

# Kazakh culture in the London air

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*Photo: Conductor Marius Stravinsky with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in the Guildhall*

At the Kazakh Arts Festival 2009, the passionate dream of its presenter, the world famous pianist Eleonora Bekova, came true bringing the classical cultural legacy of Kazakhstan to Western Europe and the snowy British capital. This year the annual Kazakh Gala gave audiences the enormous pleasure of two outstanding concerts and one unforgettable Art Exhibition. The event, launched six years ago by Ms Bekova and now under the patronage of HRH Princess Michael of Kent, HE the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan Dr. Abusseitov, Lord Poltimore, and author Jonathan Aitken who wrote the first English biography of President Nazarbayev was dedicated to the 18th anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Classical music is universally loved, especially when it is played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in the glorious setting of the Guildhall, a building with millennial history. One of the few

structures to have survived the Great Fire of London in 1666, it has been the seat of Government for the City of London since the Middle Ages. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has since its foundation in 1946 regularly toured the World and is an example of musical perfection. Their London home is the Cadogan Hall which hosted the second concert of the Festival's programme brilliantly performed by the Kazakh State Chamber Orchestra.

Both concerts were directed by Maestro Marius Stravinsky, a virtuosic Kazakh-born conductor educated at Eton College, who has conducted many operas in Moscow and is now Artistic Director of the Karelia Philharmonic with whom he has released world premiere recordings of prominent British composers. Performances by Aiman Musakhodjayeva, the renowned and multiple prize-winning Kazakh violinist, were exceptional in both concerts. Serik Yerkimbekov, Chairman of the Composers of Kazakhstan contributed to the Festival three deeply emotion-



*Photo: Eleonoora Bekova, Founder and Chairman Kazakh Gala, Zhanna Yensenbayeva of Has Sanat Gallery, Lord Mayor of London Sir John and Lady Stuttard*



*Photo: Timur Kuanyshiev, HRH Prince Michael of Kent, Gita and Ash Tandon*

al concert pieces in Minaret, Altyn Arka and Folk Dance. Other Kazakh composers whose music was performed were A. Serkebayev and Kazhgaliev.

The third and final element of the Festival, an exhibition of Kazakh Art at Sotheby's Gallery in new Bond Street, introduced Kazakh painters such as Y.Topelpai, B.Bapishev, A.Noda, A. Yesdauletov, M.Bekeyev, V.Grigorjyan who lovingly depict Kazakh nature, characters, traditions and legends in a symbolic and mystic way in search of expressive excellence. The evening's champagne reception was accompanied by speeches by HE the Ambassador Dr Abusseitov, Lord Poltimore on behalf

of Sotheby's, Zhanna Yensebayeva of Has Sanat Gallery and Eleonora Bekova. All the events in the Festival were very well attended by both art lovers and Central Asian enthusiasts and the concerts concluded to thunderous ovations.

A great honour for the Kazakh Festival was the presence of Their Royal Highnesses Prince and Princess Michael of Kent and Sir John and Lady Stuttard as Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of the City of London at the Gala and Councillor Terence Buxton, Deputy Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea at the Kazakh State Chamber Orchestra concert. Eleonora Bekova is now preparing the Gala events for 2010

marking Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the OSCE with concerts and an expanded Arts Festival.

The intention of the organizers and generous supporters, among whom are ENRC Komek Foundation, goes beyond artistic exchange and aims at future generations with the idea of sustaining gifted Kazakh youth and creating an Academy educating musicians. A dedicated site [www.kazakhgala.co.uk](http://www.kazakhgala.co.uk) will update readers of future events. Eleonora Bekova, pianist of the legendary Bekova Sisters Piano Trio, believes this initiative will help ensure that the independent Kazakh nation is fully represented in the international artistic arena.