

COVER STORY

BEGUILING TIME OF BANGLA THUMRI

The quintessential Classical and Nazrul Sangeet artist Nirupoma Rahman expresses devotion and love of music through her melodious voice. She is a Bangladesh-Australia based singer who recently sat down with Rafi Hossain for an exclusive interview. During the interview, the artist performed an enthralling blend of songs and talked about the beautiful influence of Indian classical music in Bangla Songs.



PHOTO COURTESY: NIRUPOMA RAHMAN

Rafi Hossain: Thank you for giving us your time, Nirupoma. I am truly delighted to be here with you today. **Nirupoma Rahman:** I want to thank you and The Daily Star. I am looking forward to our lively discussion alongside singing.

Rafi Hossain: Generally, audiences sometimes avoid the classical genre of music. Can you tell us why that is?

Nirupoma Rahman: I think it's important to expose the audience to all kinds of music. The general audience often assumes classical music to be difficult, when in reality, all music is universal, and there is nothing complicated about it at all. One may not understand the composition or language, but the melody can be enjoyed by all. Even a popular song can be based on a pure raga. I believe it is also the responsibility of us artists to explain this to the audience clearly. Let me give you an example. If we were both given same shades of three different colours to paint with, we would both draw entirely different paintings which reflect our personality, thoughts and insights. Just as playing with colours is called painting, playing around with specific melodic notes is known as *raag*. There are also different variations and history of Indian classical music.

Rafi Hossain: Could you tell us about Nazrul's contributions?

Nirupoma Rahman: Nazrul has brought a lot of aspects of Indian classical music, as well as other genres, into Bangla music. His not only composed so many songs which are based on different *ragas*, he also made his own *ragas* given the needs of his beautiful lyrics. In Hindustani classical music, melodic structure is vital compared to the words. Bangla songs, on the contrary, call for special attention to the words. To interweave the lyrical and melodic aspects, Nazrul even mixed different ragas in one composition very beautifully and with ease. Not only that, he also brought different genres of Indian classical music like *Kheyaa*, *Thumri*, *Kajri*, *Dadra*, and so on into Bangla songs keeping all the essence

and purity of Bangla music and 'Bangaliyana'. And that was only possible because of his immense depth of knowledge in music and sheer talent in language. Each of his compositions are like a treasure with hidden beauties for the singer to discover and highlight in their own ways. And that element of exploration is something I really love and enjoy. His tutelage under Ustad Zamiruddin Khan, who is considered to be a maestro of *Thumri*, had made an enormous impact on his love and knowledge in Indian Classical music. There are many aspects of Indian classical music, which Nazrul pioneered in incorporating very uniquely in Bangla music. Later many musicians followed his footsteps. In relation to this, with great admiration, I will make a mention here about an esteemed and widely respected Azad Rahman, who has recently passed away. He has worked tirelessly and with great passion to compose



and popularise Bangla Kheyaa.

Rafi Hossain: Tell us more about Thumri.

Nirupoma Rahman: The word *Thumri* has been derived from 'thumakna', which implies a sort of sensual and romantic nature. Usually when we hear the word *Thumri*, we assume it would be in Hindi or Urdu. However, Nazrul has introduced us to *Thumri* in Bangla music, keeping the melodic and rhythmic beauty of the genre, yet maintaining the essence of romantic and passionate imagery of Bangla literature. Nazrul created many *Thumri* compositions and experimented with different forms of their melodies in a really beautiful manner.

Rafi Hossain: You mentioned the word 'Kajri', what is it?

Nirupoma Rahman: *Kajri* can fall under the *Thumri* category. The word *Kajri* means black thick rainy clouds. *Kajri* is usually sung to either express the feeling of separation, especially when it is raining and you don't have your loved one around, or to describe the rain itself. This musical genre related and relevant to the rainy season according to North Indian classical music. Bengalis have a very special and romantic connection to rain and

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monsoon, and Nazrul was the first to bring *Kajri* in Bangla music. Nazrul explored and studied these things thoroughly and added words and phrases from other languages that fit in perfectly with the Bangla songs. And that proves his immense literary talent.

Rafi Hossain: Do you think it's important to practice and become skilled at classical music before stepping into the genre of Nazrul's songs?

Nirupoma Rahman: I think learning classical music is an important step before pursuing any specific field of music. Understanding the form and structure of melodies is an important skill to acquire, whether you choose to pursue Nazrul sangeet, *Rabindra sangeet*, modern pop music or even band music. But for Bangla music not only the melodic part but also the understanding the lyrical part of it also crucial. It is very important to understand the connection between the words and melody of a song to perfectly express it. I believe that just like chefs keep tasting their food as they cook, as a musician it's important to understand and connect with the feeling behind the songs as you sing and practise. Otherwise, how can we expect to deliver the song meaningfully and connect to our audience?

Rafi Hossain: Will you be singing any of Sabina Yeasmin's songs for her birthday as it's her birthday today?

Nirupoma Rahman: I don't think I can properly honour any of her songs as she is such a legendary artist with exceptional music. However, I will express my love and respect for her through a Nazrul song, the lyrics of which portray my feelings exactly.

Rafi Hossain: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Nirupoma Rahman: I would say it's important to expose the younger generation to our classical forms of music in a more engaging and stimulating way, rather than blaming them for being unaware. It is our duty and the duty of those in the media to promote such music. Lastly, I want to thank you and the audience for listening to me and being with me today. It is truly a joyful experience to sing like this.

Shreya Shomoyeeta

GRAPE VINE



Shakib Khan shooting after 226 days

After being stuck home for almost six months, Shakib Khan is back to shooting the Anonno Mamun directed movie *Nabab LLB*. Alongside Shakib Khan, the movie also features Mahiya Mahi, Orchita Sporshia and Shahiduzzaman Selim, among others. The film is being produced under the banner of *Celebrity Production*. Regarding the movie, Shakib Khan said, "I was told that a lot of people had their eyes on me, and that if I began shooting, it would give a lot of people courage to start. With a lot of things in mind, I decided that starting shooting is the best course of action for me. I always try to present Bangladeshi films to the world, and even after a lot of adversities, it still hasn't stopped. Due to the pandemic, our industry and the people of our country have suffered, but we will continue our work."

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub



ROSHAN'S New Mask

Popular actor Roshan recently signed for a new film, *Mukhosh*. Porimoni will be seen sharing the screen with him again. The film, directed by Iftekhar Shuvo, begins shooting within a few days. Roshan said, "I really liked the story of the film as it is based on current times. I have previously worked with Porimoni in *Rokto*. Overall, I feel that my audience will appreciate this project." Aside from this, Roshan is still awaiting four releases: *Makeup*, *Ostad*, *Jinn* and *Operation Sundarban*.

Oyshee singing in noakhali dialect



After staying home for a long time, singer Oyshee has finally been able to work on her music. Aside from appearing on a live television programme, she has also recorded new songs. Some of her songs are set to appear on films. She has given her voice to the title track of the Iftekhar Chowdhury film, *Mukti*. The song was given tune by Shahriar Rafat, and Oyshee had to do the song in the Noakhali dialect. Regarding it, she said, "I was still very involved in music even though I was stuck home, but now, I am going to the studio to work on songs. So far, I have been able to work on some songs made for movies, and I really enjoyed singing the song in the Noakhali dialect."

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some binge worthy movie and series you can spend your time watching while you stay at home social distancing, keeping yourself, as well as others, safe.



Bandish Bandits

Bandish Bandits is a Hindi TV show on Amazon Prime Video, aired on August 4, 2020. It was created by Amritpal Singh Bindra and Anand Tiwari, directed by Tiwari himself, produced under the banner of *Still and Still Moving Pictures*, and stars Ritwik Bhowmik, Shreya Chaudhry and Naseeruddin Shah, among others. The show follows the lives of a popstar and a classical singer who are on a quest of self-discovery and overcoming their differences.

Raised by Wolves

Raised by Wolves is a sci-fi TV series, set in a strange planet where two androids are given the task of raising human children. It was created by Aaron Guzikowski, produced by Jon Kuyper, distributed by WarnerMedia Direct, and stars Amanda Collin, Abubakar Salim and Winta McGrath, among others. It was first released on September 3, 2020 on HBO Max.



PERRY MASON

Perry Mason is a period-drama series, originally released on June 21, 2020 on HBO. It was created by Rolin Jones and Ron Fitzgerald, directed by Tim Van Patten and Deniz Gamze Ergüven, produced by Matthew Rhys, and stars Matthew Rhys, Juliet Rylance and Chris Chalk, among others. The plot follows the life of a defense lawyer, Perry Mason (based on the eponymous character by Erle Stanley Gardner), as he takes on an intense case.

I May Destroy You

I May Destroy You is a comedy-drama series, written and created by Michaela Coel, directed by Coel herself, along with Sam Miller, produced by Simon Meyers and Simon Maloney, and stars Michaela Coel, Weruche Opia and Paapa Essiedu, among others. The plot deals with the concept of consent in the modern day through the eyes of a millennial icon. It was first released on June 7, 2020 on HBO and BBC One.

Amina Hossain

