

RECOMMENDATIONS

Syed Jahangir's solo

Featuring recent artworks, the 10th solo art exhibition by Syed Jahangir will start at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts on April 18 at 6 in the evening. Minister M. Morshed Khan will inaugurate the exhibition as chief guest.

Drum concert

Yamato, a drummers' troupe from Japan will perform two concerts at 7 p.m. on April 12 and 13 at the auditorium of Osmany Memorial Hall in the city. The two concerts are being held in observance of the 30th anniversary of Japan-Bangladesh diplomatic relations. Yamato is touring South Asia. The events are jointly organised by the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Organisers have distributed free entry cards.

Photography Exhibition

To commemorate September 11 tragedy and to pay tribute to the innocent victims, a photography show sponsored by The American Centre of the U.S Embassy, opened on April 7 at the city's Drik Gallery, House # 58, Road # 15/A, Dhanmondi. The show is showcasing 27 pieces taken by renowned photographer Foel Meyerowitz from World Trade Centre site. Exhibition will stay open from 3 to 8 p.m. till April 20.

Art show

An exhibition of recent paintings by Murtaza Baseer is now being held at the city's Gallery Shilparag, House # 15, Road # 16(new) at Dhanmondi. The show is open to all from 11:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. everyday till April 19.

Fashion

Interpreting local culture in wearable art

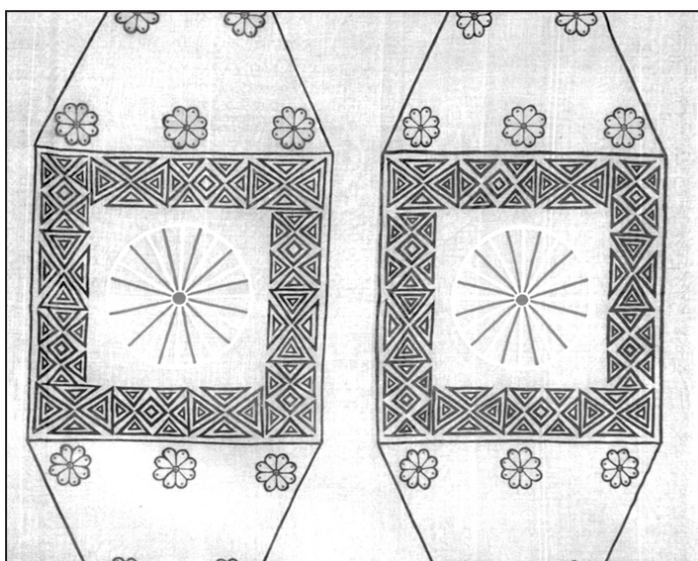
Designer Nadira Azad's sublime Baishakhi collection features in a four-day show opening today at Arial Centre at Dhanmandi

ZIAUL KARIM

NADIRA Azad has carved a niche for herself in the fashion world of Bangladesh with her unique designer-wear. And her boutique Shatabdi now stands for fashion-wear that is quite-essentially Bengali.

Media shy and reticent Nadira draws her themes and enriches her designs from the beauty and riches of the seasons and traditional festivals of the country. In her forthcoming show she pegs her collection on the theme of Baishakhi festival or the celebration of Bengali New Year which opens on April 11 at the Arial Centre in the city.

What is unique about her creation is its wonderfully refreshing interpretation of local culture and ethos. She reads closely the traditional designs of embroidered quilt and alpina or floor painting of rural Bengal to incorporate them into her design and transform them suiting the contemporary wardrobe. Her designs are simple and minimal, yet dauntingly rich in implications and effects.



The simple designs are made dauntingly rich with beautiful distribution of colour

"What you wear reflects your mind and your culture. I always try to draw from the riches of our traditional designs and by doing so I feel that I am rooted in my tradition. My dresses give me a sense of rooted-ness", explains Nadira.

Her collections are basically celebration of colour capturing the joy of life and living. "I do not meditate on my design. What I do is I wait for the right mood to wash over me. Every piece of cloth is an element for my design. And as a sculptor chisels



Nadira's punjabi wears a festive look in delicate hand painting

out his art work, I design out my wearable art," says Nadira.

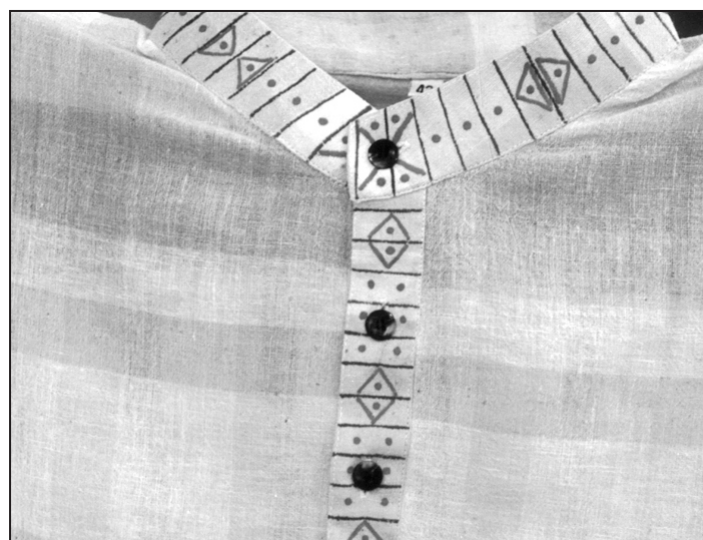
Nadira first came into serious attention of media with her unique designer sari featuring songs of Rabindranath Tagore embroidered on it highlighting themes of monsoon, autumn and love. Her Tagore collection

was first exhibited in 2001 at Shantiniketan to critical acclaim and won hearts of many including the vice-chancellor of Biswabharati University.

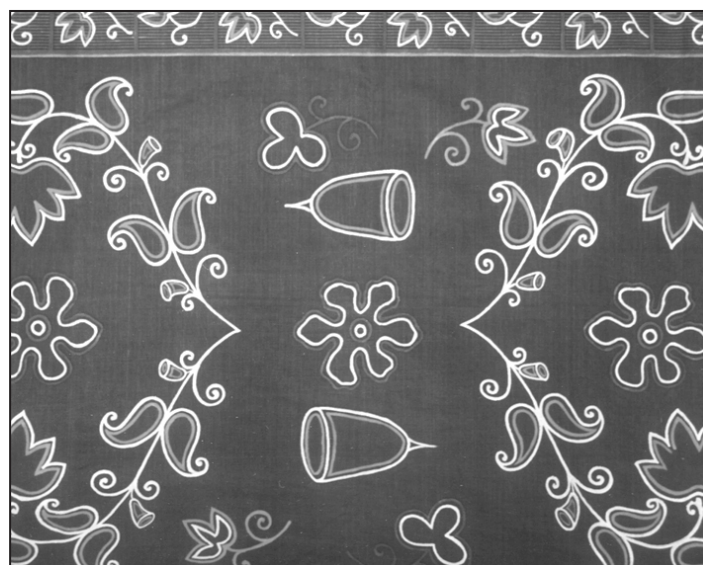
Always experimenting with new expression and devoted to Bengali culture and its nuances, Nadira feels that the secret to remain modern lies in one's attempt to create links between tradition and the contemporary.

The Baishakhi collection that goes on to display from today features sari, salwar-kameez ensemble, and punjabi. Since Baishakhi falls in summer Nadirs concentrates on light hues with designs synchronising it. "Our eyes look for a centre point in a design. This works at the heart of my design. I try to highlight particular points in my saris or punjabis and avoid crowing my collection with designs."

Delectable, soothing and low-priced, Nadira's collection is for everybody to appreciate and to try on without making a separate budget.



A little work on the collar and button area accentuates minimalist beauty of the punjabi



Traditional floral design finds a refreshing look in Nadira's sari

Folk festival

Festival concludes in Netrakona

Local NGO sponsors daylong folk festival at Mohua auditorium in the district town

BSS, Netrakona

A daylong folk-festival concluded here on April 4 with a call to flourish national culture. Saidunnesa Sarker, a prominent folk-song composer of the district formally inaugurated the day long folk-festival at Mohua auditorium here.

Sabalambhi Unnayan Samity, a district level Non-Government Organization, sponsored the folk-festival for highlighting our national cultural heritage to the new generation.

The folk-festival was designed with different cultural events including musical soiree

on bard-songs, narrative-songs (pala-gan), and boat-songs (sari-gan).

Besides, the festival was marked with exhibition, fight with sticks, popular theatres and sessions of recitation from ancient manuscripts (puthi path).

Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada Jacqueline O'Neil, Director of Canadian International Development Agency Mrs. Kate Priston and Deputy Commissioner Netrakona Mohammad Azizur Rahman addressed the inaugural session.

TV Dram



Tarin and Shamim Zaman cast in 'Dayaganj', a new production of dramatist Mannan Hira that is to be aired on Ekushey this evening at 8 p.m. As the plot unfolds Tia (Tarin), a village girl highly infatuated to cinema meets Babul (Shamim Zaman), a young man of the film arena. She follows him to the town but falls prey to some hoodlums. As the drama comes to an end after lots of development, the girl finds Babul as her saviour.

Music

Performing a soiree with "ghazals" galore

Tofail Ahmed, a ghazal exponent of the country performs at the National Museum auditorium

FAYZA HAQ

TOFAIL Ahmed, who performed a concert of "ghazals", Hindi, Punjabi and Sindhi songs at the National Museum auditorium, speaking about how he got into "ghazal" singing in public says, "In our country people take to classical music easily and I have learnt this genre of music in Bangladesh and India. I don't like the light Bengali songs that are often sung in Bangladesh and instead turned to 'ghazals' which have some following in the country."

Talking about how 'ghazals' originated and flourished, he says, "It originated in India during the British rule with Wajed Ali Shah and Bahadur Shah Zafar. Mirza Ghalib is one of its legendary maestros. It has a strong following both in India and Pakistan with singers like Pankaj Udas and Mehdi Hasan. There is a local saying in India that if the world is buying cassettes, the Indians are 'eating' music. For Indians their life is wrapped up in music. The lyrics of 'ghazals' are based on romantic subjects such as the poignant moment of parting, unrequited love. Basically the 'ghazal' lyrics and music are composed with a pensive mood. When poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz wrote his 'ghazals' he saw to its musical presentation, as in the case of 'Ranjish hi sahi dil hi dukhaney key lieye'.

Asked to comment on the recent popularity of 'ghazals', Tofail says, "There are two years for this. Earlier the 'ghazals' appeared difficult because of their complex 'ragaas'. The lyrics and pronunciation remained beyond reach ten years ago. Today, due to the exposure to cable TV's films, songs and plays people are attuned to the language of 'ghazals'. In fact if you master 20 'ghazals' on your own, you can

perform yourself. Of course, you have to have a good voice and should have mastered classical music. It was not popular before because of anti-Pakistani feelings. Today we Muslims try to maintain the correct Urdu pronunciations. However, they still don't have 'ghazals' on Bangladeshi TV or radio because of emotional sentiments".

of my sisters, Rubina. The sound of these musical instruments attracted me enormously and later learnt these instruments from teachers. My first guru for 'tabla' was Ustad Sabbir Makkamel and then I learnt it from Pandit Gaur Sankar Gosh. All this took place in Khulna. Then I began at the Shilpkala Academy there with Ustad Abid Hussain and then Pandit

plans. At that time they were extremely disappointed with my choice of profession although today they are quite contented as I'm socially established. I learnt 'tabla' again coming to Dhaka from Ustad Qamruzzaman Moni. Besides this I learnt pure vocal from Pundit Anil Kumar Shaha for five years.

"In 1997 I took the scholar-

Sharma, Pandit Jagjish Mohan, Pandit Rajensajan Misra, Pandit Birju Maharaj the dance maestro and Ustad Sabri Khan the 'sarangi' maestro. I learnt 'thumri dadra' from Bombay, where my 'guru' was Bidushi Shobha Guttu."

Talking about his experiences in India, Tofail says, "One had to be really good to bethere. They kept in mind our voice qualities, how long we practiced, our 'tamiz' and of course how we handled the instruments such as the 'tanpura' or the 'harmonium' for light songs like the 'ghazals', 'thumris', 'dadra' and 'tarana' while the 'tabla' accompanied."

When asked why a lot of modern music like the keyboard, octopad and guitar are being included in "ghazal" performances when they end up drowning and crushing the beauty of the 'ghazals', Tofail says, "Nowadays the audience want that type of musical accompaniment. All the singers like Jagjeet Singh and Mehdi Hassan have used such accompaniment. However, I admit that for 'ghazals', the 'tabla', 'harmonium' and 'sarangi' are enough."

Touching on whether it was not expensive to use so many instruments, Tofail says, "We don't practice with the instruments all the time but rather a few days before the final performance. We just discuss before the perform. Our musicians, unfortunately don't have much control but tend to flaunt their music thus ruining the final impact."

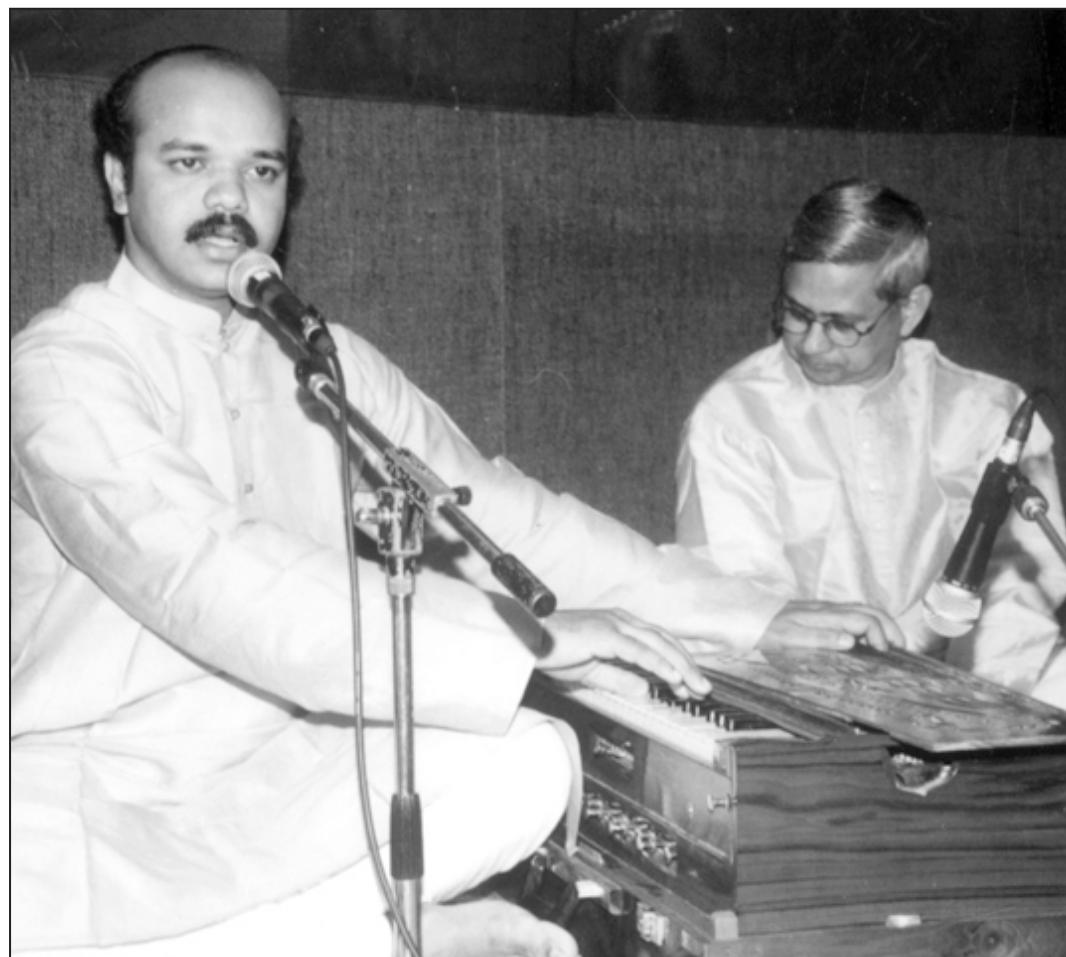
Today Tofail has his flat in Baridhara but he hasn't always had it this easy. Tofail says, "When I came to Dhaka in 1992, being a little over 20, I gave Tk225 for a 'seat' in as 'mess' and I gave tuition for Tk 300. Fortunately I got tuition for 'tabla' and with the money I learnt further. I got a few more stu-

dents and this was naturally helpful. Learning both the 'tabla' and vocal singing, I had a little saving. Often people did not approve of my 'riaz' and requested me to sing Hindi film songs instead and they even ridiculed me but I did not give up. I practiced daily despite objections and perhaps that is why I have come this far."

Asked if had instant success when he came back from India, Tofail says, "When I was a student in India there was a performance in 'thumri' or 'ghazal' every day somewhere or the other and we were paid for our participation. Having come to Bangladesh, I've had to lock up everything that I had learnt. I have a feeling that one day I'll have to quit my 'ghazals' and sing pop songs somehow. I want the listeners to hear classical songs so that they can appreciate it. That is why I had my fusion piece, Shankar Mahadev's 'Breathless', which is based on a 'raag' in my concert. At present, in Bangladesh, the appreciation for classical Indian music is limited."

Talking about how he felt about presenting Hindi film songs at a serious concert, Tofail says, "After listening to 15 continuous presentation of 'ghazals' the average listener tends to get bored and craves for something with a faster beat. They are few who are contented with listening to 'thumri' and 'dhadra' alone. People expect film songs even as a 'ghazal' performance. I had also included 'Duma dum maskalander' and a 'Punjabi' song with swift and powerful beats for the benefit of the local listeners alone and they went down incredibly well going by the response."

Tofail Ahmed's pursuit of "ghazals" is indeed admirable.



Performance of Tofail Ahmed in progress

Dwelling on his exposure to 'ghazals' during his study period in India, Tofail says, "When I got the scholarship in 1997 I got the opportunity to learn Urdu and Hindi songs which I liked enormously since my childhood days. I was 26 then and had done my Bachelor's degree in Arts. In 1989 my father got a 'harmonium' and a 'tabla' for one

Shadhan Sarka in the same city. Later I studied with Rashid Hussain Talukdar. When I was learning there I practiced at least for six hours every evening at a stretch for three years. I had no encouragement from my family but did so from my friends. My father wanted me to be a professor or at least a bureaucrat but I had other

ship exam at the National Museum auditorium and the jury decided to send me to India. This ICCR scholarship from the Indian government was for four years. I chose to study in Delhi as I had the weakness for Urdu and Hindi as the lyrics of the 'khiyal' are either in Urdu or in Hindi. I learnt from eight teachers, including Srimati Shanti

Cinema

Local film critic in Cannes festival

Ahmed Mujtaba Jamal, Secretary-general of International Film Critics Association of Bangladesh joins the Jury board of the forthcoming film festival in Cannes

CULTURE DESK

REGARDED as one of the top festivals in the international film arena, the Cannes Film Festival starts in the French coastal city of Cannes for the 55th time from April 15. The festival that is held every year receives a large number of international film celebrities including performers, makers and promoters.

Ahmed Mujtaba Jamal, a reputed personality of the alternative film arena has been selected as a jury member of the judges' panel that has been formed by a nine member team of FIPRESCI, members of which will adjudicate films as best ones in different categories.

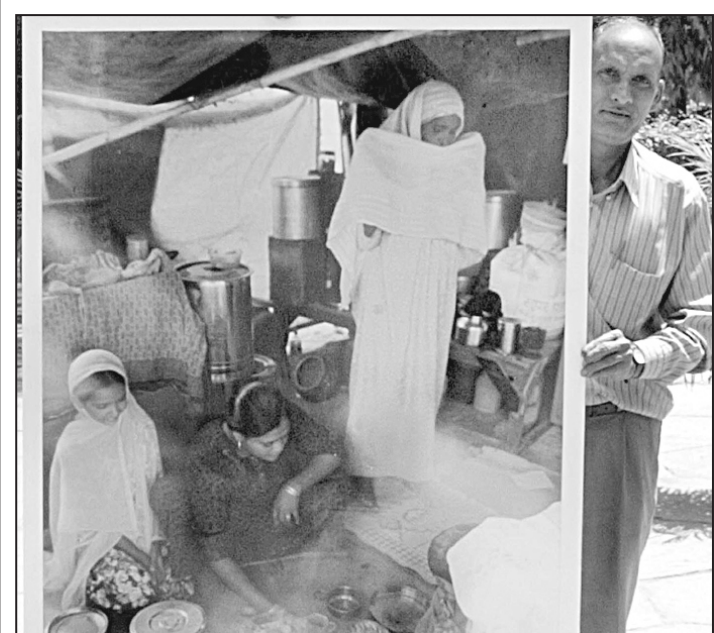
Ahmed Mujtaba Jamal is the Secretary-general of International Film Critics Association of Bangladesh (IFCAB). Other

members of the international jury panel include film critics from Czech Republic, France, Australia, Egypt, Greece, Russia, Japan and Sweden.

"The inclusion of Ahmed Mujtaba as a Jury Board member in the Cannes Film Festival will certainly give a boost to the movement in promotion of alternative films in the country" comments Professor Kabir Chowdhury, a senior teacher of Dhaka University and President of International Film Critics Association of Bangladesh.

Ahmed Mujtaba Jamal is the Director of Dhaka International Biennial Film Festival organised by Rainbow Chalachitra Sangsad. The reputed international critic is the editor of 'Celluloid', a film-based journal. In the past he had been selected as member of jury boards in international festivals in Berlin, Venice, Freiburg and Mumbai.

Photography



Photograph taken by B. Jayachandran shows Hindu and Muslim women preparing dinner together at a refugee camp in Gujarat. It will be on display in an exhibition in New Delhi from April 11