

RECOMMENDATIONS

CD Launching
Bengal Foundation will hold ceremonies for launching of eight more CDs at the Bengal Shilpalaya. The schedule is as follows:
February 23 at 6:30 pm
Gonosangeet album Himalaya Thekey Sundarban.
Rabindrasangeet album Eshchhi Tomar E Darey by Iqbal Ahmed
February 24 at 6:30 pm
Rabindrasangeet album Aamarey Jodi Jagaley Aaji by Mita Haque
February 25 at 6:30 pm
Rabindrasangeet album Aamar E Path by Ifat Ara Dewan
Film
The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Dhaka has planned to hold shows of Korean films on regular monthly basis from March. This show will provide opportunity to people to learn about Korean culture and language. The film show will be held at the auditorium of the Korean Embassy on the 1st Sunday of each month at 5 p.m. The schedule up to May has been declared as follows:
March 2
Nowhere to Hide
April 6
The Foul King
May 4
My Heart
All films are subtitled in English.

Music

Wrapped in the world of "Rabindra Sangeet"

Aditi Mohsin speaks of her love for her genre

FAYZA HAQ

NOTHING else could be more befitting a celebration of fifty-one years of Amor Ekushey, in this month of February, than contributing to the enrichment of the national cultural heritage of our mother-tongue Bangla. To keep aloft the spirit of Ekushey February as well as to enrich and preserve the treasure of Bangla music, Bengal Foundation is releasing a few albums of Bangla songs in CDs and cassettes. The eight albums by seven artistes feature Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Sangeet, Ganosangeet and Classical music.



Aditi Mohsin

The launching ceremony of these albums started on February 19 with an album of Rabindra Sangeet by Aditi Mohsin. Theatre personality Aly Zaker ceremoniously unwrapped the CD cover of the album at the Benagi Shilpalaya at Dhanmondi. Aditi Mohsin, who performed solo at the Bengal Gallery recently, says, "I was inspired at home by my mother. I was admitted to the Bulbul Academy when I was in class six. After finishing there I studied for some time with Saadi Mohammed. I sing 'Rabindra-sangeet' mainly as I studied in that genre at Santiniketan from 1993 with an Indian government scholarship. I was there for six years, doing my honours and masters. I chose 'Rabindrasangeet' as I grew up listening to it at home. When I grew up I learnt to love it. Along with 'Rabindra Sangeet' now I sing other songs too which includes the songs of Atal Prasad, DL Roy, Rajini Kanta, Dilip Kumar Rai, Nidhu Babu." Aditi adds, "I like 'Nazruls-

ing back from Santiniketan she is now performing in many places, and teaches at "Chayanot." She has been to Kolkata on many occasions on invitations to sing. She has also sung at Shilguri, Jamshepur, and the Delhi Parliament. Kolkata to Aditi does not appear very different from being at home as the people there sing and listen to "Rabindra Sangeet" a lot. Singing in Dhaka too is a pleasure for her as it is her own home. Apart from music, Aditi does not take part in any other profession. She is delighted that there is at present a lot of appreciation in Bangladesh for instance there was a large crowd at Bengal Gallery when her CD and cassettes were being launched. This proves that the standard of the singing is good, Aditi says, and the form of singing is popular. When Aditi sings her classical songs she plays the "tanpura" along with it as she has been taught that way. She says that "Uchanga sangeet" is the basis of all other eastern songs. He or she who understands and masters the classical songs can sing all other songs, she points out. Aditi has not sung classical songs in public but whenever she finds the opportunity she still learns classical songs. At the Bengal Foundation she learnt under Mashkur Ali Khan and Shanti Sharma. She visited Kalpana Bhattacharjee who came from Kolkata but could not find the time to learn from her. She says her mastery over the "harmonium" is not that great but she plays it in public. Aditi says that she cannot practice as regularly as she would like to, and practices in the mornings before she goes to teach or in the evenings. She used to practice with

the "tabla" regularly when she was at Santiniketan. She believes that the training that she has had is the best at Santiniketan is the centre of "Rabindra Sangeet", where Rabindranath had been there himself for many years. The atmosphere there is conducive and there are legendary artistes are there like Konika Bandhapaddiya and Nilima Sen. She is lucky to be able to learn from them. There are a lot of trees and shrubs there and the atmosphere is indeed artistic and romantic. Aditi says that "Rabindra Sangeet" is different from other songs in the east as its lyrics has a lot of weight and those who sing and listen to it focus on that aspect of it. The tunes also vary. She also said that some of Tagore's songs had the influence of church music such as "Shokatore o kandichey sholekley" and "Kon shubok-honey." The songs have various section that deal with nature, religion and love but you can't distinguish them sharply and one can interpret them in many ways, she says.

In Bangladesh, among the singers of "Rabindra Sangeet" Aditi likes Mita Huq, Rizvana Chowdhury Bonna and Saadi Mohammed. Along with her Ifat Ara Diwan and Sharmeen Sati Islam are bringing out their own CDs through the Bengal Gallery. Aditi believes that the future of "Rabindrasangeet" is bright in Bangladesh going by the enthusiastic listeners and the eager exponents.

Music

MIRA

The Mystic Poetess

MIRA to Giridhara Gopala (God is mine...) is the opening line of an exquisitely beautiful song of devotion with a fine lilt, expressing the ecstatic love of a mad devotee for the Lord. It is also tinged with an evocative charm which can transport one back through centuries to the old medieval Rajasthan with its impregnable fortresses, hills undulating desert, temples and, last but not the least, the unforgettable saga of the immaculate life of its composer, Mira.

A medieval Rajasthani princess through her alliance with Prince Bhojraj, son of the great warrior Rana Sanga of the house of Sisodia, Mira was born around 1498 AD in a small village in the vicinity of the fortress-city of Merta, some fifty miles or so to the north-east of Ajmer. India was then going through a turbulent period. The Mughals had already invaded the land. With the great Babar at their head, they were on the point of besieging Rajasthan. Her father Ratna Singh, a Rajput noble of the House of Rathor, being always away on fighting missions and her mother having died a long time before, Mira was sent to live in the palace of her grandfather Rava Duda at Meta.

Here being in close contact with her uncle Viramdev and her cousin Jaymal who were both pious people, Mira grew up in an atmosphere than was conducive to the flowering of her inborn devotion to God. From her very childhood, Mira cultivated the attitude of a bride in her devotion to God. And the story runs that Mira grew so fond of a statuette of Lord Krishna that her mother teased her by saying that she (Mira) would be wedded to Krishna one day. Mira's marriage with Prince Bhojraj did not work out well. Mira was a woman of great beauty with several accomplishments to her credit: a sound education, proficiency in music, dance and art, among others. But she had constantly to bear the brunt of her in-laws. On her part, Mira bypassed all social norms and mixed with holy men. Singing and dancing in their company in religious fervour was anathema and regarded as outrageous and unbecoming of a lady of her status.

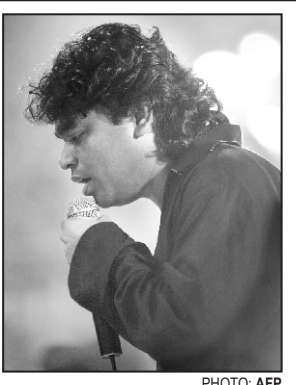
Leading a spiritual life amidst opposing forces is like walking on a razor's edge and calls for tremendous strength of character. And Mira was amply endowed with it. With a remarkable independence of spirit and a courage worthy of a royal princess of Rajputana, she braved the wrath and contempt of her kith and kin who in their plan of harassment went so far as to undertake different measures to murder her. Mira, who has surrendered herself to God, attributed her escape from attempts on her life to divine intervention. The verses below allude to these incidents:



'The king sent a snake in a basket And they gave it to the princess of Merata To put on her neck Mira, donned it smiling Thinking "This is my best necklace" The next verse from the same song runs thus: "The king prepared a cup of poison Which they gave to the princess to drink She drank it up Like the foot-wash of the Lord." Consequent to those incidents, Mira left the palace in the company of maid. She first went to live with her family at Merta, but family circumstances compelled her to go to Vrindavan. The picturesque woods and groves and pastures here, associated with the pastoral life of Lord Krishna, inspired her with some of her finest songs in which she identified herself with a gopi (belle). As mentioned earlier, Mira adopted, from the very beginning of her 'sadhana', the attitude of a bride in her devotion to the Lord in order to achieve mystical union with the Absolute. This implies that she had to be totally self-abnegated, renouncing name and fame and the world with all its myriad of attractions and invest her personal God with all the perfect attributes that the human mind could conceive of. The external attributes of the personal God of Mira, including the aesthetic element, are the sole attraction whose glory she would sing while expressing her ecstasy. At times, feeling estranged with the divine presence, Mira would burst out in anguish: 'I have sacrificed my life Unto the beautiful Shyam. For Thy sake, o' Shyam, I have abandoned worldly shame and family custom. Without Your sight I find no rest And streams of tears roll from my eyes.' Finally, the Lord, who is omniscient, showered His grace on her and the blissful Mira sang: 'The Beloved has come to my house. After many an age of expectation, The abandoned one has found her Lover'. From Vrindavan, where she spent some ten years, Mira proceeded south-west on a pilgrimage, visiting many holy places on the way till she reached Dwarka on the western coast of the Kathiawar peninsula in Gujarat. Here she lived till the end of her life which occurred round about 1546 AD. Dwarka is the place where Lord Krishna also ended His earthly mission. Mira's compositions, which were spontaneous outpourings of the heart, where handed down over long years uniquely by oral tradition. They were memorized, sung over and over again by generations of strolling minstrels and other itinerant devotees throughout the length and breadth of India.

By Nirmal Vithaldas. The author is a writer based in Mauritius.

Music



Indian composer and singer A.R. Rahman performs in a concert in Chennai February 21, 2003. The concert was to raise funds for young cancer patients. Some 35,000 fans attended the concert, the first by Rahman in his hometown.

TV GUIDE

Table with columns for time slots (12.10 pm, 12.15, 12.30, 12.35, 12.45, 01.00, 01.45, 02.00, 03.00, 04.00, 05.00, 06.00, 07.00, 07.05, 08.00, 10.00, 10.25, 10.30, 11.00, 11.30) and program titles like News Headlines, Shubhechha Nin, Aker Shangbadpatra, Cricket Quiz, etc.

Table with columns for time slots (7:00, 9:00, 11:00, 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:30, 9:30, 12:00, 2:00, 4:30) and program titles like The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle, They Crawl, Babe, Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II, etc.

Table with columns for time slots (10:30, 11:00, 11:30, 12:00) and program titles like Kittie Party, Mulk, Lipstick, Kammal, ZEE CINEMA, Dadamoni, Hindi Feature Film, etc.

Advertisement for Stuart Little featuring a picture of the mouse and text: 'PICK OF THE DAY Stuart Little On AXN at 9.30 p.m. The adventures of a heroic and debonair stalwart mouse named Stuart Little with human qualities, who faces some comic misadventures while searching for his lost bird friend and living with a human family as his child.'

Table with columns for time slots (1:00, 1:30, 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00, 4:30, 5:00, 5:30, 6:00, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, 11:30, 12:00) and program titles like Manush, Goyenda Paribar, Saregama, Mansur Milans, Ghora, Saptahik Bhagya, etc.

Table with columns for time slots (12:00, 12:30, 13:00, 13:30, 14:00, 14:30, 15:00, 15:30, 16:00, 16:30, 17:00, 17:30, 18:00, 18:30, 19:00, 19:30, 20:00, 20:30, 21:00, 21:30, 22:00, 22:30, 23:00) and program titles like Premiership Extra (R), Best Of Pga Golf 98, Taking Guard Day, etc.

Table with columns for time slots (10:30, 11:30, 13:30, 14:30, 15:00, 15:30, 16:30, 17:00, 17:30, 18:00, 18:30, 19:30, 20:30, 21:00, 21:30, 22:00, 23:00) and program titles like Mutant X, Artistic Licence, Dark Angel, Kids Say The Darndest Things, etc.

Table with columns for time slots (14:55, 15:00, 18:25, 18:30, 19:00, 19:30, 19:55, 20:00, 23:30) and program titles like Kuch Hit Kuch Superhit, Khamoshi, Kuch Hit Kuch Superhit, Shri Shri Superstar, etc.