

CULTURAL FEAST

Classical Music
Organiser: Shuddha Sangeet Proshar Goshthi
Artists: Shama Ahmed, Fayzul Haque, Bijoy, Chowdhury Mostaq, Hossain
Venue: Biswa Shahitya Kendra
Date: June 30, at 7pm

Exhibition

Title: Tapestry Exhibition
Artist: Tajul Islam
Venue: Shilpanagan Gallery, House 25, Road 5, Dharmundi
Date: June 18-29, from 10am to 1pm and 5pm to 8pm

Title: Metaphor of Agony
Artist: Nazlee Laila
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
Date: June 23-July 06, from 12pm to 8pm

Title: Terra Cotta Exhibition
Artist: Tayubuzzaman Tapu, Mazharul Haque Iqbal, Shahidul Hassan
Venue: Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts
Date: June 24-30, from 10:30am to 8pm

Title: Miniature Art
Artists: 105 artists
Venue: Shilparag, House 15, Road 16, Dharmundi
Date: June 03-30, from 11:30am to 2pm and 4:30pm to 9pm

Music Festival

Organiser: Alliance Francaise
Date: June 30-July 2, at 5pm

Schedule

June 30
05:00pm Piano recital by Students of Alliance Francaise Music Schools

06:15pm Tagore songs by Nilufar Banu Lily

07:15pm Nazrul songs by Chhayanaut
08:15pm Classical songs by Anil Kumar Shaha and Yusuf Khan

Venue: Alliance Francaise

July 01
04:15pm Latin Dance by Neelima and Shahriar

05:00pm Musical soiree by Students of Alliance Francaise Music School

06:00pm Ghazal Mezbah

07:00pm Modern songs by Uronchandi

09:00pm French and Arabian songs by Madjid Ziouane

Venue: Alliance Francaise

July 02
12:00pm Musical soiree by the students of Dhaka University

03:00pm Music rendition by Duma

04:00pm Musical soiree by Kamol

05:00pm Pop music by Rumi

06:00pm Fusion music by Meghdal

07:00pm French and Arabian songs by Madjid Ziouane

Venue: TSC auditorium, Dhaka University

Theatre

Title: Natyatraooyee
Group: Nagoric Natyasaampradaya
Venue: Experimental Theatre stage

Date: June 30, from 7pm

Title: Metamorphosis

Group: Centre for Asian Theatre

Venue: Goethe-Institut, Dharmundi

Date: June 30, from 7pm

Costume Display

Title: Summer Collection

Boutique: Ananya

Venue: 60, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Bonani

Date: June 01-30

In Conversation

Arif Dewan carries on rich tradition of palagaan

ERSHAD KAMOL

THE two names, Khaleque Dewan and Malek Dewan, are synonymous with the folksong genre *palagaan*. Keeping that *parampara* (family tradition) alive is Arif Dewan, grandson of Malek Dewan.

Explaining his musical lineage, Arif says, "The followers of Alfu Dewan, a mystic poet and my great grandfather, use the title *Dewan*. Alfu rendered mystic songs such as *adamtawa*, *dehotawa*, and *shariati* among others. Alfu Dewan's two sons—Khaleque Dewan and Malek Dewan—popular bards in Bangladesh, later presented these mystic songs in a unique dramatic style called *Sawal-Jawab* (question and answer). Like my grandfather, my father Khabiruddin Dewan is also a popular *palagaan* singer. My grandfather has given me the responsibility of the *Dewans*."

Dewans are the bards who are enlightened and gather knowledge through their songs that link man with God and the mysteries of nature. The style of presenting songs by the *Dewans* is called *palagaan*. In *palagaan* two *Dewans* participate in a musical debate with a touch of the mystic. They usually play violin, *mandira* and *dhol* as the instruments.

How is *palagaan* different from *kabigaan*? Arif says, "Though both of the music genres are dramatic presentation of two bards, *palagaan* is a *gurumukhi bida* (imparted through the teacher). *Palagaan* form starts with devotional song and then either *nabita* (teachings of the Prophet SM.) or *dehotawa* (songs dealing with human body and soul) becomes the subject of the *pala*. In the *pala*, the two rival



Arif Dewan rendering a song

bards display the emotion of different characters during the dramatic presentation. The aim of the nightlong *palagaan* is to glorify God. On the other hand, in *kabigaan*, the subject of debate between the two bards is open.

Kabigaan also starts with devotion and then come narratives. Moreover, *toppa* (rhythmic repetition), *dhanya* and *maishi* are included in *kabigaan* form.

"Nowadays, because of increasing commercialisation all round, the folksong forms are losing originality. Some of the forms have

become vulgar. And *palagaan* is no exception. In the process, the preservation of the rich tradition is in jeopardy," says Arif.

Thankfully, authentic *palagaan* remains popular amongst the masses. Each year more than 30,000 followers of Alfu Dewan gather at his Oros at Keraniganj to pay their respects to the mystic poet. Foreign researchers have worked on Alfu Dewan Mazar and his folk style.

Arif Dewan has staged over 100 stage shows in different corners of the country. Arif says, "Generally I receive invitations

to stage *palagaan* in greater Comilla, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Tangail, Manikganj and Kushtia region. Moreover, I regularly perform in the government programmes. I have performed in England, Oman, South Korea and Malaysia."

Like other folksingers, Arif Dewan believes that the government and electronic media should step in by preserving and popularising folk music. Arif says, "Though the electronic media airs a few programmes of folksongs, the time slot is not suitable for viewers to enjoy folksongs. Most of the programmes are aired in the afternoon when people remain preoccupied."

Besides, *palagaan*, Arif Dewan also sings *kabigaan*, *baulgaan* and other genres of folksongs. Since 1982 Arif Dewan is a special grade singer in radio and TV. Moreover, Arif Dewan is a music composer and lyricist of folksongs.

Arif Dewan is not into fusion folk music. As he says, "There is a harmonious interrelationship between the lyrics and tunes of our folksongs. If the tune is modified, the harmony is interrupted. And thus, the folksong loses its essence, which is not acceptable. Those who want to blend folksongs with western music should create a new form. However, they should not destroy the authenticity of folksongs."

He has written and composed over 400 songs and has released 23 cassettes and one VCD. His albums such as *Malek Dewaner Bhaber Shudha*, *Beheshti Sawgat*, *Ami Pather Baul*, *Tumito Dayal Khaja* and *Premter Smriti* have made waves both in Bangladesh and India.

Launching of a long awaited film centre



Speakers at a press conference

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Since its inception in 1975, the Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies (BFFS) has sought to promote high calibre films as well as a sophisticated audience in the country. In fact, BFFS has been at the epicentre of the film society movement for the last few decades through its effort to check the trend of vulgarity in films. The federation's recent venture is its long awaited

film centre named after the talented Bangladeshi filmmaker and first president of BFFS, late Alamgir Kabir. A press conference was held at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium on June 27 to announce the launch of the centre.

Presided over by filmmaker Morshedul Islam, President of BFFS, the conference featured prominent filmmakers Syed Bazle Hossain, Tanvir Mokammel, Manzare Hasin Murad, Chashi

Nazrul Islam and Badal Rahman. Dr

Zahirul Islam Kochi, General Secretary of BFFS, conducted the conference and gave details about the Alamgir Kabir Film Centre.

"The centre will become the focal point of the city's film connoisseurs," said a hopeful Kochi. "This centre comprises of a 50-seated air conditioned auditorium with good acoustics, a rich library filled with books and magazines on films, a DVD and VCD archive of world classics as well as good Bangladeshi films and an attractive cafeteria," he added. Apart from regularly screening the classic movies of home and abroad, this centre will organise seminars, symposiums, workshops and film appreciation courses. Plans are also afoot to launch diploma courses on filmmaking and small screen productions.

"A long cherished dream of the culture buffs was to have an art centre like Nandan of Kolkata. Although on a smaller scale, Alamgir Kabir Film Centre is a step in the right direction," said Manzare Hasin Murad.

"Our film movement is stagnant. The film aficionados will welcome this new centre, with its medley of activities," said Tanvir Mokammel.

Mainstream filmmaker, Chashi

Nazrul Islam said, "In the name of

making films, most of the mainstream filmmakers produce B-grade movies today. So it is imperative to ignite the film movement against such odds."

Another mainstream filmmaker, Badal Rahman got nostalgic while reminiscing on the golden age of our filmdom. He expressed the hope that by creating awareness among the aspiring filmmakers, this centre can take concrete steps for the betterment of our film industry.

Syed Bazle Hossain too articulated a concern. As he said, "It's a pity that the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy doesn't have a film division, although film has been treated the most powerful medium in the world."

Morshedul Islam in his speech pointed out, "BFFS is a civil society organisation. We can only create mass opinion against the current phenomenon of vulgarity in the film industry. It is very difficult to implement such a project privately, but we take it as a challenge. For instance, we may not be able to create an archive for 35mm films, but we can make a good collection of DVDs and VCDs of the classic movies. As Bangladesh is set to celebrate 50 years of cinema next year, we plan to launch 50 great Bangladeshi movies of different genres on DVDs for this occasion."

The Merchant of Venice

Staged by NSU Cine and Drama Club

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The Merchant of Venice, a pure romantic comedy of the great dramatist William Shakespeare, consists of a series of unimaginable events. On June 26, North South University Cine and Drama Club staged the play at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy as their 6th annual production.

The plot develops through two acts—the bond story and the casket story. The casket story sets the bond story in motion. Bassanio, the hero of the play, needs money to try out his luck in the lottery of caskets to win over the beautiful Portia. He approaches his bosom friend Antonio. However Antonio, a renowned merchant of Venice, has no ready cash. The two go to Shylock for a loan and a fatal bond is signed. Shylock lends Bassanio the money on the condition that if Bassanio fails to return the money in time, Shylock will get a pound of Antonio's flesh. Shakespeare has revealed the violation of human rights, the agony and torture of the minority through the character, Shylock. Thus, the two acts of the play unfold.

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