

Ustad Shahadat Hossain Khan

Upholding a legacy in music

KAVITA CHARANJI

DESPITE his formidable talent as a sarod player, Ustad Shahadat Hossain Khan prefers to keep a low profile. As he says, "To be in the public eye is sometimes important but not my priority." Today he is content to do two or three programmes annually through the family-run school named Ustad Ayet Ali Khan Sangeet Niketan. The other platform for him is working with the Grand Union Orchestra in London through music composition and performances in Europe.

Shahadat's talent has not gone unrecognised. In 1994, he was honoured with the Ekushey Padak, the highest national award of Bangladesh for his contribution in the field of music. He has also travelled overseas with his sarod, as a member of Bangladeshi cultural delegations to USA, UK, France, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Hong Kong, and Russia, among others.

Other credits include the composition and direction of music for the documentary films, *Mrityuheen Pran* and *Meet Bangladesh*. There is also his CD, *Ripples in Meadows*, produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Bangladeshi embassies around the world.

In Shahadat's reckoning he is one of the few sarod players in the country. The others are Yusuf Ali



An engrossed Shahadat at a concert

Khan and Afzalur Rahman.

Why is sarod playing so low key in Bangladesh? "The sarod is a very tough instrument to master and needs a lot of practice. Moreover, the instrument is not readily available here and students have to get it from India. Also there is a lack of sarod teachers in Bangladesh,"

says Shahadat. To some extent he has managed to fill this lacuna through the Ayet Ali Khan Sangeet Niketan, which offers classes in sarod, along with sitar, violin and *mohor veena*.

Shahadat also bemoans the lack of support to instrumental musicians and the trend of opting for instru-

ments such as electronic guitar, keyboards and drums. "Five to 10 years from now, it will be difficult to find acoustic players," he warns.

Shahadat is in a sense born to play the sarod. Coming from the illustrious family of celebrated musician, late Ustad Alauddin Khan (sarod), he is the son of the late

Ustad Abed Hossain Khan (sitar and sarod). That's not all. His grandfather is the late Ustad Ayet Ali Khan (surbahar).

No wonder then that at the tender age of seven, he began taking sarod lessons from his father. Later, he studied under his uncle Ustad Bahadur Khan, the celebrated sarod player of the subcontinent. Appreciation came his way in 1972 when he performed an instrumental duet with his uncle Ustad Bahadur Khan at the Alauddin Music Conference in Dhaka.

Along with his father, and as a guest artist of All India Radio, Shahadat performed in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Srinagar and Delhi. To him goes the distinction of participating in the All India Radio Music Conference (1974) along with renowned exponents of classical music from all over India.

As for the future, Shahadat has his hands full. In the course of his collaboration with Grand Union Orchestra, he strives to compose fusion music and introduce the sarod in different countries. Shahadat makes a fervent appeal that the government support instrumental music. As for TV and radio, he adheres to the belief that the electronic media should increase air time for instrumentalists.

Twenty greatest Bangla songs of all times

Ek nodi rokto periye secures ninth place

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

BBC is doing a survey of 20 greatest Bangla songs of all times and the listeners have selected *Ek nodi rokto periye*, *Banglar akashay rokitim surjio anley jara...* as the 9th best. The song from the film *Abar Tora Manush Ho*, written and composed by Khan Ataur Rahman and made memorable by Shahbaz Rahmatullah's unparalleled vocals, recalls the contribution of the freedom fighters during our Liberation War.

According to listeners, this song stands out because it portrays a clear image of the ultimate sacrifice made by a generation that went to war without contemplating the personal gains or losses.



Shahbaz Rahmatullah

Movies may boost Indo-Pak relations

Mughal-e-Azam and Taj Mahal released in Pakistan



Sonia Jehan, granddaughter of legendary singer Noor Jehan, as Mumtaz Mahal in the movie Taj Mahal

Though the token one-day release of K Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* has dampened Akbar Khan's spirit slightly, there's a palpable sense of excitement in Lahore as the producer-director Akbar Khan prepares for the lavish premiere of *Taj Mahal* in Lahore, April 26, and in Karachi on April 27.

"It feels like history," enthuses

Akbar Khan. "I'm here in Lahore with my entire family. My brothers Feroz and Sanjay Khan are here. My nephew Fardeen is here. So are Mahesh Bhatt, Pehlaj Nihalani and Manisha Koirala. Rekha joins us tomorrow. Pakistan's minister of culture will attend. Ambika Soni, Indian minister of tourism and culture, will arrive carrying a letter

from the prime minister. We're trying to get President Musharraf to attend the premier," says Akbar.

Akbar also discusses what he considers the duplicity of the people behind the release of *Mughal-e-Azam* in Pakistan: "They were supposed to release in Pakistan on June 2. But when they heard about our release plans, they decided to hurriedly pre-empt our release. The film was shabbily released for one day at a down-market theatre named 'Gulistan' just to make pre-empted history. Such a shame that the work of a man as great as K Asif should be reduced to a game of one-upmanship! In any case, their hasty release has backfired. The film has been poorly screened."

Akbar cheers up as he talks about the release plans for *Taj Mahal*. "We're releasing around 20 prints all across Pakistan. We've handicapped the best theatres across the country. I feel my film could begin a new chapter in cultural relations between the two countries. Both India and Pakistan could benefit immensely from co-productions. I sincerely hope Indian films will be released regularly in Pakistan now."

Source: Internet

CULTURAL FEAST

In aid of theatre activist Jaglul Alam

Title: Bajuk Bansi Anthionh
Organiser: Songbrata Abriti Charchha
O Bikash Kendra
Venue: National Theatre Stage
Date: April 28 at 6:45

Exhibition

Title: Disabled Children Art Exhibition
Organiser: Action On Disability And Development (ADD)
Venue: Bangladesh National Museum
Date: April 23-28

Title: First light

Photographer: GMB Akash
Organiser: The Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, House 275/5, Road 27, Dhanmondi
Date: April 17-27
Time: 12 noon-8 pm

Title: Art exhibition

Organiser: Liberation War Museum
Venue: Liberation War Museum hall
Date: April 21-30
Time: 10 am-8 pm

Discussion

Title: Meet the directors
Organiser: Theatrewala
Venue: Mahila Samity Stage
Date: April 28 at 9:30 pm

Strum TV to hit the international waves

KHALID-BIN-HABIB

The newest entrant in the Bangladeshi electronic media, Strum TV, is all set to go on air. This was announced at a press meet at a city hotel on April 24. The TV channel aims to promote the Bangladeshi youth culture and music both at home and abroad.

The satellite-IP (Internet Protocol) TV channel based in Thailand will begin transmission from mid-June this year. The first phase of transmission will cover Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand and US and the second phase will cover India, Sri Lanka, UAE and UK. As part of their regional programme mix, Strum TV will have a two-hour slot of Bangladeshi content every day in the initial phase of operations, with one hour live and one hour pre-

recorded. There will also be live programmes from Pakistan, Thailand and the Middle East.

On the occasion, Umer Sheikh, the CEO of Strum TV (in-charge of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan) had an interactive session with the journalists focusing on the overall plans and objectives of the channel and its Bangladesh operations. According to him, 60 percent of the programmes will be dedicated to music, 30 percent to technology and 10 percent to lifestyle and travel.

Among other speakers from Strum TV, Sayeed Zahir, the chief coordinator of music and Sadia Afreen Chowdhury, the head of programme coordination spoke about the channel's commitment to feature Bangladeshi culture.

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