



Caravan

*building bridges of understanding and respect between
East and West*

2010-Caravan Festival of the Arts "Harmony: East and West"

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The vision of the second Caravan Arts Festival at St. John's Church had been significantly expanded this year to include literature, film and music. On hand on the first evening were Sheikh Ali Gouma, grand mufti of Egypt and the Rt. Rev Richard Chartres, bishop of London, worthy figures to open this important inter-faith event. A capacity crowd was in attendance for their opening remarks. St. John's had been converted into a gallery for the week of

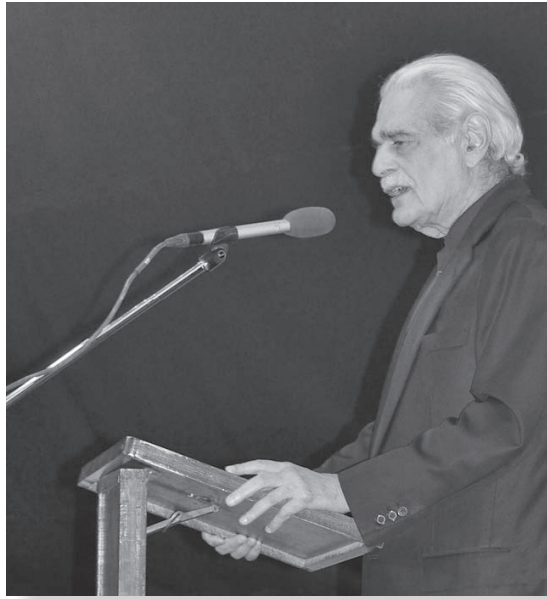
the festival and as soon as the opening speeches were over, those assembled under the tent queued impatiently to enter the church and view the art on show. This year, 46 contributing artists, from East and West, both Muslim and Christian, came together with a determination to portray interfaith unity via the arts.

There was a significant increase over last year in the quality of the works on view and it became obvious that those attendees with a keen eye for beauty and, perhaps, investment, were quick to take out their cheque books. It wasn't long before the little red dots, indicating that a work had been sold, began to appear with some frequency. The free refreshments that had kindly been made available through the generosity of church members added a nice touch to the evening.

The works of art were to remain on view for 6 days of the following week but on Saturday evening, a talk by Anglo-Afghan writer, Tahir Shah was scheduled. Tahir has chosen to base himself in Morocco where he owns a house that he refurbished slap bang in the middle of a shanty town. He was able to keep his audience both intrigued and amused with stories and incidents from a life begun in Afghanistan, ending up finally in Morocco but only after a long spell spent in London from where he and his family finally fled to escape their somewhat claustrophobic apartment and life style. His books were on sale afterwards and found lots of eager buyers.



The next evening event took place two days later when there was a showing of an Egyptian film, "Hassan and Morqos" starring Omar Sharif. Once again, a capacity crowd was in attendance, possibly drawn by the knowledge of a personal appearance by Omar. Before the showing, he beguiled his audience, particularly the ladies, with stories of his life and family and a brief explanation about his role in the film. The movie was locked solidly within the Egyptian, slapstick humour genre which Egyptians so love. It's nice to realize that Egyptian film making is once again on track to claw back the pre-eminent position in the Arab film making world that



begin so that they would not miss out on getting a chance to hear one of the world's pre-eminent musicians. Fortunately, the organizing team had had the foresight to rig up a video link to seats outside the church so latecomers could at least hear the music and get a feel for what was happening inside. If you have never had the opportunity to listen to this man's music, you have missed out on one of the finest musical treats that one can enjoy

here in Egypt. There are simply not enough adjectives around to describe the power, majesty and skill of this man's musicianship. Go and see him whenever you get the opportunity. Memories of his magic will be one of the best things that will remain in my mind from this festival.

In summation, this was a highly successful event. Congratulations to the Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler who master-minded this festival, all the artists who participated and to Paul's volunteer, behind-the-scenes team without whose contributions it would not have happened.



it held in pre-Nasser days. The audience, which seemed to be primarily Western, seemed to thoroughly enjoy the somewhat surreal plot. Rarely have I been present in a movie theater wherein an audience gave vent to ripples of laughter throughout a film. It was a remarkably successful evening from every point of view.

The final happening to close out the festival was an oud recital by Iraqi oud master, Naseer Shamma. Such is Naseer's reputation and standing that people began turning up an hour and a half before the performance was due to

