



## PRESS RELEASE

### Spectacular Equestrian Performances conclude at the Historic Al Jahili Fort in Al Ain

*Part of the Emirati-French Cultural Programme, the sold-out performances were choreographed by the legendary Bartabas and featured 30 horses from the prestigious National Equestrian Academy of Versailles*

**Abu Dhabi, April 2, 2017:** From 23- 28 March, a series of performances within Al Ain's historic Al Jahili Fort were held as part of the Emirati-French Cultural Programme. Presented by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), the French Embassy and Institut français, the sold out performances were choreographed by the legendary Bartabas, and featured horsemen and horses from the prestigious National Equestrian Academy of Versailles, highlighting the unique and diverse array of world-class cultural events organised as part of the Emirati-French Cultural Programme

HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman, TCA Abu Dhabi commented on the success of the performances: "The Emirati-French Cultural Programme was organised by TCA Abu Dhabi and the French authorities in the spirit of cultural dialogue. The sold out performances at Al Jahili Fort are testament of the quality of the artistic performances presented as part of this cultural programme. Through the choreography devised by Bartabas, we witnessed equestrian skills at the heart of one of the most significant historic buildings in the UAE. This series of performances, reflected our common perspectives, and engaged our diverse audiences in the spirit of our shared heritage. Throughout civilizations, horses have captured the attention of men and have been part of their history. Organising the Bartabas equestrian show in Al Jahili Fort revived the reminiscences of this art and its importance in our national identity.

HE Michel Miraillet, Ambassador of France to the UAE, added: "This incredible performance, that I greatly appreciated, has shed light on the encounter between French and Emirati traditions for the delight of 3 000 spectators who came from all over the United Arab Emirates. It combined the excellency of *French tradition of equitation* classified as Intangible Heritage by UNESCO and the enchantment of Al Jahili Fort in Al Ain, steeped in history and hold dear to the heart of the Emiratis. This unique experience is a new milestone in our common celebration of the future opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi."

The Arabian horse is an important symbol of identity in the Arab world; throughout the history of the region, horses were exchanged as prestigious gifts between rulers as an expression of their mutual respect. These values were present throughout Bartabas' choreography which featured scenes



punctuated by poetry and texts from 20<sup>th</sup> century writers, evoking the relationships between humanity and horses. The combination of poetry and literary texts, with important musical overtures took the audience on a journey of meditation, harmony and emotion. The performances also included a moving solo by Bartabas with a Oud player from the Bait Al Oud academy, echoing the regional musical repertoire.

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#### **ABOUT ABU DHABI TOURISM & CULTURE AUTHORITY (TCA Abu Dhabi)**

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority conserves and promotes the heritage and culture of Abu Dhabi emirate and leverages them in the development of a world-class, sustainable destination of distinction, which enriches the lives of visitors and residents alike. The authority manages the emirate's tourism sector and markets the destination internationally through a wide range of activities aimed at attracting visitors and investment. Its policies, plans and programmes relate to the preservation of heritage and culture, including protecting archaeological and historical sites and to developing museums, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. TCA Abu Dhabi supports intellectual and artistic activities and cultural events to nurture a rich cultural environment and honour the emirate's heritage. A key authority role is to create synergy in the destination's development through close co-ordination with its wide-ranging stakeholder base.

<http://tcaabudhabi.ae/en>

#### **ABOUT THE CULTURAL DEPARTMENT OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY/INSTITUT FRANCAIS IN THE UAE**

The Institut français in the United Arab Emirates is the cultural department of the French Embassy. It is responsible for promoting French thought, creation and the French language, as well as fostering bilateral exchanges and cultural, artistic, educational, academic and scientific partnerships between France and the UAE.

It is involved in a vast range of activities, including: organization of and participation in exhibitions, lectures, shows and fairs, film festivals, concerts, dance and theater shows; training of teachers of French as a foreign language; promotion of French higher education; support for French cultural industries and institutions in their development projects in the UAE.

As a government agency, the Institut français in the UAE is a key partner of Emirati cultural and educational institutions. It works in partnership and in tandem with other influential French bodies in the UAE, notably the Alliance françaises of Abu Dhabi and Dubai and French schools.

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#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL EQUESTRIAN ACADEMY OF VERSAILLES**

Created in 2003 by Bartabas within the Royal Stables of Versailles' Palace, the National Equestrian Academy of Versailles is a unique « corps de ballet » in the world. Based on the transmission as much as the arts of performance the daily teachings associate "Haute Ecole dressage" with varied artist disciplines such as fencing, dancing, singing or Kyudo, a traditional Japanese archery. Thus, the equerries develop a real artistic sensitivity, thanks to a very regular repertory, fully dedicated to the audience. It has been almost fifteen years now that the National Equestrian Academy of Versailles has become a reference which performs in Versailles, in the arena built for the occasion, but also in other French and international stages. Equerries and horses from this exceptional company directed by Bartabas make a commitment to preserve the French riding of lightness while reinventing the art of the cavalier choreographies.

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