CULTURE

The Daily Star

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabaret Pasteur July 19

A demonstrative play on French scientist Louis Pasteur by visiting guest Daniel Reichberg will be held at the cafeteria premises of Alliance Francaise de Dhaka at 7 p.m. The show is open to all.

Exhibition on French artist July 5 - August 2

An exhibition of the works of French artist George de La Tour, observing his 350th death anniversary. continues at the Andre Malraux room of Alliance Francaise in the city. The exhibits include books on the artist and a majority of his famous works.

Weekend cinema July 19

Alliance Francaise screens two films on the day, the first being, 'Louvre, la visite' to be shown at 10:30 a.m. while the other, 'Que la fete commence', at 6:00 p.m. The first film takes the audience to the biggest museum of the world where one finds the best and the most exotic artworks and items of other types The second film is one of 1974.

and is based on a historical plot of

Print exhibition July 19-28

Gallery 21 at Dhanmondi in the city presents a solo print exhibition of artist A. Rahman that continues daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Professor Mahmudul Haque inaugurates the exhibition and Nahas Ahmed Khalil stays present as special guest.

Group art show Julv 13-20

A group art exhibition is on at the gallery of Indian High commission cultural center in the city that features works of five young artists. The show continues everyday from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Art exhibition August 2-15

Artist Fakrul Islam holds a solo exhibition of his works at the gallery of Alliance Francaise, complete schedule of which will soon be announced. 'Art is the best way to express emotion, love and personal attitude of oneself' says Fakrul.

Event **Popularising Louis Pasteur**

A cabaret of science at Alliance Francaise

Fayza Haq

ANIEL Raichvarg, a professor at the university of Burgandy (Dijon), who is dedicated to communicating science to the public, who will hold a cabaret performance today at Alliance Francaise, says about his subject, the contribution of Pasteur. Pasteur wanted to popularise his own findings in science as he sometimes wanted to go over the other scientists of his time who did not believe, for example the power of microbes being involved in the development of illnesses. He couldn't easily convince the other doctors and scientists of his time. So he made public demonstrations to prove to everybody that he was right and that his was the right vaccine against the disease found among sheep. He used popularisation of his knowledge to convince people because the scientists of his time wouldn't easily accept his ideas and theories of microbes.

Pasteur's job was to find answers to daily problems and they included wine, yeast, milk and various other things. His subjects were from nature and used his laboratory to find a solution in daily use and then go back to science. His purpose was to withdraw problems from everyday use with his solution of pasteurisation. His vaccines are included in my show as Pasteur's vaccines form major history against rabies. It was not necessarily a dangerous illness as it killed only about ten or twelve people a year in France. However, it was a striking disease because the death was a painful one. Thus Pasteur tried to publicise his vaccine after which the Pasteur Institute was created and the movement for vaccination was launched. It was interesting how Pasteur used the media to try to develop his ideas.

Talking about what he wished to achieve from his demonstrations, Raichvarg says," I call it a cabaret, although it might appear a bit bizarre to a foreigner, because in France a cabaret is a place to drink, talk about daily life in a pleasant atmosphere. This is an unconventional performance in which there can be jokes on political, social or economic



Louis Pasteur

aspects of life. With the background of music and song you can say freely what you want to. This is serious fun. I am not Pasteur in 'Cabaret Pasteur' but a man working in a cabaret at the end of the 19th century making fun of the Pasteurisation of the French society at that time for example people going to get vaccination for rabies even though they were not bitten by any dog. At the same time I explain many things about Pasteur's life. My personal achievement is to say to people that science is asocial construction and it does not belong only to the scientists. For instance, at one time in France, there was an interesting song about tuberculosis. These

were tools to popularise science .' Dwelling on how he got the idea of the 'cabaret', Raichvarg says," A few years ago I was a scientist and then began to teach Biology in a secondary school. I began this theatre type instruction with my students who were teenagers. It proved to impress my seniors . By this time I had done my Ph.D in science and theatre which means presenting science on stage. I did this from Paris and wrote my book on Pasteur called 'Louis Pasteur, l'empire des microbes' and this was published for Pasteur's death anniversary in 1995. I was then asked to deliver lectures on Pasteur . I wasn't really interested in lectures so I said

'I will build a show on Pasteur'. This is a one man show. In Paris I am accompanied by an accordion player. The performance is for a little over an hour and I take some text from poetry from Pasteur's time, I use paper clippings and advertisements of the 19th century. Test from Pasteur himself is also presented. I've presented it in French, English, Spanish and Portuguese.

"During the performance I have a basket and say that I've been to the New Market, Dhaka, and bought things that remind me of Pasteur's work. I say I need the help of the audience to make the show a success and ask the people to pick out something from the basket and talk about it for example yogurt, bread, beer, wine and a box of vaccination and I ask the people to let me know what they can tell me about the milk etc. I say that I belong to 1895 and Pasteur is just dead and I do not understand what the people are saying. I reach out to the public and go back to my text and go on repeating this technique of entertainment and information." Asked how this technology

travelled to the developing world, Raichvarg says," Pasteur built his scientific world with modern ideas e.g. when he created his institute he worked in it , he could not solve problems coming from developing countries without having laboratories in these developing countries. In 1888, he created Pasteur Institutes in other countries in the French colonies like Indochina in southeast Asia and Senegal in Africa. He wanted people to discover the microbes inside other countries themselves instead of taking them to Paris which was too far. Thus the bacillus peste, transmitted by rats was found in Indochina by Yersin in 1898. Thus the teams in foreign laboratories worked in far flung areas of the world with their own population. Pasteur himself could not do anything outside France as he was too old and he died before his works could touch these far regions but for instance, by the 1930s there were a lot of people who worked on leichmania carried by parasites in North Africa in the Pasteur Institute of Tunisia. Charles Nicolle, who did this, won a Nobel



Daniel Raichvarg

Prize. This was exactly what Pasteur wanted as he wanted the effects of his research to reach distant countries."

Asked if science is still following the public service science which Louis Pasteur was part of or has science undergone more transformation where its profit is focused. Raichvarg says," You cannot speak about science in general. Take the problems of AIDS for example. We see that the scientists want to do their job and find something but at the same time science is nothing without the necessary drugs. These medicines depend on the companies and these companies know how to make medicines but they will

not give it for free to the developing countries so that even if the scientists have the will to build knowledge for people there are too many money problems in the world and they lose their capacity. The private companies are more powerful than the scientists themselves."

Asked to throw some light on his background, Raichvarg says," I am from Dijon and my job is to promote the popularisation of the sciences and show my 'Cabaret Pasteur'. Sometimes I combine the two together as I did in Bangkok and this is followed by a workshop. In Bangladesh I'm doing my cabaret today and giving a lecture at the Chemistry Department of the Dhaka Univer-

sity. Thus I'm both an actor and a university professor. With my cabaret I've been to USA, Canada, Europe(France, Germany, Italy, England, Sweden, Switzerland), Brazil, Columbia, Argentina, Madagascar, Guinea, Morocco etc. I found the most response in Madagascar because at the beginning of my show I spoke about cholera and at that time at that place there was the beginning of a cholera epidemic. Another interesting place was in the city where Pasteur worked in the 19th century. In Argentina too the response was very warm."

Talking about his impression of Bangladesh, Raichvarg says, "I had my own conceptions of Bangladesh before coming here. We know about this country from what we see on the French TV and we hear that there is a difficult time for the country with arsenic problem, flood situation and drowning by boat. The only way an underdeveloped country can progress is if there is a driving force from among the people themselves and if they don't wait for handouts from overseas. When I came here I was not really shocked by the prevailing poverty because I've been to African countries like Madagascar and Guinea which are poor too. It is a pity though that there is never any good news in the media about Bangladesh. I hope to go to the Buriganga and see old sites like the Lalbagh Fort. I hope to do some shopping too for items like printed silk scarves. Added to his interest for philoso-

phy and history of sciences, is a specific lure for theatre that leads him to create plays dedicated to sciences and other performances of living shows of sciences, willing to discuss the relationships between sciences and society in "The passion of the Scientist, "The Cabaret Pasteur", "Felicity or De Groningue's marvellous Theatre of Science an Art", "Zephyrin and the golden meteor" (adapted from a Jules Verne book), and the "Little Scientific Circus" (which includes 17 actors, a pony, a magician and five musicians.). Raichvarg received the prize for public understanding of science from the French Ministry of Scientific Research in 1996.

TV GUIDE						
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