the Al Amana Centre who was involved in every aspect of the production.



By Dr Patricia Groves

beautiful results. This multi-ethnic dance troupe shows how our differences can be ways of coming together.

The fashion element of the show was first introduced through its function in dance — to accentuate the beauty of the human body in motion. A riveting Zulu war dance with costumes in fur, feather and animal skin set the stage.

This was followed by a modern jazz dance piece with unpredictable choreography in a vortex of leaping figures and swirling skirts in oriental red, blue, or orange, with lots of glimmer. Out of this came traditional Indian dance gestures like flowers bursting through a rushing stream.

Seamlessly blending media and reality, models arrived in cars announced on huge video screens. Dancers sometimes wove in and out of the catwalk, while the models floated along the ramp.

The music might be disco, or romantic pop, or African drum, or Oriental flume, or jazz; but whatever the influence, the sound was never anything but high impact.

A hymn of love for the beauty of this country

One of the brightest among many highlights, was a walking recital by Muscat poet, Nasma al Adawi. As the words dripped from her lips, Nasma drifted along an unseen horizon, ever curving toward us and receding like waves upon the shore. She seemed to be singing a hymn of love for the beauty of this country. And no-one can forget the hypnotic echo of her repeated line...and I am the Lady of the Land.

A themed cat walk

Clothes came from Mango, Monsoon, Sara's Design Studio, and Omani fashion artists, Haifa al Busaidy and Fatma Noor. Designs varied from simple white cotton frocks embellished with sophisticated fashion accents in ribbons or gathering, or an off-angle cut, to sumptuous oriental ensembles.

The first model to appear came down from above on a cloud. In brilliant white, she emerged on the darkened stage wearing a glittering form-fitting gown completely covered in sequins and beads — from Monsoon. As this apparition turned and walked, we saw that she was wearing feathered angel's wings, life size. Later, on a related theme, she came from Mango, girls clad in white came out of the dark all in a row, carry-



(From left to right) Latifah Omar, wife of the Ambassador of South Africa to Oman; Bridget Ganguly, organiser; Karen Green; Director & Producer; and Michael Bos, Director, Al Amana Centre

ing candle lamps and moving slowly, as in a reverie.

Top of the Charts

Indian inspired fashion is still top of the charts — with filmy materials which float away from the body, sumptuous colour and sparkling applique. Among the many beautiful creations presented from Sara's Design Studio, I remember one in hot pink and red, radiating a galaxy of star spirals which shone in silver, and another ensemble in teal and saffron-orange which seemed to be perpetually caught in fluttering breezes. And then, all the lovely yellows, creams, olive and emerald greens, the rusts and reds, the chocolate browns and golds. It is an exotic, romantic approach to fashion, characterised by long lines, layered hems, slanting cuts, flowing shawls, and everywhere — glittering sequins and beading.

Haifa al Busaidy

Making a splash debut was a young Omani designer, Haifa al Busaidy, heralded by Nasma's poem. The Omani women of Muscat today are newly creative with their scarves, magically turning them into striking headresses. Haifa took the beaddress innovation further with multiple folds gracefully falling like the high train of a medieval princess.

Embroidered cuffs (sija) in silver or gold on sleeves and pants magnify the traditional, both in scope and brilliance of colour. The tunic, scarf and sarwal of this Omani costume create many layers,

and yet the result seems streamlined and slender.

Fatma Noor

Well-established Muscat designer Fatma Noor was Karen Green's choice for her appearance as MC. A fitted dress, long and elegantly plain in black crepe, was the ground for an embroidered empire style band in lush pink. Encasing the gown, except for the open front, was a matching translucent cape, with the pink applique element fringing the sides of the dress like a flame.

Fatma Noor introduced sequins not simply as trimming or embellishment, but as modern design elements artistically placed on dark grounds in the pattern of a diamond, or a square or a circle. Colours included light yellows, burnt brown, unusual greens, fiery coral, violet and dark sienna.

Monsoon and an International Finale

Monsoon is Muscat's only shop specialising in western style cocktail and evening dresses. The Monsoon models arrived like celebrities in a shining red Lexus. They presented dramatic designs, some in variations of the zebra stripe, curved and lyrical — white on black, or black on white. Then came a parade of princesses in tiaras and stinky gowns, silky or metallic, generally darker in colour, often accented with sequins or unusual ribbons.

As the show was drawing to an end, a tart in gorgeous orange and green seemed to come from nowhere, followed

by another blooming brightly in red, purple and gold. Suddenly there was a demure Japanese kimono-like casual dress or yukata, in cream with large carnation flowers and the most beautiful blood red sash or obi.

The always fascinating Korean national dress followed with its unique architectural structure, where the skirt has a high suspension. This voluminous, towering dress gives the wearer a perch and a delicate appearance suggestive of a figurine.

People of all colours; white doves of peace

The models and dancers from around the globe — people of all colours in clothes of more colours — came together for a final appearance as would players in the theatre. White doves of peace were released into the air as the performers — and the audience too — joined hands to the strains of *We are the World*.

The evening carried on into auctions and raffles, through which, along with ticket revenue, approximately RO 12,000 (after expenses) will go to the charity — a mark of the generosity and community spirit of Muscat. The guests of the InterContinental on a Friday night accommodated more than 750 people.

Made in Muscat

Karen Green, the producer and director reflects on the event:

"One World was a home-made production for which we do not fly in professional models or events staff. Everyone works for free to maximise the amount that goes to charity. The Embassy of South Africa generously flew in and accommodated the dance troupe; and so, the only expenses were for things like sound, lighting and the cost of the buffet.

"The models, who are friends, acquaintances or people I bump into in the community, train for months and months. They become stars for a night, but that is not the most important thing; they have a wonderful experience bonding together — and a great sense of accomplishment in learning new skills and contributing to charity. It was really remarkable how everyone came together to create this event; and here, on the evening itself, the Muscat community joined in. The raffle tickets were sold out before the performance began.

"Towards midnight, the twenty or thirty people who were left joined hands to sing the theme song — *We are the World* — and it was so moving, there was such a spirit of community and togetherness that many of us were in tears of joy".

