

CULTURAL FEAST

National Zainul Festival 2004



Occasion: 90th Birth Anniversary of Shilpakariya Zainul Abedin
Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangladesh National Museum and Bengal Foundation
Time: December 10-30
Schedule: December 12-January 07
Special Exhibition of Zainul Abedin
Time: 11am to 7pm on weekdays and 3:00pm to 8:00pm on Fridays
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, 275/F, Road 27, Dhanmondi, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Bangladesh National Museum, December 17-30
Handicrafts Fair
Time: From 11am to 7pm on weekdays and 3:00pm to 8:00pm on Fridays
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
December 22-24
Folk Song Festival
Time: Everyday at 6:00pm
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Premises
December 24
Seminar on the life and works of Zainul Abedin
Time: at 9:30am
Venue: National Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

LIBERATION WAR MEMORIES

Priobhashini's agonising nine months

FAYZA HAQ

TALKING about her experiences in 1971, sculptor Ferdous Priobhashini says, 'At that time I was going through a trauma in my personal life. It was the period when my husband had left me. There were a lot of brutalities in the juncture of Syedpur and Khalishpur, where I worked in a jute mill. As a telephone operator and receptionist, I was the only earning member of my family. I had many younger brothers and three young sons of my own.'

At that time she was not associated with social organisations. She was too inexperienced to know what was good for her. On March 25, 140 trucks passed by her house. Many houses had been torched down in her vicinity. In her presence 14 people were lined up and killed by brushfire. At that time even her mother became a burden. Nobody wanted to protect such a large group of refugees. Her present husband, Ahsanullah, who was then her friend, advised her to flee, but she didn't know where to escape. One day she put her mother and brothers on a rickshaw and gave her last Rs 10 to them.

She then went back to the mill where she had worked and there she found one of the officers who took her to a house to rest in. Then he physically assaulted her and told her that she would have to entertain Pakistan army officers. One of the men there helped her escape back to her mill. She had no change of clothes or even slippers on her feet. This man then helped her stay with someone at Babla.



A story of courage

The young men in the neighbourhood joined her and they spent time singing, but this could not go on for long and she went back to the office that she worked in, as she knew this to be the only source of permanent refuge.

During this time Professor Bhuiyan, one of her father's colleagues, was killed by the Naxalites in front of her eyes and NSI regarded her as a suspect, somehow involved in the case. She was given a large house with AC and was kept under watch. She was there from May to December 1971. She was also in the Jessore Cantonment. In these places she was repeatedly assaulted. She tried to resist. In the meantime, her friend, Ahsanullah, today her husband, was a Muktijoddha.

Even when Independence came, Priobhashini kept to herself. She had suffered quite a bit even in her parental home as her father had often been cruel to her mother and she had been compelled to shoulder responsibilities.

Today she is celebrated as a famous sculptor and has been chosen as the second Bangladeshi to be the 'Hero' by the Reader's Digest Magazine for the December 2004 issue. In the article of the magazine, the Bangladeshi correspondent, Nadeem Qadir, honoured Priobhashini for speaking out publicly in 1999 about her tormented days at the hands of the occupation Pakistan army in 1971. Priobhashini, who sculpts driftwood and other castoffs to express her memories of 1971, has helped other women to come to grips with their own feelings.

A tribute to the unrivalled actress

In remembrance of Najma Anwar

CULTURE DESK

When our cultural correspondent met stage, radio, TV and film actress Najma Anwar six months ago, she was characteristically modest. 'I never thought that The Daily Star would come to my home for an interview,' said Najma, who also ran an advertising agency. Today, it is befitting to pay homage to a great talent who passed away on December 14.

Najma is known for her role in several works: the tele drama Kariman Beva (2001), stage plays such as Iblish and films like Shankhnil Karagar, Dukkhai, Gontabrya, Chottogram, Shonkhanad and Hajar Bochor Dhore. Lately, she had finished a film called Joy Jatra-the country's first film in cinemascope.

Najma's commitment to her media was evident in her painstaking attention to detail. For Kariman Beva, for instance, she learnt the Rangpur dialect. Likewise she picked up the Dhakia, Noakhali, Jessore and Barisal dialects with ease.

Though she enjoyed playing serious characters, she felt she was popular in both humorous roles-ranging from an affluent lady to a poor struggling woman. She even did comedy roles such as in Humayun Ahmed's Kothao Koo Nei.

Najma's theatrical career dated back to 40 years when she was a regular member of Dhaka Drama Circle. Later, she joined Aranyak Natyadal, a popular theatrical group, in 1980. As a regular member of Aranyak, she had performed in many popular plays. Moreover, she also performed for other theatrical groups as a guest artiste.

Her last performance on the stage was in the play Loha, a Desh Natok production.

In her diversified acting career, Nazma won the heart of thousands for her bold appearance on the small screen. She had performed in the TV plays from the beginning of TV. She was also a regular radio play artiste. Moreover she had also performed in some alternative films.

Najma was a grassroots actress, who played the role of the struggling woman in Kariman Beva and Iblish. The former, based on the true story of a freedom fighter called Taramon Bibi, centred on the heroine. After her husband,



a farmer, was killed in the Liberation War, she took up arms and became one of the few women freedom fighters of Bangladesh. This TV play won Najma the Bangladesh Chalachitra Shangbadik Samity (BACHSAS) award.

In the latter stage play, Iblish, Najma again portrayed the struggle of a woman called Atoshi. Despite being thrown out by her tyrannical husband, the character persevered and eked out a living as a domestic help. Najma summed it up aptly: 'I am struggling, so are you. Only the form of struggle is different.'

The Culture Desk of The Daily Star mourns the untimely demise of this brilliant theatre activist.

Chittagong gears up for a theatre festival

Theatre festival organised by Nandimukh

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Nandimukh is all set to organise a theatre festival from December 21 to 31 at the Shilpakala Academy of Chittagong. The festival is titled 'Fifteen years of creation and struggle'. The plays will be staged by this theatre group from Chittagong along with famous drama groups from Kolkata such as Chetana, Mangolik, Hritvik and theatre groups from Dhaka such as Art Unit, Natyajan and another theatre group from Chittagong called Kalpurush.

Chetana from Kolkata will stage the play Nirnay, written and directed by Arun Mukhapadday. This play, won an award from Natya Academy this year. Mangolik will stage two plays: Manush Bhui, written and directed by Shamir Biswas and the other is Harun Al Rashid, written by Mohit Chattyapadday and directed by Shamir Biswas. Hritvik will stage Meghbat, based on Antigone of Sophocles. The play is written and directed by Gautam Roy Chowdhury. The Theatre Art Unit of Dhaka will stage Golapjan, written and directed by SM Solyman and Natyajan will stage Memi's solo performance of Phoolrani Ami Tiya.

Kalpurush of Chittagong will stage Mrinaler Chithi, based on Tagore's Strir Patra. The play is directed by Shantanu Biswas. And the organiser



A scene from the play Bela Shesher Galpo by Nandimukh

Nandimukh will perform three plays Bela Shesher Galpo, directed by Dur Rajanir Shwapon, Arfius and Abhijit Sengupta.

Celebration of the Victory Day

Extraordinary performance by boat-race team

NOVERA DEEPTA

On the eve of the 34th Victory Day celebration, the Liberation War Museum organised a memorable presentation of patriotic and Sari songs by Jatiyo Rabindrasangeet Sammilan Parishad and a boat-race team from Indrabari, Jamalpur. The present generation was not witness to the glorious era of 1971. But through history, which never lies, the new generation has learnt about the greatest period of the Bangladesh. That is why they are here to celebrate the Victory Day. It is the biggest consolation for the true freedom fighters today,' said theatre personality Aly Zaker in his welcome speech.

The metropolitan branch of Jatiyo Rabindrasangeet Sammilan Parishad performed patriotic songs in the first part of the programme. The members rendered different patriotic songs like Aji Bangladesh hridoy hotey, Bolo bolo re shobey Bangaleer joy, Muktiro mandirey shobano toley, Amader nanan moter and Ei uttal janashamudra. Their spirited rendition touched the hearts of the audience. Being performers of Rabindra Sangeet, the expertise of these artistes in



The boat-race team from Indrabari, Jamalpur performing Sari gaan

rendering folk songs was noteworthy. The function was unique in a way as the prominent singers gave the youngsters an opportunity to perform on stage. Bulbul Islam's superb rendering of Sharthak Janam amar and O amar desher

mati won applause from the audience. The spotlight on the singer made for an appealing ambience, while the only instrumental accompaniment was the harmonium.

Sharmil Shathi Islam rendered Dhonyo ami jonmechhi ei deshey with her melodious voice. Khairul Anam Shakil was the final performer of the first half of the programme.

The second half of the programme featured an extraordinary item, Sari gaan, songs performed by boat-race teams. Since a distant past the people of the char areas have proudly preserved this folk treasure of our country. Led by two siblings Adam Ali and Imam Ali, the 23-member team rendered one long song in their regional dialect. Despite the incomprehensible lyrics, the performance was hugely cheered by the audience. Aged from 15 to 50 years, all the members of the group were deeply devoted and sincere while singing and miming the boat-rowing. The first powerful beats on the dhol greatly attracted the audience.

With only two instruments, a dhol and a mandira, the team performed the dance and song. The song had a nostalgic tinge which intensely moved the audience.

TV GUIDE section containing TV programs, Star Movies, Star World, National Geographic, Animal Planet, Star Sports, and Ten Sports listings.