

Drama in driftwood

Priyobhashini's solo at Bengal Gallery

FAYZA HAQ

ERDOUSI Priyobhashini, who recently held her driftwood exhibition at the Bengal Gallery, says, 'I always saw forms around, such as in the clouds in the sky. My husband was posted in the village areas, as in Sylhet, so that I got a chance to visit garden areas. In making flower arrangements for the home I came across many dried branches and driftwood which I combined with green plants.' In her early steps to become a full fledged artist, she received encouragement from artists such as SM Sultan. Her husband also egged her on and did not mind her spending long hours over her driftwood. While her husband reads his books she whittles away on her driftwood pieces.

Asked what problems she faces, Priyobhashini says



Dusk and Priyobhashini (Inset)

that she enjoys the struggles. She must preserve her wood pieces in salt, water and mulberry and boil them for hours at a stretch. She collects her driftwood in her daily activity, as she goes about her routine work, sometimes even collecting them from dust bins. When she works she has only her helper who assists her with hammer and saw. If any guest comes while she is working, she puts her work aside. She says she would have liked to have studied fine arts formally but this stage in life, suffering from severe diabetes, she refrains from any such effort.

Her conventional themes include a swan with the wings spread out, created from a *krishnachura* tree. There is another one on Mother Teresa, contrasting with the collection of seven stools built from dried coconut shells and dead branches of trees. There was then a presentation of the romance of Leda and the swan.

Among the new works is the collage of a young woman dancing in spring. At the back are bits of burnt



An afternoon of rain clouds

charcoal and fragments of wood pieces stuck with gum. There was then the large lyrical piece with giant mushroom blooms and stem stems, which was named 'goddess of flowers'. 'Chandrabilash', which dealt with the beauty of moonlit night, had been created with ivy leaves. 'Haier shash' and old dried branches of money plant had been used in another creation presenting two haunted birds. 'Srirati allindo' brought in windows in a haunted house, opening out to the past.

Earlier Priyobhashini dealt with war, struggle and the injustices of life. In the present exhibition she has concentrated on love and the graceful forms of birds and women.

This time, again, instead of clay pots, there were remnants of trees, in the form of driftwood, containing fresh green plants with decorative leaves like money plants and 'patabahar'. She has attempted to bring in a geometry of sculpture in plant life by controlling the growth and spread of plants by placing them in wooden forms. Living creepers, bits of earth and pieces of wood create joie de vivre.

She has taken part in 10 group shows and has had nine solo exhibitions.

Of golden oldies

Nazrul and Tagore numbers by Kanak delight audience

ELITA KARIM

'I have been in this field for 20 years, and still look forward to it,' smiled Kanak Champa, when asked about her current successful career in music. Kanak was speaking at a recent soiree organised by Orchestra at the All Community's Club situated in Gulshan 2.

The hall room was aglow with candlelights and the round tables were adorned in white linens to bring a mesmerising effect. Fatematu Zohra Ritu, an upcoming singer, welcomed the crowd with several numbers hailing from the old-gold days, Nazrul's compositions and several modern numbers.

At around 8:00 pm, Kanak stepped on stage to begin with her set of enthralling compositions. 'As an artiste, it's a pleasure to have an evening all to yourself,' she said to the crowd. 'Usually, after singing a series of Bangla numbers, the crowd requests for Hindi numbers. However, tonight I am sure I'll be able to perform a few of my favourite compositions as well.'

She started off with a number by Rajanikant and went on to sing several numbers from her first few performances on the television, followed by golden oldies, Nazrul compositions and Tagore numbers. She held the audience captive with her melodious rendering of popular numbers such as *Shagorer teer theke*, *Nijhum shondhoy*, *Eymon tomake dilam*, *Akash eto meghe*, *Amar bolar kichu chilo na*, *Prem ekbaa eshechilo nirobe* and many more. Likewise I hope there will come a day when artistes will perform my numbers on stage and receive the same adulation,' she said.

Kanak is a household name in the country today. She has also travelled around the world where her music has been widely appreciated.

Looking into the future, she said, 'I have received recognition by singing these memorable oldies of legendary artistes of our land.

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Kanak Champa

which seemed to speak of its own heart.

The audience clapped in appreciation and sang along with Kanak at times. Some of the spectators were seen giving in their own requests on cards, clearly enjoying the evening. In between her singing, Kanak dedicated a few of her numbers to her father and her husband, who were both present at the show.

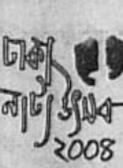
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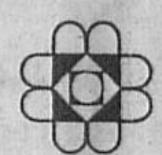
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Dhaka Drama Festival 2004

Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation

(June 17-July 23)



REVIEW

Nagor Alir Kissa

The darker side of the city

These are far from peaceful days in Dhaka. One just has to look at the widespread problems such as terrorism, crime, housing shortage, lack of employment, hijacking, traffic jam and unprincipled politicians. Though the daily papers are replete with the solutions advanced by the intellectuals and the commitments of the politicians, the current status quo is alarming. Drishipat Natya Shangshod's production *Nagor Alir Kissa* cries for an end to these problems.

On July 12, at the Experimental Theatre Stage Drishipat Natya Shangshod staged their popular play *Nagor Alir Kissa* as part of the Dhaka Drama Festival 2004 arranged by BGTF.

MA Salam's play starts with an imaginary scene where three souls of language martyrs of 1952 ask a living freedom fighter, 'What have you done after the Liberation War? Why hasn't there been a change in the current situation of the society?'

The plot advances with two men, Nagor Ali and his maternal uncle, coming to Dhaka for a job. Through their experiences in the city, the playwright successfully depicts the darker side of Dhaka. *Nagor Alir Kissa* ends with a scene when Nagor dies in a clash between rival parties.

In the play, the playwright MA Salam has used the dialect of the slum dwellers and slang for his characters. The actors, thus, have a touch of realism.

MA Salam unfolded his play through a narrator. He has successfully handled the lifestyle of the slum dwellers. To avoid any controversy he has successfully visualised the political procession scenes, using only narration and mime. However, he could have avoided



A sequence from the play

the obscene scenes on the stage.

MA Salam, as the set designer, has used a replicated slum at the backstage. The remaining part of the stage was empty.

Swapan Das's light design was simple but effective. His symbolic colour effect to visualise the dawn scene was enjoyable.

Kazi Anis's gesture, voice modulation and body movement as Nagor Ali was excellent. Swapan Das and MA Salam also performed well.

Khaled Khan: Diversified stage career

A regular member of Nagarik Natyasaamprada, Khaled Khan has been contributing his talent in theatre for more than two decades. Along with his diversified acting career in theatre, he has achieved recognition as a director. In the ongoing drama festival his group Nagarik will stage *Kalshondhoy* directed by him. Khaled said, 'It is not the construction of the play, but its philosophy that attracts me. After the successful rise a person may fall because of his arrogance. Usually it is said that Buddhadev's plays have got less dramatic quality. But *Kalshondhoy* is an exception.'

The choreography in the play



needs some physical effort. That is why I have cast all the young artistes for *Kalshondhoy*. I am also the music composer in the play.' Khaled added.

Asked for his comment on the Dhaka Drama Festival 2004, Khaled said, 'I appreciate any drama festival. But it is pathetic to see the small turnout of the audience. All the groups should stage their new productions or some special plays in the festival, which they do not stage regularly on the Mahila Shambhaji Stage. We do not see many new productions in the festivals. I think BGTF should arrange a new play, including only the new plays.'

ERSHAD KAMOL

Search for musical talents begins soon

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The Benson & Hedges Star Search 2004 kicks off with the regional audition for Chittagong on July 21. The event will take place at the Hotel Agrabad.

The other three regional auditions will also take place shortly this month: for Dhaka zone at the Dhaka Billiard Centre on July 24, for Khulna zone at Hotel Castle Salam on July 27, for Rajshahi zone on July 30, and for Sylhet zone on August 02.

15 aspirants from five zones - 43 from Dhaka, 30 from Chittagong, 36 from Khulna, 31 from Rajshahi and 17 from Sylhet--have applied for the contest. Generally 15 to 20 contestants are primarily selected by the judges for the regional auditions.

Flavours of Thailand

Week-long Thai Food and Cultural Festival inaugurated

FAIZUL A TANIM

Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, in conjunction with the Thai Embassy and Thai Airways International, has organised a week-long Thai Food and Cultural Festival. The event was inaugurated on July 10 and continues until July 16.

Besides a special food menu, the festival hosts Thai helles and men dancing to traditional and contemporary music to create an exclusive Thai ambience.

Thai food is currently a highly



Performers presenting traditional Thai dance

admired cuisine in Dhaka like elsewhere, gaining worldwide popularity. It has become the country's representative in the promotion of culture and image. Thai food blends a variety of tastes and mostly contains healthy herbs. Additionally, each dish is decorated for aesthetic appeal and is guaranteed to whet the appetite of the gourmet.

Apart from the popular hot and sour soup, the Thai specialist chefs tickled the taste buds with *Bangkok fried rice* with Thai herbs and

Bangkok gravy noodles. The salads and the sauces, which added nicely with the various dishes *Sauted chicken* and *chicken*, was indeed lip licking.

Ho mok pla, spicy fillet fish with coconut cream and curry paste along with crunchy *Tung Tong*-chicken inside rice paper, much like *Wonthon*, is quite mouth-watering and people took extra helpings.

Fried fish with chilli sauce and spicy minced beef/chicken salads were high on demand and taste.

The assortment of desserts includes fruit salad; fresh fruits from

the basket and most importantly decorated fruit cocktails. It was amazing to see a range of yogurt on small glass offerings, which, like our sweet-sour *Doi*, revealed the similar food habits of Thailand and Bangladesh.

Until July 16, this buffet would be a grand delight on one's dinner menu.

The culture and food together was a wonderful blend of oriental flavours adapted to the local taste.

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