

In conversation with Shamsur Rahman

Shehnai players: On the verge of extinction

ERSHAD KAMOL

THE wind instrument *shehnai*, that can be loosely compared to an oboe, was once very popular as a band instrument played in rural areas especially at weddings. However, the instrument is now on the verge of extinction. Though not well recognised amongst the masses, Shamsur Rahman is perhaps the only classical *shehnai* player at present in the country. A 'Grade A' artiste, Rahman plays *shehnai* at Dance and Music Department of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), does solo recitals in radio, BTV programmes and works in films as well.

Going back to his early days, Rahman says, "I was a football player, and alongside I used to learn classical music from Ustad Sirajuddin Miah. Once I tried to play *shehnai* that belonged to a rural artiste and he criticised me saying that *shehnai* is not like a football that you kick and it goes in the air. After that, I was determined to play the instrument. I got hold of a *shehnai* and started practicing regularly."

Coming to Dhaka in early 1970s, Rahman took lessons in *bansi* (flute) from renowned flutist Abdur Rahman. But, he mastered the art of playing *shehnai* by listening to tapes of music maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan, who single-handedly took *shehnai* to the centre stage. To quote him, "I did not have a Bangladeshi mentor from whom I could learn classical recitals on *shehnai*. Based on my knowledge on classical music, the renditions by Ustad Bismillah Khan were a great



help, which developed my sense of various ragas."

As a *shehnai* player Shamsur Rahman joined Bangladesh Betar in 1974. Subsequently, he worked

Rahman in their compositions. He used to play *bansi* in film songs as well. His performances in films such as *Badhu Biday* won appreciation.

However, times have changed for Rahman. As he says, "Nowadays, music composers have less interest in acoustics. As a result instruments such as *shehnai*, violin and others are not used in film songs."

Usually Rahman plays raga *Joge*, *Kafi*, *Eman*, *Bhairavi* and light classical *dhun* in solo recitals on radio, television and at live concerts. As a government delegate, he has played *shehnai* and *bansi* in Japan, Bahrain, Italy, North Korea, South Korea, Myanmar, Indonesia, Bhutan, Thailand and Hong Kong. Sharing some of his memorable moments, Rahman says, "I still remember my solo recital in Japan, which received warm response from the audience. I was supported by AFM Ekram Hossain on *esraj*. Moreover, music composer Ali Asgar Khokon composed a piece for a dance drama. My *shehnai* was highlighted in the composition, which was also titled *Shehnai*."

Does he teach *shehnai*? Shamsur Rahman's response: "Many are eager to learn *bansi*, but few are interested to learn *shehnai*, as it never received mass exposure. Moreover, one needs to dedicate his/her life to acquire mastery of the instrument. And I'm afraid, after me there will be no one to carry on the legacy of *shehnai* in Bangladesh."

in the movie industry as a musician. Music composers like Debu Bhattacharya, Satya Saha, Subal Das, and others frequently incorporated *shehnai* played by

An evening of classical music at Bishwa Shahitya Kendra

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT



Lina Taposhi performs at the programme

Classical music enthusiasts enjoyed a programme by Shuddho Sangeet Proshkar Goshthi (SSPG), a cultural organisation, at the Bishwa Shahitya Kendra on January 25. The organisation holds musical programmes on last Thursdays of each month.

Seasoned artiste Lina Taposhi and promising singer Pujon Kumar Das performed at the event. Sharup Hossain and Probir Kumar Das' display of tabla skills were applauded.

SSPG was formed in 1974, with an objective to nurture and promote classical music. The organisation, comprising individuals passionate about music, has been active in the cultural arena for over 33 years.

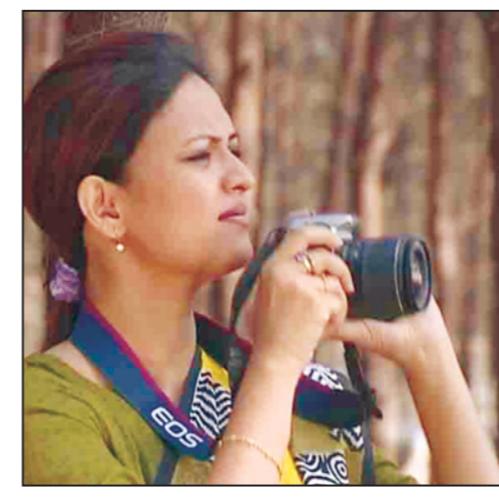
TV Watch 'Outdoor': New drama serial on ATN Bangla

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla is coming up with a new drama serial, *Outdoor*. The serial is jointly written by Arun Chowdhury and Rawnak Hasan.

The story involves a group of urbanites. Tired of the monotony of metro life, they plan to take a break and go outside the city. As they start to enjoy the openness and nature at its unadulterated best, the story goes through dramatic twists and turns.

Tanvin sweetly, Richi Solaiman, Eshita, Tinni, Hillol and Mir Sabir play the lead roles in the TV serial. Directed by Arun Chowdhury, the series will air every Sunday at 8pm, starting from tomorrow.



Richi Solaiman in *Outdoor*

Oscars: 'Long time coming' for Latinos

With Spain's Penelope Cruz and Mexico's Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuaron, Adriana Barraza and Guillermo Arriaga all nabbing key Academy Award nominations, Latinos are making a big impact in this year's Oscars.

"It has been a long time coming, especially since millions of people speak Spanish as their main language in this country," said Cruz, who was singled out for her role in Pedro Almodovar's Spanish-language film *Volver*. "It's great that it's finally being reflected in movies."

In fact, the Mexican helming troika of Gonzalez Inarritu, del Toro and Cuaron garnered a combined 16 nominations for their films *Babel*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Children of Men*, respectively.

Gonzalez Inarritu's director nomination and Cruz's best actress mention also represent Oscar firsts: The *Babel* filmmaker became the premier Mexican director nominated for the craft's highest honour, while the *Volver* star is the first actress recognised for a Spanish-speaking role.

For *Babel*'s Adriana Barraza, the film's high profile and Academy recognition provide an opportunity for audiences to view a storyline rarely

portrayed onscreen.

"With my character, a migrant worker, audiences get to see the feelings, the needs, the real reasons why they are here in the United States," she said. "People like my character, they are contributing to this society, and it's important for people to see that."

While the globe-spanning, multi-lingual *Babel* earned seven nominations, del Toro's Spanish film *Pan's Labyrinth* was right behind with six mentions.

"I think what it means is that there is finally a very strong all-inclusive presence of Spanish-language culture in the mainstream," said the director, who also nabbed an Oscar nomination for his *Labyrinth* screenplay.

And though Gonzalez Inarritu was honoured to be his country's first nominated director, he warned against defining people with labels.

"The film *Babel* is not about I am Mexican, and you are American," he said. "The point is we are human, and we are born naked before someone puts stupid passports on us and raises a flag."



Ivana Baquero in del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*

Source: Reuters

TV GUIDE

PICK OF THE DAY



Shunney Boshobash
On Channel 1 at 8:15pm
Drama Serial
Cast: Tauquir Ahmed, Bijori



Panic Room
On Star Movies at 8:45pm
Genre: Thriller
Host: Jodie Foster, Forest Whitaker

05:25 Bolly V - Star Plus
05:30 Krishna Kathaiyan
06:30 Mickey Mouse And Friends

07:00 The Legend Of Trazan
07:25 Bolly V - Star Plus
07:30 Golu Ke Goggles

08:00 Kumkum - Pyara Sa Bandhan

08:30 Lucky
09:30 Prithviraj Chauhan

10:00 Baa Bahoo Aur Baby
10:30 Aek Chabi Hai Padoss Mein

11:30 Thegrefaindialaugh-terchampion2

01:30 Wild India Week

02:30 Massive Engines With Chris Barrie

03:00 Mean Machines

03:30 How do they do it?

04:30 Wild Discovery

05:30 Beyond Tomorrow

06:30 King Cobra And I

07:30 Wild Discovery

08:30 Discover India

09:30 Sacred India

10:30 How do they do it?

11:30 King Cobra And I

04:00 Football Asia (Soccer/Futbol)

04:30 Nike Football Locker Room (Soccer)

05:00 Australian Open 2007 Presented B

06:00 The FA Cup - "Road To Wembley"

06:20 FA Cup 2006/07 (Soccer/Futbol)

08:25 The FA Cup - "Road To Wembley"

08:50 FA Cup 2006/07 (Soccer/Futbol)

11:00 The FA Cup - "Road To Wembley"

11:25 FA Cup 2006/07 (Soccer/Futbol)

04:00 Castle Test Series (Cricket)

10:30 Here We Go (Soccer/Futbol)

11:30 First Edition (Soccer/Futbol)

12:00 Hit (Cricket)

12:30 Sportscenter Week In Review (Soccer)

02:28 Castle Test Series (Cricket)

03:00 Science Safari (Cricket)

03:30 Hyenas Queen (Cricket)

04:30 Intriguing India (Cricket)

05:00 Crashing In Himalayas (Cricket)

10:30 Chupacabras (Cricket)

11:30 End Game (Cricket)

09:30 Fa Cup 2006/07 (Jip)

09:30 Fa Cup 2006/07 (Soccer/Futbol)

11:00 Sportscenter Weekend (Sport News)

11:05 Down Under - India's Tour Of Aus

11:30 Down Under - India's Tour Of Aus

12:00 Castle Test Series (Cricket)

03:00 Ashes Legends (Cricket)

Nurturing creativity

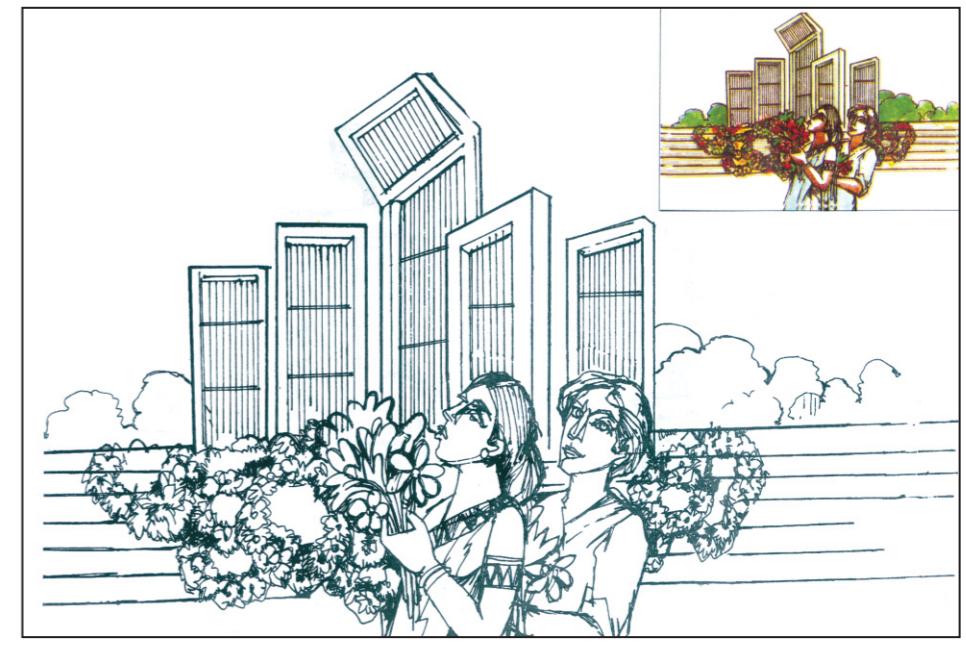
Biren Shome's art books for children

FAYZA HAQ

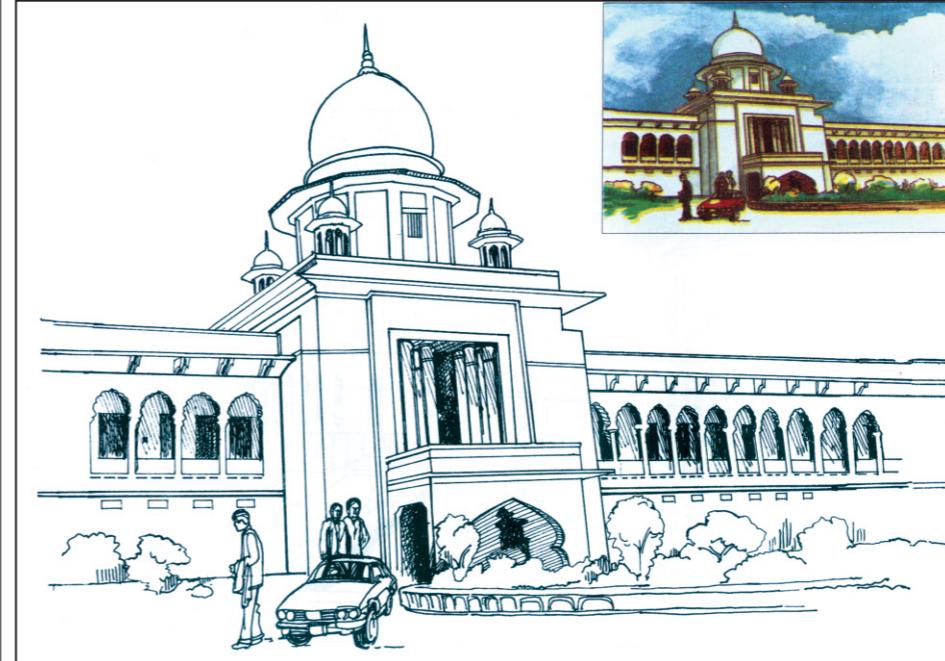
Biren Shome, a professional painter for over three decades, has brought out books on drawing and painting for school children. Written in Bangla, they are geared at students ranging from the playpen to class V, and are dedicated to famous local artists, past and present, like SM Sultan and Safiuddin Ahmed. His illustration work in the National Herbarium being over, he now has time and inclination to concentrate on doing something for the future generation. This is apart from exhibiting his works - which are semi-abstact, in oil, acrylic and mixed-media.

The books have been approved by the National Textbook Board and are suitable for the budget of most school children's parents. The first set of books train children to draw, colour and paint. The latter four books provide basic knowledge of all forms of arts and crafts - from painting and sculpture, to ceramics and needlework.

"I show the basic forms in the shape of triangle, square and circle and provide the simple techniques of drawing and colouring. They are told how to mix colours, such as red and yellow to get orange. When children are told to paint a flower, a bird, an animal, a tree or a house or a face they can have the guidance of the book.



Pictures of Shaheed Minar (top) and the High Court from a children's art book by Biren Shome



Young ones paint and colour on their own but this provides an academic training," says Biren.

The book for Class V, dedicated to the late Rashid Chowdhury, has a landscape with trees, mountains and lakes. There is then the image of the gypsy women carrying baskets on their heads, with boats in the rivers in the background. An image of the High Court introduces the child to architectural drawing and it includes sauntering people, flowering trees and gentle cloud forms too. The village scene shows the farmers and cowherds husking rice and tending to their domestic animals. Images of comely women forms, seeing to tasks like threshing of the rice and tending to the goats and hens have been carefully included.

The flood scene shows people standing waist-deep in water, while only the thatched tops of the houses can be seen in the distance. The fleeing people in boats are also included. Liberation movement soldiers with their guns and headbands of courage are included as well as the Shaheed Minar and the Smriti Shoudho at Savar.

All the images have a colour chart in a rectangle at the top right hand side to guide the young aspiring artists. Biren began writing the books in 1985, and in the final set of art books, for Classes VI to VIII, completed in 2006, he was helped by three other illustrators and art history experts.

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

News Bulletin

BTV
08:40 News Headlines (Bangla) at 8:55 am; 12:00pm, 2:00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm, 10:30pm, 12:15am.

News (Bangla) at 8:00am, 1:00pm, 2:00pm, 3:00pm, 4:00pm, 5:00pm, 6:00pm, 7:00pm, 8:00pm, 9:00pm, 10:00pm, 11:00pm, 12:00pm, 1:00am, 2:00am, 3:00am, 4:00am, 5:00am, 6:00am, 7:00am, 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am, 11:00am, 12:00pm, 1:00am, 2:00am, 3:00am, 4:00am, 5:00am, 6:00am, 7:00am, 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am, 11:00am, 12:00pm, 1:00am, 2:00am, 3:00am, 4:00am, 5:00am, 6:00am, 7:00am, 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am, 11:00am, 12:00pm, 1:00am, 2:00am, 3:00am, 4:00am, 5:00am, 6:00am, 7:0