

Sunny



AL ORASIA STUD

by Kamila Kozłowska ■ photos by Sunny, Paola Drera, Henrike Hoermann

While staying in Bahrain, all Arabian horse aficionados should pay a visit to the amazing Al Orasia Stud. Located in Al Jasra, a charming coastal village situated on the western coast of the Kingdom, this adorable place is a perfect combination of traditional Arabic design with a subtle touch of modern style. Born in Saudi Arabia, Sheikha Muna Alrashed, the owner and founder of Al Orasia, seems to have Arabian horses in her blood. Her ancestors trace back to the esteemed Anaza Tribe who have bred and cherished Arabian horses for centuries. No wonder that within what seems like a blink of an eye, Al Orasia and its horses have become recognised in both Bahraini and European showgrounds.



Sheikha Mura

Sheikha Muna made every effort to create a magical place where, together with her charming family, she blesses her guests with unceasing kindness and hospitality. It was a great pleasure for me as a representative of Tutto Arabi Magazine to attend an evening presentation at Al Orasia, where I had a unique chance to admire the carefully designed facilities together with their gorgeous inhabitants. The evening concluded with an interesting conversation that I had with Sheikha Muna over dinner.





Kamila Kozłowska during the Al Orasia visit with the filly ORA Almozoon (Kanz Albidayer x Mezna Al Zobair by Equator)



Kamila: How has the story of Al Orasia begun?

M. Alrashed: In 2015, when I graduated from the university as an Executive MBA and started a regular job, I felt I needed something that would give me a bit of entertainment in my everyday routine. I have always had passion for horses, so I decided to buy one for riding and endurance. However, my experience in equine matters was fairly limited and I did not have a clue what to do with my horse and where to train him. Some of my friends recommended a training centre, owned by the man who shortly after became my husband. He was the one that suggested endurance might not be my thing and encouraged me to start my own breeding programme. At the beginning, I was not sure about it, but one day I woke up and saw the empty space in my family farm. On this day, I decided to build a small stud

where I could keep my horses. Although I originally come from Saudi Arabia, my home and my heart were already in Bahrain and I decided to build and register the stud in here. With the help of my husband, also a great horseman, my breeding programme commenced at the beginning of 2017. Initially, it consisted of just two mares. I must admit that the first generation of the horses I bred myself was not very good quality. At that time, my knowledge of breeding was very limited and my programme was based on nothing but luck. Yet one of my husband's friends, while visiting our farm, suggested that we should participate in a local show, where the quality of horses would be thoroughly evaluated. He also recommended a trainer that we employed to prepare our horses for the show. The training started around two months before the event,

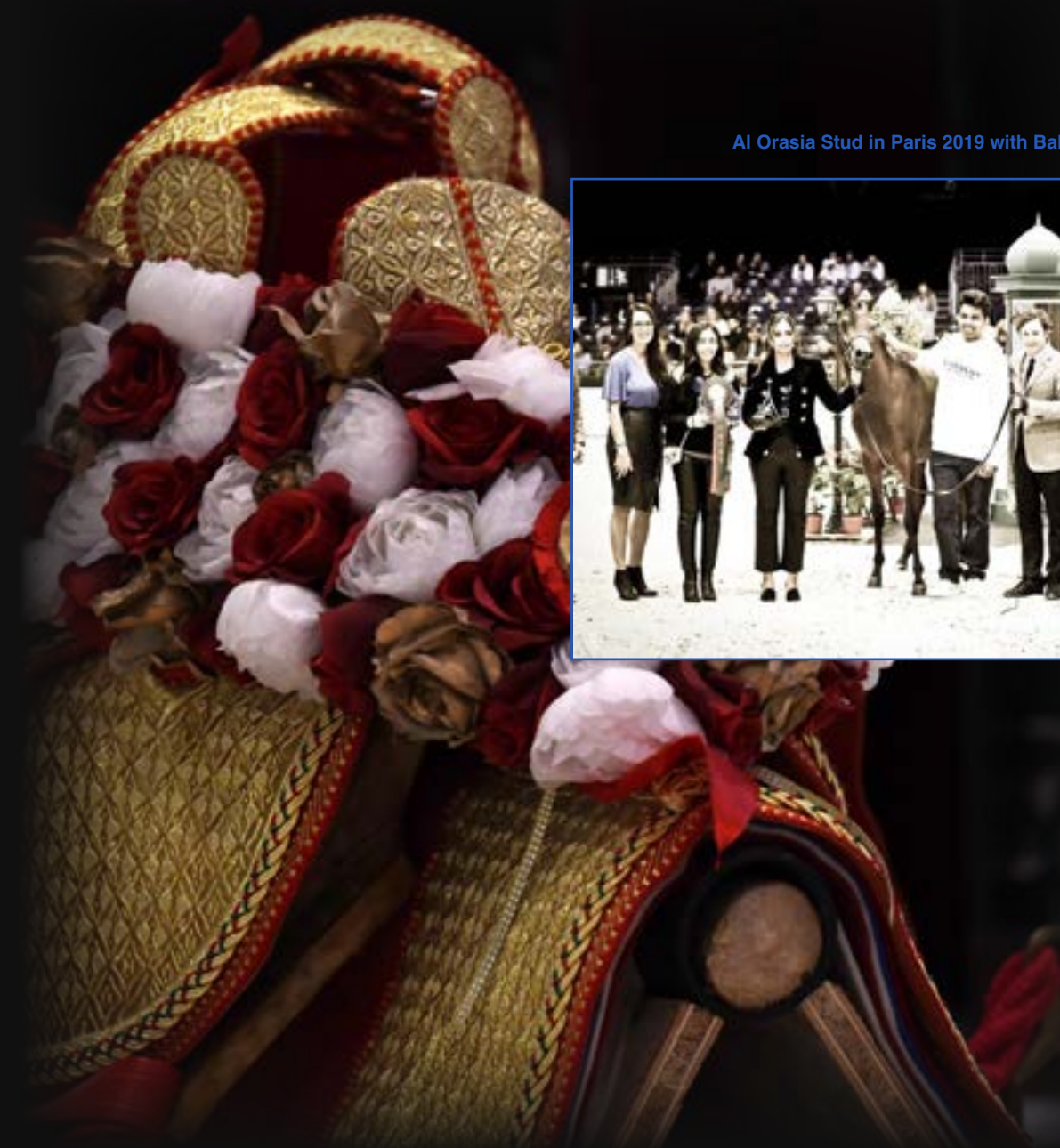
so the time for preparation was limited. Still, my horses were slightly better than the competition and one of my colts became Bronze Champion. Not long after, I celebrated a triple success when the three maternal half-brothers out of Bint Al Lail (El Gameer x Doudja Al Lail by Fahim Hisan) won all Gold Champion Male titles at the 4th Bahrain Produce Arabian Horse Show. This amazing achievement awakened my interest in shows, so I leased the gorgeous grey Bint Hazy Al Khalediah from Al Khashab Stud with the intention to show her in Europe. It resulted in another two medals: gold at the 2017 Chantilly World Cup and silver at the 2017 Menton Mediterranean and Arab Countries Show. Also in 2017, I bought a two-year-old bay filly bred by Knocke Arabians from Belgium. Magnum's Fortune KA (QR Marc x FS

Magnum's Madonna by Magnum Psyche) won three titles in Bahrain in less than two years and now, she is also an amazing broodmare. After all my achievements in the show ring, the aim to breed high-quality horses became more important to me than simply leasing or buying them from someone else. I will continue to develop and enhance my breeding programme until I achieve my goals and then, I will present the outcomes in the European showgrounds.

Kamila: Where does the name Al Orasia come from?

M. Alrashed: It is actually an abbreviation of my family name; each letter comes from either my first name or my family name. But what I also like about it is that it sounds like a combination of Europe and Asia.

Al Orasia Stud in Paris 2019 with Ballerina & Giacomo Capacci





Isra AH - 2018 Bronze World Champion for Al Orasia Stud



Bronze Champion Apollonia K & Giacomo Capacci Milan 2019



Menton 2019

Menton 2019 congratulating
the beautiful Noft

Kamila: Why Arabian horses? What is so special about them?

M. Alrashed: What makes Arabian horses special to me is their unique type. It does not mean that I do not take into consideration other qualities, like refined head, long neck, complete body and high tail carriage, but to me the type is a predominant feature. I need to highlight the fact that refined head does not necessarily equal an extreme face. And I love horses which are both typey and complete.

Kamila: If you were to describe an Arabian horse in one word only, what would that be and why?

M. Alrashed: Authentic, as Arabian horses were part of our ancestors' lives. The famous Anaza line which blessed the worlds' breeding with such legendary individuals as Anaza El Farid (Ruminaja Ali x Bint Deena by Ansata Ibn Halima) can be traced back to my ancestors, the Anaza Tribe. I feel honoured that my ancestors were the

breeders of such a pure and prepotent line.

Kamila: Can you please tell us something about your breeding vision and how it has changed or developed over the years?

M. Alrashed: First of all, I believe in quality, not quantity. My three years' experience in attending the shows and visiting important breeders all over the world makes me focus on a small number of high-quality individuals. I have noticed that many big farms tend to either sell their horses at auctions or give them away. Why would I waste my time and energy as well as the hard work of my team if, at the end of the day, it does not bring a desired effect. Additionally, having good broodmares as a foundation is essential in my opinion. I have bought a few fillies that I think will greatly benefit my breeding programme but if they do not produce good offspring, I will try something else. I also try to use new bloodlines to change the style of breeding and bring something new

to the arena. The trends change every two or three years and if you want to succeed, you need to keep up with the current fashion. Presently, I am heading towards the Straight Egyptian stallions with the aim to breed them to my mares of mixed origin.

Kamila: Which horses have had the greatest influence on your breeding programme?

M. Alrashed: All the stallions I have used in my breeding so far have had some positive influence on the next generations but it is the Straight Egyptian stallions in general as well as the WH Justice line that have vastly improved my breeding by adding a bit of refinement to my mares.

Kamila: Why did you decide to move most of your breeding horses to Europe?

M. Alrashed: There is more than one reason behind my decision. First of all, the number of shows held locally is very limited. Also, Bahrain is quite strict with its quarantine regulations, so it is very hard to move the horses around. It is much easier to bring them back here once a year for a show. Additionally, there are excellent breeding facilities and very experienced people spread across the Old Continent. And even the weather in Europe is better for the horses. Due to extremely high temperatures in Bahrain, they spend roughly 5-6 months of the year in the stables. I believe they are much happier in Europe, enjoying their lives in the pastures. I only keep a few horses here at Al Orasia so that I can enjoy them and present them at the local shows.

Kamila: When you choose a mare for your breeding programme, what are the most important characteristics that she should possess?

M. Alrashed: I need to see the mare first. If I find her beautiful and if she touches my heart, I am trying to find out more about her pedigree. When it comes to mares, an extreme face is not the feature I am looking for. I would rather choose one that is complete, meaning she has refined type, correct conformation, long neck and powerful movement. The face needs to be beautiful, but not necessarily extreme. The stallion can do the rest. For example, Mezna Al Zobair (Equator x Farasha Al Zobair by Juwel OS), whom you saw in the presentation here, is a beautiful mare although her face is far from being extremely dished. However, she has all the characteristics that I need for a great stallion to

complete her. In fact, this half-Polish mare made me more interested in the Polish bloodlines which, until not that long ago, were slightly ambiguous to me. But having this mare here and seeing what she can produce makes me want to visit Poland at the next available opportunity.

Kamila: Can you name three horses that you consider the pillars of the breed?

M. Alrashed: My short experience as a breeder allows me to mostly talk about the contemporary horses of great importance, which to me are: Al Lahab (Laheeb x The Vision HG Thee Desperado), WH Justice (Magnum Psyche x Vona Sher-Renea by El Sher-Mann) and Marwan Al Shaqab (Gazal Al Shaqab x Little Liza Fame by Fame VF) when it comes to their value as breeding stallions. As far as the most important show champions are concerned, I would like to mention Excalibur EA (Shanghai EA x Essence of Marwan EA by Marwan Al Shaqab) and Sundown KA (QR Marc x L Serenella by Turki Al Rayyan). Speaking of Excalibur, I have recently leased a yearling colt by him, the beautiful bay RDS Armani (out of Stellaris BPA), because I believe that he is an upcoming show champion and an exciting breeding prospect.

Kamila: Can you name any horses that, every time you see them, take your breath away?

M. Alrashed: I must admit that first horse that comes to my mind is RDS Exquisite (Excalibur EA x Angelica KS). I am the lucky owner of this amazing bay yearling, who became Gold Champion Yearling Filly at the 2020 Arabian Horse Weekend in the Netherlands.

Kamila: Can you name one horse that you consider the epitome of the Arabian breed?

M. Alrashed: In regards to the older generations, I would say it is Magnum Psyche (Padron's Psyche x A Fancy Miracle by Sasaki). Unfortunately, I only saw him in the photos but his influence on the Arabian horse breeding is still visible in horses that are several generations ahead of him; in their correct conformation and amazing attitude. When it comes to the new generation, I would point out to the very showy Excalibur EA who always brings great results in breeding.

Kamila: Are there any horses that you hold dear to your heart?

M. Alrashed: As far as my own horses are concerned, I would like to mention Magnum's Fortune KA, Apollonia

K (EKS Alihandro x Annika) and RDS Exquisite. No doubt Magnum's Fortune is beautiful but her amazing attitude makes you love her even more. When she snorts and moves with this upright tail carriage, you cannot help but fall in love with her. Similarly, the beautiful and charming Apollonia enchants everyone around by her kind and sweet disposition. With regard to Exquisite, there is not much I would like to say apart from that once I present her to the world, people will fall in love with her. Speaking of the horses that I bred myself, I cannot forget about the two exciting fillies: the grey ORA Haala (S.M.A. Magic One x Magnum's Fortune KA by QR Marc) and the bay ORA Aljazla (Nadeer Al Rashediah x Saffire by Shanghai EA).

Kamila: Who is your favourite mare and stallion at the moment?

M. Alrashed: *Out of all the amazing Arabian horses in the world, I am unable to choose one favourite mare. Both Mozn Albidayer (S.M.A. Magic One x Mattaharii by Magnum Chall HVP) and Noft Alnayfat (Ajman Moniscione x Eagleridge Passionata by Sanadik El Shaklan) are special to me. In my opinion, they are the most beautiful mares in the world. I admire Mozn for her athletic body, sloping shoulder and gentle demeanour and I adore Noft for her exquisite type, exotic head and huge intelligent eyes. It is slightly easier for me to choose my favourite stallion, which would be the aforementioned Excalibur EA.*

Kamila: What could you generally say about breeding in Bahrain? How has it changed over the years?

M. Alrashed: *In these last four years that I have been actively involved in the Arabian horse industry, the breeding in Bahrain developed quite considerably. It must be said that Bahraini breeders work very hard on improving the quality of their horses and very often they succeed.*

Kamila: In your opinion, what direction is the whole Arabian industry going at the moment?

M. Alrashed: *I must admit that it is a very difficult question! In my opinion, the industry is going in several different directions. Firstly, there are people who are mostly focused on money and business rather than on the wellbeing of horses. Instead of taking care of these beautiful creatures, they become more materialistic. When they breed a great individual, they build a strong*

marketing campaign for it and sell it for an astronomical price. The second group enjoy their breeding and do their best to breed high-quality horses but, at the same time, they let other people benefit from it. If they have a very good stallion, they sell its semen. If they own great mares, they sell their embryos so that other people can improve their breeding programmes. The last sector is what I would describe as monopoly. If they have an amazing stallion, they will not let other people use it. They will just breed their own mares, enter shows and win. Do not get me wrong, it is fine to enjoy what you and your team work hard for and to make money. The problem starts when business is the only thing that people are interested in and the prices become exaggerated. When I want to buy a horse, I always follow the advice of Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohamed Al Thani, the owner of Al Zobair Stud, not to buy an expensive horse but to buy a horse that I think is good as not all highly priced horses win. Most of the time, I deal with people from the second sector of the industry, who dearly love their horses and sell them at reasonable prices. To me, a reasonable price is the one that matches the quality of a horse and uniqueness of its pedigree.

Kamila: Do you think any changes need to be introduced to put the industry on the right path?

M. Alrashed: *I hope the industry focuses more on the horse and its wellbeing rather than on money and business. At the end of the day, we are talking about a living creature that deserves to be respected.*

Kamila: What do you consider your most spectacular success over these past few years?

M. Alrashed: *I feel proud and happy when my horses win at the shows but I equally enjoy breeding and taking care of them. From my first steps at the European showgrounds in the summer of 2017, I achieved great success by winning the first Bahraini medal at the 2018 World Championships in Paris with my beautiful grey filly Israa AH (Wadee Al Shaqab x Zhared Dreamz JTA by QR Marc). But I also love when people come to my farm and compliment my horses, as it gives me a sense of pride and fulfilment.*

Kamila: Where do you see Al Orasia in 5 years from now?

M. Alrashed: *I dream about filling the empty boxes of my barn with high-quality horses that I would also like to introduce to the wider Arabian horse community.*



The short story of Al Orasia suggests that, with deep love and passion for Arabian horses, one does not need countless years of experience to become a successful breeder. Both Sheikha's ancestral heritage and her appreciation for the beauty and sweet disposition of these amazing animals have helped her in making well thought-out decisions with regard to Al Orasia's breeding programme. With a strong focus on quality rather than on quantity of her breeding stock, Sheikha's desire to be even more successful and recognised in Europe is not far from becoming reality. But most importantly, she deeply cares about her own animals and, at the same time, she is genuinely concerned about the future of the whole industry which, in her view, should concentrate on the wellbeing of horses more than on anything else. □

