

Familiarising a generation with songs of Liberation War

In conversation with Shaheen Samad

MAHMUDA AFROZ

SHAHEEN Samad is noted not only for her skilful rendition of Nazrul songs, she is also renowned for her active participation in our Liberation War.

Currently the seasoned singer, along with noted composer Shujee Shyam, is teaching patriotic songs – broadcast from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra and rendered by artistes going from one camp to another during the war. The training session has been organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA).

It's a 16-day session and singers from all around the country are participating. At the end of the course outstanding students will be given certificates. Samad is teaching 6 of the 12 songs listed in the session.

"I am grateful to the academy for choosing me this year. It is a great honour," says the artiste. Some of the songs that are being taught at the academy are *Janatar shongram chholei*, *Phool khelbar din noy*, *Esho mukhtoner shathi*, *Deshey deshey bhromi tobo dukho gaan gahiye*, *Karar oi louho kopat* and more.

Samad vividly recalls those days in '71 when she reached Agartala via the Daudkandi ferry. "I was clad in a *burga*. I still get goose bumps when I remember how close we were to death, trying to escape the Pakistan army. There were other artistes on the other side of the border and soon I joined them. We all went to Kolkata from Agartala. Eventually the 'Bangladesh Mukti Shongrami Shilpi Shongshtha' was formed.

"We went from village to village on a truck singing patriotic songs and *gano sangeet*, inspiring freedom fighters. Songs like *Manush haw manush haw abar tora manush haw* and *Bangla ma-r doornibar amra tarun dol* ignited the passion of the young and the restless. We spent months on that truck all dirty and disheveled: eating, sleeping and mostly singing."



Shaheen Samad(C) with students at the training session

Samad's parents wanted their children to be bought up in a cultural atmosphere and soon all her siblings found their forte. While some chose to learn classical dancing, others chose to paint. Shaheen fell in love with Nazrul Sangeet. In her words, "There is such diversity in Nazrul songs; I was mesmerised. In Nazrul Sangeet one finds *kabyogeeti*, *bhajan*, *ghazal*, *kirtan*, *thumri*, *kheyal*, *Islamic* and other diverse genres. It's variety is unlimited."

Over the years the artiste has performed in Canada, UK, USA, France, Germany, Dubai, Abu

Dhabi, Bahrain, Russia, India and Pakistan. The number of awards and accolades she has won is listless. In 1989 Samad helped raise funds for flood victims in Bangladesh by performing at a concert in Dubai.

Rupantor Gaan, her recently released album is creating waves among the music lovers. The artiste performed at the Liberation War Museum yesterday and will sing at the Shilpakala Academy on Independence Day.

Flowers of joy

Photography exhibition on Japanese flora



Photographs highlighting variety of Japanese flowers

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

"As I walk in a foggy forest, wild flowers suddenly take over my senses. I find myself standing there, motionless, and feel as if I'm becoming one with nature. Maybe because it's a moment of bliss for me, I've spent every holiday walking around my favourite places where I'm able to see pretty flowers," says Yoichiro Yamashita, a world-renowned Japanese photographer whose exhibition – titled *Japanese Flowers* -- is currently being held at the Drik

Gallery in Dhanmondi. The exhibition started on March 17th and will continue throughout the month (3-8pm everyday). Yoichiro has focused on the individual beauty of flowers in some of the photographs while in others he has concentrated on nature, which the flowers are a part of. Some photographs capture the wilderness whereas others bring in a serene effect. Consistent to all the photographs, however, is the pure and simple joy; something only nature can offer to mankind.

Azalea, Prunus, Malus Halliana, Crychopragmus Violaceus, Tulip, Poppy, Sisyrinchium attanticum, Lysichiton Camtschatcense, Habenaria Radiata, Moss, Lilium Rubellum, Sunflower, Lilium, Meconopsis Betricifolia, Cherry blossom to name a few of the flowers which Yoichiro has highlighted in his postcard-like photographs. In bursts of red, blue, purple, magenta, white, yellow, pink and orange, the flowers look almost real in their caging frames.

In Yoichiro's words, "When revis-

iting a certain place, even in the same season, it never looks the same. I've always been fascinated by flowers and have been taking photographs for over 15 years now. I'm contented that I can live with flowers sharing 'moment' and 'the space' in a comfort zone. These photographs will continue to relish those moments forever.

Born in Tokyo, Yoichiro Yamashita has held exhibitions in the USA, Italy, Japan and Bangladesh.

Poetry evening at Goethe Institut

Ibsen's 179th birth anniversary observed



Discussants at the programme

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Goethe Institut Bangladesh organised a poetry evening celebrating Henrik Ibsen's 179th birth anniversary at its auditorium on March 21.

Young poets and translators read from poems in the programme. German translation of Ibsen's poems were presented by Sina Brod while Dr Silverine de Silva read out the English versions. Young Bangladeshi poets Firoz Ahmed and Alfred Khokon read out Bangla translations.

Torsten Oertel, director of Goethe Institut Bangladesh; Professor Niaz Zaman, Nurul Kabir, editor of *New Age*; poet Mahadev Saha and poet Muhammad Samad discussed the life and works of Ibsen.

Poet Anisur Rahman presented a paper on *Ibsen as a Poet* at the event.



National Theatre Festival '07 'Jalpori': Of infatuation and delusion

As done in indigenous theatre forms, *Jalpori* begins with *bandana* (conveying respect to the audience). Subsequently an actor starts narrating a tragic love-story. Through dialogue, body movement and music, actors on the empty stage unveil a triangular love story between Shohagi, Kayes and Moina.

Storyline of *Jalpori*, an Abayab Natya Dal production, is quite simple: A young man named Kayes is infatuated with Shohagi. The object of his affection soon dies. Kayes, however, discovers the existence of his beloved in the form of a mermaid. The plot reaches a new point when kayes' father arranges a marriage between him and Moina. The wedding takes place but the newly married couple cannot enjoy the honeymoon night; Kayes is still enamoured with the mermaid. Husband's negligence and ill-treatment from the in-law's push Moina to commit suicide. When Kayes realises that he had been delusional all along, he kills himself at the lake.

Playwright Yousuf Ali Khokon's narrative demonstrates an apt application of 'Magic Realism' -- an artistic genre in which magical elements appear in an otherwise realistic setting. Khokon has also used Muslim myths such as the story of Moses and Khawaz Khizir.

Director and designer Shahidul Haque Khan Shanon's presentation of the play using indigenous performing art form is interesting and moving. Light design of the play deserves plaudits. He has used 'water wave' effect to create the ambience of a water world.

Performances of the talented young artistes of



Young artistes of Abayab Natya Dal perform in the play

Abayab Natya Dal were commendable. The troupe staged *Jalpori* as part of the ongoing National Theatre Festival arranged by Bangladesh group Theatre Federation in associ-

ation with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The show was held on March 21 at the Experimental Theatre Stage.

'Binodini' staged

Shimul Yousuff's 50th birthday celebrated

In *Binodini* Shimul Yousuff performs in the role of Binodini Dasi, legendary actress of 19th century Bengal who made a remarkable contribution in shaping up theatre influenced by Western traditions.

Simon Zakaria, with guidance from Selim Al Deen, Nasiruddin Yousuff and Shimul Yousuff, has dramatised *Binodini*. During the dramatisation, Simon has used two autobiographies by Binodini Dasi -- *Aamar Kotha* and *Aamar Abhinoy Jibon*, several poems written by Binodini and a few reference books on this pioneering theatre actress of the subcontinent. The play refers to Binodini's rise from an existence

that was considered to be a social stigma.

Directed by Nasiruddin Yousuff, Kamaluddin Kabir is the set designer and Ishrat Nishat is the light designer of the play.

Dhaka Theatre staged the autobiography-based narrative, *Binodini*, on March 21 at the National Theatre Stage. As the day also marked Shimul Yousuff's 50th birthday, leaders of the Federation, activists of different theatre troupes and friends greeted her after the show.

BY ERSHAD KAMOL



Shimul Yousuff as Binodini Dasi

Tabu: "Doing 'Namesake' was liberating"

The thespian on her recent project and more

At practically every screening of the film *The Namesake*, director Mira Nair was asked about the actress who plays the beleaguered wife of a professor and mother of a young man whose lifestyle is very different from that of his immigrant parents.

The actress in question? "She is India's Meryl Streep," Nair says of Tabu. "She is an independent minded, great actress who is not worried about not looking glamorous."

Her work in the film is already generating warm praises from many critics who have seen the film in America. Those who have watched her career soar with films like *Maachis* and *Maqbool* felt that she has created a very strong character.

"I took up this film for the pleasure of working in it," says the 35-year-old actress. "I did not look at it as a career move and if my performance is appreciated, the credit should also be shared by my director, the writer (Jhumpa Lahiri) who created this complex but engaging character, and my co-artists."

Tabu talks about the engaging role in Nair's movie and touches other issues as well. Excerpts:

What was your biggest concern when you started working in films?

I was worried about my looks. I don't have the typical Bollywood look. I was worried about my height and how it would be projected on the screen. It took me quite some time to work on such issues. Remember I was not at all keen on an acting career.

What made you get into the movies?

I was bullied and lied to (laughs). And I was naive enough to believe that I could do a lead role in a film and then go back to my studies at St. Xavier's (in Mumbai).

What led you to enjoy working in films?

For one thing, some of the fantastic people who directed me early on in my career like Manmohan Singh, were very nice and encouraging. People like Rajiv Menon and Santosh Sivan took me under their wings. And then some of the films clicked, and I was getting the star treatment and a lot of fan mail. There were important awards (*Maachis*). It was impossible given these situations not to enjoy my work. I also realised that my work in films was also helping me grow inwardly. I was overcoming many and I was maturing fast as a person.

What was it like to work with Mira Nair?

She trusts her actors a lot. Once you have read the script, she believes you can do a very good job. There were hardly any dos and don'ts from her.

How did this role come to you?

It was a phone call. I have known her for many years. We were to work together on a film over five years ago but it did not materialise. I was not expecting a call from her but when it came, I was ready to work in the film. There were just a few days left to pack and go to America. I did not have time to absorb the offer and think of what the movie could do to my career.

What was the biggest attraction in Namesake?

To work in a different milieu than in Mumbai. Of course, I was going to work in a film based on a famous novel, working with a respected director and I had many interesting co-artists. But more than anything else, I was curious to know what it was to work with an unknown unit and in a country without a friend. So I told myself, I will go abroad,

do this film, and come back home. And that is what I did. Of course, I have been attending a few film festivals (Toronto, Rome) where the film was showing. And here I am in New York now talking about the film.

How would you describe your experience with Namesake?

Liberating. It was a very liberating and exhilarating experience. It was like I had come to America to work in this film without bringing any baggage. It was a different kind of experience. There was hardly a familiar face around, apart from Mira and Irrfan Khan. And I did not know anyone in the crew, at least in the beginning. It was as if I had been transported to a different planet, but it was so invigorating to work in this film, I forgot where I was.

Source: Internet



CULTURAL FEAST

Independence Day Celebration

Organiser: Liberation War Museum

Venue: Liberation War Museum

March 22 5:00pm

Speeches by Julian Francis and Dr. Shanghamitra Desai on experiences at the refugee camps during 1971

Song: Shaheen Samad

Dance: Nriyannandan

March 23 5:00pm

Dr. Akbar Ali Khan on Good Governance: Expectations and Achievements from

Liberation War

Readings from collected witness accounts of Liberation War

Brotochari dance and song

Performance by students

Documentary

March 24 5:00pm

Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin on

Education: Expectations and

Achievements from Liberation War

Readings from collected witness accounts of Liberation War

Performance by students

Recitation by Shrot Abriti Sangsard

March 25 6:30pm

Solo recitation: Asaduzzaman Noor,

Bhaswar Banerjee, Jhorna Sarkar,

Shahidul Islam

Musical soiree by Rabindra Sangeet

Shilpi Shangstha

March 26 9:30am

Performance by children

March 27 7:00pm

Jatrapala: Borgei Elo Deshe by Dosh

Opera

March 28 7:00pm

Street theatre

Art Camp

Venue: National Museum premises

Date: March 26

Time: 3:00pm

National Theatre Festival

Organiser: Bangladesh Group Theatre

Federation in association with Bangladesh

Shilpakala Academy

Time: 7pm

At National Theatre Stage

March 23

Biborton Jessor: Koiborto Gatha

March 24

Nagorik Natyangan Ensemble: Khanchar

Bhitor Achin Pakhi

March 25

Shwattiki Natya Shomprodye

Kusum Kabyo

March 26

Udichi

Chilekothar Sepoy

March 27

Shanlap Group Theatre

Debotar Grash

Experimental

Theatre Hall

March 23

Nagorik Natya Shomprodoy

Chhayanaout

March 24

Theatre (Baily Road)

Mukti

March 25

Kothok Natyo Shomprodai

Muchiram gur

March 26

Oikik Theatre

Thikana

March 27

Natyokendra

Projapoti

The schedule is subject to change