

Years of Culture Initiative to Debut Play by Indonesia's Renowned Director Rama Soeprapto

Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Research, and Technology to Bring Specially Commissioned Performance to the Katara Opera House in May

3 May 2023 – Doha, Qatar – The Years of Culture Initiative and the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Research, and Technology today announced the upcoming debut of a new theatrical production, “Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love.” The play will be performed at the Katara Opera House during a special two-day event as part of the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture on May 23 and 24. Tickets will be available on the Years of Culture and Qatar Creates websites in a range of price options.

Created for Qatar-Indonesia 2023 by Rama Soeprapto and his production company, “Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love” follows the hero’s search for the meaning of life through various trials in the hopes of understanding the nature of human goodness. The stories of Panji and Sekartaji, some of the oldest and most treasured Indonesian epics, are considered part of the world’s intangible heritage by UNESCO and was included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Program in 2017. Acclaimed Indonesian performers Achmad Dipoyono and Kadek Dewi Aryani star as main characters Panji and Sekartaji respectively.

His Excellency Indonesian Ambassador to Qatar Ridwan Hassan said, “Qatar and Indonesia share a lot when it comes to cultural heritage and its influence on our societies today, not least of which is the pride we have in our ancestors’ wisdom and teachings. “Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love” goes in search of life’s meaning to find it in service to others, a beautiful thread that weaves us all together in today’s interconnected global community. I am proud to share this specially commissioned performance with the people of Qatar as part of the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture.”

Aisha Ghanem Al Attiya, Director of Cultural Diplomacy for Qatar Museums, said, “Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love” is one of this Year of Culture’s principal events. We are grateful to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Research, and Technology and the cast and crew for the passion that went into creating this masterpiece.”

The “Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love” narrative is inspired by a Javanese transcript about the meaning and purpose of life, the Wedhatama Script (Serat Wedhatama). Created by the fourth ruler of the Mangkunegaran Palace, Mangkunegara IV (1809), the Wedhatama Script combines teachings from scholars and poets about the nature of human goodness, ethics and morality. The story, told through five acts, tells of the hero Panji’s journey in search of the taste of love and perfection, which he ultimately finds in the service of his land and people.

The play's musical concept seeks to transport the audience to the Majapahit era (13th–16th centuries AD), the height of artistic expression in ancient Indonesia, by combining traditional Javanese and Balinese ensemble music. Majapahit society developed a high degree of sophistication in both commercial and artistic activities and its cities thrived with a cosmopolitan population among whom literature and art flourished. **Director Rama Soeprapto** said, "There have been so many versions of Panji and Sekartaji and their story over the centuries. I wanted to create a simpler version with "Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love" that audiences can understand and connect with. It has been a welcome challenge."

Producer Bayu Pontia gust explained that "Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love" is an original show, "What I am trying to visualize within the production is how to maintain its origins from the classic Javanese and Balinese tradition, while imbuing it with a modern touch through musical and visual elements. I want the audience to not only experience and understand the essence of the story, but also enjoy the choreography."

Costumes for "Hayati: Panji Searching for the Essence of Love" were designed by **Era Soekamto**, a household name in Indonesian fashion. Known for her batik designs, she often takes inspiration from the ancient Mataram and Majapahit kingdoms of Indonesia and has expressed her hope that the stories she is able to tell through her batik help others learn and understand their history, "To me, the philosophy is like the tree of life. When the roots are stronger, the nation will grow stronger too."

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About Years of Culture

Culture is one of the most effective tools to bring people closer together, encourage dialogue, and deepen understanding between nations.

Under the leadership of its Chairperson Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar Museums (QM) developed the annual "Years of Culture" initiative — an international cultural exchange that deepens understanding between nations and their people. Though formal programming lasts only one year, the ties of friendship that are strengthened and formed are long-lasting.

Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture has been developed in collaboration with leading organizations in Qatar, including Doha Film Institute, Education Above All, Katara Cultural Village, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar Charity, Qatar Cycling Federation, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Museums, Qatar National Library, Qatar Tourism, with assistance from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Qatar and the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Indonesia.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, and Qatar-USA 2021. In celebration of its 10th anniversary, the 2022 Year of Culture celebrated the entire Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) region as Qatar welcomed the world for the Arab region's first FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.

Past sponsors include Qatar Airways, Vodafone, Qatar Gas, Shell, Ooredoo, Shangri-La Hotel and Resorts, Lulu Group International, Qatar Financial Centre, Qatar Petroleum, and ExxonMobil.

About Qatar Museums

Qatar Museums (QM), the nation's preeminent institution for art and culture, provides authentic and inspiring cultural experiences through a growing network of museums, heritage sites, festivals, public art installations, and programs. QM preserves, restores, and expands the nation's cultural offerings and historical sites, sharing art and culture from Qatar, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region with the world and enriching the lives of citizens, residents, and visitors.

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and led by its Chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, QM has made Qatar a vibrant centre for the arts, culture, and education in the Middle East and beyond. QM is integral to the goal of developing an innovative, diverse, and progressive nation, bringing people together to ignite new thinking, spark critical cultural conversations, educate and encourage environmental stewardship and sustainable practices, and amplify the voices of Qatar's people. Since its founding in 2005, QM has overseen the Museum of Islamic Art and MIA Park, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Qatar, QM Gallery Al Riwaq, QM Gallery Katara, and 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum. Museums under development include Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar; Qatar Auto Museum; Art Mill Museum, and the Lusail Museum.

Through its newly created Creative Hub, QM also initiates and supports projects—such as the Fire Station Artist in Residence, the Tasweer Qatar Photo Festival and the creative hub for innovation, fashion and design M7— that nurture artistic talent and create opportunities to build a strong and sustainable cultural infrastructure.

Animating everything that Qatar Museums does is an authentic connection to Qatar and its heritage, a steadfast commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and a belief in creating value through invention.

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Press Contacts

MENASA Region & Qatar

Anna Elshahawi, akotova@qm.org.qa

International

Julia Esposito, julia.esposito@finnpartners.com