



Aaj Robibar



Montri Mohadoyer Agomon Shubheccha Shagotom

Looking back at Humayun Ahmed's comedic brilliance on television

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Recently, BTV began re-running legendary litterateur and director Humayun Ahmed's *Kothao Keu Nei* and *Bohubrihi*, much to the delight of television buffs. Be it for his tragedies inspired by real life and Bangladeshi culture, his romantic novels or his memorable characters, Humayun Ahmed's stories have always made their way into the hearts of millions, both at home and abroad. However, the artiste truly excelled at the genre of comedy, especially when it came to writing and directing for television. Here are some of his notable television shows that will tickle your funny bones.

composing new songs in his honour. The scene of the minister's arrival adds to the humour, as his plan to land from a helicopter fails and instead, he arrives on a buffalo. The dosage of comedy is doubled with Zahid Hasan's performance as a lunatic, who ends up slapping one of the minister's officials.

With a bus full of individuals from different backgrounds, *Shomudro Bilash PVT LTD*, featuring an ensemble cast, showcases the hustle and bustle of a journey to St Martin's Island, filled with mishaps, beginning with the very first incident, when the vehicle's engine stops working, aggravating all the passengers. However, as soon as the owner of the transportation company,



Tara Teen Jon-Tea Master

by Zahid Hasan. Humayun Faridee features in a memorable role as their marriage officiator.

Bua Bilash portrays the everyday life of a housemaid in Dhaka. The show is entertaining and enlightening at the same time as it depicts the different social stigmas associated with the profession. Blended with comedic dialogues and actions in every scene, it features Monira Mithu in the lead role, with Riaz playing a key character.

Moreover, in *Juta Baba*, villagers are taken by surprise when they come across the titular character, portrayed by Challenger, who walks barefoot across the nation and eats shoes. Travelling with his two assistants, played by Maznun Mizan and Faruk Ahmed, Juta Baba finally reaches a village, where the local chair and fellow villagers refuse to believe his absurd story. In turn, Juta Baba is forced to run away and never come back. Along with humorous moments, the show has a moral message against superstitions that are imbedded in our societal beliefs.

The comedy, *Tara Teen Jon: Tea Master*, starring Dr Ejajul Islam, Faruk Ahmed and Shadhin Khasru, revolves around three unemployed bachelors who begin running a tea stall. Dressed in suits, they wake up every morning and reach their 'office', which is a park. They sell tea at the park with full dedication and manage to win over many customers with their impressive appearances and attitudes,

as other competitive tea sellers end up in losses. One day, the other tea sellers, irritated with the bachelors, hit one of their customers on the head with a bamboo. Consequently, all of the sellers end up in jail. Set in a similar universe, *Tara Teen Jon: Fuchka Bilash* also follows the story of three bachelors who plan to start a *fuchka* stall by the name of 'Fuchka Bilash'. Filled with excitement, the trio starts daydreaming about their business, especially the opening ceremony, where they expect to see actor Riaz cutting the ribbon and later, enjoying a fashion show at their stall. In the end, although the three men are left with nothing but fantasies, they do not fail to make the audience laugh.

On the other hand, *Ure Jai Bok Pokkhi* is about an aspiring singer with a big heart. The plot, layered with light-hearted moments and moral insights, takes a turn as a filmmaker from abroad, portrayed by Riaz, visits the singer's house. With the little income that he has, the singer leaves no stone unturned when it comes to looking after his guest. The cast of the series also includes Meher Afroz Shaon, Challenger and Dr Enamul Haque among others.

Lastly, *Aaj Robibar*, starring Aly Zaker, Asaduzzaman Noor, Zahid Hasan, Suborna Mustafa, and Meher Afroz Shaon among others, is a family series that is beloved across generations for its unique characters and unparalleled humour.



Neetu Tomake Bhalobashi

Featuring renowned actors like Zahid Hasan, Riaz, S I Tutul, Sohail Ahmed, Putul, Faruque Ahmed and Mahfuz Ahmed in pivotal roles, Humayun Ahmed's *Montri Mohadoyer Agomon Shuvehcha Shagotom*, is set in rural Bangladesh. The plot is based on the preparations of villagers after the government announces that each town will be visited by a minister. As soon as the villagers are informed about the minister's arrival, the chairperson of the local union council starts building a new gate to welcome their guest. On the other hand, the government school's headmaster begins preaching and teaching patriotic slogans to the students and the local musician starts

played by Asaduzzaman Noor and his assistant, played by Zahid Hasan, start talking, the passengers forget their anger and start enjoying the trip.

On the other hand, *Neetu Tomake Bhalobashi*, based on modern-day city life, is a romantic comedy that offers a delightful balance of humour and heart. It stars Mahfuz Ahmed, Shomi Kaiser and Zahid Hasan in the lead roles. In the story, Neetu's grandfather prepares to welcome Mahfuz Ahmed's character, a non-residential Bangladeshi who wants to ask for Neetu's hand in marriage. However, unable to express her wishes, Neetu, played by Shomi Kaiser, elopes to marry her love interest, played

ARIF ASGAR raises social awareness on COVID-19 creatively

SHARMIN JOYA

Talented magician and ventriloquist Arif Asgar was passionate about puppets and magic from a young age. His show, *The Asgar Show*, is an informative and entertaining children's programme, featuring animal puppets. Asgar, who is a teacher as well, wants his audience to see the world through the eyes of animals. He also appeared on a television commercial to raise awareness against sexual violence. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, he talks about making a video on the prevention of COVID-19 and more.

Recently, you produced a video on preventive measures against the coronavirus. Tell us a little about that.

I plan to produce videos and songs on coronavirus prevention in four parts. The first part, which was released recently, explains the importance of washing hands frequently for 20 seconds. The second one deals with the right techniques of washing hands and the third one is about maintaining social distance. The fourth one deals with the anxiety and panic surrounding the pandemic, and how Koko the monkey, my most popular puppet, gathers suggestions from doctors to stay safe and healthy. I have written the songs and script. The aim of making these videos is to entertain children with information through Bangla content.

How did your passion towards magic and ventriloquism grow? I was inspired by one of Satyajit Ray's short stories, *Bhuto (The Ventriloquist's Doll)*, where the main characters were magicians. I also had a friend whose father was a magician. I used to visit their house and learn different techniques from him. Both magic and ventriloquism are highly dependent on techniques. I was also quite skilled at mimicry from a young age.

How supportive is your family towards your passion?

My family is immensely supportive. In fact, my maternal aunt gifted me my first puppets, and a major part of the coronavirus prevention video was shot by my mother with her phone. They never discouraged me from doing what I like.

When did your first ever public puppet show take place?

I have been conducting professional magic shows for the last eighteen years. It wasn't challenging for me to incorporate ventriloquism into my own shows. For nearly ten years now, I have kept a segment for puppets, after my magic shows. Besides that, I have done different puppet shows on the streets and at schools.

What is your show, 'Bibahito Jiboner Golpo', on ABC Radio about? Well, it is a weekly show hosted by Koko and RJ Shetu. We started the show in January. It is a satirical programme, where Koko, the 'Jongli Ghotok' comes back from the jungle after 150 years, and shares his experience of being a matchmaker in the jungle. He also solves the audience's problems.

Could you tell us a little more about your puppet family?

I think I connect the most with Koko, because he is straightforward, charming and mischievous. Through him, I try to address matters that I would not normally speak about. Other than Koko, I have multiple monkey puppets, including Chandu and Jojo. Roky the parrot, Sultan the tiger and Anda the penguin are the other members. I also have a customised puppet of myself. However, I haven't brought him on the stage yet. I plan to introduce some other characters in the future.



Koko and Arif Asgar.

Looking into AKM Alamgir Huque's artistic muses

ZAHANGIR ALOM

AKM Alamgir Huque, a scholar and artist, was a familiar name in the Dhaka art scene of the late 80s. In that period, he excelled in painting and printmaking, establishing an individual hallmark through his semi-abstract and pure abstract works.

Born in 1953 in Dhaka, Alamgir Huque lives and works as a full-time studio artist both in Bangladesh and in Canada. He did his Bachelor's in Fine Arts from the Department of Drawing and Painting, Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka, in 1975. Under the India-Bangladesh Cultural Exchange Programme, he received an ICCR Scholarship and completed his Master's in Fine Arts from the Department of Printmaking, M.S. University of Baroda, Gujarat, India, in 1979.

Alamgir portrays nature and its mysteries through his personal observation and visions. His prints, mainly etchings and aquatints or waterless lithos, have recorded his ideas and memories.

His stay in Saskatchewan, Canada, sparked his inclination towards nature. In his view, natural elements such as air, water and soil, have no dissimilarity.

He does not portray the nature of any particular region. Rather, he tries to depict the essence of universal nature in his prints.

Many of his prints are composition and form based -- rectangular, vertical, horizontal, half-curved and fully curved. The artist brings different symbols into his prints, including scattered shapes. The space division in his compositions is dramatic, with big spaces kept flat, while smaller areas have several tiny patterns.

Alamgir left the country for Canada in 1990. Prior to his departure, the artist's themes ranged from nature to the socio-economic and political structures of Bangladesh.

So far, he has won many prestigious awards, including Saskatchewan Arts Board Grants of Individual Assistance Grants; International Award from Mini Prints International, Barcelona, Spain; Best Printmakers' Award from the Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka; Award Scholarship from the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of India-Cultural Exchange Programme; and the Best Printmakers' Award from Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka.



A K M Alamgir Huque



A painting by Alamgir Huque.

PHOTO: COURTESY

UNESCO's #BeCreative earns praise on social media



Khaiyam Sanu Sandhi

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

As a way of coping with the coronavirus pandemic, UNESCO Dhaka initiated the online campaign, #BeCreative, featuring different artistes and cultural professionals. Tania Ahmed, Gousul Alam Shaon, Prito Reza, Warda Rihab, Omer Aiaz, Sumaiya Shimu, Khaiyam Sanu Sandhi, Tony Dias, Anupama Sekhar, Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy, Samina Husain Prema, Sudip Chakroborthy, Fifa Chakma, Sydur Rahman Lipon, Joy Shahriar and Dr Irin Pervin Lopa participated in the campaign, making short videos of performances, recollections, tips and practical hands-on demonstrations of simple artistic works.

Theatre artiste Sydur Rahman Lipon, who teaches at the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at DU, demonstrated different movements of village singers in his video. Discussing the concepts of master beat and step by step instructions of how theatre artistes can practice the rhythmic physical movement of a *Gayen* or village singer, he incorporated a song, demonstrating how the master beat, song and physical movement are combined to design a



Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy



Omer Aiaz

Khayam Sanu Sandhi composed an impromptu song in his video, giving out tips and tricks of how to creatively produce a song at any given time.

Moreover, actor Omer Aiaz, in a fun-filled video, demonstrated how to make a puppet. He engaged in a conversation with his puppet, Tera Mia, on effective learning of Bangla alphabets, for proper and better pronunciation.

Noted photographer and director Prito



Prito Reza's product photography

Reza explained that as we stay indoors, we could try product photography. He showed some simple concepts for creating visually interesting photographs and encouraged the audience to spend their time at home creatively.



Tania Ahmed

Noted Bangladeshi actor, model, choreographer and director Tania Ahmed shared her video from the USA, along with her niece and nephew Juyana and Arush, respectively. They demonstrated different moods and acting expressions. Tania also spoke about her family reunions, during which they got together to perform in short plays. She urged the audience to practice easy but effective artistic skills with their families to stay healthy and happy in these trying times.

Prominent cartoonist and founder of Cartoon People Syed Rashad Imam Tanmoy shared his techniques of drawing with everyday objects, such as tissue boxes and disinfectant sprays.

Talented music producer and singer