

Spiritual capital

The city of Fez in particular speaks with the weight of history behind it.

This year's festival coincided with Fez marking its 1,200th anniversary.

The old town - where the main shows of the festival took place - is designated a world heritage site by Unesco.

Fez was for centuries the spiritual and cultural capital of Morocco and the Islamic empire that flourished in Andalusia, today's Spain, for centuries.

The city has the oldest university in the Arab and Muslim world, al-Qarawyeen. Luminaries of the golden age of Islamic civilisation, such as the Jewish philosopher Maimonides and Ibn Khaldoun, once lived and studied here.

Against the magnificent backdrop of one of its ancient gates, Bab al-Makina, artists from Africa, Asia and America performed.

The programme included for the first time joint performances of Muslim and Christian devotional music, thus underlying the fundamental message of the festival.

Sufi chants from Pakistan by Faiz

Ali Faiz and his ensemble - known as the Qawwali - shared the stage with one of America's best known Gospel music artists, Craig Adams of New Orleans.

It was a thrilling performance that brought together some of the most vibrant devotional music from both faiths.



Ghada Shbeir sang in the language of Jesus Christ (Pic: Georges Nader)