

Andrew Kishore

The regaling voice

NOVERA DEEPIA

THE song *Hayre manush rangin phanush* from the film *Bado bhalo lok chhilo* is perhaps the most appealing and widely rendered song of Andrew Kishore. The talented singer is a recipient of six National Film Awards in the best playback singer category.

Right after the film *Bado bhalo lok chhilo* was released, the song became an instant hit. He recalls the day vividly. Andrew reminisces, "I wasn't aware that litterateur Syed Shamsul Haque is also a lyricist. When he approached the music composer Alam Khan, I was amazed by his remarkable lyrics."

Haque told Alam, "I've been meaning to write a song like this for long." He was convinced that the singer, composer and the film in which the song would be used might have a shot at the National Award. He was right. Andrew received the National Film Award for the song as the best playback singer in 1982. That was just the third year of Andrew's career. Other memorable songs of Andrew are *Dak diachhey doyal amarey*, *Amar shara deho kheyo go mati*, *Amar buker moddhey khaney* and *Amar babar mukhey prothom jedin*.

Andrew started learning music at the age of six under Abdul Aziz Bachchu. Gradually Andrew started



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to perform in school shows, then on stage. Soon he started performing at programmes in Rajshahi.

Andrew said, "After the Liberation War, I was enlisted in the radio in the categories of Nazrul, Tagore, modern, folk and patriotic songs." In 1977 Andrew received an offer to perform a modern song under veteran music director Debu Bhattacharya in Dhaka. "It was the first time I performed with so many modern instruments. I performed the song *Soheli o soheli* but somehow I was not completely satisfied. Music director AHM Rafique suggested that Alam Khan would be the perfect music composer for me," recalls Andrew.

The break through playback song of Andrew was under Alam Khan. "Alam Khan was working on a tune and he asked me to sing in front of other composers and film directors," says Andrew. He was very nervous.

As Alam listened to him, he had to render about seven songs back to back. Andrew said, "Everyone appreciated my performance. But to my disappointment nobody offered me any song."

He didn't know something special was awaiting him. The next morning when Andrew went to Alam's house he offered Andrew to sing for the upcoming film he was working for. His first film song was *Achinpur rajkumari* for the movie *Mail Train*. The second one was *Dhum dharakka* from Badal Rahman's *Emilir Goyenda Bahini*. For AJ Mintu's *Protiksha*, he sang *Ek chor*

jay choley. From then on there was no looking back. Andrew released several albums subsequently.

Talking about the music scenario of yesteryears, he says, "Today's singers have more chances of popularity because there are several available mediums. But I wanted to become a playback singer as it was the highest goal for any singer of that time."

Of late Andrew has been busy running a production house, Probaho Media. This organisation produces TV plays, commercials and other productions.

Andrew welcomes the recent talent hunts, "Because of these shows in Bangladesh, the stalemate in our music arena should get a momentum."

Going down memory lane, Andrew says, "I still remember the day I first rendered a song for Subal Das. I couldn't catch the essence of his song and eventually failed to sing it properly. While the recording was on, I came out from the recording studio without informing Subal. He understood why I did this. After ten years, at his home I heard him saying to a newcomer, 'Andrew is so devoted to music that he escaped from a recording because he failed to catch the tune of my song. But, look at him today, he is so popular that even I ask for suggestions from him.' Now that is a compliment I'll always cherish."

Chitrangada

An impressive performance by Maple Leaf International School students



Young performers in the dance drama

PHOTO: STAR

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Song, dance and recital came together in an impressive performance of Tagore's dance-drama, *Chitrangada*. On stage were a troupe of young ones from Maple Leaf International School who rendered the story of Arjuna and Chitrangada (characters from the *Mahabharata*) on September 6 and 7. The crowded venue was the Shishu Academy.

or *Chandalika* but they are more complex."

Hats off also to choreographer Samina Hussain Prema, who directed the colourfully clad and graceful dancers. She is well qualified for the task: she is a teacher at Chhayana and a student of Sharmila Bandyopadhyay.

Also worth mentioning were the dances of *Chitrangada* by Nabila Islam Kumu and Orpita Ouysharja in her forms as Kurupa and Shurupa respectively. Other talents were ANM Rafayet Islam, singing in the role of Arjuna, Afnan Samara, vocalising the role of Chitrangada, Md Nayem Mahmood Khan, singer in role of Madana, the God of Love and Tasfia Mehrin who recited the part of Shokhi.

Also superb was the stage design with a backdrop clouds in the sky and two trees. Truly scenic designer Taher Ali outdid himself.

A brief idea of the storyline: The strong and courageous Chitrangada falls in love with the Pandava Arjun who is in his 11th year of exile. However, the relationship is one-sided. A distraught Chitrangada prays to Madana for

one year of beauty so that she can win over Arjuna. Her wish is granted and Arjuna falls in love with the beautiful princess. With the passage of time, she begins to feel uncomfortable in her new guise. The day of reckoning arrives when the warrior princess is quizzed by Arjuna about Chitrangada, whose tales of bravery have reached him. Finally, Chitrangada calls on Madana to revert her back to her original self.

There is an underlying message in the dance drama. "The best scene in my view was the last scene, when Chitrangada says to Arjuna, 'I am not an object of worship like a goddess nor should I be cast aside. I walk by your side,'" says Tuhi.

As the brochure puts it: "One of the most noticeable features of *Chitrangada* is that it not only reinforces Tagore's philosophy of love but spins around the concept that beauty is mortal and like life fades out in a flash, but also separates the power, strength and beauty of a woman." Truly the audience is left with the feeling that beauty is only skin deep.

Tête-à-tête with Pragna Laboni

Aggrojo turns the spotlight on the elderly

KAVITA CHARANJI

Pragna Laboni juggles her many interests with ease. The part time teacher in North South University is also a TV anchor, scriptwriter and reciter. One of her newer ventures is anchoring the TV show *Aggrojo*, aired on ntv on alternate Sundays (at 6.50 pm), which hit the small screen three months ago.

Aggrojo is a series on senior citizens. The show features two or three common people such as a rickshaw puller, vagabond, people from the old home and a celebrity. Among the celebrities featured on the show are Obaidul Haque (a senior journalist and ex-editor of the *Bangladesh Observer*), Professor Kabir Chowdhury, National Professor, Sudhin Das an exponent of Nazrul songs and Noorjahan Begum (editor of *Begum magazine*). "Aggrojo was the first to focus on senior citizens in a regular programme. The purpose is to create awareness, give the elderly a voice through the medium of television and a place in society," says

Pragna.

The programme also offers viewers tips on handling old age—ranging from celebrating birthdays of our elders, giving them a patient hearing, presenting them what they want—no matter how small—taking them on an outing and taking group pictures. Explaining the reasoning behind the tips, Pragna says, "In the present day we are busy with ourselves, children and jobs. In the bargain, the elders in the family are neglected. The important thing to recognise is that one day we will be in their shoes."

Aggrojo is not Dhaka-centric, rather it showcases the elderly people from all over Bangladesh. Currently the team is in Laxmipur, where they are shooting. Apparently, a man of all of 103 years will be presented on the show.

Pragna is pleased with the response to *Aggrojo*. As she says, the team has received mail from many parts of the world. Among those who have written in are a cousin from London and a family friend in Sweden. They were



Pragna Laboni in the TV show Aggrojo

apparently touched by the programme, particularly one episode where an elderly couple is thrown out of their home and sent to an old people's home in Gazipur. Another memorable story is that of a once powerful police sub-inspector who is left to fend for himself in the Gazipur home for old people.

In addition to anchoring, Pragna also writes scripts for TV plays. The first such work is *Cha* and she has already done 13 scripts. *Cha*, based on the December 14, 1971 killing of intellectuals, was telecast in 1998. The play *Cha* is derived from a short story by well known academician-writer Mohammad Zafar Iqbal and in addition to being script writer, Pragna has also directed the play.

There is more to come. Though Pragna feels hamstrung occasionally by the inability to bring about radical change in the lives of the elderly, she hopes that *Aggrojo* will generate public opinion so that our elders can be assured of dignity and respect in their twilight years.

Bollywood bonds with James



First it was Pakistani singers and now it's over to a Bangladeshi singer to bond with Bollywood. If problems regarding James' visa are sorted out soon, he will become the first ever Bangladeshi rock singer to sing in a Hindi film.

The music for Mahesh Bhatt's *Gangster*, which will have James' song, will be scored by Pritam. James will be singing a Hindi version of Goutam Chattopadhyay's *Prithibi*. In a recent interview James said, "It is an honour for me to have been chosen to do Goutam's song in the film. There are two songs that I've been asked to do and I am just excited about the entire project. However, we are facing visa problems. We have a meeting scheduled with embassy officials where we will take the matter up."

world'. Artists should not be denied visa," added James.

Pritam, the music director of the film said, "Even we are very worried about this visa imbroglio. Our recording is getting delayed. I roped in James because he has this awesome singing style which is absolutely unique."

Meanwhile, James has also been approached by *Yahaan* director Shoojit Sircar for his forthcoming film *Amarjeet*.

Elaborating on this issue, Sircar said, "Shantanu (Moitra) will compose James' song and I will begin shooting in December. In fact, I was the one to forward James' number to Pritam when they were contemplating about using it."

Source: Times News Network

Reflection Million Dollar Hilary

"One thing I've learned: You never know where life is taking you, but it's taking you." -- Hilary Swank

Life certainly took Hilary somewhere. Hilary Swank was born in Nebraska but spent most of her childhood in Bellingham, Washington. She has been swimming since the age of three, and competed in the Junior Olympics, as well as the Washington State Championships. She also ranked fifth in Washington for all-around gymnastics.

Hilary started acting at an early age, and appeared in several local plays. She moved to Los Angeles with her mother Judy when she was 16. Times were tough, and she and her mom were forced to live out of their car for a while, but before long Hilary landed her first professional acting job: two lines on *Harry And The Hendersons*. She got her first real break when she was cast as Kimberly, Buffy's best friend and sidekick in the feature film, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. However, she wasn't widely recognised at that point.

Her lack of name recognition actually aided Swank in landing the career transforming role of Teena Brandon, a Nebraska woman who opts to live as a man, in *Boys Don't Cry* (1999). Based on a true story and beautifully realised onscreen by director Kimberly Peirce, the film presented numerous challenges for Swank. Having successfully passed the audition, she chopped off her long hair and worked with a trainer to build the requisite physique. As part of her extensive preparation, the married Swank created a male alter ego and spent close to a month living in that persona in Los Angeles, a move that provided the actress with reams of first-hand research.

The onscreen results were nothing short of astonishing, conveying the swagger as well as the fragility of the character, with many praising Swank's performance as Brandon as one of the year's best. She earned numerous accolades, including a justly deserved Best Actress Academy Award. About her preference Hilary said, "I follow my gut because in the end that's all you have. I shied away from playing just 'the girl' roles because I didn't find them inspiring."

Hilary became a household name and took parts in many films after that. *The Gift* (2000), *The Affair of the Necklace* (2001), *Insomnia* (2002), and *The Core* (2003) are some of the many films that followed. Hilary gave laudable performances in all of her films. The year 2004, brought yet another run of critical success. Hilary played the role of Maggie Fitzgerald in the Clint Eastwood directed film *Million Dollar Baby*. In the movie about the struggles of a female boxer, her performance is so emotionally riveting, it leaves a long-lasting impression on viewers. And that impres-



An emotional Hilary at the 77th Oscars

sion paid off as Hilary received her second Oscar for the role.

Even at the peak of her career, Hilary seems modest. As she put it at the 77th Oscars, "I don't know what I did in this life to deserve all this. I'm just a girl from a trailer park who had a dream. I never thought this would ever happen."

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent

Cross-current

Bipasha, Mahfuz and Tarin together again



COURTESY ANJAN

Popular artistes Bipasha Hayat, Mahfuz Ahmed and Tarin will be seen together again in another TV play *Jekhaney Shimanto*. Promising director Chayanika Chowdhury is now working on the script. For the first time Chayanika will direct a play written by Mohan Khan. Chayanika said, "Mohan Khan usually directs his own play; this is the first time he offered his script to any other maker for direction."

The story is about a love triangle. After getting a divorce from Bipasha, Mahfuz marries Tarin. Tarin is a bit curious about Bipasha, but she cannot wrest any facts from her husband. However, despite the mystery in Mahfuz's life, Tarin is happy with him. One fine morning three years later, Tarin is in for a surprise when she answers the door. Who could it be? There stands Bipasha at the doorstep. This is how the story unravels.

Source: Cultural Correspondent

Noble to pair up with Aupee

Noble, one of the lead models of the country, is very selective about TV plays. After acting in *Chhoto Chhoto Dheu*, *Kushum Kata* and *Prima Tomakey*, he hasn't acted in a TV play. However, he will soon stage a comeback in a new TV play *Brishtir Porey* as the protagonist. Made under the banner of Ad Media, the play will be aired on the next Eid-ul-Fitr. Noble will pair up with popular actress Aupee Karim in this play. As in real life, the popular Monalisa will be seen as a famous model. In the play Aupee plays an architect who lives in Monalisa's house because her parents abandoned her in her childhood. Noble, another model and a good friend of Monalisa, falls for her. But Monalisa refuses him for the sake of her career. The broken hearted Noble selects Aupee for his next commercial and eventually falls in love with her. According to the director, there is a twist at the end of the play.

Source: Cultural Correspondent



Aamir's next film in Dec'



Just recently, Aamir Khan had his first release in almost four years, *Mangal Pandey -- The Rising*. Aamir's next film should be released at the end of this year. Rakesh Omprakash Mehra is almost through with the principal shooting of *Rang De Basanti* and is planning to release it in December this year.

"We are looking for a year-end release for the film," says Mehra, adding in the same breath that he has decided to release the film in the Hindi version only. Where does that leave the English version of the film (*Paint Me Yellow*)? "Though we can make a *Hinglish* version of the film, I'd prefer releasing the Hindi version only," he states.

Source: Internet