

# Qayyum's cascading colours

The veteran artist turns 75



Artwork by Qayyum Chowdhury

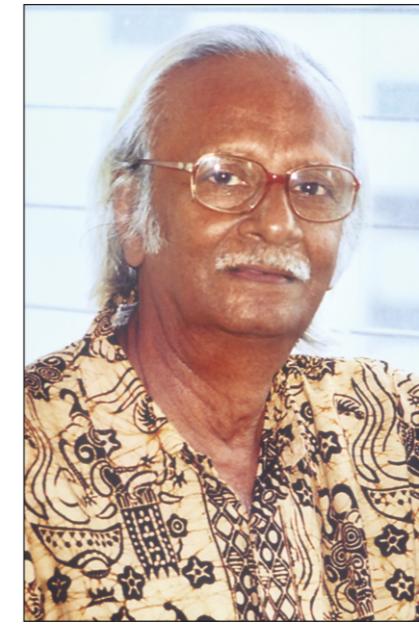
FAYZA HAQ

QAYYUM Chowdhury, whose 75<sup>th</sup> birthday is being celebrated with an exhibition at the Bengal Gallery today, inhabits a world of his own. It is full of lines, colours, passions, emotions and dreams. He combines years of aesthetics of Indian art with experiences and feelings of his own. His lines appear simple and yet express layers of metaphors and meanings.

After Zainul Abedin and Quamrul Hassan, he is among the best loved artists of Bangladesh. His ideals were always progressive while his vision secular. Fond of music, literature and the cinema, he seeks the best of the variety of life around him. His strokes are swift and sure as he ushers in the beauty and sensitivity of the world around him.

He takes realistic forms and motifs from folk art along with textile designs to form a rhythm of his own. His designs always have a practical formation as his forms are from everyday life. He has also worked on the historical theme of 1971 in his flow of life on his canvas. His lines are delicate and subtle, bringing in the sky, trees, domestic animals, boats and in particular women seen working or resting. The people and places of rural Bangladesh have left a deep mark on his mind and this is what he reflects in his flamboyant greens and blues.

Qayyum Chowdhury says, "The artist who has influenced me most is undoubtedly my teacher, Zainul Abedin. Apart from him, the artists who move me greatly are Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Picasso. More recently I met the Australian painter Egon Scholler, who had powerful drawings of human figures and landscapes and he too influenced me. From India I admire Poriitor Sen and SH Raja. I don't have formal education overseas but went on study tours to UK, USA, Russia and China. Wherever I went, I visited the art galleries, I tried to learn as much as I could by studying the painting and talking to the artists I came across."



The artist

Before launching on large paintings he makes small sketches and only then progresses to the final canvas or paper. His painting materials are often brought from overseas by friends and patrons. Qayyum says, "I believe that water-colour is most suitable for our weather in Bangladesh." Over the decades, since 1952, when he began as a professional, he has made alternations in his style. An artist's work should always progress, he feels. "While I work I listen to music such as Rabindra Sangeet, Mozart and Beethoven," he says.

Qayyum has won many awards such as the one from Leipzig Book Fair in 1968, the Best Cover design prize from National Book Centre in 1976, Gold Medal from Sultan Foundation in 2001 and Ekushey Padak 1986. He has exhibited in Pakistan, India, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Zimbabwe and Oman.

জাতীয় নাট্য মেলা ২০০৭

# National Theatre Festival

Gearing up for success

With the slogan *Katbe Andhar Nobin Praner Srijon Tane*, after many years National Theatre Festival has been arranged by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF) in association with Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy (BSA). This is the third such theatre festival at the national level. Earlier BSA and BGTF jointly arranged festivals at the national level in 1992 and in 1998.

Chairman of BGTF, M Hamid says, "This is the third major initiative carried out by BGTF and BSA. If we get support from the government, we hope to organise a SAARC Theatre Festival including leading troupes of the SAARC countries at the end of this year."

Through a selection process, 46 plays have been included in the 23-day festival, which is simultaneously running at two venues of the academy -- National Theatre Stage and Experimental Theatre Stage.

festival for unavoidable reasons, members from the waiting list will be included."

Explaining the rationale behind arranging a national festival after an extended gap, Secretary General of BGTF Jhuna Chowdhury says, "Patronage from the government or from City Corporation is needed to for a national theatre festival. Unfortunately this culture has not yet permeated Bangladesh. As a result the federation has to raise funds from private sources."

Director General of BSA Quamrul Hassan (ndc) says, "We have provided two venues free of cost. As a result 46 troupes are staging shows in one compound, which was not possible earlier. One troupe representing BSA is participating in the festival.

"After the completion of the second phase, work of the National Theatre Hall, we hope to provide 'Theatre Museum', 'Theatre

National Theatre Hall in Bangladesh is yet to provide facilities on par with the National Theatre Hall overseas. However, he asserts that by the end of the year they will be able to provide rehearsal rooms for the troupes. He further says, "Under the direction of a world renowned director, BSA hopes to produce a theatre performance, in which selected quality actors from different groups will perform."

The organisers believe that the festival will boost theatre in Bangladesh and attract new viewers. Co-convenor of the festival, Akbaruzzaman who is also the assistant general secretary of BGTF says, "We seek to create new viewers through the festival. We have requested theatre activists to watch performances with their friends and families."

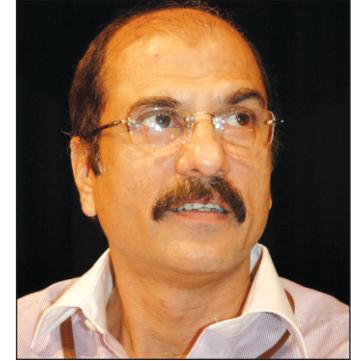
Over 80 theatre activists from different troupes are extending volunteer service to make the



M Hamid



Keramat Moula



Jhuna Chowdhury



Quamrul Hassan, ndc



Abul Kamal Shafi Ahmed



Probir Sardar

PHOTO: STAR

festivals a success. Member Secretary of the festival Probir Sardar says, "These young talents are working hard throughout the day. The festival is a chance for them to exchange views. And we hope these committed young talents can prove their worth."

Library, 'Studio Theatre', 'Seminar Room', 'Training Room' and other infrastructure facilities for the theatre practitioners", he adds.

Abul Kamal Shafi Ahmed, Director of the Department of Theatre and Film of the academy says, "Because of a shortfall of funds, we can't jointly organise the festival with BGTF. Still we are the associates of the National Theatre Festival with support from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs."

Ahmed is of the opinion that that

## 'Ekhono Mirzafar': a social drama

Many contemporary playwrights in Bangladesh have lampooned the rehabilitation of the Pakistani collaborators during the Liberation War. Sarwar Chowdhury's play *Ekhono Mirzafar* features the conspiracy of a Pakistani collaborator of 1971, who after many years of independence comes back to power and is involved with anti-state activities.

Like other such works, Sarwar in his play has featured the corruption that prevails in contemporary society. Analysing the reason behind the social turmoil, the playwright traces its roots to the rehabilitation of the collaborators. As a result, the Liberation War has appeared in the play as a 'flashback'.

Where playwright Sarwar breaks new ground is that he has created a parallel story of the social history of Bangladesh with the social setting of the popular historical play *Siraj-ud-Doula*. As a result the characters of *Ekhono Mirzafar* have been analysed from the perspective of historical characters such as Siraj-ud-Doula, Mirzafar, Mohammad Beg, Aleya and Golam Hossain.

Director Shahadat Hossain Hilu has used the technique of 'alienation', where the audience is alienated by a narrator to remind them that they are watching a play based on real life, not the reality.

However, there is room for the development of his directorial compositions especially in the sequences when the Liberation War has been shown in flashback. And it takes much time to transform from one sequence to another. As a result

No set has been used for the play.

However, the light design needs to be improved. Light designer Shahadat Hossain Khan has unne-

cessarily used red and green colours as well as a big zone at the center of the stage.

*Ekhono Mirzafar* was staged by Bahurupi Natya Shongstha, Mymensingh, on March 7 at the Experimental Theatre Stage. The show was staged as part of the National Theatre Festival arranged by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation in association with Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy.

Arun Bhattacharya as corrupt journalist and Arbinda Sarkar Jibon as a pseudo intellectual have performed well.

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