



## MEET SAVVY WOMAN JANET HASSOUNEH, FOUNDER OF NSO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Abu Dhabi Woman • September 16, 2013

After living, working and raising a family in Dubai since 1984, my husband and I decided to move closer to his work in Abu Dhabi in 2011. This decision was based on the fact that he had been commuting faithfully from Dubai every day since 1991 and it was time to 'get him off the road'. Our two children, who had recently graduated from Universities in Washington, were returning to work here in Abu Dhabi and Dubai so it was indeed a good opportunity for new beginnings for everyone in our family.

My first introduction to the music world in Abu Dhabi was through my 'Bravo Productions!' (Dubai) work organizing UAE tours for various guest performers and groups. I presented these in the former Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation starting in 2002 with a production of Mozart's comedy opera 'Cosi fan Tutte' from the USA, in 2005 a 'Music Beyond Boundaries' vocal concert with a NY opera singer and pianist, and later that year the first 'Mozart in Arabic' concert production from Cairo. Another 'Mozart in Arabic' production in 2007 was performed with vocal artists from Beirut and orchestra from Armenia.

When I arrived in 2011 in Abu Dhabi, I saw a continued healthy and vibrant community performing arts scene, highly professional guest visual and performing arts events organized by ADMAF as well the world's A-List orchestras and concert performers with the 'Abu Dhabi Classics'. I was pleased to see an ever growing appetite for these kinds of classical events here in Abu Dhabi by Emirati and expats alike.

The NSO orchestra started as an idea in 2011 where I saw the need for a resident orchestra of excellence, comprised of the outstanding professional musicians residing in the UAE who could perform concerts, provide educational programmers for Emirati and expat young people, and all the while celebrate and nurture Emirati performing and visual arts talent by showcasing them in our concerts which we have done in our Inaugural season.

To be honest, as a woman, I don't believe I had any more difficulty than a man in starting a business. On the contrary, because I am a woman in this part of the world, I was always met with the most extreme kindness and courtesy. The most difficult aspect for me personally however was learning what system was available here to properly organize the legal framework of the orchestra. We took a hiatus from performing since January to sort this very thing out. With the help of our friends at the law firm Baker Botts, who have graciously contributed their time and effort in being our legal advisor, we discovered that the FZ-LLC at twofour54 was the easiest and most economical way for us to obtain the necessary legal framework that allows us to reach out to our UAE community and beyond at this time.

The most rewarding experience this year, that's a tough question ... so many incredible experiences.

However, if I had to say, it would have to be finally receiving NSO Symphony Orchestra's FZ-LLC license. Second most rewarding experience for me will be when I get to sit and watch the orchestra perform in its first concert, 'A Night at the Movies ... The Sequel', of their 2013-14 seasons in October.

The coolest part about living in Abu Dhabi, other than attending a NSO Symphony Orchestra concert? (ha,ha), I don't have to wash windows!

Two fold question of what advice would I give has a twofold answer...

### **1 • Setting up a business...**

To paraphrase Forbes in the five steps to starting a business: 1) own your name, 2) get in with a lawyer and accountant to guide you, 3)when doing a business plan factor in 'you' and what you need to live, 4) are you ready to give up your personal life for the next 3 years, (takes 60-80 hrs a week the first two years), 5) Don't over/under spend (Don't skimp on things your company needs.)

### **2 • Becoming involved with 'Friends of the Orchestra' (FOO)**

The 'Friends of the Orchestra' programme was designed to encourage those individuals who really appreciate the musical arts to not only support the orchestra and it's educational programmes, but really feel like they are indeed 'Friends' by meeting like 'Friends' at the NSO concerts and functions, attend and meet orchestral musicians at one of their rehearsals, as well as meet the conductor at a special pre-concert reception.

It's easy to join and it's good to know that you're per annum 'friend-ship' will certainly make a difference in the life of your orchestra.

**Find out more about the NSO Symphony Orchestra at [www.uaenso.org](http://www.uaenso.org)**

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