

RECOMMENDATIONS

Concert

Tsugaru Shamisen Concert by a traditional music group from Japan is being jointly organised with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at Sonargaon Hotel Ballroom today at 6:45 p.m. Minister of Finance M. Saifur Rahman and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selma Rahman will be present as special guests. Performance of the same concert will be repeated at the National Museum Auditorium at 6:30 p.m. tomorrow.

Chamber Music Ensemble

The German Embassy in Dhaka organizes a recital of European Classics by famous composers including Mozart, Handel, Schubert and H.M. Bhunibol Adulyadez, the king of Thailand, at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city on March 3 at 7:00 p.m. Ticket is available at the reception of the German Embassy and at German Cultural Center in the city.

Kite Exhibition

A Japanese Spinning top and Kite exhibition will be held at the premises of Bangladesh Shishu Academy at 4:00 p.m. on March 06, 2002.

Art Exhibition

Japan and Bangladesh will hold a joint art exhibition at the National Museum art gallery in the city from March 7 till March 20. The exhibition will feature works of renowned Bangladeshi artist Mohammad Kibria, those of Noriko Yanagisawa, a Japanese contemporary artist and works of Kazi Ghiyasuddin, a Bangladeshi artist who is presently based in Japan.

Ikebana

A Japanese Ikebana workshop and demonstration will be held at Bangladesh Shishu Academy on March 7. The workshop will begin at 10:15 a.m. and will remain open for the invited guests only. The demonstration event will allow free admission that will be held at 3:15 p.m.

Film Festival

A Japanese film festival will begin at the Institute of Modern Languages in the city on March 8 and will continue till March 11. Four films will be screened during the period with two shows, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., every day. The films are Tsuru, Faraway Sunset, Wild Daisy, Hearts and flowers for Toru. Detailed fixtures of the shows will be announced soon. Admission will remain free for all.

Cinema

Mira Nair masala for cine-buffs

Zahir Raihan Film Society screens four films by celebrated Indian filmmaker Mira Nair

CULTURE DESK

MIRA Nair gained international fame with her very first feature film *Salaam Bombay!* It eventually won the 'Golden Camera' for the Best First Film Prize in the 1988 Cannes



International Film Festival in France and was nominated for the Best Foreign Film Academy Award in the same year. No film from India has won the Oscar in the Best Foreign Film category. (*Mother India* was nominated before and *Lagaan* has been nominated this year in the same category. There is a possibility, though, for the highly entertaining film *Lagaan* to win the coveted Prize this year.) Since then Mira Nair has made four feature films: *Mississippi Masala* (1991), *The Perez Family* (1995), *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love* (1996) and *Monsoon Wedding* (2001). All these films are highly entertaining as well as thought provoking. In her feature films, Mira Nair often uses the documentary approaches which often compel the viewers to take her films seriously. Zahir Raihan Film Society has come up with Mira Nair's retrospective this time showcasing four of her celebrated films -- *Salaam Bombay!*, *Mississippi Masala*, *The Perez Family* and *Monsoon Wedding*. These films will be shown in collaboration with the High Commission of India at its Cultural Centre at 754 Satmasjid Road, 5th floor, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209 from today (Saturday) till Tuesday, 5th March, 2002. The films will be

presented chronologically and each day the show will start at 6 p.m.

Mira Nair was born in Bhubaneswar in the state of Orissa in India on 15th October, 1957. She went to Harvard University in 1976 to study Sociology from where she graduated in 1979. Then she started her research work on the various problems in India including migration to other countries, street urchins, child labour, child prostitution, and prostitution in general. She made several documentaries

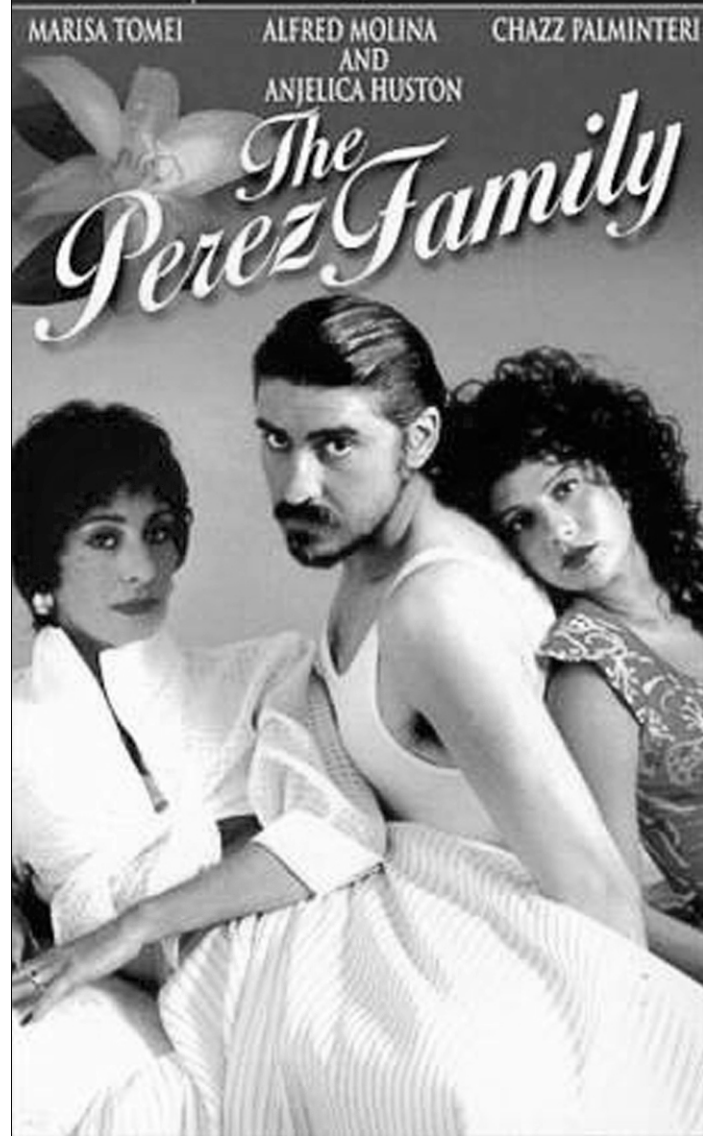
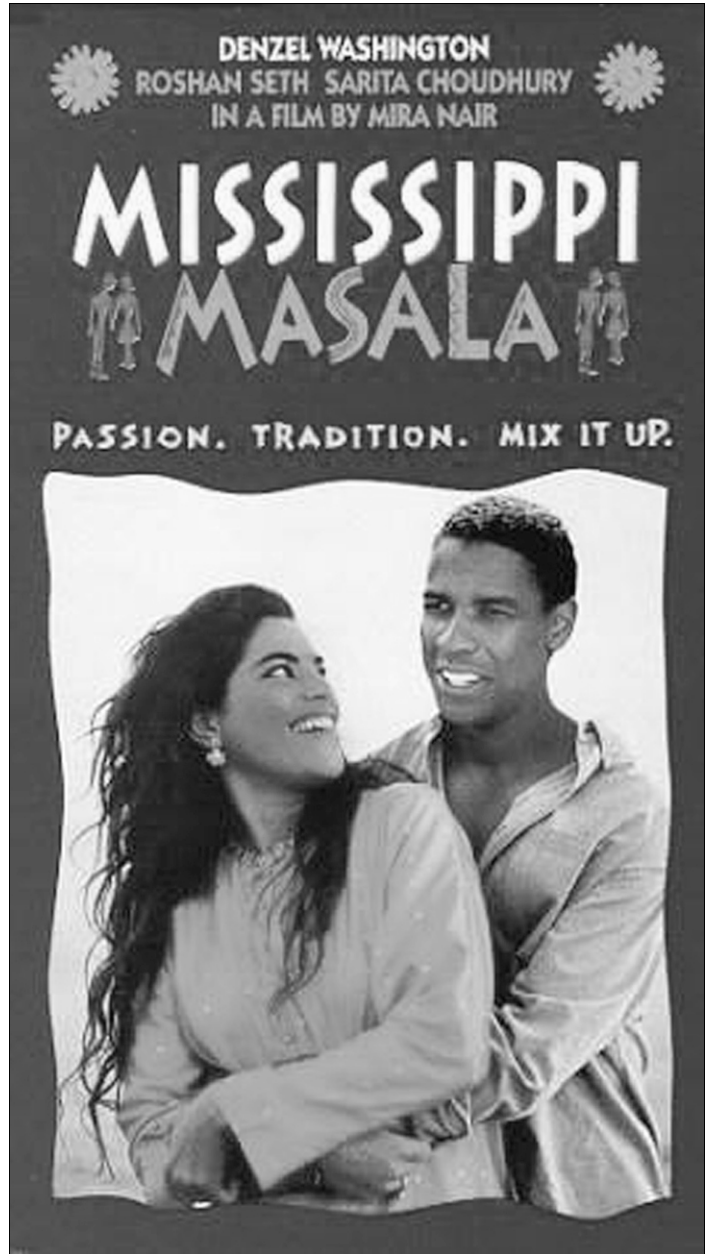
concerning these issues. So, when she started her first feature *Salaam Bombay!* we get a kind of documentary approach in her style. Her recent feature film *Monsoon Wedding* won the prestigious 'Golden Lion' Prize for the Best Film at Venice International Film Festival in 2001. (Zahir Raihan Film Society will screen 11 'Golden Lion'-winning films from Venice Film Festival in its 59 festival-history from 17th to 21st March, 2002 at the Goethe-Institut in Dhaka.) This year, Mira Nair

Table with columns: DATE, DAY, TIME, FILM, YEAR, FILMMAKER. Rows include Salaam Bombay! (1988) and Mississippi Masala (1991).

presided the International Jury in the Competition Section of the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival. (Zahir Raihan Film Society also celebrated the Berlin Film Festival by screening 11 'Golden Bear'-winning films at Berlin from 3rd to 7th February, 2002 at the Goethe-Institut, Dhaka.)

The Retrospective kicks off today with *Salaam Bombay!* (1988, colour, 114 minutes): The streets of Bombay (Mumbai) team with children begging, dealing, sleeping rough, surviving. Working on a scale that would make Dickens envious, Nair draws together the seemingly disparate threads of life in a red-light district, centering around the experience of an 11-year old boy who runs away from his village. At first frightened and alienated, he soon becomes part of a complex hierarchy of exploitation, abuse and affection as he befriends the prostitutes, drug dealers and children of the streets. Far from being episodic or disjointed, the film brings the lives of all its characters into a common embrace, never pointing a finger of blame but constantly emphasising the difficulties and dangers that surround young and old alike. Short entirely on location with its child actors recruited from the streets, *Salaam Bombay!* enters into its subjects' lives with rare authority and absolute compassion, the material generated largely from workshops that Mira Nair and her team ran for a period of months prior to filming. This film is indeed a revelation for audiences of any background.

Mississippi Masala (1991, colour, 118 minutes) will be shown on Sunday, 3rd March: Mira Nair's ambitious film *Mississippi Masala* examines a plurality of subjects associated with race and migration within the confines of a more-or-less conventional love story. Four-year old Mina, her lawyer father and family, of Indian origin, are among those expelled from Uganda in



Demetrius (Denzel Washington), a clean cut, self-employed contract carpet cleaner, and their relationship unleashes the submerged rivalries, resentments and prejudices of their respective communities. An interesting and self-contradicting drama, directed with assurance, and given some appeal by the honesty of its performances.

The Perez Family (1995, colour, 113 minutes) will be screened on Monday, 4th March: There's something about Hispanic culture which has filmmakers swinging their hips. Although based on the Mariel boatlift of 1980, this is no less a rose tinted spectacle than, say, *Don*



Juan de Marco or *The Mambo Kings*. It's crammed with historic performances and ersatz *mise-en-scene*, and it looks like a musical after all the songs have been cut out. Marisa Tomei is Cuban prostitute Dottie Perez, Alfred Molina political prisoner Juan Raul Perez (they're erroneously recorded as husband and wife by US immigration officials); Anjelica Huston is his real wife Carmela, who escaped to Miami 20 years before, and token Hispanic Trini Alvarado their daughter Teresa. Marisa Tomei gets the worst of it. Coming to the states with a passion for Elvis Presley, a long line in cocktail dresses, and the ambition to 'fo' John Wayne, she shapes her money-maker, amasses an extended misfit family, and generally carries on like Rita Moreno with ants in her pants.

Monsoon Wedding (2001, colour, 114 minutes) will be presented on Tuesday, 5th March: This film is full of joy. Happy, cheerful, with so many characters, and most of them good, interesting ones. It is the story of a wedding in upper class Delhi. A large family spread all over the world reunites for the big event and all the ties and feelings between siblings, cousins, parents, friends are shown and expressed in a light but touching way. Love, friendship, envy, pain, sorrow, loneliness, passion and hope in a nearly perfect mix. This movie is full of colours and music, and it is an accurate portrait of modern India (the wealthier part of it at least).

New books

Children's dreams in print

Books for children at the Ekushey book fair have brought smile among young readers

CULTURE DESK

CHILDREN'S books of novel, rhymes and fantasy tales have attracted attention of children at the Ekushey book fair that ended recently.

Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone, a novel that has been written by J.K. Rowling, a British authoress, received an unexpectedly high ovation from the visitors

to-do community. Another book that has attracted a large number of readers at the fair stalls, is 'Swapan Buror Golpo', a storybook for kids. Written by Qamrunnahr and published by Aparajita Prokashani, the colourful book has an elaborate description of a dream that a child sees in his sleep. The contents of the book can be regarded as an excellent sym-



the fair. International filmmakers, to create movie based on the story of Harry Potter, have utilized the plot. The book has been translated in almost all languages of the world including Bangla. The book was available at the Ekushey book fair and is a publication of Ankur Prokashani. Price of the book is taka 90/-.

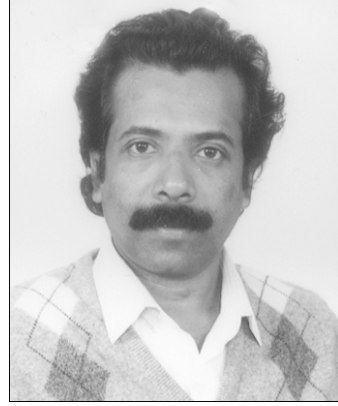
Harry Potter is an orphan who has to spend struggling days in an aunt's house. The aunt and uncle always want to hide some facts of Harry's infancy. They do not want Harry to know the fact that he had rich parents who had left behind a huge amount of financial legacy for the kid. A sorcerer comes in his life to help bring out Harry Potter from the clutches of some selfish people. The theme has depicted a cruel contemporary situation where the poor and the weak are certain to receive maltreatment from the well-

boic expression by the author who has exposed the lack of certain civic amenities in our society. The writer has dedicated the book to her two children who, in her words, are confined, just like the small child of the story, in an unplanned city that has no recreational provision.

Rhyme book, that was available at the book fair, is 'Barsha Manei megher Khai'. The book is written by Ribon Raihan and published by Kolpodoot. Ribon, a rhyme composer who is in his twenties, has projected on various issues of the society. History of language movement, oppression on the Bengali during the war of liberation, sweet childhood memories, traditional ceremonies of Bengal, eco-conservation and juvenile fantasy are some of the themes those have found place in the 42 compositions.

Anniversary

Shihab Sarkar turns 50 today



CULTURE DESK

THE 50th birthday of Shihab Sarkar, a major voice of Modern Bangla Poetry, will be observed today. He was born at Azimpur on 2 March, 1952. Shihab Sarkar's prolific literary career began in the decade of the seventies in 1972. His maiden collection of poetry 'Laal Jouban Din' appeared in 1982. The latest one 'Marylin Oi Je Gooha' came out in 2000. He has so far published 16 books including 8 poetry collections. The voluminous 'Shihab Sarkar Kabita' is coming out next month. Shihab Sarkar has been honoured with a number of literary awards and citations in the country and abroad. He has received the Kabyokala Award 2001 for his contribution to Bangla Poetry.

By profession Shihab Sarkar is a journalist. He works for The Independent as Assistant Editor.

Shihab Sarkar has proved his brilliance as a gifted prose writer as well. He has been writing short stories, novels and literary essays since the beginning of his literary career. His latest novel 'Someshwarier Meye' appeared in this year's Ekushey Book Fair. Sarkar is a skilled translator and a TV dramatist. One of his English poems has been included in the syllabus of a special education programme launched this year in the US state of Delaware. His poems have appeared in international anthologies published from Asia and the West. He participated in the prestigious International Writing Programme at Iowa University in the USA in 1991.

Japan Week

Music from Japan

Japanese concert to enchant music lovers in Dhaka



CULTURE DESK

T SUGARU Shamisen Concert will be performed by a traditional music group from Japan at 6:45 p.m. today at Sonargaon hotel in the city. The concert has been jointly organised by the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on the occasion of the ongoing Japan week. The Minister in charge of the Ministry of Finance will be present as a Special guest.

The shamisen is believed to have originated in western Asia. The skin of the western Asia instrument from which the Shamisen originated is made of chestnut wood, and it is believed that it went to China via the Silk Road, where it was covered with python skin and transformed into the 'Niko.' The niko was a kind of instrument played with a bow, but after coming to Okinawa via the Ryukyu trade, it became the 'Sanshin' played with a pick made from a water buffalo horn, and subsequently came to Japan.

Japanese at that time did not know how to play the 'Sanshin,' but since the Biwa Hoshi, Buddhist priests who play Biwa (Japanese mandolin) and who were respected at that time as Japanese traditional performing musicians, used plectrums, it began to be played with a plectrum as it is today. It is said that the shamisen is the product of several improvements.

Tsugaru Jongara-bushi is the musical melody particularly played by Tsugaru Shamisen. Although it is believed that Tsugaru Jongara-bushi originated in Tsugaru, the northern part of Japan, because of

the lyrics of the song, it is said to be a song originally from Echigo (middle part of Japan) that was later introduced to the Tsugaru area by Goze (blind women who played the shaisen and sang for money).

According to legend, there was a place called Kamigawara on the Aseish River in Tsugaru Area, and a Buddhist priest who was chased by the Tsugaru clan threw himself into the river. It is said that villagers at that time started to sign a memorial service for him, the 'Kamigawara-bushi.' There were lyrics for cherishing the memory of the priest and cursing the Tsugaru clan in those days, these naturally died out, and it became popular as a regular oral lyric. This became the present lyrics in 'Tsugaru Jongara bushi.'

Later on, the melody of 'Tsugaru Jongara-bushi' changed repeatedly. It became popular in each period as follows: the melody in the middle Meiji Period is the 'old melody,' that from the middle Meiji till the early Taisho Period is the 'mid melody,' and that from the early Taisho to Showa Period is the 'new melody.' The three kinds of melody originated as a result of competition among entertainers who were always looking for something new. Even now, the 'Tsugaru Jongara-bushi' is played completely differently depending on the performer, constantly looking for changes to continue this development.

As 'Shuichiro & Daichi' led by Shuichiro Takahashi is being passed on to the next generation, it will be a pleasure to see how 'Tsugaru Jongara-bushi' will change and develop.

Music

R and B diva Alicia Keys sweep Grammys

AFP, Los Angeles

UPSTART R and B queen Alicia Keys and the underdog film soundtrack of 'O Brother Where Art Thou?' thundered to victory Wednesday in music's highest awards, the Grammys, scooping up five honours each.

The gospel and bluegrass-scented soundtrack's win of five statuettes including best album, the top honour late Wednesday at the 44th annual Grammy Awards, stunned pundits who had not rated it as a major Grammys player.

But 'O Brother's' lightning managed to strike repeatedly, ultimately ousting award favourites, veteran Irish rockers U2 -- from the top of the rankings by topping their four wins, which included record of the year for 'Walk On.'

The 21-year-old singer-songwriter Keys, who was nominated in six categories, won two of the four major awards -- the coveted best new artist statuette and best song for her smash hit 'Fallin.'

Keys, whose album, 'Songs in A Minor,' was among the top-selling and most lauded of 2001, also swept the Rhythm and Blues categories, winning best R and B album, best female R and B vocal and best R and B song, also for 'Fallin.'

'I am truly humbled' by the honour, said Keys, 21, clad in a black lace and red taffeta tango gown at the ceremony held amid a festive and often comic atmosphere at Los Angeles' Staples Center.

Newcomer Keys' wins put her into Grammys royalty, matching the previous record set in 1999 by Lauryn Hill, who won five statuettes, the most ever for a female musician. The soundtrack of dark,

depression-era comedy 'O Brother' won best male country performance for 75-year-old Ralph Stanley for the song 'O Death,' best country collaborative with vocals and best soundtrack compilation.

The soundtrack of the tale based on Homer's Odyssey also scooped non-classical producer of the year for T-Bone Burnett before hitting best album gold.

U2, who with eight nominations had seemed to be the act to beat this year, however lost ground to Keys and 'O Brother,' earning four honours including best record and best rock album for 'All That You Can Leave Behind.'

The Dublin foursome also took the coveted golden gramophones



second only to U2's eight nods -- including in the all powerful best album, best record, best song and best new artist categories failed to pull off a single golden gramophone.

Another up-and-coming young diva, Canadian Nelly Furtado made good on one of her four nods and won best female pop vocal performance.

Other winners included rockers Train, whose 'Drops of Jupiter' earned best rock song, and rappers Outkast, who picked up two rap category awards.

Three-time nominee 1960s legend Bob Dylan picked up an award for best contemporary folk album for, 'Love and Theft,' which was also nominated but lost out for best album.

Organizers said the Grammys show, held here before the music's world's glitterati under tight security, could be seen by up to 1.7 billion people in 175 countries.

Winners were picked in 101 categories, 85 of which were unveiled before the main show, which was spiced up with a gigs



and nominees including Billy Joel and crooner Tony Bennett, Train, Furtado, Keys, Dylan and India. Arie, nominated seven times --