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FEATURE

The Jamileh Kharrazi Charitable Foundation

Nobody has ever measured, even the poets, how much a heart can hold.

Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (1955)

We all wander through life meeting and greeting. However, very occasionally, one is privileged to sit opposite someone truly extraordinary... and this was the situation in which I found myself when I was asked to write this article on Jamileh Kharrazi and her recently formed *Jamileh Kharrazi Charitable Foundation*.

What motivated you to found the J.K. Charitable Foundation?

Jamileh is a multi-talented woman who was born in Iran and educated in Europe and the United States. She started to dance and sing at the age of five and today, having trained in business and architecture, is a highly respected and successful international commercial and residential property developer. She has always maintained that self-belief will allow you to achieve whatever task you set for yourself. However whilst Jamileh will not deny that she has 'achieved' - she does not credit herself for ever having 'excelled'. Her key motive in establishing the Foundation, therefore, is to give talented and artistic individuals - who have the burning ambition to invest the many years required to achieve excellence - the security of financial support.

Do you support particular areas of the arts?

"Not really." If Jamileh believes in a person's ability, she will consider their request. She will support musicians, publishers, painters, sculptors, filmmakers... in fact all art forms. She recently supported a hugely successful concert at the Commonwealth Institute for a young talented guitarist, Sirus Malakooty, and has also pledged support for a young new Lebanese musician, personally recommended by the President of the Beirut Higher Conservatory of Music, to play at the Weimar Festival of Music.

Will the J.K. Charitable Foundation be international?

Much of the initial support has been based in the Middle East, not least through support for the development of The Symphony Orchestra of Beirut. Much of the Middle East is viewed as a region of political and religious extremism. Jamileh would like to re-introduce, into the global arena, the art and sounds of this same region, which over the past 2000



ABOVE: Jamileh Kharrazi, with Michael Jackson's elder brother Jackie, at the cocktail party she hosted at the Inter-Continental Hotel London. At the party, Jamileh announced that the original Jackson Five were going to make a new record to raise funds for starving children around the world.

years has made it one of the artistic centres of the world. Jamileh, however, is also looking to develop a centre in London which will assist young people in the UK and Europe. In the fullness of time, she hopes that the Foundation will cross borders and unite people of all races, ages and genders through the common bond of music. "Music is the perfect form of communication".

What are the main aims of the Foundation?

The essence of the Foundation will be to foster international musical and artistic talents. This will be achieved through creating specific events which will not only act as a platform through which to introduce the performers to the public but will also give performers valuable performance experience. The fund-raising projects of the Foundation will assist in the development of an educational programme to support students in the arts - including the recruitment of teachers to train talented young people in their country of origin. The Foundation will aim to nurture closer relations between the corporate sector and the sponsorship of students. Further down the line - in association with the major established European music centres - the Foundation

would like to stage an Awards Scheme which will recognise the work of new talented youngsters. It is also Jamileh's hope to stage a series of social functions based around the arts which will raise funds for children in need of such basic requirements as food, medicine and education.

What is the next step?

Jamileh needs to find a building in which to develop her centre. The Foundation is now at the stage where she needs administrative support and a team of volunteers who can ensure that the groundwork of the Foundation is correctly co-ordinated. The development of the centre will be supported directly by Jamileh who to date has not received any form of government funding for her projects - nor indeed accepted any donations. The Foundation has already received many pledges of support from leading figures from both sides of the Atlantic. The President of Lebanon, himself, has recently agreed to show his commitment by becoming a patron of the Foundation.

How do you intend to raise the profile of the Foundation?

The Foundation is in its early stages and Jamileh is aware that it needs to establish firmer roots before developing its image. In many respects, Jamileh is reluctant to see the Foundation's name in "neon lights". To date she has relied on personal support from friends and business colleagues who hold her commercial and charitable work in high esteem. Therefore, Jamileh believes that come the day when she needs support for events and projects, she will find much of it simply by picking up the phone.

What are the eligibility criteria for support from the Foundation?

Jamileh smiles and simply says "talent". There was a day when all Jamileh needed was a call and a request. Today, however, she has found it both necessary and wise to look deeper into the background and needs of those who approach her for support. This is as much to ensure that there is no misappropriation of funds by individuals as to ensure that the Foundation itself has records for its accounting procedures.

BY DAVID SIMPSON

Do you have a philosophy on life?

For the past twenty years Jamileh has given time and effort to a wide range of causes. She has supported orphanage projects in Iran and lived through the heartache of seeing them closed during the new revolution, and then re-opened more recently through her financial backing and the selfless work of friends. She is currently financing a project to introduce much needed meningitis serums for children to several regions of Africa through The Red Cross and regularly supports and finances a range of basic daily necessities for children and the elderly.

Jamileh has a love of life and a richness of heart, which makes it a daily necessity to help and support. In essence Jamileh is one of those rare individuals who manages to live her life, day by day, as a positive experience - the kind of philosophy by which we would all wish to abide, but in truth cannot maintain.

Jamileh Kharrazi's creative talents obviously still burn bright in her soul. Her intelligence has the ability to challenge one's own opinions. Her instincts have created her tremendous success in business. Her perspective on life has the ability to nurture a brighter future for many.

The *Jamileh Kharrazi Charitable Foundation* must surely succeed if it is borne out of the combination of all of these worthy features.

How do you find the time to undertake and fulfil so many projects?

"If the motivation is in your heart... you will find the time..."

David Simpson was employed for eight years in both the medical and voluntary sectors, the last four years of which were spent as Director of Children With Aids Charity. Today David runs his own corporate, charity and private event planning and management company - Indigo Events - based in London's West End.

Raising Standards

BY RUSSELL L. C. MORGAN

As the World prepares to enter a new Millennium, we will find ourselves taking time for self-evaluation and looking forward to the possibilities of a new Millennium. This is true on personal and as well as on business levels. I am also finding it to be the case within our special events industry en masse.

Within the industry, there is a lot of talk about our industry "coming of age", as events are becoming more sophisticated and working practices become standardised. Things have certainly come a long way since the Crown Group started preparing food for events over 25 years ago, and I will be the first to admit we have learnt along the way. I would also like to think that, with some of the industry's other leading companies, we have been at the fore-front of raising standards.

I am currently witnessing an unprecedented commitment by many of the major players from all events industry service disciplines to work together to strengthen the credibility of the events industry. Organisations like the International Special Events Society (ISES) and the Corporate Hospitality and Events Association (CHA) are two prime catalysts bringing everyone together and the dialogue between (normally very competitive) contemporaries is producing some very positive benefits. The reason extremely busy Managing Directors are investing time in this process is that we understand the importance of raising and maintaining standards across the whole industry.

Corporate clients have realised the huge benefits a well run event can bring to their company, whether it be networking with their client base or for internal motivation, communication and education. As

confidence in the quality of events has grown in recent years, clients have been more willing to entrust budgets to "event professionals" - and the true professionals are working together to ensure that those budgets are turned into some great events. But expectations are now high - and must be exceeded.

As our industry "comes of age" in the near future, it is also important that we, as suppliers, communicate with you - our clients. The final responsibility to raise standards will always lie with the clients, who must ensure that any suppliers used are reputable - not an easy task.

Membership of respected industry trade bodies is one indicator that a company is committed to high standards, but it is vital that you have in place your own checks and balances. For example, in our field of special event catering a thorough consultation should include planning of the menu and wines, often with a tasting and discussions at the venue. Having the event manager present at the meal is advisable to ensure that the serving staff and timings are properly co-ordinated. References should be taken - and checked.

Most of all, we value our clients' input. At Crown Society we appreciate all post event comments from clients, whether positive or negative, so that we can follow our policy of consistently raising standards.

Russell Morgan, Chairman of Crown Society, Special Event Caterers was recently awarded Corporate Hospitality Caterer of the Year.
38 Portland Place, London W1N 3JQ.
Tel: 0171 236 2149
Fax: 01708 742480
email: linda@crowngroup.co.uk