

RECOMMENDATIONS

Glimpses of Life: Japan & Bangladesh

A 7-day group exhibition titled Glimpses of Life: Japan & Bangladesh by two young Japanese photographers Machiko Honma & Kaori Yoshihara opens on March 5 at Drik Gallery at 5 p.m. The show, which displays 60 colour and black and white photographs, ha been designed to complement on going Japan Week in the city.

Literary evening

A literary evening titled 'A Rendezvous with Writers' holds today at 5:00 p.m. on the occasion of the publication of BICHITRITA at the CIRDAP Auditorium, Chameil House at Tophkana road in the city. Manilal Tripathi, the High Commissioner of India in Bangladesh and eminent litterateur Dr. Mohammad Moniruzzaman will be present as special guests. The book is an anthology commemorating 25 years of the monthly magazine Bharat Bichitra in Bangladesh.

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 Tora. Detailed fixtures of the shows will be announced soon. Admission will remain free for all.

Interview

Frantic fervour for classical notes

Chamber music at Osmani Memorial Hall

FAYZA HAQ

PACHISAWAT Sophie Tanapura, the vocalist of the group that performed last evening at the Osmani Memorial Hall , at a function organised by the German Embassy, says, "In our group there are Elvira Galioullina and Simon Stadlmair and me. Way back in 1990 I already had a chamber orchestra going in Bangkok for about five years. Then one day a German friend called up from Germany to start up meetings with Simon Stadlmair. He said "You have a job , I believe to conduct your chamber orchestra' We needed a manager and a conductor for the ensemble. Sometimes we'd add flutes, oboes and clarinets to the string ensemble when the occasion arises. We began with Simon in 1990 and this was unusual for me as a singer to begin a chamber orchestra. When I'd got back to Bangkok in 1985 there wasn't much going on. I'd got together with professors at that time and that's how the chamber orchestra was created. Simon came when the group had already been formed. Five years later we closed down the chamber orchestra as a formation because people grew up, had different ideas and went abroad to study further or took on other jobs so that the orchestra disbanded.

"Simon and I looked at each other and said, 'Why don't we do what we do what we love most which is perform as a chamber group. A violinist and a soprano cannot really perform together alone so that we had to look for more friends. Elvira's husband who happened to be in Bangkok at that time agreed to coax his wife to join them. He said, My wife wants to do little else but play the piano and this will give her some opportunity and pleasure. We continued to work together and Elvira has been with us ever since. We've been creating chamber music programmes for voice and violin recitals and we'd invite other friends who were cellists or flautists ,oboe and clarinet players from Europe or the United States or even Japan to join us every year since 1995. We've been performing all over the world having created a series in Bangkok going to Europe



Sophie Tanapura

specialy in the Czeck Republic, Spain , Japan , Singapore , Cambodia and Vietnam."

Having spoken about how the group got together, Sophie dwelt on her education, saying, "Simon trained at Detmold Music Academy, north west Germany and who comes from a family of musicians so that his brother is a cellist and his sister is a clarinetist andhis mother plays the piano while his father is a violinist. Elvira, who comes from Ufa,Central Russia have been playing since they were five years old and she too came from a music loving family although they were not professionals. I learnt my singing in Paris and Germany. I have always sung as a child but my parents weren't musicians but I always sang in choirs all the children at home had piano lessons and my mother was always singing."

Touching on whether the work takes them away from their family, Sophie says, "We have a child each and it is not difficult as our husbands are understanding and helpful with household duties. My own husband is a businessman. As Elvira's husband is a musician they understand each other perfectly."

Talking about practice, Sophie says, " As a singer I practice about two hours in two sittings every day with exercise in the morning and repertoire in the second session. Elvira practices for three to four hours each day. We also teach and all three of us have been doing a lot of this since last year because we have a contract with the city of Bangkok who have decided to open up a classical lesson music centre which is quite extraordinary because the funding is from the city budget and the teaching fee for the six teachers in the programme while the students study for free. What depends whether they should stay in the programme or not is that if they are hard working and if they meet the concert dates every month which are sort of exams. I find equal seriousness with both the young men and women who are between 18 and 35 and I find the male students more hard working."

Dwelling on the response to their music in the places that they went to, Sophie says, "I think Spain we were very well received where people called for encores and shouted 'Bravo!' even when the average age of the audience group

was over forty. In the east the reaction is a bit subdued as the audience don't have the same mentality. They like the music but will not give a standing ovation as they did in Spain. The response in the Czech Republic was also very encouraging as it is a very musical country."

Asked if the classical music of their type has universal appeal, Sophie says, "Classical music, contrary to what people think is not western. We think it is western because the immediate development has been from the west. But if you look back to the development of music it can be traced back all the way to the east. The scales include well-tempered bells in China and people believe that well-tempered music is western. If you look at the scales people say it began with Pythagoras but the Greeks came all the way to India and I think that there are more links and common roots than we think. The other thing is that when you look at great composers like Beethoven and where they are it is sung today we find that it is mostly in Japan and in China and it is part of the anthem of the European union"

Asked if they had been exposed to eastern music, specially the Subcontinent music, Sophie says, " I know of the 'sitar' and the 'tabla' vaguely and I'm looking forward to the private Bangladeshi concert this Tuesday night at the German Embassy.I have been to Delhi and Agra in India, although the group has not, and I find the music very invigorating. I like Thai and Japanese music . As for ethnic music, for me, it reflects a particular cultural area and it is interesting although I don't have a passion for it. I like the classical music of our type best as I'm at home with it."

Touching on pop and rock music, Sophie says, " I never listen to them, even casually and I even confiscate my son's CDs and replace them with classical ones. I prefer classical music because it reflects on complex thoughts in comparison to folk or pop or rock. Folk music is simpler and more popular as it is easier to understand, I admit. Classical music of any country is bound to be more complicated and this goes for the theatre and fine arts. To develop the culture

in any country it is important to develop the classical culture."

Commenting on fusion music, Sophie says, " I know that some groups in Bangkok have tried to fuse music together but I don't know how well it works although I admit that the Beatles had done a good job with Ravi Shankar. According to repute the fusion work of some efforts is very popular with the young groups .

Explaining the pieces that they played last night, Sophie says, " We took 'Winter breeze' with the melody by HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand with the arrangement by Hans Gunther Momar, a German conductor who has lived in Thailand freight years and created this trio music for us by combining the violin and piano along with the voice line. His Majesty's melody is more the early nineteen hundreds style. His majesty first composed it in English verse but when you sing it in English it sounds too American . However, when you sing it with a Thai verse it is much nicer. The other pieces Mozart who is definitely universal. We also present pieces by Gabriel Faure, Franz Schubert, Sergei Rachmaninov and other composers .

Music of the great masters like Mozart and Beethoven is something that will stir up any civilized soul. You like it even if your are not initiated in classical music and have no idea that it is the work of a great composer. If you listen to it several times you are bound to find it appealing. Once you are familiar the appreciation grows."

Asked if their type of concerts were meant only for the elite, Sophie says, " If the ticket price is very high it will focus on the upper class. If you make the tickets affordable by everybody it will be accessible to a large public who will come on their own accord, whether they are familiar with the music. Just putting up announcements will not do. If in the country there are radio programmes to popularize this type of music , as it is happening in Thailand it would be recommendable."

Giving her comments of her impression of the Dhaka city where she had been only for a day, Sophie says, "It's like Ho Chi Minh city with the rickshaws and honking."

Cinema

Asha Parekh: end of the long wait

ASHA Parekh, with her trendsetting performances in the 1960s in some of the most successful movies in Indian film history, should actually have got the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award well before this year, says Venkat Parsa

The Filmfare Awards 2002 brought few surprises. Lagaan more or less swept the medallions, and Dil Chahta Hai claimed most of the rest. However, Asha Parekh's Lifetime Achievement Award, well-deserved no doubt, caught one off-guard. The trendsetting heroine, who



Asha Parekh dominated the 1960s with a string of musical romantic films, could have won the award any year, of course.

This is not the first time that the accomplished danseuse and talented actress has won a Filmfare Award; she won the Best Actress Award in 1972 for Kati Patang. The award proved to be a turning point in her career, causing her to cut down on films and work on her dancing. Even today, though, Asha continues to be actively involved with the visual media and has to her credit such highly successful soaps as Kora Kagaz.

Known for her involvement with social causes and charitable organisations, not many persons know that the Santa Cruz Hospital has since been named after her. She is also the first woman ever to head the Indian Censor Board of Film Certification.

Hailing from a mixed parentage (Hindu father and Muslim mother), Asha Parekh became a cult star, as an apogee of the Ganga-Jamni or the 'mixed culture'. In fact, this is an aspect that characterised all the stars of the 1960s. With the advent of the newer crop of stars in the 1970s, the trend changed, and today the trend is conspicuous only in its absence.

Asha Parekh's apparel, appearance and acting style were refreshingly different. Films like Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hun, Mere Sanam, Ziddi and Aaye Din Bahaar Ke resulted in the creation of an entirely different genre of films, and in the process, a cult star among an entire generation of notable stars. Asha Parekh, exuding the charm of the traditional Indian beauty, is easily among the most glamorous heroines of Indian cinema.

Asha Parekh's song-sequences had a charm all of their own: Aankhon se jo utren hain dil mein and Zulf ki chhaon mein chehre ka ujala lekar (Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hun), Jaaiye aap kahaan jayenge and Roka kayee baar maine dil ki umang ko (Mera Sanam), Suno sajna papihne ne kaha sab se pukar ke (Aaye Din Bahaar Ke), Oh mere sona re sona re sona (Teesri Manzil) and Sayonara (Love In Tokyo).

Although she had acted in Bimal Roy's Baap Beti (1954) as a child artiste, it was Nasir Hussain, who launched Asha Parekh in Dil Deke Dekho (1959). Hussain continued to be her mentor, and Asha did some of her best films for Nasir Hussain. These included Dil Deke Dekho (1959), Jab Pyaar Kisise Hota Hai (1961), Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hun (1963), Teesri Manzil (1966) and Bahaaron Ke Sapne (1967). Later, he is known to have helped her set up her own film distribution set-up.

After Ghunghat and Hum Hindustani (1960), Chhaya (1961) and Jab Pyaar Kisise Hota Hai (1961), she went on to do a string of light-hearted musicals, which were blockbusters.

Asha was considered a glamorous star, but not an actress. It was only after Do Badan (1966) that she earned recognition as an actress. On the flip side, Asha Parekh did films like Kanyadaan, Chiraagh, Pagla Kahin Ka, which were not quite such a draw at the box-office. Kati Patang and Main Tulsi Tere Aangan Ki were among the more serious roles she did.

The 1970s saw her in dominant roles in films Heera, Samadhi, Caravan, Mera Gaon Mera Desh and Main Tulsi Tere Aangan Ki. By the 1980s, Asha Parekh began to perform character actress roles, aging gracefully. She continued staging her dance ballets until the 1990s, when she finally retired to concentrate her energies on television productions.

Concert

Dhaka savours Tsugaru Shamisen concert

Tsugaru Shamisen concert by Shuichiro & Daichi enthalls the audience

SAIFUL ISLAM

THE Shilpakala Academy and The Embassy of Japan in Dhaka had jointly organised Tsugaru Shamisen Concert at the ballroom of the Sonargaon Hotel last evening to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the People's republic of Bangladesh. It was an evening of an exotic experience for the Bangladeshi audience as the melancholic tune of the shamisen chilled them with its forceful hum. As if it was a journey along the zigzag terrain of the mountainous Japan, as if the musicians clad in traditional Japanese dresses were hiding themselves within a crowd of kimonos, many faces of the rural Japanese people could be seen around the musicians, as if they were peeping through the bamboo twigs of Japan. The bucolic Japan had found its place last evening in the soft soil of the hearts of the Bangladeshi spectators.

The shamisen is believed to have originated in the western Asia a

Japanese musical instrument nurtured through a long history. Tsugaru Shamisen is a style requiring advanced performance skills backed by tradition. The skin of the western Asian 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.

The music group started with

Daichi, the original tune using Jongara Bushi melodies as a motif. The highlight is the intertwining performances of shamisen and shakuhachi flute. 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 shamisen and sang for money). The closeness of it to the Japanese soil, folk tradition and people is noticeable.

According to legend, there was a place called Kamigawa on the Aseishi 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 sing 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, but these naturally died out and it became popular as a regular oral ballad.

Some of the other fascinating pieces played by the group were Shika no Toone(Komuzo)endless expanses of Japan's unique spiritual world, expressed with the Shakuchi flute, melting the listeners in its haunting flow, Ninin Baroi and Ryukyu no Hana(flowers of Okinawa).

Inaugurating the musical performance, the Finance Minister Saifur Rahman remarked that Bangladeshi people share many folk sentiments well known to Japan. The Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Jiro Kobayashi recollected the fine relationship between Rabindranath tagore and Tenshin Okakura, a distinguished Japanese master of painting, in his speech.

The group Shuichiro & Daichi was formed by Suichiro Takahasi in 1998. The groups debut CD 'Daichi' was completed in 2000, since then the group has been touring energetically around the nation.

Cinema

"Amelie" wins France's top movie honour



PHOTO: AFP

British actor Jeremy Irons thanks the audience after winning an "honorable Cesar" March 2, 2002 in Paris, during the Cesars, the French film awards

CULTURE DESK

FEEL-good movie "Amelie" won the award for best film at the Cesars -- France's answers to the Oscars -- in a glitzy ceremony in Paris late Saturday. And "No Man's Land", a film that takes a satirical look at the absurdities of the Bosnian war, won the prize for best first work of fiction.

Director Jean-Pierre Jeunet was also honoured with a Cesar for best director for the film, which has been a hit around the world. Two other Cesars, for best music and best actor, were also picked up.

"Amelie" star Audrey Tautou, however, lost out in the best actress category to Emmanuelle Devos, who played a deaf woman in the critically acclaimed "Sur Mes Levres" (Watch My Lips).

The story, about a young girl

living in Paris (Tautou) who brings happiness to the lives of people around her, had walked into the Cesars with 13 nominations.

"Amelie" is also competing in the best foreign film category of the Oscars, which is to be held in the United States on March 24.

No Man's Land", by first-time Bosnian director and writer Danis Tanovic, relates the story of the war through two enemy soldiers who find themselves at the centre of an international dilemma after becoming trapped in a trench together.

The Cesar honour adds to a basket of trophies the film has already picked up, including best screenplay at last year's Cannes Film Festival. The movie is also nominated for an Oscar as best foreign language film.

Anniversary

BPS turns 25

Bangladesh Photographic Society observes its silver jubilee through honouring 25 of the most reputed photographers of Bangladesh

AZIZ AMIRUL

BANGLADESH Photographic Society (BPS) held a discussion and awarded reception to 25 renowned photographers of the country on February 28 on the occasion of its silver jubilee.

The programme was arranged at the society's office premises at Science Laboratory road in the city. Three photographers were honoured posthumously. They were late Golam Qashem Daddy, late M.A. Beg and late Kafilluddin Ahmed.

The others were Dr. Ansaruddin Ahmed, Naibuddin Ahmed, Dr. Noajesh Ahmed, Rashid Talukdar, Anwar Hossain, Brigadier General (Retd.) M. Atiqur Rahman, Bijon Sarkar, Dr. Shahidul Alam, Syed Anisul Hossain, Mosharraf Hossain Lal Bhai, Mommell Hossain, Golam Mustafa, Syeda Khanam, Maksudul Bari, Abdul Malek Babul, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Khan M o h a m m a d A m e e r , Dr. Rashidunnabi Shuvro, Swapan Saha, M.A. Rahim, Mohammad Alam and Shafiqul Islam Swapan.

Begum Selima Rahman, State Minister in charge of the Ministry of

Cultural Affairs attended the ceremony as Chief guest. Photographer Enam Ul Haq, FBCCI Director Enayet Hossain Chowdhury, Cultural editor of the Daily Independent Syed Lutful Haq, one of the honoured photographers Rashid Talukdar and the secretary-general of the society Mohammad Ziauddin Lashkar were present who delivered important speeches in front of a large number of invited guests.

Monwar Hossain Manik, president of Bangladesh Photographic Society, chaired the event.

The speakers thanked the members of the society for their efforts in honouring the 25 photographers among whom some could be designated as legendary figures in the arena of photography and photojournalism in the entire subcontinent.

Late Golam Qashem Daddy, a father figure among all photographers of Bangladesh, was a natural choice at the top of the list. Late M.A. Beg, founder of Beg Art and Photography Institute, followed his predecessor in a similar fashion, as did Late Kafilluddin Ahmed.

Bangladesh Photographic Soci-

ety released a brochure on the occasion of the completion of its 25th year where more than a dozen demands have been inscribed to draw attention of the concerned authorities.

A couple of those demands included setting up of a government institute of photography and inclusion of the subject in graduate level of academic studies. The members of the photographic society, among other things, also demanded introduction of life assurance policies for the photographers who remain at constant risk during their assignments.

Bangladesh Photographic Society has planned to observe the year of silver jubilee in a befitting manner through arrangement of rally, photography contest and exhibition, seminar, workshop, reunion of photographers, reception to famous photographers, cultural event, photography publication festival and special tours titled as 'Outing'.



Begum Selima Rahman MP is seen (in middle), accompanied by special guests and honoured photographers, at the ceremony.



A concert par excellence