



SOUTH ASIAN THEATRE FESTIVAL MARCH 9 - 21, 1997

VENUE: BANGLADESH SHILPKALA ACADEMY

“মুক্ত করো ই ম্বাব মসে,
মুক্ত করো ই বক্ষ”

“Unite with all the others,
open up all the Shutters”



The snow of the mountain peak melts to create thousands of water falls and brooks, each with its own differing strength, colour & character. They flow downward in search of the sea or the ocean. Some of them converge to form mighty rivers others flow as rivulets in their own lilting rhythm.

They meet, ultimately, in the oneness of the ocean. In this great assembly each has to sacrifice some of its ownness for the greater glory of oneness. There is almost an uncanny resemblance between the character of nature and that of culture. Culture emanating from various civilizations congregating to make it all powerful & irrepressible. Today, no art-form that is practised universally can claim that all it practises are purely its own.

In case of theatre or cinema, as it is natural, it is also desirable that they are not abandoned to isolation. This has made them universally appealing. British Director Peter Brook's Mahabharata, Japanese Kurosawa or Bangali Geerish Ghosh's Macbeth, Richard Attenborough's Gandhi or American David Mamet's great production of Chekhov's Three Sisters bear testimony to this universal openness.

In Russia a number of cities have Shakespeare Societies. In Edinburgh Festival every year more than half of the plays performed are in languages other than those of Edinburgh. Indeed, they come from various countries belonging to different continents. Thousands of theatre enthusiasts who flock around in Edinburgh do not find these plays unintelligible. Art has a language of its own. In Nagorik we have believed in this universality of theatre right from the beginning.

Just as we believe that a person, confined within a well, would fail to create anything that is honest & is able to withstand the test of time, so do we firmly believe that fusion of variety of thoughts can make the art exceedingly powerful. The artist, then can fight against all kinds of injustices with that weapon. This has been proved right over and over again from the beginning of the civilization.

An unspoken, even inarticulate relationship exists between the artists of the world and the distressed humanity that they have extended a helping hand to. This has been proved time and again.

A number of such examples can be given from the world history. The Spanish Civil War the struggle in the Latin American countries, the war of Vietnam, in all these cases the artists have stood by the people's cause and upheld their demands. Pablo Picasso, Andre Malraux, Ravishankar, Allen Ginsberg or Annada Shankar Roy-thousands of such stalwarts from all over the world have been, are, and will always support the cause of freedom loving people. This proves the indomitable march forward of the world culture, the victory of internationalism.

It might be clear from the pattern of our presentation that we have always endeavoured to bring on stage plays written by the best playwrights of the world in combination with a selection of best local ones. Moliere, Shakespeare, Michael, Rabindranath, Becket, Brecht, Dwijendra, Albee, Molnar, Zuchmayer, Syed Waliullah, Camus, Chekov, Dorfman, Badal Sircar, Saeed Ahmed, Syed Shamsul Huq, Rashid Haider have tread on our stage hand-in-hand. They have encouraged us, enthralled us and inspired our audience in comprehending life — the multi-faceted life.

This assembly of people from all over ignoring the bondage of geographical or political boundaries—the great congregation of the playwrights, actors, theatre workers and audience—if this helps us get rid of our pettiness, meanness, vested interests, atleast to some extent, Nagorik would feel its efforts well worth its while.

This is the reason why we have retained the slogan of our last festival and will perhaps repeat it in our future events as well. For nothing could be closer to our heart than these great words of Tagore:

“Unite with all the others
Open up all the shutters”

Message Bangladesh has a distinctive position in the world of international theatre. Nagorik Natya Sampradaya should be mentioned first among all the groups that have contributed towards achieving this. Nagorik embodies the differential characteristics of the Bengali culture and at the same pursues the ideal of internationalism. Nagorik definitely deserves the credit for uniting the drama of Bangladesh with the main stream of modern international theatre. For the same reason I believe Nagorik theatre festival to be very meaningful for us. As it will give us the chance to assess the current trend in the South Asian Theatre. The theatre lovers will be able to enjoy the plays from four countries at the same time, while the young generation of theatre workers will be introduced to the acting style of some renowned actors of the world. We congratulate Nagorik Natya Sampradaya for organising such a grand and eventful festival. We wish them success.

Ramendu Majumder
President ITI (Bangladesh Centre)

Message of the sponsor

We wish all the best to the South Asian Theatre Festival organised by Nagorik Natya Sampradaya. Nagorik deserves praise for its theatre of the South Asian countries. This sort of cultural exchange is not limited to formalities only but also promotes friendly relations among the peoples and societies of different nations.

We strongly believe that the theatre workers and the audience of Bangladesh will appreciate the plays in this festival. Beximco has tried its best to associate itself with the creative cultural activities in the country for a long time.

Beximco is delighted and proud to be a part of this South Asian Theatre Festival organised by Nagorik.

BEXIMCO

Introducing the participating theatre groups from other South Asian Countries.

SHWAPNA-SANDHANI (India)

- Shwapna-sandhani Natya Sangsta was formed on 29th May 1992.
- The founder president of the group is Mr. Shoumitra Chattapadhyay.
- The major productions of Swapna-sandhani are:

Aankhipallab ('92), Bimal Kaar's "Jodubangsha" ('93) "Tikitee" by Anthony Scheffer ('95) and "Prothom Partha" by Buddho Deb Basu. The other productions of the group are: "Two-in One", "Khoni", "Marjoni", "Padma Beejer Mala" & others.

In Dhaka the group will stage its most successfully produced play "Tikitee". In 1995, Tikitee got the best production award titled "Asian Paints Shiromoni". Koushik Sen, who has starred in this play was awarded the best actor by West Bengal Natya Academy in 1995.

Shoumitra Chattapadhyay:

On 27th March, 1957, "Profulla" of Girish Chandra Ghosh was staged under the direction of Shishir Kumar Bhaduri. Shoumitra Chattapadhyay played the role of Suresh. While the Natyacharya himself played the role of Jogesh. This was the ultimate dream of young Shoumitra. In the same year Shoumitra Chattapadhyay was cast in Satyajit's "Apur Sangsar". Atlast on 9th August 1958 the film saw the light of day & the world saw on the black and white screen Apu in his youth. That was the beginning, and ever since the world of film has not turned down Shoumitra. Even at the peak of success, he did not put theatre in reclusion. He always nurtured within him the craving to do theatre which turned him towards the study of theatre through these years. He saw plays, directed for Abhineti Sangha, which in later years saw to the development of his talents towards directing plays for professional stage. For the very reason he came to the rescue of professional theatre from crass commercialism through his efforts and success in staging good plays such as "Namjibon", "Rajkumar", "Phera", "Nilkantha", "Darpane Sharshahi" and play like "Nyaymurti". In the world of film, he has gone beyond the boundaries of national acclaim. He has been the founder President of "Swapna Sandhani" since 1992. "Tikitee" was directed by him and he also acted in the play. Ever since the staging of the play, "Swapna Sandhani" has found its unique place in Bangla theatre.



Shoumitra Chattapadhyay and Koushik Sen in Tikitee by Swapna-sandhani

RANGAKARMI (India)

'Rangakarmi', the theatre group was established in 1976. Usha Ganguly is the founder president of the group. The more known plays of the group are "Parichay" ('76), "Maa" ('83), "Purush" ('86), "Lokkantha" ('87), "Holi" ('89), "Bhama" ('90), "Court Martial" ('91), "Rudali" ('93), "Khoni" ('94) and others. The stalwarts of drama in West Bengal, people like Tripti Mitra, Rudra Prasad Sengupta and Bibhush Chakraborty have directed plays for 'Rangakarmi'. The various plays of 'Rangakarmi' have been won prestigious awards.

In the "South Asian Theatre Festival" Rangakarmi will stage "Lokkantha", "Rudali" and "Court Martial". "Lokkantha" won the best production award of West Bengal Natya Academy in '86-'87. "Court Martial" won the best production award in '91-'92 and "Rudali" for best direction in '93-'94.

In 1970 Usha Ganguly started her career in theatre as a member of Sangeet Kala Mandir. She played the main female lead in plays like 'Mrichyakatik', 'Kisi Ek Phul Ka Naam Lo', 'Ek Aar Donachariya', & other plays during this period. In 1976 she founded Rangakarmi. Usha Ganguly is the founding president of the group. In most of the plays of the group she has given direction and played the main female lead. She has successfully translated plays of world famous writers like Chekov, Pirandello, Rabindranath Tagore, Ibsen into Hindi. She has also translated Shaoli Mitra's 'Nath Boti Anath Bodhi'. Usha Ganguly has also successfully acted in feature films & TV dramas. She won the West Bengal Government's best actress award in 1982. In 1990 she received the best actress Lebedev award for the play 'Maa' and the award of West Bengal Natya Academy for 'Court Martial' in 1992 and for best direction for 'Rudali' in 1994.

CHORUS REPERTORY THEATRE (India)

In the North-Eastern region of India, in the small hill tract domain of Imphal, the repertory theatre company CHORUS was formed. Not only in this region, throughout India, this group is known to be a fulfilled professional group. The group and its members have earned a name for themselves for their discipline in the creative art of theatre. "We may not earn the butter, but let us earn the bread through the theatre" — has been the motto of Chorus. Not only has CHORUS earned name for its excellence in performance but serves as a training ground for young directors and choreographers. The commitment of this group has been to modernize the Indian theatre form and in the process take it beyond the national and place it in the rank of international standards. CHORUS has produced many original plays of Manipur & has also adapted foreign plays. The productions have always been unique. It has won many national & international awards for its excellent production and acting. In 1987 CHORUS was awarded the Fringe Firsts Award in the Edinburgh Festival. In 1994 it got the Indo Greek Friendship award. In 1990 it was given the Mexico diploma of Caraventino. It has unique acclaim of participating in the most famous theatre festivals of the world. CHORUS attended the Dublin Theatre Festival (1987), Pan Asiatic Festival in Rome (1984), Indo Greek Symposium in 1984, Festival of India in USSR (1987), Glasgow Festival (1987), Mitsui International Festival in Japan (1992), Toge International Festival (1994), Festival de Evinon, France (1995), and Festival of India in Thailand (1996). Thus under the able leadership of Ratan Thiam the perseverant actors, production designers, music directors, choreographer have formed a fine team active in this performing art of theatre for 20 years and more. Above all it has earned an international name for its experimental work through research.

Ratan Thiam (Padmashree)

Director, Designer, Composer & Choreographer.

- Born on 27th January 1940.

- Honours Graduate of National School of Drama (NSD).

Ratan Thiam is placed in a distinguished position in the field of Art in North Eastern region of India. At one time he was the Director of NSD and the member of Executive Parishad in Sangeet Natak Academy.

Writings: 5 full length plays, 4 novels, 1 short story collection, 2 poem collection, 1 short play.

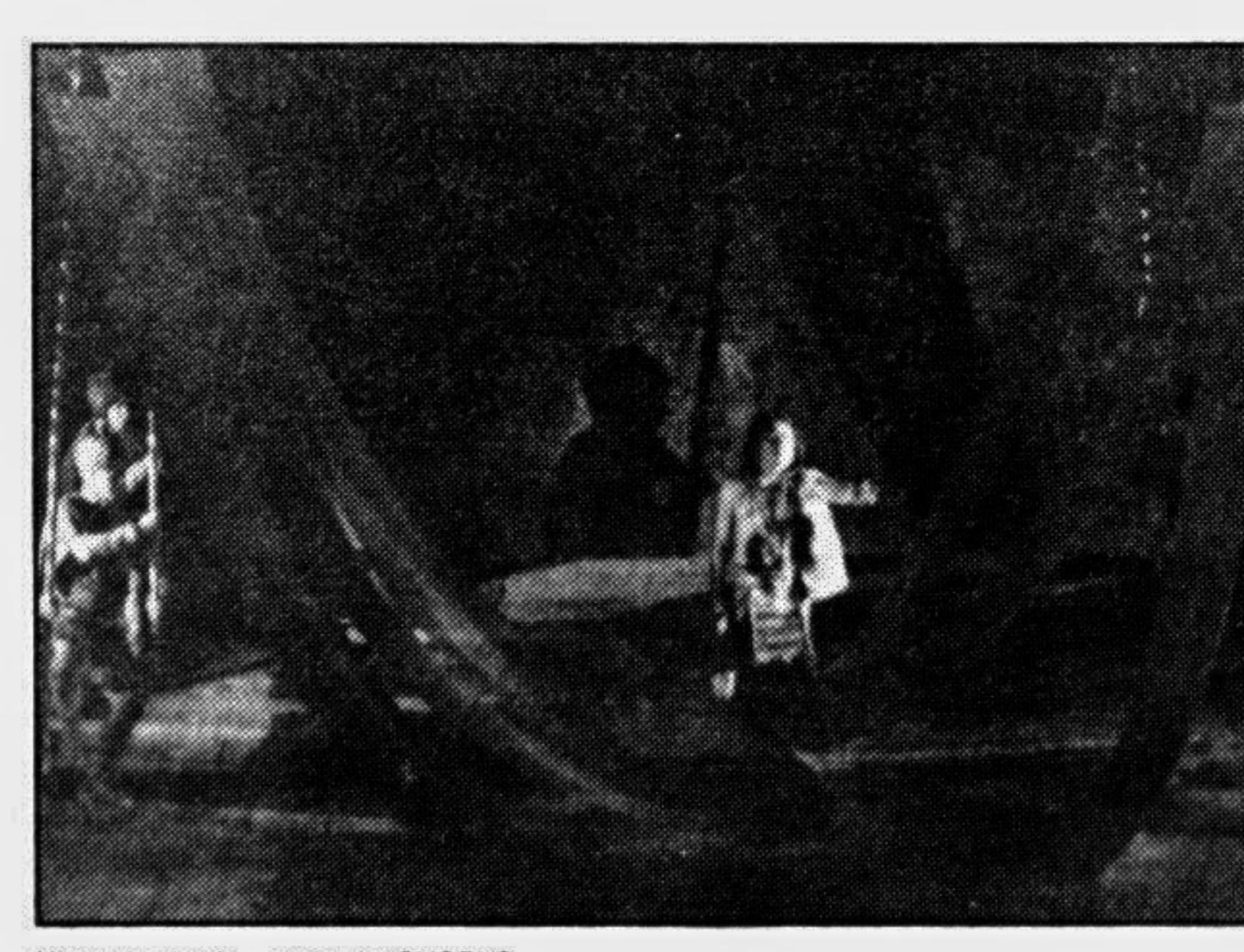
Translation: Greek Classic plays, Japanese Noh & Kyogen, Indian Modern Classics.

Awards: * National Academy Award (Sangeet Natak Akademy), 1987.

* Padmashree, 1989. * Nandikar Award, 1992.

Achievements in terms of production:

- * Indo-Greek Friendship Award, Greece, 1984.
- * Fringe Firsts, Edinburgh International Theatre Festival Award, 1990.
- * Diploma of Serventia International Festival-Mexico, 1990.



Uttarpriyadarshi - a play by CHORUS

LANKA CHILDREN & YOUTH THEATRE ORGANIZATION (Sri Lanka)

Lanka Children's and Youth Theatre Organization was established in 1980. The founder person is Srimati Sumalata Subhasingha. She has been a guide to the members of the team in the discipline of Sangeet, Nritya (dance), Drama, acting, production design, for the last seventeen years. She has produced fifteen plays till date with members of her troupe whose ages range between five and thirty years. Out of these, many of the plays have won international awards.



Thoppi Velenda by Lanka Children & Youth Theatre

Sumalata Subha Singha - Director.

In 1950, Srimatee Subha Singha was introduced to Professor E. R. Sarat Chandra the esteemed theatre person of Sri Lanka. At that time Srimatee Sumalata Subha Singha acted in the central role of some of the experimental plays written and produced by him. In later years she started writing & directing plays for children & youth. She got the best production award for her play VIKUR TIH (Bikriti) in 1975. This play, centering around the problems of education for youth & children is still a critically appreciated. In 1988, she received National Heroes Day Award and was honoured with the title of Kala Shuri by His Excellency the President. In Dhaka, the group will perform Thoppi Velenda' and "Punchi Apata Den There".

TEHRIK-E-NISWAN (Pakistan)

The play: 'Mein Kon Hoo (Who Am I)', is a single woman performance by Sheema Kermani. A production of Tehrik-e-Niswan.

"Who am I" is a one-woman dance theatre which was originally prepared and choreographed by Sheema for the Beijing World Women's Conference (1995) and was presented there on two occasions with great success. Since then it has been repeatedly performed in all the major cities of Pakistan.

Through an interesting combination of dance theatre and poetry, "Who Am I" relates the story of the lives and struggles of women in our part of the world. Using a fluid technique that allows dance, drama, poetry and music to be juxtaposed together, it moves from dialogue to movement from mime to poetry, from words to dance, resulting in intense moments of dramatic tension.

The women portrayed in this piece range from the ordinary suppressed, house bound woman to the great "Sheroes" of History (or rather Her story) who valiantly led and fought the battles of freedom in the sub-continent.

The text has been compiled from various sources such as Dario Fo and Franca Rama's plays, poems by Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Kishwar Naheed and others.

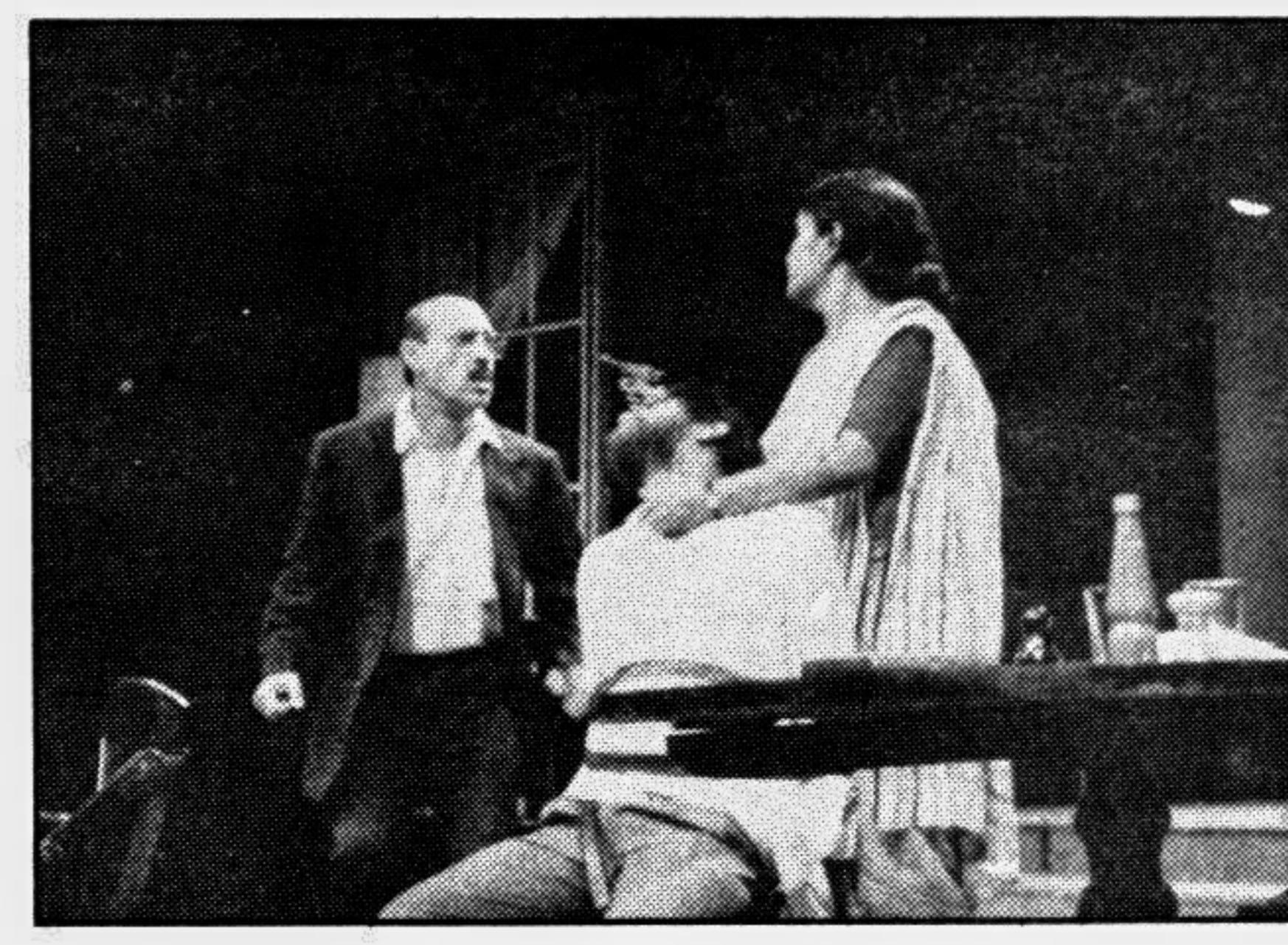
ENSEMBLE (India)

Ensemble was founded in 1983. The director of this group is Srimati Sohag Sen. Till date, under the direction of Sohag Sen, ENSEMBLE has produced eleven plays. The famous playwrights whose plays have been produced by the group are Bertolt Brecht, Franca Rama, Mahesh Elkunchwar. The two plays that they will stage in Dhaka are 'Uttaraadhi' and 'Uttarpurush'. Both these plays are considered as very successful production of Ensemble & has won the group considerable recognition.

Sohag Sen (Director)

Sohag Sen (50) has been trained in dance & music since childhood. In 1969 she started her work in theatre with the renowned theatre personality, Utpal Dutt.

In 1971 she jointly formed CPAT and in 1983, the Ensemble. She won the Lebedev Award in 1990 for her contribution to the discipline of direction.



A scene from Nagorik's Mukhosh

ABOUT NAGORIK

* Established:

November 1968

Play: Buro Shaliker Ghaare Ro at WAPDA Auditorium

Date: 16th July 1972

* Regular staging of plays by selling tickets:

Play: Baaki Itihas at British Council Auditorium on 3rd February 1973.

* Hundredth Performance: 4th June 1976

* Five Hundredth Performance: December 1984

* Thousandth Performance: 16th March 1995

* Total number of staging: 1082 till date.

The Achievements of NAGORIK

- Pioneer in regular staging of plays through selling of tickets. Play: Baaki Itihas, 3rd February 1973.
- The very first group to commemorate the 100th day of its stage performances.
- The first to commemorate the 25th performance of a particular play: 'Swat Manusher Khonje'.
- The first group to commemorate the hundredth performance of one of its plays: 'Dewan Gaazir Kissa'.
- The first group to commemorate the two hundredth performance of one of its plays: 'Dewan Gaazir Kissa'.
- The maximum number of shows completed by a single play: 'Dewan Gaazir Kissa'. number of shows - 279.
- The first group of commerorate its 1000th performance.

(Nagorik will perform 4 plays in the festival.)