

# Tagore's dance-drama 'Shapmochon'

## A mélange of songs, dance and theatics

## CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

**R**ABIRAG, a leading cultural organisation, held a dance-drama titled *Shapmochon* by Rabindranath Tagore. The event was held at the Shishu Academy Auditorium on July 28.

According to Sadi Mohammad, director of Rabirag, "While the other three popular dance-dramas of Tagore, namely *Shyama*, *Chitrangada* and *Chandalika* are often performed, *Shapmochon* is relatively less publicised. Hence we wanted to perform the dance drama." It took the crew two-and-a-half months of rigorous practice to stage this work.

*Shapmochon* is the story of a repulsive king who has been cursed by the gods.



Shibli and Neepa enact the lead roles (bottom), a colourful dance sequence

Rabindranath Tagore wrote it in 1931 on the occasion of his 70th birthday. During Tagore's lifetime he had introduced several changes and adjustments to the play. However, what has remained consistent throughout the 80 odd years, is its immaculate mélange of songs, dance and theatics that was also evident in the Rabirag performance. Tagore was also very particular about the colour for the stage settings and attire of the artistes in *Shapmochon*. There was no lack of that in the

performance as Shamim Ara Neepa, Shiblee Mohammad, Sohel Rahman, Abul Hasan Tapan, Ireen Parvin, and Shammi Yasmin fascinated the audience with their well-coordinated costumes and performance.

Another unique point in the performance was the use of live music and songs. The singers sang in rhythm, maintaining their own individuality yet being perfectly comfortable with the interdependence required to give the flavour of oneness for the play. The artistes exhibiting their talents in this field were Sadi Mohammad, Amina Ahmed, Lili Islam, Shopon Dutta and many others.



Shibli and Neepa enact the lead roles (bottom), a colourful dance sequence

## CULTURAL FEAST

## Theatre

### 'Rupoboti': A conflict between love and destitution

## ERSHAD KAMOL

A piper (Khalid Hassan Rumi) wanders from village to village in search of the killer of his beloved. Who is the killer? Nasrin Jahan's play *Rupoboti* points its finger at the scourge of poverty in the rural areas, where people are often compelled to leave their dearest ones.

Rumi, as the tragic hero, has given a bold performance in the play. Particularly poignant are sequences such as when he tries to track down the killer, the romantic scene with his beloved Rupoboti and the final scene when he meets with his dual personality Aibura.

In his cameo role as the zamindar, Saiful Islam Dipu's performance was highly appreciated. His voice modulation and body language were authentic of an aging lecher. Bratya Amin as Baul and M Ansar Ali as Joytish (astrologer) also performed well.



A scene from the play

But, Sonia Hassan in the role of the central character Rupoboti needs to develop her acting skill. She seemed disoriented and stiff during her performance.

Director Khaled Khan's endeavour deserves plaudits. To give an authentic representation of rural life, he has used different indigenous performing art forms

such as *palagaan*, *jatrapala* as well as rural games and sports. And his handling of the final sequence when the piper talks with his dual personality is notable.

Ahsan Habib Nasim's music and Anisul Haque Barun's choreography was impressive.

Enamul Karim Nirjhar's suggestive set does not go well with the theme and the mood of the play, which is based on a poverty stricken rural social setting.

Abu Daud Ashrafee's light design is faulty. Besides poor visibility, he has created two zones on the stage, unsuitable to an action-packed play. He needs to fine-tune his design, particularly in the sequences when the fortuneteller sees zamindar's fate in a moonlit night, the piper meets Aibura and others.

Shubochan Natya Sangsad staged the premiere show of *Rupoboti* at the Experimental Theatre Stage on July 28.

## Musical soiree by Citibank

### Bring on the rain

## KARIM WAHEED

Citibank, N.A. Bangladesh, a member of Citigroup, held a musical soiree featuring songs of rain on July 28. The event titled 'Borshor Gaan' was held at Radisson Water Garden Hotel.

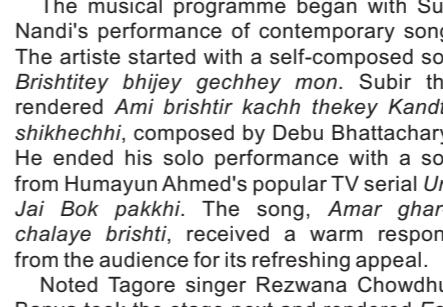
Speaking on rain and its impact on Bengali literature and songs, noted educationist Professor Anisuzzaman said, "We have six seasons but three of them are dominant. We feel the changes in nature and weather profoundly in summer, the season of rain and winter. However, the blistering summer sun is not comfortable and neither is shivering winter nights."

"Rain soothes us and nature. Who doesn't have fond memories of being drenched in rain on the way to school? At night we enjoy the rhythm of rain and though we know we might get wet, we leave the window open just for a little longer."

"Numerous songs have been written on rain. Tagore wrote songs on all six seasons. Majority of them, however, are on rain. This affinity towards rain goes back to ancient times. Mention of rain is noticeable in *Vaishnav Padabali* (written during the Middle Ages)."



Clockwise (from top) Rezwana Chowdhury Banya, Ferdaus Ara and Subir Nandi perform at the programme



The musical programme began with Subir Nandi's performance of contemporary songs. The artiste started with a self-composed song *Brishtitey bhijey gechhey mon*. Subir then rendered *Ami brishitir kachhi thekeye shikhechi*, composed by Debu Bhattacharya. He ended his solo performance with a song from Humayun Ahmed's popular TV serial *Urey Jai Bok pakkhi*. The song, *Amar ghar-er chalaye brishti*, received a warm response from the audience for its refreshing appeal.

Noted Tagore singer Rezwana Chowdhury Banya took the stage next and rendered *Esho Shyamol-o shundor-o*, followed by *Bohujug-er opar hotey Ashadha elo* and *Megh-er porey megh jomechhey*. Banya ended her performance with *Shaon-o gaganey ghor ghanaghata*, a Maithili song from *Bhanushingha-er Padabali*.

Nazrul artiste Ferdaus Ara was the last to

perform. Though the theme of the programme was 'rain', the singer decided to greet the season with a song on *Bashonto* (spring) and rendered *Ku kuhu..koyeliya*. Nature must have been amused too, as it started to rain unexpectedly. The ambience was perfect.

Ferdaus Ara also performed *Shaon-o raatey jodi*, *Gogoney kheleye shap* and an old Lata Mangeshkar classic, *Ashadha Sabon maney nato mon*. An impromptu duet by Ferdaus Ara and Subir Nandi -- *Rimjhim..ghano deya boroshey* -- wrapped up the event.

Mamun Rashid, chief executive officer of Citibank, expressed his gratitude to the artistes and guests. Rashid also added that Channel-i will air the event soon and funds generated from sponsors will go to Liberation War Museum.

Incorporating guitar and octapad in Tagore and Nazrul songs is not easy and that was evident throughout the event. Musical instruments are supposed to complement the vocals, not override it. Perhaps, the organisers would pay more attention to these details in future.



### Bush meets with 'American Idol' singers

## AP, Washington

After discussing war and peace in the Middle East, President Bush squeezed in a 10-minute photo-op last Friday with finalists in the hit television show *American Idol*.

They got the photos. Bush got a harmonica engraved with "American Idol 2006."

The 10 finalists dropped into the Oval Office to see Bush in between his meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and another photo session with top high school students in US.

The president gave the performers a quick tour of the Oval Office and talked about his job. Bush posed for a group photo in front of his desk, and then individual photos with each finalist. He urged them to stick to their beliefs, even if their celebrity status grows.

Taylor Hicks of Birmingham, Alabama, the most recent winner on the show, also gave Bush a black T-shirt emblazoned with "Soul Patrol" -- the name of Hicks' fan club.

Besides Hicks, the finalists from last season who met with Bush were: Katharine McPhee of Los Angeles, California; Chris Daughtry of McLeansville, North Carolina; Paris Bennett of Fayetteville, Georgia; Kellie Pickler of Albemarle, North Carolina; Ace Young of Denver, Colorado; Bucky Covington of Rockingham, North

Carolina; Mandisa Hundley of Antioch, Tennessee; Lisa Tucker of Anaheim, California; and Elliott Yamin of Richmond, Virginia.

It's unclear how familiar Bush is with their talents. Asked whether he had ever seen the show, the White House responded that he was "aware" of it.



Bush (C) with the 'American Idol' finalists

## All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

## BTV

09:05 Open University  
10:00 Satellite Broadcast  
12:15 Shongbadpotre  
Pata Thekey  
12:30 Shastho Tatho  
01:00 Krira Deganto  
01:30 Protiyashor Alo  
02:15 Selected  
Programme  
02:40 Educational  
Programme  
03:05 Banshori  
03:30 Selected  
Programme  
04:30 Selected  
programme  
05:05 National TV Debate  
06:10 Tagore Song  
07:00 Mati O Manush  
07:30 Drama Serial:  
Protidin Bangla-  
desh  
08:45 Drama Serial:  
Machhi Konya  
09:25 Drama Serial:  
Swapni Shonar  
Gaon  
10:25 Teknok Theke Tetulia

01:45 Public Reaction  
02:40 A Selected play of  
Humayun Ahmed  
04:05 Bashundhara  
Amader Gaan  
04:25 Sa Re Ga Ma  
05:30 Talk Show:  
Swashyo Kotha  
06:00 Music Plus  
06:20 Shamoiki  
07:50 Hello Minister  
10:00 Drama Serial: *Bela*  
Obelar Golpo  
12:00 Ajker  
Shangbadpotro  
13:30 Anyodishtri  
12:15 Abibashi Jonopod  
12:50 Smritir Monikothay  
01:30 Shornali Shadakalo  
02:30 Tele Film: *Fera*  
Holona  
05:45 Islami Sawal O  
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