



Written from the heart

After finding a publisher for her book, Lubna al Balushi spoke to TheWeek about how it all worked out

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For any writer, getting their first book or article published is a very exciting time and for Lubna al Balushi, who earlier this year successfully managed to get her debut book of poetry published, it was no different.

Lubna's journey to getting her book published began in 2008 when she started learning German at the Goethe Institute in Oman and won a scholarship to attend the Goethe Institute Freiburg in southwest Germany. She began writing poetry in German to help her improve her grasp of the language and decided that if she wrote 20 poems, she

would try to get them published.

Fifty-four poems later, Lubna travelled to the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2011 with the intention of finding a publisher for *Schönheit des Herzens (Beauty of the Heart)*. After returning to Oman, she was surprised at the reaction the book received and at the amount of feedback she had from people asking

where they can buy the book. "My time in Frankfurt was very tough and people were having trouble digesting that I had written the book in German as they kept thinking it was translated so that was complicated."

Luckily, this minor confusion did not put off everyone as Lubna received a number of proposals from prospective publishers. As she had planned to get the book published and ready for sale by the 2012 Frankfurt Book Fair, Lubna decided to accept an offer from German publisher Medu Verlag. The offer meant she had to make a contribution financially towards the publication costs so she began contacting local companies in Oman hoping for sponsorship. When she was unable to find this, Lubna decided to take the risk and put in her own money.

Lubna believes that more needs to be done to help support young people such as herself who are trying to branch out into more creative areas and added, "I wanted my book to be published while I am still young so I decided to part finance it myself and have undertaken a little financial adventure that enables me to do this. Now the book is available on the market and I'm looking forward to visiting Frankfurt this year and doing readings and signings of the book."

Lubna said that about 700 copies

of *Schönheit des Herzens* have been printed and are available from the German National Library as well as Amazon and other websites. Following feedback from people in Oman and those attending the book fair, Lubna realised that a number of people who don't speak German would still be interested in reading her poems if written in their language, so translating them into Arabic or English is something she hopes to do in the future.

After seeing how well received the proposed book cover was, which was designed by her sister Arwa, Lubna decided to use it for the published book. "My sister is very happy that I decided to keep the cover she designed. I liked it from the

start and when I was in Frankfurt, I found that others really liked it as it reminded them of their childhood because it was so dream-like."

When it comes to the future, Lubna hopes to hold a launch party when she receives her hard copies of the book and also deliver one copy to the German Embassy in Muscat for the Ambassador to see. "I am so much more confident now after getting the book published. Now I have the opportunity to improve my German and write some more poems. If I hadn't got this book published, I would not have been confident enough to continue writing."

If I hadn't got this book published, I wouldn't have been confident enough to continue writing poetry
- Lubna al Balushi

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