

# Alauddin Ali and his unforgettable melodies

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

It was one of those rare moments when I caught a glimpse of renowned composer Alauddin Ali, as usual oblivious to the world around him, humming a catchy tune he probably just came up with...

As I continued working on my songs, I occasionally saw him from the other side of the glass window at Sruti Studio.

Seeing the nonchalant way the piece of paper was left on the harmonium, my first intuition was that Ali was possibly creating yet another classic like *O amar Bangla ma tor*, *Shurjodoy-e tumi*, *Prothom Bangladesh amar shesh Bangladesh*, *Achhen amar mokhtar*, *Hai-re kopal mondo*, *Keu konodin amar-e tho*, *Tumi aar ekbar ashiya*, *Ei duniya ekhon tho aar shei duniya nai*, *Harano diner moto* and more. This certainly was not the time to intrude into his world, I reckoned.

It has been nearly two decades that we ran into each other once more. We talked about the days at the Shahbagh radio station when Ali had not yet made his mark as a composer. Our conversation veered on his vast popularity as a music director.

Ali's father, Jadob Ali, was a staff artiste at the radio. His uncle, Ustad Sadek Ali and cousins Dhir Ali Miah, Mansur Ali, Yunus Ali and Momotaz Uddin were all renowned music directors and composers of the Dacca Radio Station during the 60s.

When Ali was only a student of class three, his uncle, Ustad Sadek Ali had given him a Chinese violin as a gift. At that age he would be on the



It was at that point that I dropped anchor in the world of music. I realised I was going to be here for the rest of my life...

tabla, accompanying his sister while she practised on the *sitar*; he even ventured on his father's *esraj*,

composing tunes.

"In 1964, I won the 'All Pakistan Children's Award' for violin from

President Ayub Khan. It was at that point that I dropped anchor in the world of music. I realised I was going to be here for the rest of my life."

By 1967-68, Ali, besides practicing violin, learnt the piano under music director Karim Shahabuddin. "I spent almost 18 to 20 hours practising every day, which gave me confidence to emerge as a violinist in playbacks."

Ali feels fortunate enough to have worked under eminent music composers like Khan Ataur Rahman, Altaf Mahmud and Robin Ghosh. In 1970, his urge to work in music direction intensified as he got the opportunity to assist late Altaf Mahmud. Prominent music directors Dhir Ali Miah, Mansur Ali and Anwar Parvez also guided him for several years.

Ali made his debut as a music composer through the film *Shondhikkhon* in 1974. In 1977 his compositions for the films *Golapi Ekhon Train-e* and *Fokir Mojnu Shah* earned him enormous popularity.

"I was selected as the best music director and composer for three consecutive years (1978-80), which opened the door for me to work at HMV in India.

In 1978, one his best-selling albums featuring the diva Runa Laila was released. "The album broke all previous records and my songs attained greater popularity in West Bengal. In the last 20/25 years I'd recorded several songs in Dhaka, Kolkata, Mumbai, Lahore and Karachi. I consider myself fortunate that I've been able to have this kind of exposure."

His genius did not go unrecog-

nised as he received the most number of National Awards as a music director in our country.

In 1990, during the grand celebrations of 300th anniversary of Kolkata, Ali was accorded a reception at Salt Lake Stadium in the city, along with maestros including Saili Chowdhury and others. He was the music director for the SAAF Games Ceremony in 1993 at Dhaka Stadium, where over 8000 artistes sang to his tune.

"Many prominent singers of the subcontinent have sung my compositions. A reputed French music company has included the background scores for the movie *Shurjo Dighol Bari*, composed by me, in the curriculum of several music schools," Ali says.

Speaking on upcoming talents, Ali sees no alternative to proper grammatical know how. Despite access to modern electrical gadgets, it is next to impossible to venture into this field without a firm foothold in the basics of music, he asserts.

"Substandard lyrics and compositions are an embarrassment. Audio piracy has fuelled this unwanted phenomenon, where people (I don't like to call them composers) simply copy or lift off popular (mostly Hindi) songs, in an attempt to become famous overnight. Stern measures should be taken against them or we will soon lose our identity and like a tree with its roots severed, whither away into oblivion."

# Geetishotro's musical tribute to Waheedul Haque



PHOTO: STAR

Artistes of Geetishotro sing at the musical soiree

## CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Cultural organisation Geetishotro arranged a musical soiree on June 13 at Shawkat Osman Memorial Auditorium, Central Public Library. The programme was a homage to noted Tagore exponent Waheedul Haque. The highlight of the programme was renditions of songs from the 4th part of Tagore's *Swarobitan*. Kanganalicharan Sen was the staff notation maker of the songs.

Geetishotro, the last organisation founded by Waheedul Haque, has

been working towards generating public interest in Tagore songs for the last two years. One could feel Haque's presence everywhere at the programme, with his image in the background and his recorded speech being played.

Prior to the performance, cultural personality Biplob Bala delivered a speech on Haque's thoughts on music. "Waheedul Haque believed that music holds the central position in Bengali culture and popularising our traditional songs should be considered a sacred act if as a nation we are to fortify our identity,"

he said.

He also read out *Ek Photo Shishir* written by Waheedul Haque on the occasion of the launch of Geetishotro.

The musical performance started with a *bandana* (devotional) song, *Jethaye thake shobar odhom*. Solo and choral renditions followed. *Darao mon anonto brohmando majhey*, *Aji momo mon chahe*, *Bajao tumi kobi*, *Taro taro hori deenojone*, *nibiro ghono andhare* and *Je raat-e mor duarguli* were among the songs rendered at the programme.

# TV play "Ananya" on Channel-i



Subarna Mustafa in *Ananya*

## CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Channel-i will telecast *Ananya*, a single episode TV play, today at 3:05pm in its *Savlon Birothiin Binodon* slot.

The play revolves around Ananya -- a vivacious woman with an uncommon habit. She goes to houses of strangers and gets inside with some excuse,

strikes up a conversation with them and has a good time. Her talents seemed to be serving her well until one day she shows up at the home of Aditya and Nira.

The play is written and directed by Aruna Biswas. The cast includes Subarna Mustafa, Tushar Khan, Jitu Ahsan, Moushumi Biswas and others.

# "Kushumpur-er Jabanika" on ATN Bangla tonight

## CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Single episode TV play *Kushumpurer Jabanika* will be aired tonight on ATN Bangla at 8:45pm.

Ali is a famed TV actor. He also owns an ad firm. His wife is an actress. One day his school teacher, 70-year-old Mokhlesur Rahman, comes to him with a rather strange proposal.

Mokhlesur Rahman's elder son was a martyred Freedom Fighter. Rahman's younger son lives abroad and has been detached from the family for the last ten years. Rahman's wife Saleha is hard of hearing and had turned blind from

the shock of her elder son's death.

Mokhlesur Rahman begs his former student Ali to find an actor who would play the role of his younger son to comfort his ailing wife.

When an actor finally reaches Kushumpur, Saleha has almost given up on life. Rahman, however, lets the actor try.

Scripted by Tajul Islam, the play has been directed by Mohammad Hossain Jaimy. Azizul Hakim, Mamunur Rashid, Sirajul Islam, Sujata and Sumona Shoma have played the key roles.



Mamunur Rashid (R) and co-artist in the TV play

# My views on music as an art form

SWANI ZUBAYEER

Why do we compose music? Why do we involve ourselves in this field of art? Is it something we possess as a gift from the Creator and destined to continue throughout our lives? If not naturally gifted, could someone just wake up one fine day and realise that this is what he or she is meant for?

My mind is always engrossed with these questions for two reasons. Firstly, somewhat 18 years ago I happened to participate in an essay-writing exam held by Springston University in USA, and the subject was "Whether or not music should be included as a basic course in the junior level at schools". My stance was "no". My view on this issue has not changed in 18 years. I firmly believe music or any form of art cannot be imposed on anyone. It's a decision that should not be influenced by external elements. The gift of music cannot be achieved by force.

Secondly, after studying in Europe (Sweden) for years I came to know about quite a few globally renowned composers who started their careers in other professions but eventually became successful musicians and contributed to the development of modern music. For example Hungarian composer Xenakis was an architect by profession and American composer Bryan Fernihough started as a mathematician. Both of them have made significant contributions to modern classical music.

Having said all that, my predicament is that I feel I have failed to appreciate most of the music composed during the last 50 years.

The melody somehow seems displaced, harmonies broken into pieces as if a crystal palace has



PHOTO: STAR

The artiste during a performance

been bombarded with a cannon. I've always believed that mathematics and music are inseparable. If I may compare these two with the

human body then math would be the skeleton and the flesh and face over it would be music. It seems to me that for the most part, music

created in the last five decades only have skeletons. That is, it is so vigorously based on the mathematical part that the passion has been robbed off. The industrial revolution played a key role behind these complications.

Today's music is basically constructed with a high focus on expression of sounds. Some of the noteworthy contemporary composers are: Sven David Sandstrom and Per Lindgren of Sweden (*Trombone concerto* composed by the latter should be mentioned), Lars Ekstrom for his *Ocean of Time* and Toru Takemitsu of Japan. The simplicity, even in their definitive complex structures comes across so evidently that it touches the heart. I am bringing up these examples because a composition can be extremely complex in its structure but the outcome of it should move even those who do not have an analytical ear. After all, music should be for everyone.

It took me years to get a proper understanding of the language of western classical music. The same can be applicable to a westerner trying to understand our music. In Indian classical music the *raga* and the *taal* system are unique. I believe it would be interesting to use the modes of *raga* and the divisions of *taal* in the western set-up. From chamber to orchestral music these eastern elements can be used with the counterpoint technique (a technique Palestrina used in the 1600s) or in a harmonic way.

There are many things still left unexplored. One can only start by delving deep into the world of music.

The author is a music composer-singer and has completed his Masters in Western Classical Composition from the Royal University College of Music in Stockholm

# Aparna Sen's latest venture "The Japanese Wife"

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Whenever there is an opportunity to explore the intricacies of human relationships, veteran actress-director Aparna Sen never lets go of that.

She is at it again, delineating on the silver screen the relationship between a school teacher in the heart of the Sundarbans and a coy girl in Japan -- a bond established and nurtured through exchange of letters.

After the wide critical acclaim of her previous movie *15 Park Avenue*, Sen is shooting her next film in the Sundarbans. The film is based on *The Japanese Wife*, a book by London-based author Kunal Basu, a teacher in marketing at the Said Business School and Templeton College, Oxford University.

According to Basu, Sen liked the story when he narrated it to her during a visit to Kolkata last year.

*The Japanese Wife* oscillates between India and Japan and the turning point comes when a young widow Sandhya enters the school teacher



Snehamoy's house with her son.

Snehamoy is confronted with a complex situation: He shares domesticity with a woman he is not married to but is married to someone with whom he has experienced no domesticity.

Rahul Bose, who featured in Sen's award-winning film *Mr and Mrs Iyer* and *15 Park Avenue*, plays the role of Snehamoy and Raima Sen plays Sandhya. Japanese actress Chigusa Takaku and veteran actress Moshumi Chatterjee play other central roles.

Kunal Basu, who had appeared in Mrinal Sen's *Punascha* and *Abasheshey*, too has a cameo in Sen's film.

*The Japanese Wife*, the book, is expected to be released in January next year and Basu says his next work too will feature contemporary India.

This is the first book by Basu, who has earlier works include *The Opium Clerk* and *Racists*, will be reproduced on celluloid.

# Drew Barrymore to play a chihuahua



Drew Barrymore has signed up to play a chihuahua in Disney's latest comedy *South Of The Border*. The film follows the adventures of a pampered Beverly Hills lapdog called Chloe, who is accidentally abandoned on the mean streets of Mexico and must find her way home.

Disney has corralled a whole kennel full of Latino talent to play the indigenous mutts Chloe meets on her travels, including Salma Hayek, Cheech Marin, opera singer Placido Domingo, and Andy Garcia as a depressed German shepherd.

# "Pirates of the Caribbean III" faces wrath in China

*Pirates of the Caribbean III* is the latest film to feel the wrath of Chinese censors. Audiences in Beijing will see a severely snipped version of the movie when it opens there this week. According to *Variety*, the censors have cut back on a series of scenes featuring the action star Chow Yun Fat.

Some of the offending material was removed due to violence, but according to local media reports, one missing section features Yun Fat reading a verse by Tang dynasty poet Li Bai. The last *Pirates* flick was banned entirely because of scenes involving "cannibalism and ghosts".

Source: BBC



(L-R) Chow Yun Fat, Geoffrey Rush and Johnny Depp in *Pirates of the Caribbean III*