

A rendezvous with Bangla songs of last 100 years

HSBC's grand musical soiree

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

It was an endeavour second to none. A journey through a hundred years of musical history, glory and pride. It was a rare occasion as some of Bangladesh's best lyricists, composers, and singers were under the same roof. Though generations apart, their love and passion for music brought them together to give music lovers a chance to experience some gems of Bangla songs.

The event took shape through the untiring efforts of HSBC Bank, the organiser and sponsor of the event. Titled 'Shotoborbor Bangla Gaan' (Hundred Years of Bangla Songs) it was held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center last Friday.

This was the second such extensive initiative by HSBC to celebrate the last 100 years of Bangla music.

Bangla has been the hub of countless talented composers, lyricists and singers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, DL Roy, Atul Prasad, Rajnikant to Radha Romon, Pronob Rai, Shali Chowdhury, Abdul Latif and many more during the last 100 years.

With an impressive line up of 20 artists that included Syed Abdul Hadi, Abdul Jabbar, Sabina



Clockwise (from top-centre): Shahnaz Rahmatullah performs at the event, instrumentalists and artistes during an orchestra presentation and chorus rendition, respectively

Yasmeen, Shahnaz Rahmatullah, Rezwana Chowdhury Bonna, Mita Huque, Ferdous Ara, Lucky Akhanda, Kumar Biswajeet, Indramohon Rajbonshi, Mitali Mukherjee and more, the audience swung to the melodies of the golden era. The concert featured 40 songs (three from each decade), selected by Dr Karunamaya Goswami and

Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed. After a welcome speech by corporate banking head of HSBC, Mahbub-ur-Rahman; Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Korunamaya Goswami and CEO of the bank, Steve Banner, also gave short speeches.

The choral rendition of our National Anthem, written in 1905 by Tagore, was followed by an orchestra

trated composition *Aji Bangladesher Hridoy Hotey* with traditional instruments such as *esraj*, *dotara*, *sitar*, *sarod*, *flute*, *dhol* etc, that created a wave of patriotic sentiment in the concert hall.

Next in line was DL Roy's iconic song *Dhono dhanya pushpey bhora* by Mita Haq, Fahim Hossain Chowdhury, Mahiuzzaman Chowdhury and others. The drift of nationalism among the poets and musicians during the early 1900s made way for scores of magnificent patriotic songs. Songs from that era *Mayer deya mota kapor* (of Rajnikant Sen) by Mita Haq and *Moder gorob moder asha* (of Atul Prasad), a choral rendition captured the sentiment thoroughly.

Sumon Majumdar and Ferdous Ara sang romantic Nazrul songs. Mohiuzzaman presented the song - *Diner sheshey ghumer deshey*. This was followed by two more Tagore songs by Bonna.

Upcoming singer Nirjhor Chowdhury received a warm response as he sang *Tomai aaj koto durey*.

A gripping choral rendition of *Mukhtir mondir shopano toley*, composed during 1926-35, took the audience to the tumultuous days of revolt against the British Raj. Then came Indramohon with a folk song

Shain parey tor boshot bari.

Mid '60s saw the popularity of television soar in our country. Syed Abdul Hadi selected a song of that era *Kichhu bolo* followed by Salil Chowdhury's popular composition *Shat bhai Champa*, performed by Samina Chowdhury. Bashir Ahmed performed two of his popular songs *Onek shadher moina* and *Amakey poratey jodi*. Upcoming talent and last year's *Closeup 1* contestant Sonia performed *Chhaya hoye tobu p a s h e y r o i b o*.

Shahnaz Rahmatullah sang *Tomar aguney porano* and an all-time favourite *Jey chhilo dristrishmanay* that received a round of applause.

The final segment of the event included *Osru diye lekha e gaan* by Sabina Yasmeen, *Nishi raat* by Samina Chowdhury and *Shona shona*, a choral rendition composed by Abdul Latif.

Inspirational song, *Purbo digantey* (written by Gobindo Haldar), aired from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, during our Liberation War, was presented next. Abdul Jabbar presented an emotive rendition of *Salam salam hajar salam*, a homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement and the Liberation War.

The programme wrapped up with songs of Mitali Mukherjee (now settled in Mumbai), Lucky Akhanda and Kumar Biswajeet.

Mitali presented *Ei duniya akhon tho aar* and *Haraano dimer moto*. As Lucky Akhanda performed his romantic ditty *Ei neel monihar* there was hardly anyone who didn't join in. Kumar Biswajeet then performed *Khakey shrimanto tomar*.

Minutes away from midnight, the six-hour concert came to an end with the song *Je matir bukey* by Syed Abdul Hadi.

Once more HSBC deserves kudos for taking up a mammoth task. Hopefully this trend will continue to inspire more such initiatives.

Indigenous Performing Art Festival 'Shongjatra': Art form with a touch of humour



Actors in a scene from *Shongjatra*

PHOTO: STAR

ERSHAD KAMOL

The rural artistes in Bangladesh, who are basically occupied with other professions, perform several *jatra* forms developed through improvisation. The presentation style of *Shongjatra*, developed and performed by the rural artistes, is unlike that of the typical *jatrapas* performed by the professional artistes. Usually the presentation style of typical *jatrapas*, which acquired its present form during the British colonial era, is greatly influenced by the European theatre concept. However, according to the experts, we have traditional *jatra* forms, which are not crafted like Shakespearean five act-drama, and

nor is the presentation style akin to the typical *jatrapas*.

Nipen Pal, a potter by profession, and his troupe staged *Shongjatra* at the Experimental Theatre Stage on February 23. The troupe from Kalihati, Tangail, presented *Shongjatra*, titled *Boiragi*, as part of the ongoing seven-day indigenous performing art form festival arranged by the Department of Theatre and Film of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

If someone analyses the name of the art form one finds that it is basically *Shonger jatra* (*jatra* presented by clowns). As a result, in a *Shongjatra*, the clowns or jokers through the jests and meaningless dialogue and activities

skillfully take the audience into the embedded sorrow and depth of the story. And the artistes appear on stage with 'painted face' and their performance may be labeled as 'exaggeration', but not at all irritating, rather entertaining.

Nipen Pal's troupe in its *Boiragi* jatra has touched many debated current issues with a touch of humour such as 'price hike', 'land grabbing', 'birth registration act' and 'dowry system'. And the use of glasses and costumes by the actors suggest the ongoing 'fusion process' of the indigenous performing art forms at the root level.

Bhajan Pal as a joker performed exceptionally well in the show.

A world without borders

79th Academy Awards more global than ever

Clint Eastwood, that most American of actors and directors, has a film nominated for a best-picture Oscar, *Letters from Iwo Jima*, that is in Japanese, a language he doesn't speak, and was shot in Iceland because it looks a lot like Iwo Jima but was cheaper.

Not to be outdone in globalising America's most famous film awards, another best picture nominee, *Babel*, was shot in four countries with actors speaking five languages and was written and directed by two of Mexico's most talented filmmakers.

To add to the Tower of Babel-like atmosphere at this year's Oscars, best-film nominee *The Queen* was shot in Britain about a crisis in the life of Queen Elizabeth.

This year's Oscars are more global than ever including a large number of Britons and Mexicans who have received nominations.

Guillermo del Toro, the Mexican director of *Pan's Labyrinth* said in a recent interview, "It is a beautiful paradox. A world worried about protecting borders and frontiers now has film as the new Esperanto -- crossing all borders and being a universal language."

The Oscars have always been international, but this year the US film awards seem to have been particularly open to foreign invasion.

Seven of the 10 contenders for best actress and best supporting actress are foreigners, including best actress

front-runner Helen Mirren.

As for the actors, three out of 10 are foreign-born, including dark-horse best actor contender Peter O'Toole of Britain for *Venus*. The last Briton to win the Oscar was Welshman Anthony Hopkins in 1992 for *The Silence of the Lambs*.

A trio of Mexican directors are competing for various awards with the films *Babel*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Children of Men*.

Babel picked up seven nominations - second only to *Dreamgirls* with eight -- including a directing nod for

Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu. Del Toro's grim Spanish-language fairytale *Pan's Labyrinth* followed with six nominations, including foreign-language feature. British sci-fi thriller *Children of Men* scored three nominations, including an adapted screenplay mention for director Alfonso Cuaron.

Inarritu is one of three foreigners vying for best director, alongside long-shot Britons Stephen Frears (*The Queen*) and Paul Greengrass (*United 93*).

In the last 10 years, the coveted Oscar has gone to foreigners six

times.

The Oscars will be handed out on tonight at the Kodak Theatre, Los Angeles (tomorrow morning, local time).

Source: Internet

Film festival at DU

Classical music at National Museum

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Classical music has the innate power of transporting listeners to a higher realm. A memorable evening of music, which offered a gamut of rhythms to satisfy the palate of classical music lovers, was held on February 23. Cultural organisation Saptarshi arranged the musical soiree titled *Geetadhar* in association with Unesco, Bangladesh at National Museum Auditorium.

Singers performing at the soiree were Nilotpal Sadhya, Yasmin Mushtari and Rezwan Ali. They sang a series of beautiful compositions covering the ragas in *dhrupad*, *dhama*, *khayal*, *tappa*, *tarana* and *thumri*. They were also supported by Sajjadur Rahman (harmonium), Ashit Biswas (esraj), Firoz Khan (sitar), Tapan Sarkar (pakhwaj and *khol*), Gazi Abdul Hakim (flute) and Enamul Haque (tabla).

Rezwan Ali, director of Saptarshi, delivered his welcome speech. Malama Meleisea and Professor Alim-ur-Rahman Khan, representatives of Unesco Bangladesh, were present as special guests.



Yasmin Mushtari (2-R) and Rezwan Ali, next to her perform at the programme

PICK OF THE DAY



Shanto Kutir
On ntv at 8:20pm
Drama serial
Cast: Chitrolekha Guho, Fazlur Rahman Babu



Transporter 2
On Star Movies at 7:00pm
Genre: Action/ Adventure
Cast: Jason Statham, Alessandro Gassman



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