

Ferdausi Rahman

Unique in her own domain

NASHID KAMAL

ALTHOUGH poet Kazi Nazrul Islam called these words in his famous song: Amay nohey go, bhalobasho shudhu, bhalobasho mor gaan, they capture the essence of every artist -- to be loved for his/her music. These lines form the title of the monthly programme on ntv where accomplished artists of the country Ferdausi Rahman presents her songs that are sung by contemporary artists.

Ferdausi, as the programme displays, has earned her fame from a very early age. The beauty of her

music is its versatility. Ferdausi herself mentioned that although she had been training in pure classical from her ustads and spent innumerable hours in practicing ragas, her first recorded song was a folk number in erstwhile Pakistan Radio (at age 17). Her father, the folk maestro Abbasuddin listened attentively while Ferdausi's song was being broadcast. When she returned home, Abbasuddin commented on the exactness of her style, "I have never taught you this bhawaiya, but you have presented it in its correct manner!"

If I had not made the effort to learn from Ferdausi, I would never

have known the nuances that exist for each kind of song that she has so carefully practiced to perfection. There is no doubt that hailing from North Bengal she could make a quick transition from being a modern, educated woman to representing a village belle with all her emotions and longings.

However, that is only a partial portrayal of Ferdausi. When she sang for the films, the reason each song became a hit is because she applied her own imagination and identified herself with the character in the movie concerned and aptly used her own vocal dexterity to represent the character. As she explained the reasons behind a certain pronunciation, or the reason for using a sad tone or happy note, it seemed so well thought of. In the short timing of only three to four minutes of a song an entire era, an entire story, an entire episode even a saga of life has been narrated by her. While teaching the songs, sometimes she says, "The more I think about it, the more my expressions improve and the thoughts of the writer, unifies with mine as a singer. Even the style of holding my breath or deferring it for a later moment makes a gulf of difference."

As an instance she mentions Robin Ghosh's Urdu film song O pardesi aja, ankhiya tore. Even a stress, elongation and juxtaposition is so important.

Ferdausi sings from Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal, Ami bare bare jeebonero srotey bheshey, peyechi tomoe sheshey. She explains how life's vagaries tilted her from one shore to another and that's how the words and tune should sound, till you reach peyechi tomoe sheshey where it reaches a climax, a culmi-



Ferdausi Rahman (Top), Nashid Kamal in the show hosted by Ferdausi

nation of a dream or the end of a journey.

Her renditions are so real and inimitable that to this day no artist has even after much effort been able to emulate the allure of Podmar dheurey.

She loses herself in classical music. Her only lament is that she could not train further. She admires the likes of Ustad Amir Khan and also Roshanara Begum, yet her

taans, sargams, her renderings are still unattainable to us. Her achievement is very special and so is her dedication. It is not a day's achievement -- it takes a lifetime to achieve what Ferdausi has -- a pursuit through life and a lesson for us all.

The author is an eminent singer.



Shanjher Pakhira

Opulence of Nazrul songs underscored by Nasima Shaheen

KARIM WAHEED

Diversity is the identifiable trait of Nazrul songs. Think any raaga or traditional genre of sub-continental music -- kheyaa, thumri, daadra, toppa, adhunik, Islami, mursheedi, marfati, kirtan, Shyama Sangeet, folk, jhumur (featuring Santaal beats) -- they have all been brilliantly experimented with and incorporated in 'Nazrul Sangeet'. In fact, it would not be an overstatement to say that Nazrul should be credited for widely popularising ghazals in Bangla. Ghazals originated in Persia (Iran).

Shanjher Pakhira, a recently

released album, is an assortment of Nazrul songs. Emerging artiste Naseema Shaheen's renditions of the songs in the album manifest the opulence and diversity of Nazrul's compositions (all except for Mon-e porey aaj, composed by Kamal Das Gupta).

The album starts off with a rendition of Eki shurey tumi gaan shonaley -- A ghazal based on mishra bhairavi. With the very first song, the artiste demonstrates her admirable élan and expertise. Shaheen's voice exuberates the kind of finesse that can only be achieved through years of arduous

music lessons and studies. She deftly carries out the subtle mudkis (twists and turns) in the song.

The next song based on mishra jajjyanti is an articulate delineation of monsoon. The number becomes memorable as Shaheen breathes life into verses -- Abar ki elorey re badol, loye peethbhora elo chul chokhbhora jol...

Nazrul songs often epitomise a forlorn lover yearning for his/her distant beloved. That disposition resonates in Shaheen's vocals in Hey priyo tomar amar majhey biroherparabaar.

The melancholy, yet regal sound of sarangi creates an apt ambience for the song Boriya poraan shunitechhi gaan, violin and sarod add to the effects. The songs reaches its highpoint when the artiste renders chandrachur megher gaye, moral-mithun uriya dhaye, nesho dhorey chokheyalo chhayae...

Shedyin bolechhiley and Mon-e porey aaj two adhunik songs are easy on the ear. Dolonchampa bone doley, features a raaga created by Nazrul -- raaga dolonchampa. Shaheen finishes off with a poignant rendition of Shanjher pakhira phirilo kulaye.

Music direction by Durbadal Chattyopadhyay compliments the artiste's vocals and not overshadow it, as the case should be. The album produced by Shurer Mela can be a treat for music aficionados, specifically Nazrul devotees.



Nasima Shaheen

Abul Hayat visits Sisimpur

Eminent TV personality Abul Hayat recently visited the sets of Sisimpur. There he interacted with the moppets and the people working behind the scenes, says a press release.

"The show is a very positive initiative towards enhancing the knowledge of young children across the country and several aspects in the show help generate social awareness amongst them," said the actor.

In the TV show Sisimpur this week, children will get to see moppet Halum in discomfort due to a large fishbone stuck in his throat.

His friends Tuktuki and Lal Mia help him finally get the fishbone out. A chorus song will be presented by a group of children. Tuktuki and Polash will then introduce the number 7 and the letter cha to the young ones. Children will get to know to exercise to remain fit and strong. Five-year-old Asha from Trinidad teaches the children on how to walk on stilts and how they enjoy themselves through singing and dancing during carnivals and much more.



Abul Hayat seen with the moppets in the TV show

Berlinala '06

A global fiesta for film enthusiasts

MIR MONAZ HAQUE, Berlin

Berlin International Film Festival -- "Berlinala" has awarded the "Golden Bear" to the film Grbavica a moving drama about Bosnia's post-war trauma and the lingering impact of the systematic rape of Bosnian women by Serb soldiers.

"Berlinala" has become one of the leading international film festivals alongside Cannes and Venice. The festival in Berlin rolled out the red carpet to films from all over the world on 9th February for 12 days. The city of Berlin sparkled and shimmered for the 56th edition of the international film festival. It was a significant event not only for the public at large but also for local and international filmmakers. International stars like George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Robert Altman, Claude Chabrol, Isabelle Huppert graced the red carpet during last 12 days at Berlinala.

Approximately 3500 journalists from over 80 countries covered the event in newspapers, magazines, radio and television. The public film screenings alone attracted over 450,000 visitors. This year there were over 1000 films shown at the Berlinala.

There were 26 films in the main competition category. Some 60 short films were divided in the "Competi-

tion", "Panorama", "Perspektive Deutsches Kino" and "Kinderfilmfest" sections.

The opening film was Syriana (USA) to the film Grbavica a moving drama about Bosnia's post-war trauma and the lingering impact of the systematic rape of Bosnian women by Serb soldiers. In one of the leading roles George Clooney plays a CIA agent who is sent on a mission to the Middle East.

The Road to Guantanamo, a co-production of UK, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan was screened at the festival as well. The film criticises the US administration for ill-treatment of detainees at the Guantanamo camp.

For the last five years Berlinala has been operation a programme called "Talent Campus" which aims to promote young filmmakers and actors. The "Berlinala Talent Campus" has also become a platform where young talents and experienced professionals come together and share views.

With 530 emerging filmmakers, actors, technicians from 90 countries and a total of 80 international experts this year, "Berlinala Talent Campus" is turning into the school for those wanting to make it in the film business. This year two young filmmakers from Bangladesh have participated at the "Berlinala Talent Campus". One of them is Zahurul Islam



The winners of Berlinale-2006: Director Jasmila Zbanic of Bosnia (3-R)

and who screened his experimental film Children of Paradise.

John and Jane, a documentary film about Indian call centre employees on the frontlines of globalisation, made waves at the festival. Director Ashim Ahluwalia, followed the lives of six Indian call centre agents trying to sell American everything from cheaper phone call rates to emergency medical systems. The film's protagonists take on pseudonyms such as John and Jane and work nights to cater to the demands of a

market half a world away.

Since 1951, Berlinale has honoured a number of brilliant directors and films that went on to become parts of the film history. Award-winners at the Berlin International Film Festival include Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michelangelo Antonioni, Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergmann, Sidney Lumet, Robert Altman, Claude Chabrol, Roman Polanski, Satyajit Ray, Carlos Saura, Ang Lee, Zhang Yimou, John Cassavetes and many others.

The festival's main prizes are the Golden and Silver Bears.

The International Jury was led by Charlotte Rampling. The English character actress, who resides in France, is one of the most important international stars of contemporary cinema. Matthew Barney (multi-media artist, USA), Yash Chopra (producer-director, India), Marleen Gorris (director, Netherlands), Janusz Kaminski (cinematographer, Poland), Lee Young-ae (actress, Republic of Korea), Armin Mueller-Stahl, (actor, Germany) and Fred Roos (producer, USA) formed the jury.

The inaugural speech by festival director Dieter Kosslick truly resonated the approach and sentiments of the festival: "The 56th Berlinale intends to blend silver-screen glamour with an unflinching look at issues ranging from the US prison camp at Guantanamo Bay to women's rights in Iran."

The author is the editor of Asia Today, a business journal

CROSS CURRENT

Karnaphulir Kanna receives rave review

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

It was a gathering of South Asian writers, film makers and journalists where the mind was without fear and the head held high here last week.

And the fittest tribute to the event was the screening of Bangladeshi director Tanvir Mokammel's documentary Karnaphulir Kanna which has been banned by authorities in Bangladesh, against which he has moved the high court there.

The hour-long documentary, also screened at the Jamia Millia Islamia University here, drew good response from students of films at the university. "I am happy with the response the film elicited at the seminar on censorship and freedom of expression as well as at Jamia Millia Islamia University," Tanvir said.

Leading lawyer and rights activist Sara Hossain, was among the participants at the three-day seminar held at the Max Muller Bhawan.

Facing the wrath of the authorities or the censor board is nothing new for Tanvir whose feature film Nodir Nam Modhumati also needed high court's intervention to get past censor board objections to certain sequences and dialogues. His earlier documentary Smriti Ekattor made in 1991 has still not been cleared by the authorities.

The ban on Karnaphulir Kanna notwithstanding, the director is going to complete his next documentary titled 1971. Sixty percent of the shooting of the two-hour documentary is over and the remaining would be completed in next three to four months, he said.

"I felt the need to make this documentary keeping in view the way history is being sought to be distorted in my country," he said adding he has to undertake a lot of research by delving into archival materials before completing the documentary. If Bangladesh Liberation War has more than once formed the background of Tanvir's work, it is again going to be so with his next feature film Rabeya whose script is ready.



Scenes from Karnaphulir Kanna

The story of the proposed film is inspired by Sophocles' famous play Antigone and is set in 1971 rural Islamic background. Rabeya finds it hard to bury her brother, who is killed by collaborators of Pakistani army during the Liberation War, in the face of strong opposition by local clerics. But she is undeterred and herself is shot dead while burying her brother's body.

Tanvir says he has not filled up the cast for the movie particularly in the title role of Rabeya. However, Aly Zaker in the role of an Islamic patriarch is certain to feature in the film whose shoot is likely to begin in November this year, he added.



Bonya Mirza and co-artist in the TV play

TV play on Liberation War

A special TV play based on our Liberation War, Manush, written and directed by Hasina Ahmed Soma, will be aired tonight at 7:50 pm on Channel-1.

The story revolves around a teacher who works with the differently-abled students. The play analyses our Liberation War and other related issues.

Tania Ahmed, Bonya Mirza and others play the central characters in the play.

Theater for a cause



A scene from the play

Dramatics and Music Department, Dhaka University (DU) will stage William Shakespeare's Macbeth to raise funds for Jaglul Alam, a theater activist suffering from cancer, says a press release.

The play is being staged at the Natmondol auditorium, DU from March 1 to 4 at 6:30pm everyday. The

play translated by Syed Shamsul Huq is directed by assistant professor Dr Israfli Shahin.

Abul Bashar Zia Ul Haque, Ahmedul Kabir, Nayyar Sultana, Riaz Uddin Mahmud, Taposhi Dutt, Nawsheen Laila, Tamanna Hasan, Kaisar Rahman, Tanzy, Touqir and others perform in the play.

Trading races -- new TV show takes a close look at racism

AP, Los Angeles

When writer John Howard Griffin turned his skin from white to dark and traveled the southern parts of US in 1959 for a firsthand look at the depths of racism, he relied on a simple medical treatment and his wits.

In the 21st century, such a journey requires Hollywood makeup wizardry, the well-honed conventions of both reality TV and documentary filmmaking, and two families -- one black, one white -- acting as undercover race detectives in Southern California.

As superficially different as FX Networks' Black.White, and Griffin's landmark book Black Like Me appear to be, they are brothers under the skin.

Black.White, proceeds with open-minded seriousness as it leads viewers to a conclusion both obvious and powerful: race counts, for better and worse. Expressions of racism and racial identity change, but that bedrock truth remains.

"I didn't realise, more than anything, how hard it was going to be for whites and blacks to see the world through each other's eyes," said executive producer RJ Cutler. He insisted the six-episode show, which begins March 8 on FX, doesn't "aspire in any way to say definitive things about race." But the participants and their actions do.

In a Los Angeles-area house, Black.White, brings together Bruno Marcotulli, 47, his wife, Carmen Wurgel, 48, and her daughter Rose Bloomfield, 18, a white family from Santa Monica, California, and Brian Sparks, 41, wife Renee, 38, and their son, Nick, 17, a black Atlanta family.

Through artful makeup they swap races, if not perspectives.

"Don't believe the hype, everything in the world ain't black and white" -- sings rapper Ice Cube sings



Ice Cube (C), poses with Carmen, Bruno, Rose Wurgel (L), and Brian and Renee Sparks.

in the title song. The series' timing is notable, with race brought into renewed focus by Katrina and the disproportionate suffering it caused for blacks in New Orleans.

Attitudes are mostly, but not always, subtly expressed. In black makeup, Rose gets the brush-off when she applies for work at stores in a white area.

Sitting in as a white woman on a focus group discussion on race, Renee Sparks is shocked to hear a young college student relate how he was cautioned to wash off the handshake of a black person.

Larry E. Davis, director of the University of Pittsburgh's Center on Race and Social Problems, lauds the series' concept. "Black Like Me was a powerful work in its day; projects like Black.White. Have potential value for now," he said.