

Presentation of the Vagif Mustafazade documentary at the Nizami Cinema Centre, 25 October 2016

Speech by Gordon Birrell, BP's Regional President for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey

Excellencies, Minister Garayev,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this event on behalf of BP. We are here to present what we believe is a valuable contribution to the international recognition of Azerbaijan's amazing musical culture.

This film about Vagif Mustafazade is not the first cultural project that BP has proudly put its name on. We have always been proud to support where we could projects that promote Azerbaijan's wonderful cultural legacy.

As Azerbaijan's long-term oil and gas partner, BP has been closely involved with the country's rich cultural life since the early days of its presence here. We believe our cultural initiatives – the films, books, cultural researches, concerts, archaeological studies that we sponsor, along with other major social investment programmes we are undertaking in Azerbaijan, fully support the country's long-term plans for sustainable multicultural development.

They also support the country's efforts to ensure that the best of Azerbaijan's musical art and cultural traditions continue and they are bridged with the international cultural space.

And today's event is one of such occasions when we feel we are part of the country's cultural community.

Indeed, we in BP are proud to be associated with the name of the most renowned representative of Azerbaijan's jazz Vagif Mustafazade. He is also one of the world's most famous jazz pianists and composers.

BP is well aware that this extraordinarily great jazzman is highly admired throughout the world and his music is a legend in Baku.

I am not an expert in his area, but as an admirer of his talent I know that he was able to create a fantastic combination of the best trends of music of the East and the West. This combination has come out as a brilliant fusing of Azerbaijan's national mugham music and the Western jazz.

I would like to say a few words about mugham. When I first heard it I thought this must be the most powerful reflection of a national identity and spirit through music. I know that prior to Vagif Mustafazade synthesizing mugham and jazz, mugham had already been incorporated into opera in the works of your great composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli in the early 1910s and later it was introduced into Western symphonic music for the first time by another well-known composer Fikrat Amirov in the mid-1940s.

So it looks almost natural that a third great Azerbaijani musician should combine mugham with another Western musical trend – jazz.

We hope the film about this great musician will be received as a tribute to his fantastic performing art and will contribute to the great respect for and recognition of his talent world-wide.

We believe it will also contribute to the recognition of Azerbaijani jazz and overall to the country's international recognition as a cultural hub.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan, Minister Garayev personally, the Butafilm company, the Director of the film Mr Ilgar Najaf, all members of the crew who created this valuable documentary, and all those who contributed to this production for their collaboration with BP.

We hope the film itself and today's event will be received as a reflection of BP's ongoing overall commitment to the people of Azerbaijan.

Thank you!