

CULTURAL FEAS

Ekushey Book Fair



Organiser: Bangla Academy
Venue: Bangla Academy premises
Date: February 1-28
Month-long book fair

Ekushey Cultural

Programme

Organiser: Sammilito Sangskritik Jote
Venue: Central Shaheed Minar Premises
Date: February 9-19
Time: 4:00pm

Organisers: Sammilito Sangskritik Jote
Venue: Rabindra Sarobar Amphitheatre (Dhanmondi)
Date: February 15-21
Time: 4:00pm

Documentary Festival
Venue: Shawkat Osman Smriti Auditorium, Central Public Library, Shahbagh
Date: February 15-18
Time: daily at 11am, 3pm, 5pm and 7pm

Children's Painting
Exhibition

By Russian and Bangladeshi school children-winners and participants of the 4th International Children Art Biennale Bangladesh-2006
Venue: Exhibition Hall, Russian Centre of Science & Culture
Date: February 15-20
Time: 10am-7pm

Solo Painting
Exhibition

Title: Alluvial Dream & Reality
Artist: Kalidas Karmakar
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, Bengal Shilpalya, House no-275/F, Road no-27 (Old), Dhanmondi
Date: February 16-March 2
Time: 12:00pm-8:00pm

Bangla Calligraphy
Exhibition

Artist: Arham-ul-Haq Choudhury
Venue: British Council, 5 Fuller Road, Dhaka
Date: February 17-28
Time: 10:00am-8:00pm

Helmut Käutner
Retrospective

Venue: Goethe-Institut Dhaka
Organiser: Zahir Raihan Film Society and the Goethe-Institut Dhaka
February 19th: Romance in a Minor Key and The Devil's General
February 20th: The Affair of Julie and Sky without Stars

Blending eastern poetic prowess and western precision

In conversation with Swani Zubayer

KARIM WAHEED

IS songs deal with contemporary themes, weaving often enigmatic, often wistful or uplifting melodies. Swani Zubayer's songs sparkle with poetic prowess -- an unmistakable trait of *ghazal*. The talented singer-composer, however, says his songs do not precisely follow the form of traditional *ghazal* (a collection of couplets called *sher*), derived from the Persian *qasida*. Call his songs by any name, but the fact remains Zubayer's last two albums *Nirjon Shakkhor* and *Ojossro Kobita* were highly appreciated by music enthusiasts in the country, in particular those who crave variety.

Zubayer's first guru was Sri Gobindo Rababi Das. His *taleem* in Indian classical music began in 1993 under the supervision of Ustad Mazhar Ali Khan and Jawad Ali Khan (grandsons of the legendary Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan) of Kasur Patiala Gharana. But one incident in 1995 made him change his track. "I was in Delhi and I had the opportunity to experience an internationally acclaimed orchestra (conducted by Zubin Mehta) perform live at the Indira Gandhi Stadium," says the crooner, "that was a breakthrough experience."

Breakthrough indeed. Zubayer went on to do his Masters in Western Classical Composition from Royal University College of Music in Stockholm, Sweden. However, his passion for both Indian and western classical music are not mutually exclusive. The musician wants to experiment and incorporate elements of Indian classical music into western classical format. According to Zubayer, "One feature of western classical compositions that I've always admired is the precision in execution. Every composition, down to its last note is specified;



even the range of singers -- bass, baritone, tenor or contralto, mezzo-soprano, soprano -- is mentioned. There's provision for originality but no room for distortion.

"Music in our part of the world is all about improvisation. And that leaves an open ground for artists rendering the same song in different ways. There are debates on accuracy of renditions of certain

Tagore and Nazrul songs. I want to create music which will remain unchanged even after hundreds of years."

In 2003 Zubayer was commissioned by Sundsvall Symphony Orchestra for an orchestral work, titled *The Golden Land*. Based on the six seasons of Bangladesh and the transformation in nature, Zubayer composed the symphony

where the blend of East and West is evident.

On the current music scene in Bangladesh, Zubayer says, "There's definitely lack of originality. Not enough groundbreaking styles or inspiring songs have come up in the last three/four decades. Use of traditional acoustic instruments seems to be a dying trend. There is one skilled *sitar* player, no *sarengi*, *esraj*... it's a dismal picture. Everyone is going for fusion but for the most part, what one hears cannot be called fusion; more like choppy and sloppy inclusion of a little Latin here and bhangra there or something else. To be able to efficiently fuse different genres, one needs experience and skills like Kazi Nazrul Islam's creation of Bangla *ghazals* or RD Burman's use of Latin beats or Salil Chowdhury's use of East European orchestra styles.

"Most people don't want to learn things the right way which is also the hard way. Thanks to technology, now one can purchase software of percussion notes, ready to be pasted in compositions.

"However one positive aspect of advancement in technology is that production has become significantly cheaper and at this moment there are more buyers of music albums in the country than ever."

Zubayer will run a three-month music course in Western Classical Composition at Alliance Francaise, starting from March 3 (every Friday). On the *raison d'être*, he says, "In a globalised culture, one needs to learn the international language of music to project his/her heritage to the world. My dream is a music institution and this course is a humble beginning. Besides Western Classical Composition, other courses -- in classical guitar, violin and piano -- will also be offered at Alliance Francaise."

Sammilito Sangskritik Jote's programme at Rabindra Sarobar begins

MAINUL HASSAN

With the slogan *Ekush amar ahonkar, Ekhush ghuchabey andhokar*, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote (SSJ) inaugurated their weeklong cultural programme, observing 'Ekushey', at Rabindra Sarobar premises, Dhanmondi on February 15. The programme will continue till the International Mother Language Day, February 21. SSJ is also running programmes at the Central Shaheed Minar. The programmes at the Shaheed Minar will continue till February 19.

The programme at Rabindra Sarobar started with the National Anthem by artistes of Padatik Sangeet Sangsads and Kranti Shilpi Goshthi. It was followed by the familiar song on Ekushey -- *Amar bhai-er rokter rangan* *Ekushey February*.

Following that, chief guest of the programme Ramendu Majumder,

president ITI, Bangladesh declared the opening of the event.

Nasiruddin Yousuff, president of SSJ; Gulam Kuddus, general secre-

tary, SSJ and others also spoke at the occasion. The welcome speech was presented by Selim Shamsul Huda Chowdhury, member of the

executive committee, SSJ and also convenor of the programme. Nasiruddin Yousuff presided over the

programme.

The cultural programme started with a performance by Birman Chandra Biswas, followed by Shamima Rahman Munni. A group recitation was presented by the members of *Boikuntha Abritti Goshthi*. Artistes of Kranti Shilpi Goshthi rendered three chorus songs starting with *Mukiro Mondiro Shapanotole*. Artistes performing solo songs were Rahat Shorkar, Mita, Enayet A Mawla Jinnah, Mahbubul Haider Mohon and Sheikh Alaul Haque.

The last segment of the programme featured two street plays, *Gupto Bidya* by Samay and *Dori Khele* by Prachyanat.

The programmes will be held at Rabindra Sarobar everyday from 4:00pm to 8:00pm.

On February 14 there were some surprises for the audience. In a refreshing departure from the original, the 'Pumpkin' Bottom (ably played by Chalana Perera) unexpectedly bursts into the rhyme 'Mary had a little lamb'. This was purely improvised to the surprise of even Pam who thought he would render a Bangla song.

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The fairy sequences were delightful as dainty girls presented graceful dances, fusing western ballet with Indian dancing. The stars of this segment were indubita-

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Pointing to the USP of the play rendered by the young ones of AIS/D, the directors point out in a note, "As we made design decisions and worked with the actors, the concept we held on to was one of 'Fusion'...the plot of the play itself offers a good bit of 'confusion', as affairs of the heart, laws of the land, and whims of the supernatural collide."

Students of AIS/D in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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