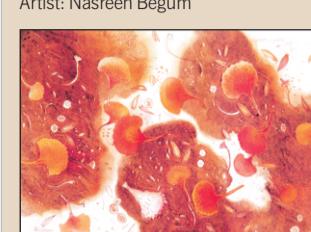


CULTURAL FEAS

Exhibition
Art
Title: The Path Within
Artist: Nasreen Begum



Venue: Bengal Gallery of fine arts, 275/F, road 27, Dhanmondi,
Time: September 01-15, From 12:00 pm
to 8:00 pm

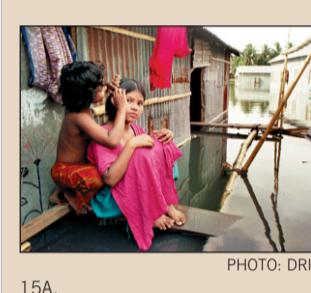
Title: Urban Sight
Artist: Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed



Venue: La Gallerie, Alliance Francaise,
26, Mirpur Road
Time: September 03-20, From 9:00 am
to 12:00 pm, from 5:00 pm to
8:00 pm and on Saturdays from 5:00 pm
to 8:00 pm.

Title: Shamaman-Shahjan
Venue: Charupath, Munshi
Meherulah Road, Jessor
Time: September 10-19, From 10 am
to 8 pm

Photography
Title: Bonya 2004
Venue: Drift Gallery, House 58, Road



15A,
Time: September 4-17, From 3 pm to
8 pm

Dhaka Pantomime

A troupe introducing new trends

SABIR MANIR

THE cliché 'Action speaks louder than words' is most effectively illustrated in mime, a creative dramatic expression usually without words. And pantomime is the art of creating the illusion of reality by dealing with imaginary objects or situations. The terms mime and pantomime are, however, often used interchangeably.

Though the art of mime and pantomime have had a rich tradition in Bangladesh, this performing art was previously not recognised as an independent art form.

In the post-Liberation period, mime obtained familiarity as a totally different and independent medium in Bangladesh. However, it lacked both the involvement of serious actors and audience appreciation. To popularise the art of mime and pantomime in Bangladesh, in 1989 pioneering efforts were made by the first mime group of Bangladesh, Dhaka Pantomime.

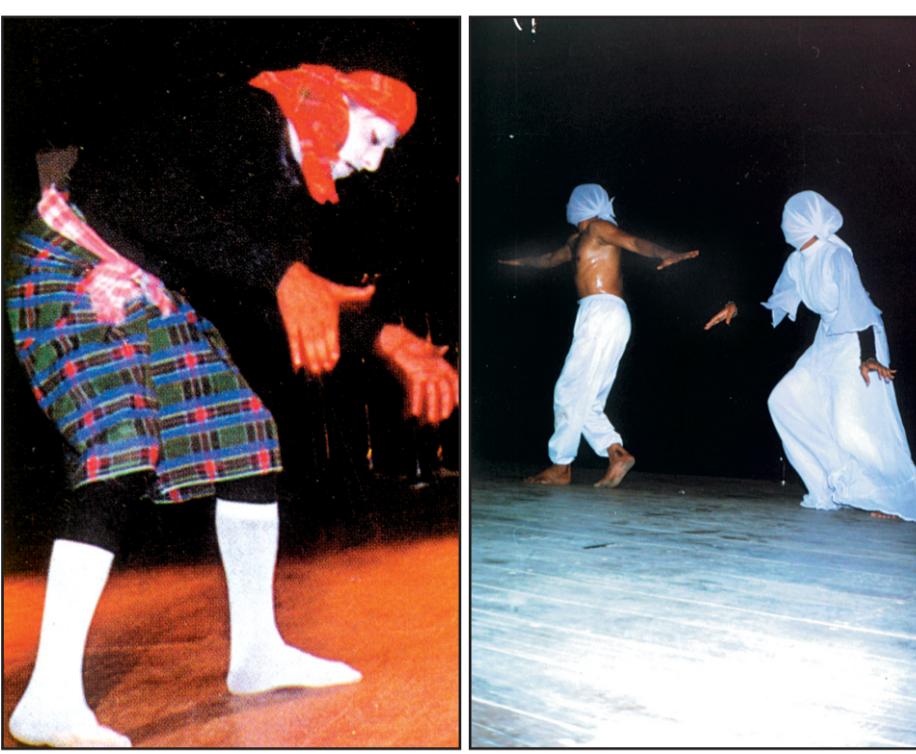
An initiative of Zillur Rahman John, Dhaka Pantomime started its journey with seven members. To quote John, 'We had no institutional training—we were just dependent on our innate talent.'

Dhaka Pantomime first performed at the German Cultural Centre in 1989. 'This was the first team work on mime in Bangladesh,' says John. 'After this successful production, we spread out all over the country,' he adds.

For the first two years, Dhaka Pantomime followed the traditional form of mime which was introduced by Jogesh Dutta, a mime artiste and director of India. Later, the group realised that this was not the actual form. 'Then we came out from the typed form, the typical costume and make-up. In formalising this new trend, we were inspired by a German mime troupe led by Milan Slagke, who performed in Dhaka at that time. After seeing their show, our previous works seemed to us non-artistic. We assimilated the new style which we thought rational and international,' says John.

In 1991, Dhaka Pantomime and Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy jointly arranged the first festival, the only one till date, on mime and pantomime in Bangladesh. They invited two renowned troupes of India to the festival. Besides the performance, an exhibition and seminar on mime were also organised.

Dhaka Pantomime performed on the themes of Man and Nature, Civilisation, Language



Transformation of pantomime: (L) an early performance of Dhaka Pantomime with typical make-up and costume; (R) later, a greater realism has enhanced the art form

Movement, Drug addiction, Love and Freedom that in festival. John says, 'Later we tried to arrange several such festivals but failed due to governmental regulations.'

The first tour abroad for Dhaka Pantomime was to Kolkata, India, in 1992. The tour was organised by Mount Mukhar, a mime troupe of India. John says, 'It was a highly successful tour. And the audience of Kolkata was highly appreciative of our performance.' Later Dhaka Pantomime travelled to India many times. In India, they were honoured by the mime troupes like the Jogesh Mime Academy and the Mimic.

They have also performed in Japan (1996), Korea (1997), Malaysia (1998) and Australia (2004). The greatest recognition that Dhaka Pantomime has received to date is the Best Group Performance Award in International Festival of Non-verbal Arts (IFNA), in 1993 in

India. The title of their performance was *Steps Toward Freedom of Bangladesh*. 'This award inspired us a lot to move forward,' says John.

Dhaka Pantomime is going to India next October. 'This time around, we are planning to do something new' says John.

Dhaka Pantomime established a children's troupe in 1999. The notable performances by the children of this group are *Hiroshima*, *Life of Gautam Buddha* and *Children's Struggle*. This November they are going to Delhi to participate in the International Theatre Festival.

Dhaka Pantomime has broadened the horizons of mime and pantomime in Bangladesh despite innumerable obstacles. Thanks to the creative efforts of the group, these art forms are likely to flourish and gain popularity with the younger generation.

It is a joy to direct The Importance of Being Earnest--Penny Legg

The Importance of Being Earnest was recently staged at International School Dhaka, Bashundhara. A key figure behind the recent play, written by Oscar Wilde, is director Penny Legg. Here she talks to **Fayza Haq** of **The Daily Star** about the play and the role she has played in bringing this work to the stage.

How did you get involved with the stage and direction in particular?

I have always been interested in the stage. As a child every week I wrote a play. As I grew older I learnt to dance and took part in competitions in Old Time, Ballroom and Latin American dancing.

I love amateur dramatics, which allows a fusion of dance and drama. I have been involved with a number of groups both in the UK, in Brussels and here in Dhaka. 1995 I joined the Pantaloons group in Brussels and worked as a stage manager and sound engineer on several large productions. I also worked with the Brussels Shakespeare Company, training their stage manager, whilst working on *The Merchant of Venice*. I have been on the committee of Dhaka Stage for nearly three years.

I drifted into direction. It is a joy to find myself directing *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Was it easy to combine your busy schedule at the British High Commission office with the direction of the play?

To do anything of this nature requires great organisation, lots of patience and plenty of stamina! Being organised is the key. Allocate a certain amount of time to each task and be clear about what you wish to do and why. I am lucky—I have an excellent producer, Mary Fitzgerald, and assistant director, Teri Khan, who complete my team. They have made directing the play an easier task.

Does Dhaka Stage have any criteria for choosing a play?

No set policy is in operation. We usually ask our members if they have any proposals for plays. Those thought feasible are taken forward, others not. We have a very diverse membership, but often it is only a few members who come forward with ideas. We would love more of our members to take an active role in our productions. I know that we have been criticised for the choice of some of the plays in the past.

How does this comedy compare with the other light-hearted plays staged by your group before?

Very well! It is a widely known play, written by a very talented and well-known playwright. It is not farce such as *Foreplays* last year but gentle comedy. Dhaka Stage has performed it in the past and it is always well received.

What is the plot of your play *The Importance of Being Earnest*?

Jack Worthing, who lives in the country, pretends to have a younger brother, Ernest, whose escapades frequently call Jack to London.

Algernon Moncrieff pretends to have an invalid friend, Bunbury, whose attacks of sickness call Algernon into the country whenever there is a set and have lost nearly all of the original crew. To say that this has been a challenging production to bring to the stage would be an understatement. I can only admire the outstanding tenacity of the cast and crew to stick with it to the end.

What are Dhaka Stage's future plans?

Our next show is to be *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, adapted by Jerry Patch. Dhaka Stage is delighted to have been invited to perform at the Sonargaon again and is looking forward to performing there on November 19. We will then take the show forward for a further two nights.



Performers of the Dhaka Stage

faced?

This play was originally cast in March and had its opening night at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in May. Due to security problems, we had to postpone two other shows at the American International School.

When I looked at re-scheduling, I found that the only realistic option was to wait for September when I would have a parley with the cast.

Some of our cast members left in the midst of the production. What's more, we have had rehearsals disruptions, we have had problems obtaining suitable furniture for the set and have lost nearly all of the original crew. To say that this has been a challenging production to bring to the stage would be an understatement. I can only admire the outstanding tenacity of the cast and crew to stick with it to the end.

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Famed Disney animator Frank Thomas dies

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Legendary Walt Disney Co. animator Frank Thomas, whose work ranged from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to *Pinocchio* and *Bambi*, has died at age 92, the studio said on September 09.

One of Disney's original 'nine old men,' the key group that helped make Disney an animation powerhouse from the 1930s onward, Thomas died on Wednesday after months of declining health following a brain hemorrhage.

Thomas joined Disney in 1934 when the studio had only just begun working on *Snow White*, its first full-length animated feature film. The costly movie nearly drove Disney into bankruptcy, but became the company's foundation after it turned into a huge hit in theatres. 'Frank helped to invent animation as an art form and took it to incredible new heights,' film critic Leonard Maltin said.

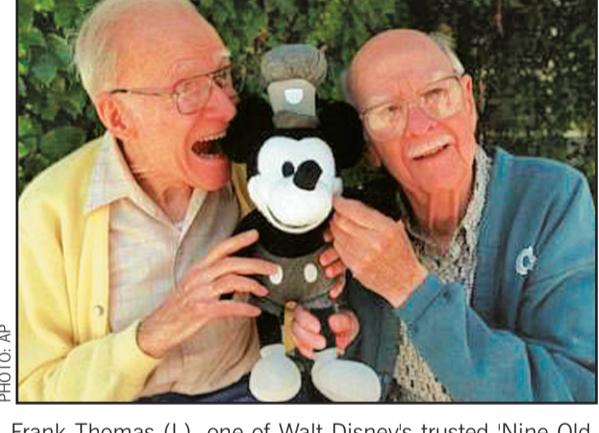
Thomas was known for emotional scenes, romance and deeply felt work early in his 43-year career at Disney, but in the late 1940s switched to villains.

Thomas created the spaghetti dinner scene between Lady and Rover in *Lady and the Tramp* and dreamt up Thumper showing Bambi how to ice skate in *Bambi*. He helped design Pinocchio and was responsible for the scene in which the marionette gets trapped inside a birdcage by the evil Stromboli.

In 1941, Thomas joined Walt Disney on a trip through South America that resulted in *The Three Caballeros*. In 1949, he created the superstitious Ichabod Crane of *Sleepy Hollow* fame and one year later dreamt up the wicked stepmother in *Cinderella*.

Other films on which he worked were *The Jungle Book*, *The Aristocats*, and *Robin Hood*. He retired in 1978.

Thomas was born in Santa Monica, California, and went to college at Stanford University, where he met his lifelong friend and another one of the 'nine old men,' Ollie Johnston, who is the last of those original animators still alive.



Frank Thomas (L), one of Walt Disney's trusted 'Nine Old Men', is shown with Ollie Johnston, the last of Disney's original animators, on June 30, 1999, in Los Angeles with a vintage Mickey Mouse doll.

PICK OF THE DAY



Or Not!

12:30 Men In Black

3:00 Galaxy Quest

5:30 Now See This

6:00 Now See This

6:30 The Amazing Race

7:30 Ripley's Believe It

8:30 Or Not!

9:00 The 25th Hour

3:00 Carlito's Way

5:15 Groundhog Day

7:00 Abandon

8:40 Killing Me Softly

10:15 The Replacements

1:30 Rock Star

3:30 The Astronaut's

4:00 Fields

12:00 Chasing Holden

5:45 Born Free

7:45 Head Over Heels

11:30 Ripley's Believe It

WORLD

12:30 Rendezvous With

Simi Garewal

1:00 Travel Asia

1:30 The Kids From Room

2:00 402

2:30 RoboRoach

3:00 Monster Farm

3:30 X Men

3:00 The Kumars At

3:30 No.42

4:00 Cops

4:30 I Dare You

5:00 Yamraaj

5:30 Fist Of Fury

6:00 Do Ur Do

6:30 Paanch

7:00 The Office

11:00 The Office

STAR PLUS

1:00 Star Bestsellers

2:30 Mirch Masala

3:00 Musafir Hoon Yaron

3:30 Balika Badhu

4:00 KabhiKabhiMer-egharneib-hucha

4:30 Meri Mrs Chanchala

5:00 Yatra

5:30 Piya Bina

6:00 Pardey Ke Peechey

6:30 Kachche Dhaage

7:00 The Office

8:00 The Office

8:30 The Office

9:00 The Office

10:30 The Office

11:00 The Office

12:00 The Office

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