

RECOMMENDATIONS

Solo Art Exhibition

The second solo painting exhibition of artist Zahir is being held at Jainul art gallery at the Institute of Fine Arts in the city. The weeklong exhibition ends on February 7, 2002. The exhibition is open for all everyday from 10:00 a.m. till 8:00 p.m.

Art Exhibition

A solo exhibition of artworks by artist Nazia Andaleeb Preema is being held at the DRIK gallery at Dhanmondi in the city. The exhibition continues till February 12, 2002. The exhibition is open for all everyday from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Thursday & Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Book Fair

Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela, a three-week long book fair at the premises of Bangla Academy is in progress. The fair is open everyday from morning till evening

Etching Print Exhibition

A solo etching prints exhibition by Rashid Amin, a Charupith Fellow (2001) is continuing at Gallery 21. The exhibition will remain open till February 10 from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. everyday.

Drama Festival

Nattyto Utsav 2002, the national festival of drama is going on at the Mahila Samity auditorium in the city. The festival will continue till February 20 organised by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation. The drama festival is featuring 'Nattyto Jalsa' after the staging of the theatrical productions, each evening. Each Jalsa includes cultural events performed by members of the theatre groups. Coinciding with the drama festival began the 'Street Drama Festival 2002' that will continue till February 7, 2002. 'Fair & Lovely Drama Festival 2002' is continuing at the Showkat Osman auditorium of Central Public Library. The weeklong festival has been arranged with the theme 'Reach for the Skies'. DESH NATAK has composed five of the seven theatrical plays of the festival.

Theatre

Eugene Ionesco's strong dramatic structure

'The Lesson' a rebellion against conventional drama staged at Bailey Road

FAYZA HAQ

EUGENE Ionesco's "The Lesson" translated by Saidus Saklaan and directed by Mejrma Reuter, was presented at Guide House, Bailey Road recently by CAT. Kamaluddin Nilu played the part of the professor, while the pupil was acted by Sabina Sultana, and Tahmina Sharif was the maid.

The plot had the girl student termed as "Mademoiselle" knocking at the door of the professor's room, which Maria the maid opens to let the pupil in. The student looks polite, lively, well dressed and pretty. When the professor enters the room he too is overtly polite and totally professional. He believes that since the young woman is smart and intelligent it will be no hassle to help her prepare for the doctoral degrees that she wishes to obtain in a period of three months.

The professor commences with arithmetic and the pupil proves good at adding but is not satisfactory at subtraction. Inoffensive at the beginning the professor becomes more aggressive and domineering. He suggests to "Mademoiselle" to go in for a partial doctorate instead. At this point Marie the maid enters and advises the professor not to get excited and carried away as it would ruin his health. The pupil is delighted when she is told that she can master the fundamental principles of comparative and linguistic philology. At this point Marie enters again and warns against the professor's teaching of philology.

The professor pays no heed to Marie's warning and continues to teach the various rules and characteristics of different languages. However, the meaning of the lecture gets confused while Mademoiselle gets sleepy and tired. She groans with pain and clutches her face as a throbbing toothache develops. Nevertheless, the professor pays little attention to his pupil's pain and proceeds to pronounce the work "knife" in various languages. In the process he gets so violent and aggressive that he



The Professor (Kamaluddin Nilu) in a frenzy

loses control of himself and finally kills his pupil with the knife. The professor finally hides behind a political swastika symbol and is saved in the denouement.

Mejrma Reuter, the director says about the play, "Many writers write because injustice has moved them in some way. They find themselves offended between values, characters and events. A few great writers have the skill and self-control to metamorphose that negative energy into something creative, communicative and valuable and Eugene Ionesco undoubtedly falls into that category. Ionesco's play 'The Lesson' first played in the Pocket Theatre in Paris in 1951 has since enjoyed enormous success all over the world. Technically superb in its use of verbal grotesque and strong dramatic structure, it has become an icon of the Theatre of the Absurd. By bringing the play into the repertoire of the Centre for

Asian Theatre, and through its translation into Bangla by Saidus Saklaan, the aim has been to introduce this globally-recognized modern classic for the first time to a wide audience in Bangladesh.

In common with others of its theatrical genre, 'The Lesson' poses more questions than it answers but one nevertheless perceives the play's theme as having an undercurrent of universal relevance. It is both humorous and challenging. Ionesco provocatively juxtaposes the concepts of Knowledge and Reason, Learning and Awareness and Sense and Nonsense. He confronts the audience with multiple dilemmas of understanding. He challenges us to re-examine our comfortable notions of knowledge. What is knowledge? Information? Explanation? Power? A weapon? Desire? How is it that knowledge, something we generally regard as so positive, can be both destructive and self-

destructive?

"This is a play that touches all who engage with it, audience and players alike. My enthusiasm for the play has therefore not only been shaped by an indefinable, underlying sensation for its importance and relevance. As a student it engendered a search for understanding, as an actor it challenged me technically, as a teacher of actors I was concerned with its deep pedagogic value and as a director it inspired an adventurous exploration of its themes and values."

Kamaluddin Nilu, the main actor of the play, gives an exclusive interview:

Qs 1. What made you take up a role on the stage when you are normally directing?

Kamaluddin: In order to keep me active and dynamic as an actor. I felt monotonous -- only directing plays for a long time. So I was just waiting for a good theatre director who can direct me properly, and it was all on a sudden that I was introduced to Mejrma Reuter, a theatre director. I requested her to direct a CAT Repertory production. She agreed and we decided that a Bengali translation of Eugene Ionesco's 'The Lesson' could be produced. And she selected me for a character in that play. I do believe that a theatre director cannot properly direct a play-production when he himself acts in that play.

Qs 2. How often have you acted before and do you have training for this?

Kamaluddin: I haven't had much opportunity of acting on stage, because I always aimed at directing stage productions. However, I acted in three stage productions: Balaraj Pundit's 'Tal Patar Sepai', a production jointly produced by Dhaka Padatik and the graduates of the National School of Drama (NSD); and Molliere's 'Kanjus' and Bertolt Brecht's 'Byatikram'. However, I have acted in numerous TV plays -- including weekly plays, serials and in some full-length feature films. I studied theatre at the National School of Drama (NSD).

Qs 4. What do you think is important for an actor? In your CAT insti-

tute what do you put stress on?

Kamaluddin: Discipline, diligence, devotion and sincerity -- are mostly important for an actor. Along with these, to develop the acting-style and-technique as an actor, one has to be engaged in a continuous process of theatrical activities; I mean he/she has to be involved on a full-time basis. This is very important.

CAT is an institute where not only theatre practice but also theatre research is put stress on. But CAT is also working in the field of exchange programme, organising conferences, seminars and theatre festivals both at the national and international levels, as well as training programmes and workshops on various aspects of theatre mostly with involvement of theatre professionals from abroad. By this time, a number of foreign theatre professionals have worked in CAT. At the same time, the CAT Repertory company is running, and its members have to undergo training programmes and workshops on acting as well as on various aspects of theatre. As you know that CAT is a professional theatre organisation where actors and actresses have to be involved on a full time basis.

Qs. 5) Who are the actors and dramatists who have influenced

you?

I have been inspired by a lot of performers and directors and playwrights. However, if I really have to say about someone's influence on me, I must say that I was influenced by my father, Mia Matin, who was a renowned theatre and film actor of Bangladesh. Not only he influenced me, but it is because of his inspiration that I studied theatre at the National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi.

Qs. 6) What is your impression of Hollywood and Mumbai based films?

Kamaluddin: In Hollywood and Mumbai, obviously two streams are going a parallel way -- good and bad films. There is a rooted belief that the Hollywood or Mumbai films are like soap-opera, but simultaneously the production of good films cannot be ignored. The world has had numerous good movies from Hollywood and Mumbai, which are really excellent in terms of techniques, performances and directions.

Qs. 7. What is your opinion of theatre goes here in Bangladesh as compared to those in Europe?

Kamaluddin: Actually no comparison can be made as regard to the theatre goes of Bangladesh and those in Europe. Because

European theatres have got patronization of their countries, which we do not have for our theatre. In Bangladesh, what all the theatre groups except for CAT are doing is 'evening theatre'. Furthermore, we do not have a theatre infrastructure at all, which the western countries have. I would like to add that here in Bangladesh there is a dearth of appreciation of good theatre works, and lack of professionalism in the field of theatre.

Qs. 8. Would you say that stage performances are very different from the one on TV and the large screen? Which do you prefer and why?

Kamaluddin: Of course there is a big difference, because these are different media. Why should only I, all actors and directors, I think, would say that theatre is their first choice, because theatre is the most impulsive medium, and I do of course prefer theatre to any other medium. It is only on the stage that an actor or actress can present his/her creativity to a fuller extent, which is not possible on TV or film, this is because both TV and film are 100 per cent directors' media.

Qs. 9. Why do some actors pine to be on the telly or the big screen? It is reported that often there is too much of time consumption in case of the stage performances in Bangladesh. What is your opinion?

Kamaluddin: Only for popularity, because on TV and on the big screen one may easily achieve popularity, get the provision of a good amount of money, and it is possible to work in a shortcut way. All this enables a TV or film performer to work for two or three TV or film-productions a day. But it is not possible for a theatre performer to do that, since, for example, he has to work at least 6 weeks at a stretch for the perfection in his acting, because there is no way to make any amendment of acting on the stage. But if any mistake happens in case of any TV or film production, it is possible to retake a shot.



Maria soothes the distraught professor after the murder of 'Mademoiselle'

Event

To glorify country's folk heritage

Wrishiz Shilpi Gosthi, a folk cultural organisation, holds a festive program in celebration of its Silver Jubilee on January 30 and 31

TAWFIQUE ALI

IN the face of cultural assault and inflow of cross-cultural elements of late, it has become imperative to retain own cultural tradition and foster flow of country's cultural heritage. Wrishiz is one of those organisations which practice and speak for the country's own folk cultural heritage.

The two-day program of the Silver Jubilee festival of Wrishiz was comprised of rally, folk musical event and discussion.

The inaugural ceremony was dedicated to the memory of legendary folk music exponent Abbas Uddin Ahmed and was held in open air at the premises of Bangladesh Shishu Academy. Folk artists Abdul Halim Bayati, a mystic folk singer and Nizamul Huq attended the inauguration as special guests who spoke on the retention and dissemination of age-old rich treasure of Bangladesh folk music.

Nizamul Huq, an accomplished singer inaugurated a colourful festival rally, which was followed by an enchanting folk song performance. A host of professional folk song artists from different parts of the country rendered songs on the occasion.

Eminent singer Fakir Alamgir presided over the event while Abdul Halim Bayati highlighted significant aspects of different genres of our folk song. He fervently called upon all to take effective measures to preserve this folklore treasure for the sake of our rich cultural heritage.

He presented Fakir Alamgir a copy of his work titled 'Abdul Halim



Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury receives crest from Journalist Obaidul Haq

Bayati: Life and Music', a valuable documentary volume on Bangladesh's folklore, published by Bangla Academy. This volume, written by Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury of Bangla Academy, is based on a lengthy conversation with Abdul Halim who provided the writer with analytical knowledge of varied subjects related to folk music. "I had to share my knowledge on folk music with the writer for long seven years to complete the volume," an elderly Halim said while talking to this correspondent. Many famous folk singers today owe to Abdul Halim, a music mentor who comes from the village of Naodubi under Shibchar in Faridpur. His dictation in the book covers a wide range of information on source, history and message of Bangla folk music of different genres. Contents of the book ranges from Halim Bayati's childhood education, his life as a

folk music exponent, his personal life and above all an erudite theoretical background and spiritual message of folk song.

In his address, Fakir Alamgir mentioned about the roles and objectives. "Wrishiz's aim is to blend the style of folk art with the trend of urban art in a progressive manner". He also said that pop music was introduced in the country not to create cultural unrest but to provoke one's inner thought. Folk music speaks against social anarchy and terrorism with aims of establishing a society free of misdeed.

Popular folk singers, Kanganali Sufia, Babul Bayati, Kalam Bayati and Jahangir Baul performed in their naturally affluent voice creating a reverberating wave of mystic melody in the audiences' heart.



Chorus rendering song at the Silver Jubilee celebration

Music

Pepsi celebrates the New Year

Pepsi's 'Rock the New Year' concert held at the Army stadium

NAFID IMRAN AHMED

FROM the beginning of this year's music season Dhaka was not flooded with concerts like the previous years. But world famous soft drink brand Pepsi did not let that continue. On February 1 with one of the largest concert crowds Pepsi celebrated the New Year 2002 with performances by the front ranking musical icons of the country.

In Bangladesh, Pepsi has provided the much needed platform to reach music to its' consumers, the youngsters. Not only in Dhaka, Pepsi has organised concerts in Rajshahi, Chittagong and many other cities of the country. With music, Pepsi concerts always have a noble cause, such as helping the cancer clubs and blood banks. This time Pepsi came up with something similar. This concert was held for the raise of a fund for establishing a free Friday clinic. Front ranking bands LRB, Nagarbaul, Shadhinota, female singer Mehreen and upcoming bands Vikings, Steeler, Cryptic Fate and Glad Tidlers performed at the concert.

The concert was scheduled to start at 3:00p.m. and long before that the music loving people started to fill the Army Stadium premises. With a heavy metal number Cryptic Fate kicked off Pepsi's New Year Fest. By then people were outside the ground and filling in the galleries in small numbers. Though new to many, Cryptic Fate started their journey into Dhaka's music scene quite some time ago. They already have two albums released and have performed in many mini and big shows. They are quite famous for their heavy metal numbers. The heavy metal fans in the audience loved their performance. The audience cheered as they started playing Iron Maiden numbers. Cryptic Fate played the heavy metal numbers in a unique manner. As always it was amazing to see three young musicians play such good music. Glad Tidlers took over the stage. With some all-time favourite rock English numbers and some of their own Bengali composition such as 'Psychotic Love Affair' the band performed at the concert. Beginning in 1991 the band came a long way and partook in the Benson & Hedges Star Search 1999. Recently they have released an album and have distributed 3000 copies of it free. The reason behind this was that they wanted the audience to listen to their music and judge for themselves whether they preferred it or not. Once again the drummer Daiyan fascinated all with his superb drumming.

Last year's Star Search winner Steeler was next. They started their performance with their own number

'Dukkho'. Next they started performing English numbers. One after another they performed Dire Strait's 'Saultan's of Swing', Brain Adam's 'Summer of 69', Deep Purple's 'Black Night' and 'Highway Star'. One of their Bengali number 'Ratri' was next. The audience enjoyed their performance. With the number 'Tobuo' Steeler's performance came to an end.

Solo female performer Mehreen took the stage next. 'Anari' was the song with which she started her performance. The crowd loved her performance and cheered. 'Shanai' was her next number and the crowd enjoyed this one even more. Famous Latin number 'Lambada' was next. Mehreen's remarkable performance came to an end with the song 'Dekha Hobo'.

The band that gained quite some popularity within a very short time, Vikings was next. They started their performance with their own number

the stage next. As the daylight swept away and the colourful lights flashed on the stage the Army Stadium took a new look. The crowd went crazy as James walked on stage. With a harsh voice James apologized to the audience for having a bad throat and then started their performance with his famous number 'Dukhini Dukho Koro Na'. But as soon as he started the song it was clear that having a bad voice was not a problem at all because the audience sang along with him so loudly that James hardly needed to sing. One after another Nagar Baul performed their famous numbers such as 'Bijli', 'Dushtu Cheler Dol' and 'Mira Bai'.

The crowd started singing and dancing and the whole army stadium wore a festive look. With the famous number 'Jatra' Nagar Baul concluded their performance. The last but not the least LRB was next to perform. LRB's Ayub Bacchu walked on stage and thanked the



Nagarbaul performing at the concert at Army Stadium

'Shomoy'. One after another they enthralled the crowd with their famous numbers such as 'Din Joto' and 'Tumi Kotha Dao'. The last song that Vikings performed was 'Jibiner Kolahol' the number that earned them the Star Search 1999 title. For the first time famous male singer Hasan's new band Shadhinota performed live. The crowd greeted him and his new band as they walked on stage. At first Hasan sang some of his all time favorite numbers such as 'Ato Koshto', 'Ekaki', 'Guru' and 'Bangladesh'. The crowd loved their performance. Then Shadhinota performed two numbers 'Ekla Cholo Re' and 'Karbala' from their debut album, which is due next Eid. With these two numbers Shadhinotas performance came to an end.

Long awaited Nagar Baul took

crowd for singing along with James as he had a troubled voice. Then the band enthralled the audience with non-stop performance of their all time favourite numbers such as, 'Gotokal Rate', 'Mon Chaille', 'Ghum Bhangha Shohor', 'Rupali Guitar', 'Madhobi' and 'Tara Bhora Rate'.

The audience was moved to experience their superb performance. They sang and danced along with the band. The number 'Baro Mas' was performed next. The song with which the PEPSI 'Rock the New Year' came to an end was 'Ural Dibo'.

Once again Pepsi proved that music is the best celebration and presented the audience an unforgettable evening.

Review

Raaz: moviemaking mastery in the making

Vikram Bhatt's Raaz promises to be what no other Bollywood movie has been - a slick thriller, says Subhash K Jha

YOUNG director Vikram Bhatt's latest offering Raaz has already been widely acclaimed. Even British pop star and former Beate Paul McCartney came to see the film in Mumbai. So engrossed was he by the film (or was it just the spooky seductress Bipasha Basu?) that he had to be dragged out of the theatre or else he would have missed his flight back home.

How come one never hears Vikram Bhatt boasting of all this? "You know me. I'd rather do my work than talk about it," he says, as he immerses himself in the post-production work of his second 2002 release Aap Mujhe Achche Lagne Lage.

There are plenty of media-savvy filmmakers who know exactly how to get maximum mileage for their endeavour. But not Vikram Bhatt. Ever since his first directorial venture Fareb, Vikram has been swinging from genre to genre in pursuit of variegated senses of proportion on celluloid. Some of his earlier work, like Bambaai Ka Babu and Madhosh (the latter launching Aamir Khan's brother Faizal as a leading man) are best forgotten. Vikram finally made it big with Gulam. The blockbuster changed his life, and his affair with Sushmita Sen changed his image.

"At that point in my life it was very important for me to prove myself professionally, or I'd have been known as Sushmita Sen's boyfriend for the rest of my life," Vikram whispers softly, loathe to rake up the past.

Vikram is not into spilling beans. "Do you want to know the secret?" is, ironically, the blurb for Raaz, which opens on February 1. Hailed as a supernatural thriller, it is the first of its kind in mainstream Hindi cinema. For its young director, it is one more step ahead in his journey towards moviemaking mastery.

Bhatt became known for his slick action drama Gulam five years ago. Today, he is one of the most viable Bollywood directors with a cluster of assignments awaiting his attention. But Vikram Bhatt remains loyal to Mukesh and Mahesh Bhatt's banner Vishesh Films (he is not related to the two senior Bhatt's).

As his grand romantic epic Aap Mujhe Achche Lagne Lage, featuring Hirith Roshan and Amisha Patel together again, is being readied for a March-end release, Vikram Bhatt is putting the finishing touches to Raaz.

"Raaz is not like the suspense thrillers of the past, such as Who Kaun Thi and Bees Saaf Baad. Quite frankly, I haven't even seen these films. Raaz plays on a very subtle but very real fear of the



unknown. There 's no blood spilt on screen, no grotesque faces and no loud background music and sound effects to startle viewers. Also, it remains true to the supernatural theme to the end."

Interestingly, this is Vikram Bhatt's first original screenplay. All his previous films - from Fareb to last year's Kasoor, have been inspired to some extent or the other by Hollywood films. "It's more challenging to do a film where you're on your own, without any reference points," reveals the director as he anxiously awaits the audiences' verdict on what he calls yet another genre-hopping attempt.

Vikram is all praise for Bipasha Basu in Raaz. She plays a young wife who makes contact with a supernatural presence in Ooty. "I think Bipasha's image of the funky bohemian model-turned-actress is quite misleading. Her face conveys a lot of softness and Indianness. She has given a breathtaking performance in Raaz," he says.

Interestingly, Bipasha's husband is played by her real-life boyfriend model-turned-actor Dino Morea, who also forms part of Vikram's next assignment Kalyug, once again for Vishesh Films.

Also on the cards is a film featuring the mighty Amitabh Bachchan with Bipasha Basu playing his daughter. The Big B plays a man who has lost his son in communal riots and now cannot bear to see his daughter stray into aberrations. Vikram says it's a dream come true to be working with the actor whom he has adored from childhood. "He was the only actor I accompanied my father (cinematographer Pravin Bhatt) to see when dad shot films like Kaalia."