

# Fusion of rock and classical music

James and Partha Sharathi perform at Shilpakala

ERSHAD KAMOL

**S**INCE Pandit Ravi Shankar's performance of Indian Classical music with renowned western musicians at the Woodstock concert in the '60s, several Indian musicians have been fusing North Indian ragas with western genres such as rock 'n' roll and jazz. Perhaps, this is for the first time that an Indian classical musician -- Sarathi Chatterjee -- has done a "jugalbandi" with a Bangladeshi rock artiste -- James.

The Indian High Commission, in association with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, organised a fusion music concert on September 12 at the National Theatre Stage.

Six improvised pieces along with one pure rock number were performed at the concert. Sarathi Chatterjee improvised with James in three popular songs -- *Dukhni dukhni koro na*, *Maa* and *Jatra*. Moreover, two improvised presentations based on ragas *Jog* and *Bagesree* and James' popular Hindi number *Bhigi bhigi* (from the Hindi blockbuster *Gangster*) were performed.

James as usual was playing lead guitar while singing. Sarathi provided *alap*. Prasun Chatterjee, Funti, Tamal and Bulbul were on *tabla*, drums, keyboards and bass respectively.

Sarathi's vocals seemed to dominate the performance and no pure essence of electric guitar, drums or keyboard was found. Bulbul played



Partha Sharathi (L) and James perform at the concert

PHOTO: ISHTIAQUE BIN QUASHEM

hammering bass only in the raga *Bagesree*-based presentation. That was perhaps the best act of the evening, as it featured spontaneous performances by the musicians.

The melody of the first presentation of the evening -- a raga *Jog* based performance -- was also enjoyable. However, the raga *Bairagi-Bhairav* based performance was not worth writing home

about. There was room for bass, drums, guitar and keyboard improvisation in the composition with the festive mood.

Except in *Bhigi bhigi*, James did not seem to be in his best form, nor was he spontaneous as he usually is on stage. The rocker sounded monotonous. James began with his popular songs in slow tempo but eventually Sharathi took the lead.

The concert can be an encouragement for musicians in Bangladesh and India to fuse music genres on stage.

# From child artiste to actor-director

## In conversation with Ishita

NADIA SARWAT

Rumana Rashid Ishita, better known as just "Ishita", is one of the leading actresses on the small screen. Starting off as a child artiste, Ishita soon won the hearts of many, demonstrating her superior histrionic skills as a lovable child, working as a domestic help, 'Falani' at the National Competition *Natun Kuri* in 1988. The then head of the state was seen in tears on national TV, as Falani described abuse at the hands of her employers.

Though she has been trained as a singer and dancer, acting however, remains Ishita's main interest.

Of late, she has not been that frequent in TV plays though. "From the start, I've been very selective about the script, director and the production. I think this is the reason you don't see me frequently in TV plays nowadays. Moreover, at present I'm busy balancing my job and family life. But as long as I work in quality productions, the quantity doesn't concern me that much," says the actress.

Ishita is now busy working as the marketing executive of Channel i. She has also tried her hand at writing and direction recently. So far two single-episode plays *Nirjon Aranye* and *Swapno Swapneel*, directed by her, have been aired on Channel i.

"Direction is quite challenging. Till now, I've directed plays written by me. I have received encouraging response from the audience," she says. Another single-episode play titled *Godhuli Belaye* will be aired on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.



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Does she find it necessary for aspiring actors to go through acting classes? "Well, there are several aspects that can be better comprehended through institutional training. Obviously one needs to have some inherent skills before even considering to take up acting as a profession," says Ishita.

Does she contemplate acting in films? "Not really. I've received several offers but refused all," her response.

What does she consider as the reason behind her success? "If you can call it 'success', I would say the reason behind it is my commitment and sincerity. I've always tried to stay true to my work and myself. I consider myself fortunate to have received constant support from my family -- my parents, my husband and in laws," says the actress.

Was the transition of a child artiste to a mature thespian difficult? "I consider these two phases as quite unique, yet related. The child actor Ishita is the foundation of today's Ishita. I do admit that I've had some difficulties breaking the lovable image of a child actor when I started doing adult roles. Then again every child actor in the world goes through that phase," Ishita explains.

Which does she consider as her most remarkable work? "Actually when an artist says he/she has done the most remarkable work, that particular career is done and over with. It's the constant urge to do better that makes an artist move forward," the actress smilingly says.

# Indigenous cultural show held in Tangail



Indigenous artistes perform at the programme

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

A three-day cultural programme highlighting performances by artistes of the Manipuri and tea-picker communities from the Sylhet region, and Nayakrishi people from Tangail, ended here recently.

The programme was held at Bishnupur in Delduar upazila while NGOs -- Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) and Unnayan Bikolper Niti Nirdharoni Gabeshona (UBINIG) -- jointly

organised the event.

Manipuri and Tea-picker performers and the hosts, Nayakrishi people, staged traditional songs and dances at the Bidyah Ghar of UBINIG.

Manipuri artistes performed traditional *Rash*, *Gostholeela*, *Udkha* and *Mridanga* dances. Musical instruments of the Manipuris including *pena*, *moibh*, *mandila* and flute were used with the dances.

The tea-pickers performed their traditional *Kathi*, *Chhat*, *Pata*, *Jhumur*, *Pala* and *Santali*

*Thongam* Dhirendra Singh and Parimol Singh Baraiak led the Manipuri and Tea-picker groups respectively.

Among others, Pathrail UP Chairman Abdul Aziz Chand Khan, Atia UP Chairman Khaled Hossain Chandan, project coordinator of SEHD Partha Sankar Saha, coordinator of UBINIG Jahangir Alam as well as representatives from different cultural organisations and NGOs attended and spoke at the programme.

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