

# Chill Out



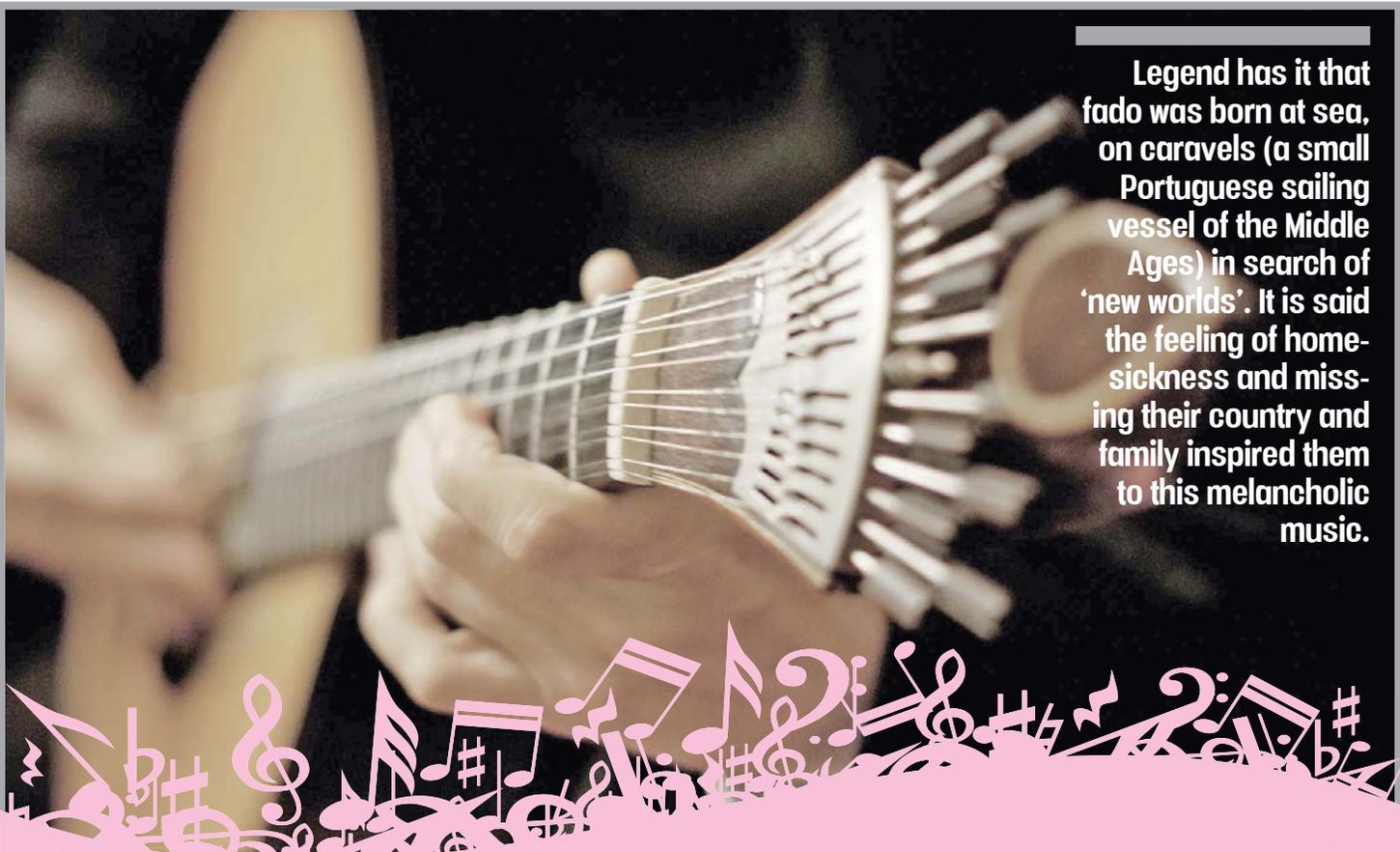
## TAKING FADO TO THE WORLD

COVER STORY  
PG 2&3

Fun in the winter sun **PG 9** ▶

Taimur was to be named Faiz **PG 13** ▶

Legend has it that fado was born at sea, on caravels (a small Portuguese sailing vessel of the Middle Ages) in search of 'new worlds'. It is said the feeling of homesickness and missing their country and family inspired them to this melancholic music.



# Music from Portugal, with love



Maria Ana Bobone (centre) flanked by the Portuguese Ambassador and his wife

## LEZIMA GOMES

DOHA

**F**ADO, a music genre, is native to Portugal. At its heart is a sentiment, lost love, longing for a departed one, everyday life and triumphs. They say fado is ingrained in the Portuguese soul, and Maria Ana Bobone through her singing portrays just that. Fado is a kind of music that demands some maturity, so one can relate to the poems and express them. Yet, Bobone's journey started at 16 when she got an invitation to sing at a fado concert, which she took as a challenge. "Since then, my life took a different course. I understood the beauty of it all and the uniqueness of this kind of music," she said.

Bobone will be performing with the

Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) at the QNCC on March 17 (Saturday). This will be her second performance with the QPO at QNCC, as well as her second performance in the country. "The last time was a great pleasure and I am looking forward very much to making the magic happen again this time," she said.

She grew up in a very musically inclined family. Both her parents are talented piano players, so it was but natural for her to take to it. The journey to actually becoming a professional fado proponent began when she was invited by veteran singer João Braga to participate in his concert. Reminiscing, she said, "He heard me sing and thought I had a good voice for fado. After that, I had the opportunity to record with two other young singers, and my first CD was released. Since then, my journey into learning and developing

artistically in fado is continuing.”

Bobone, who has to date recorded six CDs and participated in many concerts, said, “It is believed that it is impossible to learn fado, and that you are born knowing it. Nevertheless, I had many influences of amazing singers and musicians, some of which I knew personally, others only through recordings,” she said.

Speaking about traditional fado, Bobone explained, “Traditionally in the 20th Century, fado is accompanied by a string trio - Portuguese Guitar, Viola de fado and acoustic bass. Earlier, there was a tradition of fado songs being accompanied by the piano; with the singers playing the piano too. This tradition was practised by the elite, or the ones who could afford to have the piano, and so, the piano slowly gave way to the trio that we know today.”

She said that as an artist, she has attempted to bring back the lost piano tradition with her recent CD titled *Fado & Piano*. As well as the introduction of the piano, and the writing of new songs, “I searched for a kind of playing made simple in order to highlight the singing and especially the words. I think innovation while respecting tradition is what I am looking for,” she said.

“Any Portuguese person, who is away from home, is instantly transported there by the notes of a Portuguese Guitar. This is what makes it so special to us.”

While there are many fado singers that Bobone admires, but she said that her favourite is Portuguese fado diva Amália Rodrigues. “Amália Rodrigues was the first person to take fado abroad, opening up to the world with her magical presence and astonishing voice. She also contributed to the fado repertoire introducing erudite poetry in it in a harmonious manner.”

Elaborating on the history of fado, she explained that legend has it that fado was born at sea, on caravels (a small Portu-



Maria Ana Bobone

guese sailing vessel of the Middle Ages) in search of “new worlds” around the 16th Century, when the Portuguese set out to discover new lands. It is said the feeling of homesickness and missing their country and family inspired them to this melancholic music.

“One of our greatest poets Luis de Camões wrote an epic describing these journeys and the word ‘fado’, meaning fate, was used by him. In reality, we only have proof of the existence of a musical genre called fado in the middle 19th Century. There are also many Arab influences in our music and culture as many of our words begin with the prefix ‘Al’ and some melodies resemble Arabian music. I will sing one of these songs at the concert in Doha,” Bobone added.

Fado is sacred in Portugal and holds utmost importance in the heart of its people. “People respect fado as one of our dearest traditions. It is listened to in absolute silence, so people can appreciate the whole feeling of what is being sung.”

Talking about the challenges she faced through her career, she said, “I have had the opportunity to represent my culture and music around the world; I find this a challenge and a huge responsibility.”

Bobone, who is passionate about what she does, practises every day. And each time she performs in front of an audience, she feels blessed. “When I can share art with fellow musicians on stage and present it to an audience, it is a great experience.”

Her advice to budding singers: “Never give up on your dreams.”

