

Ulfah Arts UK and Dam Festival Kosovo present:

حكايتية

HAKAWATIYYAH THE STORYTELLER



"CHRISTIAN, JEW, MUSLIM,
SHAMAN, ZOROASTRIAN,
STONE, GROUND,
MOUNTAIN, RIVER,
EACH HAS A SECRET
WAY OF BEING WITH THE
MYSTERY, UNIQUE AND
NOT TO BE JUDGED"

Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi

FOREWORD



from Naz Koser, Artistic Director Ulfah Arts

Welcome to Hakawatiyyah, our latest production as part of our mwmmusic campaign which was launched at the World Music Expo (Seville, Spain) in 2008 pioneered in my beloved City of Birmingham (UK). This has been our most ambitious production yet, developed by an international team of artists, separated by geography and language, working in sync, with a single objective to take the debate on Muslim women and their participation in music and other creative art forms to the next level.

This project has truly been a pioneering initiative, Hakawatiyyah is a union of two distinct artistic genres, a collaboration between tradition and culture – this is a project that has strived from day one to unite contradictions, break stereotypes and nurture harmony which is the very essence of Ulfah Arts.

My thanks goes to the Muslim women and community partners who have enabled us to leave the legacy of this work with all Muslim women, no matter who they are and what they do. Particular thanks to our funders who bravely support this work that is challenging in many ways. Finally thanks to our Kosovan friends, who not only brought amazing artistic skill but the hope and aspirations for a better future.

On behalf of myself, my team and the artists thank you all for supporting this work and I hope you enjoy the evening.

Mwmmusic

Muslim Women Music Makers (mwmmusic) is a music initiative by Ulfah Arts that puts Muslim women at the forefront in music making, innovating, collaborating, and producing pioneering music for all to enjoy. Launched at the World Music Expo (WOMEX) in 2008, Ulfah Arts leads on building partnerships and developing artists through annual projects and presence at WOMEX.

If you wish to work with us to explore a collaboration please do not hesitate to contact us.

Hakawatiyyah The Storyteller is available for national and international tour bookings please email naz@ulfaharts.co.uk. Audio and educational resources will be an ongoing development and materials can be requested. For regular updates on the mwmmusic initiative please see www.mwmm.co.uk for ongoing updates on projects and news.

OUR STORY

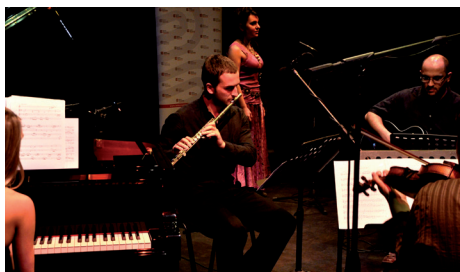


Our story begins five years ago when Ulfah Arts founded with one driving force- an aspiration to develop Ulfah in to an organisation which can produce something as artistically rich as Hakawatiyyah – The Storyteller. But our ambition was not to just produce it , it was to produce an artistic product developed by everyday Muslim women, a possible benchmark to empower Muslim women through music.

Over the years Ulfah Arts has tasseled with prejudice and ignorance to make music and other art forms more accessible to Muslim women. In our quest we have met supporters who have gone out of their way in helping us develop an artistically rich future for all Muslim women. British Council has been one such supporter.

Thanks to British Council and their Creative Collaborations project, we were able to connect with the artistic team of the famous Dam Music Festival in Kosovo and thus began to build our partnership in March 2009. After visiting each others work and learning more about each other we both (Ulfah Arts and Dam Festival) decided that we had enough common ground to realise a collaboration. We formulated the first ideas for

this work during a visit by Dam Festival Director Dardan Selimaj to the UK in May 2009. We knew we came from two different worlds and bringing them together not only presented many challenges but also created small cordon around the creative flexibility we had due to geographical fraction between the two artistic teams in UK and Kosovo. The work started early January 2010 with the tour of five UK cities by the storyteller, Alia Al Zougbi and the Kosovan composers supported by Cambridge based interfaith scholar and pianist, Rosalind Parker. We met around 20-25 women in each city, from all walks of life, diverse cultures upbringing, race, academic levels, we were mostly received with open arms, but sometimes a hint of suspicion around our motives. Music in Islam is still as controversial today than it has ever been for women. So bringing religion and music together head on, aroused curiosity in some and some stayed away. However, once the workshop started and the storyteller began her stories with musicians in the background, their perspective changed, a slight gust of creativity opened up their closed arms; they shared their stories like they have never shared before, some even saying that they would not hear stories without the music when given the option.



The women brought stories from Quran and Hadith and we all learnt so much about how these stories are used today in 21st century. Women talked about the lack of recognition from men to being queens of their homes, to role models such as 'The iron lady Margaret Thatcher' and how the epic stories give confidence to the business women of today.

Our commissioned storyteller from UK Alia and three Kosovan composers began work with Alia sending through three epic stories that the women had narrated and chosen as the core of the concert script.

Thus began the production of the commissioned new music by Kosovan composers, deadline, Six weeks.

The UK team arrived for the world premiere of the concert at the DAM Festival in Kosovo on 28th March 2010 and not having heard the music, were nervous, but excited at the same time! Once all the artists got together and organized themselves we started to hear the music and stories and knew we had created something truly special. The concert premiered, as scheduled in Kosovo



on 31st March 2010, thankfully the hard work by the entire creative team paid off. The concert was applauded by the audience for its musical genius and artistic ingenuity. It was loved by all and truly appreciated so we turned our sights to the UK and with further ambition we set work straight away. In the spirit of Rumi we have taken inspiration from all in UK and in Kosovo and present for the first time, a concert which openly embraces two worlds. We don't have the language to describe the experience yet, and look forward to reactions across the world but leave you with a few words from Rumi in anticipation.

Oh heart, sit with someone
who knows the heart;
Go under the tree
which has fresh blossoms

- Rumi

ULFAH ARTS UK & DAM FESTIVAL KOSOVO

THE ARTISTIC TEAM



NAZ KOSER

UK Tour Artistic Director & Founder of Ulfah Arts.

The last five years have been spent directing and producing a number of shows with British Muslim women.

Born in the UK, Naz considers herself more British than Pakistani (having only been there once) and is considered to be a pioneering British Muslim contributing the essence of her faith to British culture.

Ulfah Arts (meaning Arabic for harmony) was born out of personal tragedy due to religious extremism.

Naz is also an artist under the name Sufi Punk, where she's interested in the shared attitude that can create two different extremes and uses a variety of forms in communicating her findings of common ground.

Hakawatiyyah – The Storyteller is the first time she has worked with western classical musicians in this way.



ALIA AL ZOUGB

Storyteller and Original Writer for the UK Tour in 2010.

Alia is a BAFTA Scotland nominated and award-winning actress, storyteller, dancer and workshop facilitator. She has performed stories and facilitate workshops at The British Museum, The V&A, the National Gallery and the Barbican as well as performing internationally

Her theatre credits in the UK include Go to Gaza, Drink the Sea, Amada, Yarn, The Lady Survives and The Open Couple. She has also performed in It's Nothing Personal, a one-woman show co-written with Yamina Bakiri, which was received with acclaim in London and has now been invited to be performed in Belgium and Bahrain. Alia's film & TV credits include the title roles in the feature film Trouble Sleeping and the docu-drama Hijack (BBC4).



ROSALIND PARKER

Composer of original score and pianist for the UK tour

Rosalind Parker graduated with a double first in Theology from Cambridge, she currently holds the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme Research Scholarship, with which she explores the role the arts can play in fostering inter-religious dialogue and works closely with Ulfah Arts.

Rosalind is Director and Co-founder of Rough Magicke Productions Ltd. (www.roughmagicke.co.uk) The principle aim is exploiting the musical element of theatre to engage the audience more directly with the visual narrative. Rosalind and Rough Magicke have toured six musicals around the UK.

The musical aspect of storytelling and narrative has become increasingly important to Rosalind having composed music for The Crucible, Shakespeare's Water Music, and worked as Musical Consultant developing soundscapes for The Medea, Little Red Things.



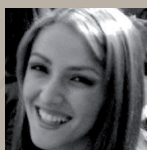
VISAR KUÇI

Original Compositions for the story of Asiya as written by Alia Al Zougbi, also Violinist for the 2010 UK Tour.

Visar is one of the most distinguished violinists in Kosovo (as well as playing the contrabass, guitar, bass guitar, viola and piano) and also a composer. Born in 1983 in Prishtina (Kosovo), he finished his elementary and high school years in the music school "Preng Jakova" in Prishtina.

In 2006 Viasr graduated from Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität in Mynster, Germany and in 2008 was elected an assistant in the Faculty of Arts, University of Prishtina where he currently attends his graduate studies. He is also a member of the Philharmony of Kosova and a solo artist having performed concerts and ensembles in Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Bosnia & Herzegovina as well as his native Kosovo.

Visar is a close collaborator with pianist Clemens Rave and accordionist Piotr Ragno in Germany.



DAFINA ZEQIRI

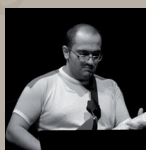
Original Compositions for the story of Mary as written by Alia Al Zougbi:

Born in 1984 Dafina finished the music high school "Prek Jakova" in Prishtinain. Having studied under the well known Albanian composer Mendi Mengjiqi (student of Krysztof Penderecki) at the Music Branch in the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina.

Currently attending her master studies in the class of Macedonian composer Jana Andreevska at the Faculty of Music Art in Skopje (Macedonia). Zeqiri won several prizes in Competitions in Switzerland, Albania and Italy.

She won Theodore Front Prize with her work Atmospheres for Choir and Orchestra and has composed more than 30 pieces for ensembles and orchestras.

Dafina was named an assistant at the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina and is leading the non government organization Women in Music NEO MUSICA.



ARMEND XHAFERI

Original Compositions for the story of Fatima as written by Alia Al Zougbi, also Guitarist for the 2010 UK Tour.

Born in and educated Prishtina Armend is the most famous Albanian jazz guitarist. Having studied at the Arts University in Graz, Austria, where he also did post-graduate studies on jazz guitar.

He has performed many times as soloist, but also as member of various jazz ensembles in Kosovo, Germany and Austria.

He has recoded several CD's with mmarimango Trio, Nenad Vasilic Band, Laurie Antolnlioli, Armend Xhaferi Band and also wrote a score for the movie 'nje rruge tjeter' and now works as a Lecturer in the Facutly of Arts in Prishtina.



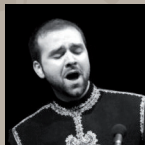
HOLLY JONES

Flautist for the 2010 UK Tour

Holly studied classical flute at the Birmingham Conservatoire and developed her interest in jazz and improvisation.

Holly has played with Svengali, a jazz funk-fusion band and performed with various bands recording albums ranging from breakbeat to indie-pop. In 2001 she formed a Jazz/Funk quintet where she recorded her own Acid Jazz arrangements.

Holly is currently a member of the TG Collective a Spanish gypsy-jazz ensemble. Other projects include collaborating with a Tabla band, a funky soul outfit. She even finds time to teach flute and direct a youth funk group for which she composes and arranges music.



RIAD YMERI

Tenor for the 2010 UK Tour

Riad was born in Prishtina, graduated from the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina. Riad is soloist in the Philharmonics Choir – Opera of Kosovo and vocal ensemble Oketi Plus. He has performed in several international festivals, including DAM and ReMusica festivals in Prishtina, Histria Festival in Pula and Macedonian Music Days in Skopje. Riad has also performed with other soloists in Tirana, Brussels, Zagreb and won second prize in the international contest of classical music Ars Kosova 2006 in Prishtina. He attended master classes with Enxo Tei and Vito Maria Brunetti.

In 2007 he worked with the La MaMA theatre from New York for the "Diana" musical staged in Prishtina. Last year, he worked with Kosovo National Theatre for the show "Cifti Martin".



ULFAH COLLECTIVE

Choir for the 2010 UK Tour

The first practicing Muslim female Choir in UK it consists of a group of women aged 13 to 42 from different backgrounds and nationalities that include Pakistani, Somali, Bangladeshi, and Arab all brought together by Ulfah Arts.

The Ulfah Collective has a core team of five which expands to fourteen members for larger performances.

Varying backgrounds and cultures bring together different interpretations of Islam that are catered for, by women only audiences and performances with just the hand drum. They write their own lyrics and vocal compositions. Performances have included Wembley Arena (London) to an audience of 12,000 alongside Robin Gibb from the Bee Gees and Ruby Wax. Their songs are universal and include traditional Islamic songs as well as songs of other faith traditions such as gospel.



CREATIVE COLLABORATION

PARTNERSHIP
IN THE ARTS



The British Council Creative Collaboration project worked with artists and creative entrepreneurs to build networks across the arts communities of South East Europe and the UK. We aimed to increase the number of artists working in cross-cultural collaboration with other countries. Ulfah Arts linked UK Muslim women with Kosovan composers in a bold initiative to encourage new voices and ideas. They succeeded in both surprising and impressing their Kosovan audience. We look forward to experiencing the UK tour.

-Susan Glover, Project Manager Creative Collaboration, British Council.

www.britishcouncil.org/creativecollaboration

THE STORY OF ASIYA

She had fallen out of love with her husband and fallen in love with another.

When he first sensed it, the fading of the flame of love and devotion in her eyes, it was his pride that was hurt. But do not mistake his pain for love, for try as she might to take him to these heights with her, it was he who did not want to go. He did not know love. When his eyes quivered with rage at the infidelity of his wife it was not out of a desire to win her back, but in a desire to reclaim what he no longer possessed. When he held her hand and sank his eyes into hers pleading with sweet words it was not because he missed her person, but because he could not stand the lack of her devotion. And when he went into counsel with those nearest to her it was not to be closer to her, but to use the influence of others upon her.

He cringed and twisted. The mention of his name! Every time she rejected her husband's claims. With each of his offers, without fail, she chose her new love to prevail. He was enraged by her audacity, for in this land, his land, no one reigned more supreme, no one more powerful,

no one more esteemed. And here his ego was whipped and he was belittled by his own wife for all to see!

For her part, she was whole for the first time since the moment of birth. She feared not the truth that sang so harmoniously in her heart. For how could she not feel at peace, how could she not feel complete when she was replete with love? How could she not succumb to her cruel worldly fate when she had found the One who would satiate her? And she knew, that suffer as she might, the strength of her faith would elevate her above the cruel tortures she was about to endure for her dissent.

Under the blazing sun of Egypt her arms and legs were tied to four stakes and slowly pulled apart tearing at her from the inside out, her skin ripping from the pressure, her bones detaching from one another. A heavy rock was placed on her heart to mirror the rock he felt on his, its rough and protruding edges digging dents into her flesh under its heavy weight until they pierced through the skin to cause the blood to seep out in snaking strips down her exposed flesh. But though it was she who

endured the true torture, she dressed her face with a smile and looked up to the calling of his heaven while the other dug his own hole of despair and destruction and buried himself deeper in this pit of anger and hate.

What he did not know and could never see was that she was being protected. Her loved one reassured her with the strength of his words, he watched over her. His angels swept down to protect her from the rays of the sun with their thick feathered wings. Her eyes met the glare of the sun, and the same rays that once burned her now wrapped her cold body claiming her from this earth and carrying her into the beckoning embrace of the One, the Pure, the True, her Love.

Before finding true love, she had lived the life of no ordinary woman, but as the spoilt wife of Pharaoh who believed himself a god. For her the most desired riches of the world were attainable. But she walked away into the light of her true love. She was Asya, Asya to whom the River Nile carried a little child, Musa.

The stories before and after this page are inspiration behind the three compositions commissioned for this production and appear in order in which they are performed.

Written by Alia Al Zougbi, inspired by Ulfah Arts creative process.

The stories are the writer's artistic license on the project and are by no means to be taken literally as factual about the Islamic or any other faith.

THE STORY OF MARY

There was a pain that welled up in her body as the child left it, and then the pain stayed. There was a tearing and gnashing at her insides that seemed determined to reduce her to shreds of flesh. Every time she tried to stand her legs gave way as though there were no bones to hold them up, her body splaying itself back onto the ground in a mess of limbs and groans and twisted mayhem.

The wails of her child matched her own, both were muted, silent, hers trapped behind a face flushed and distorted by the pain. Her tears began to fall for no one to see and the deep guttural groans were drawn out of her throat for no one to hear. Eyes wide with sorrow and fear. Wisps of wet hair snaking its way down the strained muscles of her face.

Time passed in this torment until the pain began to subside but only because it was overpowered by pangs of hunger in her stomach and a grainy thirst in the dryness of her throat. One by one she grounded her feet and sat onto them, and holding her new born to her bosom, she straightened her body and walked... she walked into the infinite expanse of the desert. All around her everything

was repetition, a cloudless sky that spread above her head without alteration, and the repeated rising and dipping of rock mountains at varying degrees. All was a haze of dirt rock brown and light blue sky except for the sun's cyclops' eye glaring at her with merciless heat.

She walked, she flailed, she stumbled...

A Voice descended... round her in broad gentle strokes, lifting her once more to her feet bequeathing her to walk towards the palm tree whose roots suckled from the fresh water stream beneath, but she saw no tree; it bequeathed her again to drink from the stream and moisten her hair and head, to shake the tree so that sweet dates may fall at her feet. But which tree was she to shake and what stream was she to drink from. Nothing but nothing was around her!

'Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten!'

It was then, at the moment of greatest weakness, she felt a wetness beneath her feet. It seeped through the cracked earth and gurgled and purred

THE STORY OF FATIMA

Abu Jahl was a bleak, fearsome man - what one in today's language would call a thug. He was without proper manner, without social know-how, without serious thought and certainly without a proper shower.

Abu Jahl was the bitterest opponent against a certain budding religion, and translated this bitterness into such petty confrontations and encounters. His belligerent stance eventually earned him the name *Abū Jahl*, the Father of Ignorance.

Now there was a certain little girl, *Fatimah*, who was as feisty and temperamental as a caged cat. One can only imagine that as soon as anyone spoke ill of anyone she loved, she would roll up her sleeves and clench her fists, ready to throw a whack, particularly when it came to her father and how he was treated by the likes of Abu Jahl. This earned her the reputation of being her father's favourite... and as a result was in the lines of Abu Jahl's foremost enemies.

Fatimah was but a young girl when the incident took place. She was out on an errand when she passed Abu Jahl in the streets with his clique of companions, huddling round

each other like a hoard of hyennas. Fatima walked by holding her head up high with one eyebrow raised, looking straight ahead, as if she was the queen of the street. Abu Jahl needed no provocation. He took any opportunity to offend and humiliate her father and she was the perfect target. With a single lunge he intercepted her path, towering over her, and cocked an eye down at her with a knowing smirk on his lips. She cocked a challenging one right back. They stared at one another squinting their eyes at one another for a while, when suddenly 'PAK!' he raised his fat hand and slapped her across the face! A thunder of laughter ensued from Abu Jahl and his clique of friends and so alarmed was the young Fatima at this uncalled-for act, that feisty as she was, she did not know how to respond as everyone in the market turned to see what was causing all the commotion.

She gathered up her skirts and walked on, tears welling up in her innocent eyes, angry at the injustice she had received and at the hands of such a lowly man. She was fuming, her head steaming, her blood boiling in disbelief at what had just happened. She was not going to let this pass. She was going to

set things straight once and for all, and she knew exactly how she was going to do it.

She found her feet taking her to Abu Sufyan, the leader of the people of Quraysh, and complained to him about Abu Jahl's brutish behavior. Abu Sufyan listened silently, then asked her to take him to the place where the barbarian was still sitting with his hoard of hyennas, and told her to demonstrate on Abu Jahl's cheek exactly how he had slapped her. PAK! This time it was Abu Jahl's turn to stare in disbelief as the small palm met his cheek, seemingly in slow motion, and issued a sound so sharp and immediate it didn't seem to correspond with the prick of pain that he felt. But the true pain was in the humiliation of being slapped by a little girl before the people of Quraysh, who chuckled and snarled at the sight.

From this very first attempt, Abu Jahl learned not to mess with this girl. For whatever challenge he or anyone else threw her way, Fatima always raised an eyebrow and cocked an eye and found a way to get her own back.



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and Art Gallery is a
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vulture or visitor to
the city.”**

Shefali Oza

TV presenter

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BIRMINGHAM - CANDIDATE CITY



Birmingham City Council

TO OUR FUNDERS:

Our personal thanks to the following funders for not just supporting this production but for the ongoing support they have given to Ulfah Arts' Muslim Women Music Makers (mwmmusic) is a music initiative.

British Council –
Creative Collaboration

United States Embassy,
London

Arts Council of England

Be Birmingham

UK Trade & Investment

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

This production has been developed in partnership with UK communities. Our community partners have been instrumental in developing this production. They organized workshops early 2010 for us to meet and discuss with women what stories from Quran and Hadith (stories from the life of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him) are inspiring them in the 21st Century. This process informed the production in many ways such as deciding which epic stories from Islamic history to use to commission the composers, to identifying lesser known stories. We also took inspiration from the women in terms of what they would like to feel and how these stories translate to modern day life, as well as consulting with them around the music. Our heart felt thanks to all our partners and the individual women who support this work.

St Hilda's East, London is a vibrant multi-purpose community centre, which has in excess of 14 projects designed to serve a diverse and multicultural community of all ages.
www.sthildas.org.uk

Fatima Women's Network, Leicester – FATIMA (Forum for Advocacy Training and Information in a Multicultural Arena) Women's Network is an independent, strategic and diverse organisation using dynamic interventions for gender equity, social, economic and environmental justice.
www.fatima-network.com

Hear My Voice, Luton/Birmingham – HMYV is a fantastic, entirely youth-led initiative which offers Muslim Young People with innovative opportunities to make a difference in their communities. www.hmyv.org.uk

THE 100 WOMEN BEHIND THE STORIES

Creative Colours, Nelson – specialises in promoting South Asian and Middle Eastern Arts. Main aims are to create a platform for artists and develop specialised arts like Calligraphy, miniature painting, geometric patterns, and various music and performance arts.

Creative Muslim Network, Luton – is an award winning organisation based in Luton since 2007. The CMN has been founded by Interfaith art consultant, teacher and academic Shemiza Rashid. The CMN works to engage children of all abilities with Islam through art and creativity, and motivate interfaith dialogue through innovative and inspiring community led projects. www.thecreativemuslimnetwork.org

As a result of this partnership we would like to thank 100 women personally who have and continue to support the development of this production.

Abida Rahim	Lynette Webbe	Saada Ahmed	Sultana Begum
Afroz Nasiri	Mahmuda Jaigirdar	Sabeha AMiah	Sumaiya Bibi
Ahamber Qureshi	Maria Bibi	Sabiya Mohamed	Tahmina Perwez
Ahashia Qureshi	Maria Rashid	Safiah Ahmed	Tasleem
Aisha Khan	Mazda Miah	Saharra Ali	Tasleem Kauser
Alina Hussain	Mehareen Ali	Sahra Mohamed	Tasneem Mahmood
Amina Kachwala	Momina Begum	Saira Ifikhar	Tasnim Khan
Asma Husain Awan	Nabeelah Khan	Salma Jabeen	Tazamber Rashid
Assiya	Naheed Jabeen	Sanha Qureshi	Tayyba Rehman
Ayan Mohammed	Naila Kamram	Saima Akhtar	Tess Ditta
Aysha Begum	Naila Suleman	Salma Bashir	Uzma
Azami Murad	Naseem Akhtar	Sarah Yaseen	Yasmin Akhtar
Diana Choudhury	Nasreen Bibi	Shabnam Asghar	Zenab Khatoun
Gemma McAloon	Nasiba Aganoglu	Shafina Ahmed	
Farida Khanom	Naya Sultana	Shahida Ahmed	
Fateha Begum	Nayem Akhtar	Shahida Aslam	
Fatima Ali	Nazira Ditta	Shahida Begum	
Hamdi Omer	Nelufa Akanjee	Shahida Khan	
Hadiya Masieh	Noor Akhtar	Shahnaj Begum	
Hodan Ahmed	Noor Nehar Begum	Shaheen Ahmed	
Ijaz Begum	Noori Bibi	Shaista Gohir	
Jaida Khatun	Nusaiba Mohamed	Shanaz Rashid	
Juhela Choudhury	Parvin Ali	Shayla Ali	
Jubeda Begum	Razia Sultana	Shelly Begum	
Khadiya Mohamed	Rahima Begum	Shemiza Rashid	
Khaja Nur	Rehana Koser	Shiara Khatun	
Kookab Qureshi	Ruqiya Mohammed	Sughra Bashir	
Laveeza Hussain	Ruhela Ahmed	Shukri Ahmed	
Lourdes Colclough	Ruksana Koser	Sofia Omer	

1600 BC

ASIYA BINT MUZAHIM

INSPIRING THE PRODUCTION

The following are the inspiration behind the production as highlighted to us by UK women.

"Oh my lord! Build for me, in the nearness to You, a mansion in the Garden, and save me from pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those that do wrong".

Holy Quran (66:11)

Asiya bint Muzahim was the wife of the tyranny Pharaoh and guardian of Moses. She became the Queen of Egypt; she gained everything that she wanted in this worldly life from the materialistic point of view: the best of clothes, food, palaces, jewels, servants and maids, etc. But she sacrificed all that to be closer to Allah. She is said to be one of four women from Islamic history who are guaranteed paradise (Heaven)

600-200 BC

BALQIS OR QUEEN OF SHEBA (SABA)

"I have come to you from Saba with tidings true. I found (there) a woman ruling over them and provided with every requisite; and she has a magnificent throne"

Holy Quran (27:22/23)

The Queen of Sheba - an exotic and mysterious woman of power - is immortalised in the world's great religious works, among them the Hebrew Bible and the Muslim Qur'an. She also appears in Turkish and Persian painting, in Kabbalistic treatises, and in medieval Christian mystical works, where she is viewed as the embodiment of Divine Wisdom and a foreteller of the cult of the Holy Cross. In Africa and Arabia her tale is still told to this day and, indeed, her tale has been told and retold in many lands for nearly 3,000 years. The location of her historical kingdom most likely included part of modern day Yemen,[2][3] and perhaps Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well. She mostly known for being a just and good queen.

20 BC-45 AD

MARIAM BINT IMRAN (VIRGIN MARY)

"O my lord! I do dedicate to You what is in my womb for Your special service: so accept this of me: For You hear and know all things"

Holy Quran (3:35)

See! The angels said: "O Mary! Allah has chosen you and purified you – Chosen you above the women of all nations.

Holy Quran (3:42)

"Ah! Would that I have died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"

Holy Quran (19:23)

Mary ("Maryam" in Arabic), the mother of Jesus, is considered one of the most righteous women in the Islamic tradition. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an and her name is mentioned more times than it is in the New Testament.[1]

According to the Qur'an, Jesus was born miraculously by the will of God without a father. His mother is regarded as a chaste and virtuous woman and is a highly respected figure in Islam. In the Qur'an, no other woman is given more attention than Mary. The nineteenth sura of the Qur'an is named after her and is, to some extent, about her life. Of the Qur'an's 114 suras, she is among only eight people who have a sura named after them

555–619^{CE}

HIND BINT 'UTBAH

"be quick in the race for forgiveness from your lord, and for a garden whose width is that of the whole of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous"

Holy Quran (3:133)

Mūsá ibn 'Uqbah narrated that Wahshi gouged out the liver of Hamza ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and took it to Hind bint 'Utbah and she ate it. Her status as a Sahaba (companion of Muhammad) remains questioned because of actions she took against the Muslim community before her conversion, particularly an incident of alleged battlefield cannibalism.

6-7TH AD

KHADIJA AL-KUBRA

The first woman to follow the religion of Islam was Khadijah ul-Kubra'. She was the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was older than him, previously divorced and a business woman. She is often used as a role model to counteract ideas of suppression of women in Islam.

FATIMAH
BINT MUHAMMAD

Muslims regard Fatimah as a loving and devoted daughter, mother, wife, a sincere Muslim, and an exemplar for women. It is believed that she was very close to her father and shared many of his mannerisms, traits and luminous lights.



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NOTES:

(PBUH) – Peace be upon him, is a saying that Muslims use whenever talking about significant figures from Islamic history.

The stories and use of the quran has purely been on the basis of inspiration and the concert should no way be considered as promotion or factual of the Islamic faith.

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