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'From Cinderella to Sindbad: German and Arab Timeless Tales' Exhibition to Showcase Cross-cultural Influences and Children's Stories

*New initiative launched by Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre in collaboration with the Embassy of the
Federal Republic of Germany Abu Dhabi*

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: An exhibition dedicated to the rich cultural heritage of narrative traditions from ancient Egypt, the Arab world and Germany will be held as part of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair programme for 2021, where Germany will be the Guest of Honour.

Titled '*From Cinderella to Sindbad: German and Arab Timeless Tales*', the exhibition will run from 4th April to 20th September 2021 at the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation and is a collaborative effort between the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre (ALC), the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany Abu Dhabi, the Goethe-Institute, and Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation. The showcase is the result of research collaboration between the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) and the Arab-German Young Academy for Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) and comes as both Germany and the UAE move to strengthen their cultural ties, and as ALC further solidifies its status as a custodian of cultural exchange and dialogue.

The scope of the exhibition, which will be presented in both English and Arabic, ranges from ancient Egyptian papyri to the tales of the Brothers Grimm, from the Arab poet al Mutanabbi to the German playwright and novelist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and from the *Arabian Nights* ('Alf Leila w Leila') to contemporary pop-up books and comics. Approximately 100 objects, including facsimiles, archival material, books and games from the collections of the 'Staatliche Museen zu' Berlin and other lenders such as the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region and Kalima Translation Project, which will showcase German titles translated to Arabic during the exhibition, provide fascinating insights into 4,000 years of cultural

history. The exhibition will explore the aspects these stories and folktales have in common, addressing the shared themes of good and evil, heroism and satire.

Also examined will be literary traditions that continue to inspire international artists and authors, including the ancient Egyptian stories of Sinuhe and Westcar. The manner in which stories were adapted and interpreted reveals how ideas are passed on across time and space, which is also illustrated by the story of Sindbad. Similarities in narrative traditions are also shown by the exhibition, with varying versions of *Cinderella* found in Germany and on the Arabian Peninsula. A special section in the exhibition area is to be dedicated to children's books by Emirati authors based on Emirati folktales and stories that have been passed down through the generations.

“Cultural exchange is essential to progress, development, and open dialogue between peoples and nations,” said HE Dr Ali bin Tamim, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre. “Cross-cultural dialogue creates a platform for the sharing of stories, experiences, concerns, hopes and ambitions, resulting in powerful outcomes. In this exhibition, we celebrate the Federal Republic of Germany, a country with a long literary history which has made rich contributions to world and Arab culture. We eagerly look forward to further cultural cooperation with Germany on future projects.”

HE Peter Fischer, German Ambassador to the UAE, said that the idea for the exhibition arose shortly after Germany was announced as the Guest of Honour for the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

“We are delighted to bring this exhibition from Berlin, Germany - the land of poets and thinkers - to our friends and partners in Abu Dhabi,” he said. “This exhibition emphasises the commitment of both countries to further deepen bilateral ties in the fields of culture, education and research. This is a fun and interactive cultural exchange and visitors will be surprised by some of the connections between our cultures. I thank our partners and all those involved for their endeavours in bringing it to life.”

The curator of the exhibition, Prof. Dr. Verena Lepper from Berlin, said: “This exhibition is especially aimed at children, and to show that the roots of modern Emirati storytelling traditions are very old, going back to antiquity, and are part of an international network. Through the exhibition we can build cultural bridges between Germany and the Arab world.”

Fareed Majari, Director of the Goethe-Institut in Abu Dhabi, said: “Fairy tales like ‘Cinderella’ or the ‘Tales of 1,001 Nights’ entertain their readers with stories from far away cultural or geographical worlds that are both exotic and familiar. There is an innate common structure: the quest of the hero, the dangers they face and the battles they have to win, and, of course, the demise of the bad and the

triumph of the good. This is why the books in this exhibition lend themselves to a discourse about what is culturally different and what is similar, including our common aspirations.”

From Cinderella to Sindbad will feature a number of programmes aimed at children and adults alike, including ‘Fairytale and Folktales We Share’, which includes a weekly feature of an Arab story, or a German Brothers Grimm tale, as well as a marionette show. The event programming will also include children’s writing workshops, introduced to cultivate writing and storytelling skills, as well as handcrafting of marionette dolls and a theatre.

The exhibition’s agenda will include a monthly interactive workshop titled ‘Hakawati’ (The Storyteller), during which children will listen to folktales about Sindbad, Cinderella, Sinuhe and other characters. Children can also solve puzzles based on the challenges faced by the stories’ protagonists. The exhibition also involves the ‘Common Stories’ campaign, which will be running for the entirety of April and May, with the purpose of promoting reading among children and encouraging families to read and discuss books.

Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation is open Saturday-Thursday from 10am to 7pm, and Fridays from 2pm. Strict safety measures and precautions have been implemented following government guidelines for visitors' health and wellbeing. The exhibition will also be made available online through a virtual gallery at culturalfoundation.ae/en/exhibitions/from-cinderella-to-sindbad.

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About the Arabic Language Centre

The Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre works to support Arabic language development and modernisation through comprehensive strategies and frameworks, enrich the scientific, educational, cultural and creative contributions of the Arabic language, promote Arabic language proficiency and cultural understanding, and support Arab talents in the fields of writing, translation, publishing, scientific research, arts, and content creation.

The Centre works to realise its foundational vision through dedicated programmes, human expertise, and meaningful partnerships with the world’s most prestigious technical, cultural and academic institutions.

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About the Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection

The Papyrus Collection of the Ägyptisches Museum (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection), Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, is one of the most important of its kind worldwide with around 60,000 written documents (papyri,



ostraka) from all periods of ancient Egyptian history. It is presented in the Neues Museum on the Berlin Museum Island with highlights such as Papyrus Westcar or the story of Sinuhe forming an exceptional 'library of the ancient world'.

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About the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) is based at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) in Germany and at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) in Egypt. It was established in 2013 and is the first bilateral young academy worldwide. AGYA promotes research cooperation among outstanding early-career researchers from all disciplines who are affiliated with a research institution in Germany or any Arab country. The academy supports the innovative projects of its members in various fields of research as well as in science policy and education. Currently, 60 members – Arab and German scholars in equal number – realize joint projects and initiatives. AGYA is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and various Arab cooperation partners.

AGYA is currently looking for new members. Application deadline is 11 April 2021. For more information, please visit: www.agya.info

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About the Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany with a global reach. With 157 institutes in 98 countries, it promotes knowledge of German abroad, encourages international cultural exchange and conveys an image of contemporary Germany. The Goethe-Institut's ties with partner institutions in many other places give it about 1,000 points of contact around the world.

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