

Shantha P Gunasekara

A pianist par excellence

KAVITA CHARANJI

MUSIC runs in the blood of the diminutive Shantha, ace pianist and music instructor. She has trained hundreds of children in the piano, taught singing and history of music to students of Green Herald School and now wants to pursue further studies in music therapy, as well as complete her Ph.D thesis in Ethnomusicology. This relatively less known discipline, in simple words, stands for a study of various types of music in relation to their geographic, musical and cultural context.

To Shantha also goes the credit for opening the Bangladesh centre of the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). Prior to its establishment, Shantha would take students to the Kolkata centre of ABRSM between 1991 and 1993. Subsequently, when the number of candidates increased, a similar line of exams was introduced in Dhaka in 1994 for the first time, monitored by the British Council. The following year, the Bangladesh centre of ABRSM was set up with Shantha taking over as the first founder representative (honorary) sponsor for the centre. This organisation celebrates its 10th anniversary. 'I was the first to introduce the systematic examination system of western music in Bangladesh,' asserts Shantha.

Along side with her piano recitals, Shantha is a committed piano teacher. Though she won plaudits in the 1980s at the Goethe Institut among others, she says that she was keen to go into teaching because she was interested in nurturing new talent. In her words, 'My effort has been to launch at least one pianist in our country, which is better than me being on stage.' Shantha has certainly succeeded in this endeavour. Among the success stories that she cites are those of Swani Zubayer, who learnt music under her from 1997 onwards. Today he is a renowned singer, composer and song writer. Based in Sweden currently, Shantha says that he stands apart from his contemporaries in his 'voice, arrangements, composition and lyrics.' She adds, 'I never tire of listening to his CDs of Bangla music and ghazals.'

There's also Emon Shaha, the son of the musician and composer of Bangla music Shaiba Shaha. Today he is an upcoming artist, composer and music director. Says Shantha, 'Emon still comes to take piano lessons and learn music theory with me. His thirst to learn has never ended though he disappears now and then because of his business.'

To Shantha also goes the credit for arranging the music and conducting the school choir for the Green Herald school song. The tune was given by Sister Mary Imelda, the ex-headmistress. Another of her unforgettable memories is that of the late 80s when the three-day highly successful Dhaka



'Heavy metal music is not my cup of tea,' says Shantha

Music and Art Festival was organised by an enthusiastic expatriate crowd along with renowned local musicians and artists.

Equally memorable is her return to Sri Lanka in March 2004 when she got a very warm welcome from her 80-year-old former KG teacher.

Shantha's taste in music is eclectic. Her preference runs from the classical music giants of Beethoven, Chopin, Tchaikovsky and Schubert to western music, Rabindra Sangeet and *aduhunik gaan*. 'Heavy metal music is not my cup of tea,' she asserts.

A life without music is unthinkable for Shantha. At the young age of six she learnt the piano and gave exams under the Trinity School of Music, London. Getting flying colours in almost every exam, she sang in Radio Ceylon as a child artiste. In 1976 she gained admission to the State Institute of Culture in St Petersburg in USSR. She did her MA in music and majored in piano. Subsequently she did a year's teacher training course on how to teach small children and those who are partially impaired mentally.

Her education did not stop here. She got admission to the Institute of Ethnography of Academy of Sciences USSR to do a Ph.D in Ethnomusicology. After a short delay, she is now in the process of completing her thesis.

A Sri Lankan from Colombo, Shantha's musical talent comes from her parents. Her mother learnt piano in her childhood, while her father belongs to a well-known musical family. He was

the first to play the Esraj in Radio Ceylon. Shantha is married to a Bangladeshi named Sheikh Mansuruddin Ahmed. Her husband is an art director with a local firm, besides being an artist and stage designer for Nagorik. Her daughter, Poornika Gayathri, is at the end of her graduate studies in engineering from the Wichita State University, USA. She is an able successor to her mother since she also shows promise in art, singing and playing the piano.

And the future? She hopes to pursue her study of music therapy. This discipline seeks to help people through the art of music. Shantha describes music therapy as a means of treatment for people with psychological disorders, troubled teenagers, and terminally ill patients. To quote her, 'Music therapy can help people who suffer abuse, drug addicts and the elderly, among others. One can divert their minds by teaching them piano or singing and help them to step out of stressful lives.'

Sensitive to the needs of the physically and mentally challenged, in 1997 she worked as a voluntary music teacher at a public school in Sydney. Here she conducted a rehabilitation class to teach music to partially disabled children. 'This was one of my most memorable teaching experiences,' she recalls.

In many ways, Shantha has contributed to the western music scene here. Her numerous gifted students are certainly her best torchbearers.

Foreign plays in Bangla

Abdus Selim speaks of his passion

SABIRA MANIR

The play *Galileo*, since its first staging has received whole-hearted appreciation of the audience. This play, written by Bertolt Brecht, was translated in 1974 by Abdus Selim, a renowned translator of Bangladesh. And this was the first ever translated play in Bangla that was staged.

So far, Selim has translated several famous plays of the world. These have been staged several times by different theatre groups such as Dhaka Padatik, Nagorik Natyangan and Little Theatre. These are: *Venice Shadadagar*—a translation of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, *Phera* (*The Visit of Duran Mart*), *Bigya Nathan* (*Nathan the Wise of Lessing*), *Himmati Ma* and *Golmatha Chokhamatha* (*Mother Courage and Her Children and Round Heads and Pick Heads* of Bertolt Brecht), and *Majhrater Manushera* (*Nocturnal Wanderer* of Gao Xing Xian). Among the plays, *Himmati Ma* and *Golmatha Chokhamatha* were highly appreciated by the audience and critics.

Abdus Selim has also translated plays for the students of North South University Cine and Drama Club. As a professor at the university, he introduced drama as a subject in the university. The plays he has translated for the university are *Mouse Trap* of Agatha Christie and *The Would Be Gentleman* of Moliere.

Before *Galileo*, Selim had translated the biography of Pablo Neruda, a few poems of British poets Kingsley Amis and Ted Hughes, Brecht and poems of the Bengali poets of the 1960s. However, he never thought about translating any plays for stage yet.

He says, 'I was involved with the film society movement since my student life. But, because of some differences in opinion, I left the society. Then I felt the urge to do something. Film director Mashihuddin Shaker gave me the play *Galileo* and told me to translate it. That was the starting point.'

In 1986, an American freelance theatre activist read *Galileo*. He proposed that the play be staged in Bangladesh with performers from different theatre groups. The activist met the performers but the play could not be staged because of technical problems. That proposal encouraged Selim to look at new translation avenues.

Later in 1988, a prominent theatre group Nagorik Natya Samprodaya staged the play *Galileo* under the direction of Ataur Rahman. The play ran for 50 successful shows. 'All the 50 shows were staged at the Goethe Institut because the set was suitable for the play,' says Selim.



Abdus Selim

Although *Himmati Ma* was a successful play, it could not run for a long spell because the leading actress of the play left the group. The play *Golmatha Chokhamatha* is still showing.

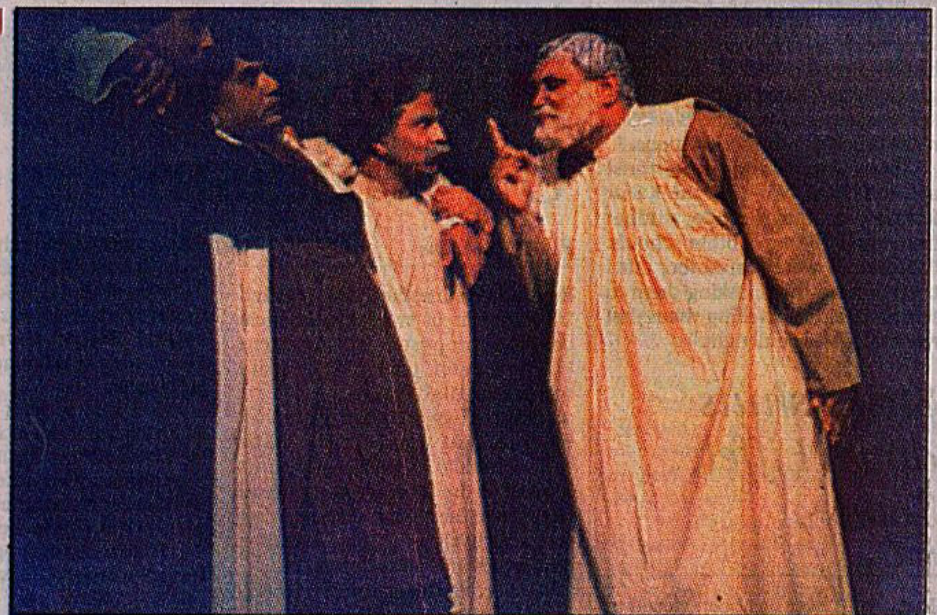
Most of the plays translated by Selim have been directed by Ataur Rahman. According to Selim, Ataur Rahman is one of the best directors in Bangladesh.

'I feel proud because most of the renowned actors such as Aly Zaker, Asaduzzaman Noor, Lucky Inam, Nima Rahman and Khaled Khan have performed in my plays,' says Selim.

Abdus Selim shies away from writing an original play. As he says modestly, 'I do not think I have that kind of talent.'

Recently Selim has translated three more plays—*King Lear* of Shakespeare, *Lady from the Sea* of Ibsen and *The Government Inspector* of Nikolai Gogol—which are to be staged this year. Now Selim wishes to translate the play *The Brand* of Ibsen.

'Translation is my passion now,' concludes Selim.



A sequence from the play Galileo staged in 1988

Shahnaz to pair up with Brosnan

India's herbal beauty care queen Shahnaz Husain might soon have two new occupations—Hollywood actress and Harvard teacher. The 50-something Husain has been offered the role of a medieval princess opposite James Bond star Pierce Brosnan for a fee of \$7 million and to lecture at Harvard on how she metamorphosed from a housewife to head a \$100 million global beauty conglomerate.

'Some producers from Hollywood got in touch with me and offered me the role of Mughal princess Nur Jehan opposite Pierce Brosnan in a film,' said Husain. 'But filmmaking is time consuming and I have my business to run. I cannot concentrate on other things. Also I am scared, if my film becomes too successful, then I'll just be making films,' laughed Husain. 'What will happen to my business?'

'She is considering the Harvard offer a little more seriously. A Harvard professor came and asked me if



they could have a lecture programme with me,' explained Husain. 'He was astonished to hear that I was not even a graduate and said, "There are two very successful

business people in the world—you and Bill Gates—who are also college dropouts." I told him I've never been to college so where is the question of dropping out?' laughed Husain who was married at 15, after seeing just the photograph of her husband, and was a mother at 16.

Then she started travelling across the world, learning dermatology and beauty treatment. 'But I realised that all the treatments of the West are chemical-based, which ultimately harm your body. So I came back to India and started my own business using just natural herbal products.'

For over three decades now, Husain has been the greatest crusader for the ayurvedic Indian system of medicine, ayurveda. 'I truly believe that the natural way is the best way and we in India have perfected this art over thousands of years.'

Source: The Times of India

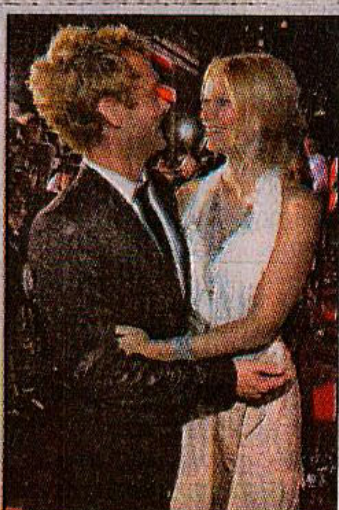


PHOTO:AFP

Actor Jude Law and actress Gwyneth Paltrow attend the world premiere of *Sky Captain And The World of Tomorrow* at the Grauman's Chinese Theatre recently in Hollywood, California.

ALL TIME GREATS

RAJ KAPOOR: 'The Tramp' lives on

Who doesn't remember Raj Kapoor? Described as a megastar, producer, director and all-round showman, his films such as *Aag*, *Awaara*, *Shri 420* live on in the collective memory. Known variously as 'The Tramp' and the 'Charlie Chaplin of India', he has combined the romantic element with the struggle of the underdog.

The son of famous film giant Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor started out as a clapper boy. He wrested his first film role at the age of 11. In 1948 he set up his own studio and made his first feature film, *Aag*. *Aag* was a trendsetter in that it challenged the traditional order of sympathetic characters and straightforward storytelling. In this film, he partnered Nargis whose off and on screen chemistry caught the public attention in other movies as well.

Aag ranked among other successes, such as *Barsaat* and *Shri 420*. He also appealed to patriotic sentiment in films such as *Aag* and *Jis desh mein Ganga behti hai* (The country in which the Ganges flows). One of Kapoor's film songs in which he pays tribute to his motherland goes as follows:

*My shoes are Japanese
And the trousers are English.
Tomorrow at the Grauman's Chinese
But my heart is Hindustani*



Kapoor's songs and films captured the hearts of audiences not just in India but also in large parts of Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union.

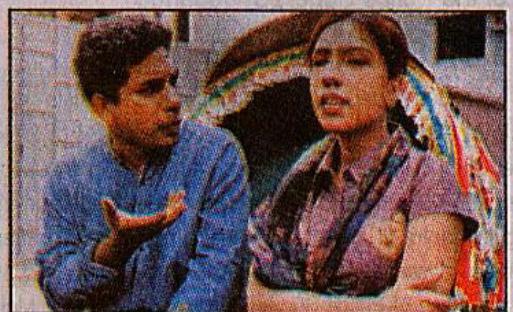
After the box office failure of *Mera Naam Joker* (My name is Joker), his films took a more sensual turn. Take for instance, *Bobby*, which telescoped the love story of two youngsters, played ably by his son Rishi Kapoor and the exquisite Dimple Kapadia. Then followed *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* and *Ram Teri Ganga Maaili*. One critic has aptly described him as exhibiting 'the carnality of a schoolboy' in his films.

To Kapoor goes the credit of introducing new talents in films such as his sons Rishi, Raj, Nimmi, Dimple Kapadia, Zeenat Aman and Mandakini. He also roped in music directors Shankar-Jaikishan and lyricist Hasrat Jaipuri under his banner. In addition, the songs of *Barsaat*, *Andaaz* and *Mahal* were instrumental in catapulting Lata Mangeshkar to the top as a playback singer. Raj Kapoor's innate musical sense gave his films a unique and memorable touch.

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY



Keboli Raat Hoya Jay
On Channel i at 7:50 pm
Drama Serial
Cast: Hridi Haq, Mahfuz Ahmed, Sweety, Deepa Khondokar



Stepmom
On HBO at 9:30 pm
Genre: Drama / Comedy
Cast: Julia Roberts, Susan Sarandon, Ed Harris

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

News Bulletin	CHANNEL-i	ATN BANGLA	HBO	STAR GOLD	STAR PLUS	STAR MOVIES	STAR WORLD	
BTV News Headlines (Bangla) at 8:55 am, 12:10 pm, 2:00 pm, 3:00 pm, 4:00 pm, 7:00 pm. News (Bangla) at 8:00 am, 1:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 8:00 pm. News (English) at 3:00 pm, 10:00 pm. Late Night News (Bangla and English) 11:30 pm.	09:30 Shongbad Potray Bangladesh and Public Reaction 09:45 Titiyo Matra 11:00 Agora Shopping Guide 11:30 RC Travel On 12:00 Chitthi Pelam 12:30 Aaj Dupurey and CityCell Taroka Kathon 01:00 Ebong Cinema Gaan 01:25 Public Reaction 02:15 Priyo Natok 04:00 Banglar Gaan 04:30 Dekhar Gaan Shonar Gaan 05:00 Sa Re Ga Ma 05:35 Jonopoder Khobor 05:45 RC Brain Storming 06:10 Music Plus 06:45 Aamar Chhibbi 07:50 Keboli Raat Hoya Jay 08:25 Drama Serial: Poryakto Bari 09:35 Drama Serial: Kathamirio 10:00 Close Up Hit Wave	06:20 Shubho Shondhya 06:50 Aain O Jibon 08:20 Drama Serial: Ronger Manush 08:50 Drama 11:25 Dindarpan 10:30 Annyodishti 11:05 Magazine show: Ek Dui Teen 11:35 Musical Programme 12:10 Sharmaly Sadakalo 12:50 Telefilm: Bandhu Aamar 03:45 Uro Cole Saat Rang 04:20 Sundor Jiboner Jonno 05:10 Cinema Cinema 05:45 Islami Sawal O Jawab 06:20 Thunder Stone 08:00 Drama Serial: Tana Foran 08:30 Drama Serial: Bhawal Raja Sannyasee 09:00 Drama Serial: Dityo Boki 09:30 Drama Serial: Mohona 10:35 Pop Dharmaka 12:20 Bangla Feature Film: Taji Putra	08:00 Aajkar Shokal 08:30 Sheena 09:00 Sports World 09:30 Expedition Animal Kingdom 10:05 ShaplaKuri 10:30 Dhakar Cinema 02:30 Drama Serial: Sposhar Bariy 03:05 Kichu Katha Kichu Gaan 03:45 Drama Serial: Sheola 04:25 Gambhira 05:20 Mahilangan	10:10 Lok Parlok 1:30 Beqabul 4:30 Desh Premi 8:30 Ailbaar 11:30 Sanyasi Mera Naam 12:00 Hard Rain 9:30 Stepmom 12:00 Head Over Heels 1:45 Wonder Boys	2:45 Multiplicity 4:45 The 25th Hour 7:00 The Pianist 9:30 Army Of Darkness 11:05 The Rookie 1:15 Carillo's Way	4:00 Mac Gyver 2:28 Star Asia Travel 2:30 Oprah Winfrey 3:30 Bold And Beautiful 4:30 Hollywood Squares 6:00 Maal Hai To Taal Hai 6:30 Fox Kids 7:30 Kurnkum - Pyara Sa Bandhan 8:00 Shaika Laka Boom Boom 8:30 Dekho Magar Pyaar Se 9:00 Kasauli Zindagi Kay 9:30 Saara Akaash 10:30 Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki 10:30 Angel 11:28 Star Asia Travel 11:30 Baywatch	2:00 Bhabhi 2:30 Kabhi Aaye Na Judai 3:00 Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi 2:00 American Psycho 2 9:00 The Rookie 11:15 Targat (A.K.A. Falcon) 12:45 Little Women	12:30 N.Y.P.D. Blue

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