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Alexandrov Red Army performing at ROHM today

With its rousing voices and robust singers, Russia's most prestigious choir, the world-famous Alexandrov Red Army Chorus will appear at the Royal Opera House Muscat on October 12 at 7:00 pm.

Founded in Moscow in 1928, the Choir was the brain child of Alexander Alexandrov who first achieved fame as the composer of the national anthem of the Soviet Union. This stunningly impressive super-masculine chorus gave more than 1,500 performances during World War II. Historically seen as representing the great masses of Russia, the Alexandrov Red Army Chorus is now the official choir of the Nation's Armed Forces.

Having performed throughout the Soviet Union, from



the Arctic snows to the sands of Tajikistan, the Chorus left Soviet soil to sing at an International Exposition held in 1937 in Paris where it

won the prestigious Grand Prix. That was the beginning of the Alexandrov Red Army Chorus' acclaimed global tours. For many decades all the singers were men, but since the 1990s, army women have occasionally been included as sopranos. A military dance troupe with women as well as men has been added. Some dances are performed by both men and women, while others, such as the Cossack Cavalry Dance, are performed by men only. The Orchestra for the Alexandrov Red Army Chorus includes both traditional Eastern and Western instruments in the performance of a wonderful repertoire that ranges from folk tunes to operatic arias and popular music.

For further information and booking consult the ROHM website: www.rohmuscat.org.om

SPOTLIGHT



A perfect stop for lovers of exotic beaches

SANDEEP SHARMA

A picture-perfect lighthouse, a dhow factory, wadis, a cinema hall, mountains, fishing, boating and a few exotic beaches – Sur, a city in Oman, has a lot to offer to travel junkies.

Situated on the north-eastern coast of Oman, the city means "selling port" in Arabic, proved a surprise package as one approached along the highway.

Unlike most "rich towns", this place – some 200 km south of Muscat, makes an impact with its simplicity.

The Al Ayyah Lighthouse, the place I stopped at first, provided a dazzling view of the sea and the modest architecture of the houses in the city. Once the entourage soaked in this sight, there were more reasons to say "Wow". Wadi Tiwi and Wadi Shab, where you can go boating, banished the torpor that came with the soaring temperature – around 40 degree Celsius – and created the urge to hit the beaches.

But that had to wait as the next stop was one of the 10 "dhow" factories in Sur.

Al Ayyah Dhow Factory – owned by 80-year-old Juma – had 50 workers, mainly from the Indian state of Kerala.



And it was heartening to know that some of them have been living fulfilled lives while working at the factory for well over 25 years.

It was a beautiful experience to witness what goes behind the making of boats, which were being constructed for a businessman who was to open a restaurant ahead of the 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar.

While walking along the streets of Sur, you get to see the City Cinema hall, which has its last show till midnight and screens a mix of Hollywood and Indian movies – the latest being Malayalam film Njandukalude Nattil Oridavela. The town also has popular eateries.

As you cross the sea bridge over the distinctly green water, you get a glimpse of multiple beaches.

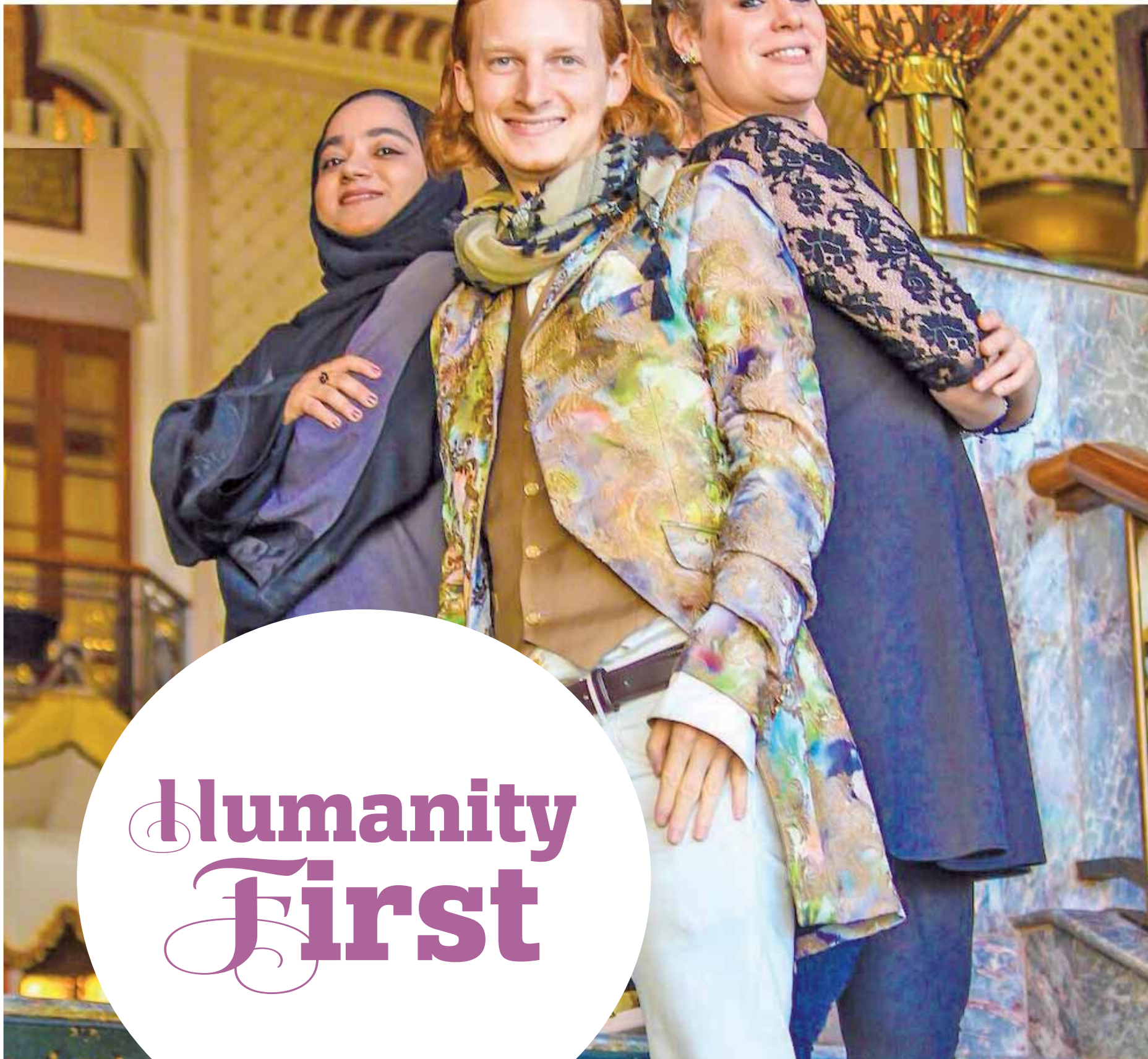
As we stopped at one, the water urged me to take a plunge – but not being a water baby, I chose to keep away and admire the beauty from afar.

While driving out of Sur – and as I regretted not venturing into the water – emerged another mesmerising landscape: The Hawiyat Najm Park, which has a 200-metre sinkhole filled with sea water.

The sinkhole, locals insist, came into existence after a meteor fell there. It was a treat to watch people taking a dip and enjoying the water in the sweltering heat of the desert.

If the picturesque landscape of Sur fails to captivate you, the town – famous for its pearls – has some other facets that might blow your mind away. And the locals are really helpful and friendly. — IANS

LOCAL SCENE



Humanity First

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

In 2008, Lubna al Balushi began to write poetry. Can you imagine going abroad to learn a foreign language and coming back as a poet writing in that language?

Well, that is the story of Lubna al Balushi who won a scholarship to attend the Goethe Institute in Freiburg on Southwest Germany after learning German at the Goethe Institute in Oman. What started off as a class assignment quickly became a passion.

Lubna writes poetry in Arabic, Baloch, English and German but she says she is most comfortable writing in German. Starting from that one poem, she soon had a collection of over 20 poems and had about 54 poems by the time her work titled, 'Schonheit des Herzens', was first published. The multilingual poet still feels she is more comfortable writing poem in German although she had written poems while a student but had never imagined that she would be a published poet in the near future.

Meanwhile in 2012, two people met at a train station in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Saskia Stauble had been singing since a little girl, and began by singing in choirs and theatres at the age of six. She soon began to write lyrics and compose melodies and no matter where she travelled or worked, music kept pulling at her.

The person she met at the train station was Michael Odermatt, who had set his eyes on a Grand Piano for the first time in a music store when he was just six.

The awe for the great instrument continued and

he became a student, training eight years in classical music education. But there was a time when he heard a song on the radio, he would immediately sit at the piano and play the entire song.

His vision became clearer to give something back

The trio have come together to present to the people an evening of Omani and Swiss cultures along with an exchange of stories through music and poetry. The programme is called 'Humanity First' and their objective is to bring together humanity through the arts and build a bridge between uniting the Arab and the European worlds

to the world and had been looking for the right people to convey the message and as faith would have it, this was when he met Saskia. The duo became the Dust of Soul creating music from the heart with the philosophy of respect, passion and love to the world. Saskia became the singer 'Dusty' and Michael became

the pianist 'MiKey' together became known as the Dust of Soul.

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"We are showcasing a real example of an Arab country and giving positive prospects to the European world. This is more illustrated in my poetry collection – 'Face from the Land of Tolerance, Oman,' as I am creating a visual of the journey into the beauty of Oman to depict Oman and the Omanis with their dreams, love, thoughts and pride. This brings us back to the theme – 'Humanity First!'"

The collection is an amalgamation of touristy visions, indirect marketing and historical ambiance of the Sultanate.

Lubna's poems and Dust of Soul's music will come together on a common platform on October 14, 2017 from 7 to 9 pm.

"It is more than just a collaboration. It is based on friendship and feels like family. We have the same intentions in our hearts – our love to the world. We will be performing our own work, but the meaning of each of our songs is connected to the poetry that will be read by Lubna al Balushi," said Saskia and Michael.

Some of the titles of Lubna's poems are The son of the desert, My camels, Get-together, The fish, Little Sailor, Little Goats, Doors, Razeen, Laughing from heart, The wish bridge and Jewels.

In other words, the trio will be showcasing an evening celebrating emotions and feelings.