

In loving memory of K S Firoz

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned actor Khondoker Shahid Uddin Firoz, better known as K S Firoz, made undeniable contributions to the television, film and theatre arenas of Bangladesh. The actor breathed his last on September 9, 2020, leaving behind his wife, his three daughters and countless well-wishers.

Born in 1946 in Ujirpur, Barishal, K S Firoz served in the Bangladesh Army for more than a decade, starting from 1967. He retired from the army as a major in 1977, to pursue acting.

K S Firoz worked in over 500 television projects throughout his career. His debut television show, *Tobuo Deep Jole*, aired in 1968. He impressed one and all with his brilliance on the screen. He also gave a memorable performance in BTV's critically acclaimed show, *Jonaki Jole*.

"K S Firoz was a true gentleman and a disciplined artiste. He always helped people out," says Shahiduzzaman Selim. "I had the opportunity to work



PHOTO: STAR

with him on several projects, including *Jonaki Jole*. He was like an elder brother to me."

He founded the Theatre Amambagh troupe, based in Dhaka, who are known for productions such as *Sathghater Kanakori*, *Rakkhushi* and *King Lear*, among others. His masterful portrayal of King Lear will be remembered for generations to come.

"I still cannot believe that he is gone. I have lost a dear friend," shares Mamunur Rashid. He was a great artiste, and he will live on through his work."

K S Firoz made his film debut with *Laawarish*, and went on to play significant roles in movies like *Bashi*, *Brihonnola*, *Shonkhonaad* and *Chandragrahan* among others.

"I had spoken to him over the phone a few days back. I always took his advice on different matters," shares Ahsan Habib Nasim. "He was an open-minded person."

"Our seniors and guardians are leaving us one by one. K S Firoz's death is another heartbreaking news for us," adds Chanchal Chowdhury. "He was a compassionate artiste. I learned humility and kindness from him."



Matilda



Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

Roald Dahl movie adaptations to fall in love with

SHABABA IQBAL

September 13 (tomorrow) marks the birth anniversary of Roald Dahl, a celebrated children's author whose works resonate with people all over the world till date. In honour of that, we take a look at some of the best movie adaptations of the stories he gave us.



James and the giant peach

but reviled by critics at the time, and even by Dahl himself. Nevertheless, it is a classic with memorable characters, hummable songs, like *The Candy Man* and *Pure Imagination*, and a compelling performance of Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka. His own take of Wonka balances out his questionable quirkiness and his sinister secrets, in a charming way.

Similarly, *Matilda* (1996) may have been a flop at its time, but it grew to become a cult classic. This film is based on the beloved 1988 novel about a mischievous but kind-hearted girl, who learns she has telekinetic powers that she uses to handle her ignorant parents and topple her cruel headmistress. As the titular girl, Mara Wilson plays her effectively with a right balance of deadpan and enthusiasm, and a supporting cast that includes Danny DeVito as the demeaning Mr

Wormwood and Pam Ferris as the arrogant Ms Trunchbull is fun to watch.

While it is fitting for Tim Burton to work with Roald Dahl's macabre themes, it is surprising for Wes Anderson to capture Dahl's familial topics and character eccentricities. For that, *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009), an innovative and wily adaptation, is a stop-motion animated film that balances out their styles. The 1970 story is about the titular Mr Fox (George Clooney), who must outwit a trio of cruel farmers to scavenge food.

The Witches, on the other hand, is prominently based on Dahl's childhood days being born to Norwegian parents and learning of various Norwegian folklore. This story is about a boy and his grandmother that discovered a coven of witches who thrive on their existence by killing children. It features Mai Zetterling, Rowan Atkinson and Anjelica

Huston. This 1990 adaptation captures the darkness and weirdness of the Dahl story, accompanied by Jim Henson's puppetry and levied by Huston's great performance.

Moreover, producer Tim Burton and director Henry Selick collaborated on Disney's adaptation of *James and the Giant Peach* (1996), a stop-motion effort with Burton's signature quirks and creepiness that fits well for a Dahl story. It revolves around an orphan named James who enters a whimsical world hidden inside a peach and meets eccentric characters like Susan Sarandon's Miss Spider, Simon Callow's Mr Grasshopper and Richard Dreyfus' Mr Centipede. The animation advancements work to the film's advantage, since it meshes live-action and stop-motion to seamless effect.

Another adaptation of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* came to life by Tim Burton in 2005. Not necessarily a remake itself, it is another reimagining from the gothic auteur. Its distinctive difference from the 1971 crowd-pleaser is its faithfulness to the book, down to the songs and character traits. This film has an elevated production design as well. Nevertheless, its visual flair is contrasted with Johnny Depp's darker Willy Wonka.

Dahl's *The BFG* received a feature-length treatment, as a live-action adaptation in 2016, with Walt Disney Pictures and Steven Spielberg behind its creation. It is based on the story of a girl who encounters a humble giant, whom she names the BFG (Big Friendly Giant). Mark Rylance plays the titular giant, in this film filled with Spielbergian whimsy, signature Dahl eccentricity and crowd-pleasing performances.

Gazi Nafis Ahmed's take on visual arts

ELITA KARIM

Gazi Nafis Ahmed is a visual artist working in Spain. His pictures portray visual stories, highlighting unseen or ignored realities. He investigates complex social issues in intimate terms, dealing with multiple questions using photography, video and storytelling as his mediums. His works are immediate in their stylistic brilliance, but the effects are lasting. Inspired by real-world issues concerning equality, human rights and tolerance, Nafis eschews documentary detachment, favouring a more intimate, humanistic and often playful kind of collaboration.

He studied Art and Design at the Sir John Cass Department of Art, Media & Design of London Guildhall University in London and photography at the Danish School of Media and Journalism in Denmark. He completed his Master of Fine Arts in Photography from Istituto Europeo di Design in Madrid and Master's in Realizacion de Documentales, Madrid, both on full scholarship. He was an honorary fellow of The Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University, USA. When he is not busy making artworks, he is a visiting lecturer at various institutions, including Danish School of Media & Journalism and Complutense University.



Hans Ulrich Obrist (L), Director of Serpentine Gallery in London, with Gazi Nafis Ahmed (R) at DAS.

Nafis was awarded the prestigious art residency in Spain, supported by Andrew W Mellon Foundation. "The five residencies were all unique in their own right. From the highest mountains to the countryside, the bustling cities and the most cutting-edge

contemporary art, science and tech labs, I had a very diverse experience," he shares. His artist residency in The Pyrenees near the border of France and Spain was particularly memorable. The residence was surrounded by 600-year old stone structures and high mountains, located 3,000 feet above sea level and defined by coniferous and deciduous forests, meadows, alpine pastures



Nafis' installation of photographs from his 'Puran Dhaka' series in the exhibition, 'Delineating Memories' at Exhibit 320 Gallery, Delhi.

and rock formations. In 2019, Nafis had the privilege of representing Bangladesh at La Biennale di Venezia 58th, one of the most prestigious art events in the world. He exhibited a series of gender identity portraits.

While speaking about his past projects, Nafis shared his experiences of visiting one of Bangladesh's biggest rehab centers, BARACA, in 2006. "It was an interesting visit," he says. "I thought of different ways of taking the photographs. The challenge was to keep the identities of the individuals obscure in the visuals."

A notable aspect of his approach is its therapeutic value, in which a form of mutuality, or 'walking alongside', leads to a catharsis for all participants. His photographic projects have a strong activist undertone and challenge the norms to start a discourse, which favours the perspectives of his common subjects.

Nafis further spoke about *Racializados* in Spain, a term that is referred to as "people

of colour" in English. "The films that we grew up watching, or the superheroes and fairytale characters in popular entertainment make us think that white is superior and beautiful," says the artist.

He noted that in Bangladesh, the paradoxical mechanism of fairer skin comes from those portrayals. The popular belief is, the fairer someone is, the more

beautiful and confident they are.

Similarly, newer generations of migrants in Europe lack a sense of belonging as they are not well represented by their surroundings or in the media. "I created a series of portraits, in which the methodology worked as a catharsis for the participants," Nafis shares about his comparative experiences of photography in Spain and Bangladesh. "In the series, I celebrated these people, building up their pride and confidence through the therapeutic discourse that takes place."

Nafis plans to curate an exhibition on the theme, 'Youthful Bangladesh', with an open call for participants from across the country to send in their photographs and videos.

His advice to young photographers and artists is to pursue what they love with passion and follow their hearts. "I hope to lead workshops for underprivileged groups and community-based youths, who are on the autism spectrum or are battling drug addiction," he concludes.



Nabil Rahman's solo exhibition 'Water bodies' underway

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The second solo exhibition of writer and multidimensional artist Nabil Rahman, titled *Water bodies*, was inaugurated on September 7 at Studio 6/6. It will be open for viewing from 11 am to 8 pm every day, till September 27. For safety reasons, audiences are requested to book a session before visiting the space.

The exhibition features his drawings, photographs, multi-media works and installations. It reflects the artist's experiences with a diverse range of issues, such as intergenerational trauma, immigrant life, art, future of the planet, the role of artificial intelligence and



Artworks by Nabil Rahman.

spiritual discoveries, among others.

Nabil was born in Sylhet in a family of poets. His grandfather was the Ekushey Padak winner Kabi Dilwar, and his uncle Kishwar Ibne Dilwar was a poet of the 80s. He left Sylhet along with his family at the age of 11. He grew up in New York and moved back to Bangladesh, where he



currently lives.

The artist did his MA at the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism in 2012 and his BA in Creative Writing at Herbert H. Lehman College (City University of New York) in 2010. He took part in the Dhaka Art Summit (2020, 2018), Bellas Artes Projects, Manila (2018), *You Can't Cross the Ocean Merely by Staring at the Waves*, Krinzing Gallery (2016), *Raster*, Experimenter Gallery (2016) and *It hung over us like an anvil*, Longitude Latitude 6 (2015). He attended Urronto Art Residency Program in 2019 and Bellas Artes Projects in Bataan, the Philippines in 2017 and 2018. He curated the photography exhibition, *Eyes on Bangladesh* (2014), in New York.

Nabil also worked as a freelance journalist for Al Jazeera America, TIME, and Vogue India, among others. He was also an editor for CBS News and a multimedia producer for the National Geographic.