

Shahana Sumi: Carving a niche with diverse roles

AHSAN HABIB

PROMISING actor Shahana Sumi is a familiar face on stage and TV. Her performances combine an individual quality of freshness and thoughtfulness. Versatility seems to be one of her assets.

Sumi studied at the Department of Drama and Music, University of Dhaka. Her all-out acting career took off in 1998, as she, being bemused by the spectacular production *Circus Circus*, joined the theatre troupe Prachayanat. There she met Azad Abul Kalam who became the most important influence on her career.

"What is most impressive in Prachayanat is Azad Abul Kalam's simple directorial style and his exceptional ability to bring out the best in every actor," Sumi says.

She has so far acted in Prachayanat's productions -- *A Man for All Seasons* (an adaptation of Robert Bolt's work), *Circus Circus* and *Koinna*. She has managed to make the difficult transition from playing minor characters like Catherine Anger in *A Man for All Seasons* or an illiterate, Baby in *Circus Circus* to more mature, central characters like the titular role in *Koinna*. In this breakthrough role in *Koinna*, she has consistently performed with great sensitivity and warmth.

In TV plays she was offered a greater variety of roles. Nurul Alam Atique's *Cycle-er Dana*, Mostafa Sarwar Farooki's *Kana Machhi*, Masum Reza's *Chhayaghor* (directed by Proshanto Bordhon), Giasuddin Selim's *Tebhaga*, Matia Banu Shuku's *To Let*, Sibli



Shahana Sumi

Quyyum's *Chena Manusher Panchali* and Saiful Islam's *Kalo Muffler* (based on a short story by Mahmudul Haque) are some of the

plays in which she performed. "Being an actor enables me to take on different identities and that is the most fascinating aspect of acting for me," she says.

Sumi made her debut in feature films with Syed Wahiduzzaman Diamond's *Nacholer Rani*. The film was based on the tumultuous years of Ila Mitra's life. "Though I have not acted in any other film since *Nacholer Rani*, now I am ready to do more films," says the actor.

Apart from acting Sumi has directed *Romeo and Juliet* for Prachayanat School of Acting and Samokal Natyachakra's *Hamlet-Machine*, an adaptation of Heiner Müller's play.

Sumi, inspired by Nurul Alam Atique, has embarked on scriptwriting recently. She has already written two plays -- *Nakhikantha* and *Lata Pata* -- that are to be directed by Shuku. Sumi is now involved in a research for a fiction on Monoroma Mashima.

Sumi's father Ustad Waliur Rahman was a teacher of classical and Nazrul songs in Neelphamari. She participated in debates and poetry recitations in school and college. Tagore's *kabyanaty*, *Gandharis Abedan*, organised by Shilpalaya Academy, was her first play as an actor. Warm reception boosted her confidence.

Sumi took teaching as a profession, at Scholastica. But to spend more time on acting, she left the job recently. "I could only manage time for acting on Fridays and Saturdays. My own space for acting was gradually narrowing."

In May 2006 Sumi got married to IT expert Tanim Mahmud.

Shawkat Osman remembered Discussion at the Liberation War Museum

NADIA SARWAT

It's not enough to have one Shawkat Osman in our literature; at this moment, we are in need of a few like him -- discussants expressed at the 91st birth anniversary of one of the most powerful Bengali writers in Bengali literature, Shawkat Osman (1917-1998).

At the Liberation War Museum premises a discussion was held on January 2, where eminent cultural personalities shed light on different aspects of Osman's life and work. National Professor Kabir Chowdhury was the chief guest at the event. Abed Khan, editor of the daily *Samakal* was the special guest. Artist Hashem Khan, Matub

Ali and Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam were the discussants at the programme. Professor Bulbon Osman presided over the discussion.

The programme began with a rendition of the Tagore song, *Tumi nirmolo koro*, by singer Shakil Hashmi. Salehin Shipra read out a brief biography of Shawkat Osman.

Born in the Hooghly district of West Bengal on January 2, 1917, Sheikh Azizur Rahman (he later took on the pen name 'Shawkat Osman') was awarded several prizes for his writings including Bangla Academy Award (1966), Ekushey Padak (1983), Swadhinata Dibosh Padak (1997) and more. He died on May 14, 1998 at CMH, Dhaka.

"Throughout his life, Shawkat Osman was true to his identity as a Bengali. He explored his inherited power of *Bangali*. He was the 'complete man' as per the renaissance concept," said Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam.

Abed Khan reminisced fond memories with Osman. "Apart

from being a remarkable litterateur, he was also an outstanding individual. We are badly in need of people like him in this crucial period," he said.

Artist Hashem Khan said, "He was a bold writer and constantly addressed the prevalent social problems. His works will always remain a source of courage and inspiration to generations."

"Through his words, Shawkat Osman stands against all kinds of injustice. His illustrious novel *Kritodasher Hashi*, which I had the honour to translate in English (*Laughter of a Slave*), contains a profound symbolic lesson which is still very relevant," said National Professor Kabir Chowdhury.

Shawkat Osman's son Yafes Osman, read his own poems which were social satires written in the style of his father's famous *Shekher Shambara*.

Between the discussion, Khairul Ahsan Shohag recited from *Kritodasher Hashi* and *Janani* (*Mother*), two celebrated novels by Shawkat Osman.



Abed Khan speaks at the discussion

PHOTO: STAR

Preview: Most anticipated movies of 2008

While a few familiar faces will certainly reappear this year, they are hardly of the *Rush Hour 3* variety. Who knew a year without *Shrek*, *Spider-Man* and *Captain Jack Sparrow* could be so exciting? A peek at the most exciting movies to be released this year:

Iron Man

Possible release date: May 2
Stars: Robert Downey Jr., Terrence Howard, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jeff Bridges

The Story: Billionaire industrialist and genius inventor Tony Stark is kidnapped by terrorists, who force him to build a devastating weapon. Escaping by building himself a powerful suit of armor instead, he realizes he has been a pawn in a sinister plot with global implications. Determined to stop it, he develops a more advanced version of his armor and becomes Iron Man.

The Lowdown: When the first footage from the movie was shown in front of 5,000 Comic-Con fans last July, the audience freaked. And no one is questioning whether Downey has the chops to pull off a convincing action hero anymore.

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

Possible release date: May 22
Stars: Harrison Ford, Cate Blanchett, Shia LaBeouf, Karen Allen, John Hurt, Ray Winstone

The Story: Set in 1957, 19 years after "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade," the professor's latest adventure has him racing against the Soviet Union to find the Crystal Skull, a mysterious object of possibly alien origin (bingo!) that has tremendous power.

The Lowdown: It's amazing the movie is being made at all with Ford a wry 65 years old, but that's why Steven Spielberg protégé and teen heart-throb LaBeouf is along for the ride.

Tropic Thunder

Possible release date: July 11
Stars: Ben Stiller, Jack Black,

Robert Downey Jr., Nick Nolte, Steve Coogan, Danny McBride, Bill Hader, Tom Cruise and numerous celebrity cameos

The Story: Movie actors go on location and find themselves stuck in the middle of a real war zone. Hilarity ensues.

The Lowdown: Stiller has recruited a fantastic ensemble of comedic actors in his first directorial effort since 2001's underrated "Zoolander." Word is it's not the more recognizable names who have the biggest laughs, but that up-and-comers Hader and McBride steal the show.

The Dark Knight

Possible release date: July 18
Stars: Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Gary Oldman, Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman, Aaron Eckhart

The Story: Batman (Bale) faces his greatest challenge: a punk/anti-establishment Joker (a sinfully intriguing Ledger) wreaking havoc across Gotham City. And, in the wings, another evil threat looms.

The Lowdown: Director Chris Nolan also smartly kept Wayne's love interest, Rachel Dawes, but thankfully replaced Katie Holmes

with a much better actress, Gyllenhaal.

Mamma Mia!

Possible release date: July 18
Stars: Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan, Amanda Seyfried, Colin Firth, Stellan Skarsgard, Julie Walters, Christine Baranski

The Story: A young bride invites three of her mother's ex-flames to her wedding in hopes of determining which one of them is her father.

The Lowdown: The original stage musical composed of the greatest hits of 1970s pop band ABBA has been extremely popular with audiences, but not so much with critics.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

Possible release date: November 21
Stars: Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Helena Bonham Carter, Jim Broadbent, Michael Gambon, Warwick Davis, Maggie Smith, Alan Rickman

The Story: It's getting darker and darker at Hogwarts as Voldemort's influence is growing, but Dumbledore is preparing Harry and his friends for the inevitable climactic showdown. And just to make matters worse, teenage

romance is in the air!

The Lowdown: Rickman has waited patiently through the first five films for Professor Severus Snape to finally get interesting, and, having read the book, he's no doubt thrilled he stuck around. (He also admits to having read the final book, "The Deathly Hallows," as well.)

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Possible release date: November 26
Stars: Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Tilda Swinton, Elle Fanning, Julia Ormond

The Story: Based on a 1922 short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Benjamin Button (Pitt) is born as a fully grown, old man in 1918 and lives his life by aging backward all the way to the 21st century.

The Lowdown: Director David Fincher's latest flick has an astronomical budget in part because of CG work used to place Pitt's face on all the different bodies that help portray Button along his journey, from elderly man to little kids.

Star Trek

Possible release date: December 25
Stars: Leonard Nimoy, Eric Bana, Karl Urban, Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana, Simon Pegg, Anton Yelchin

The Story: Shrouded in secrecy, but rumor has it that, in order to correct the timeline, Spock (Nimoy) is forced to return to the days when he first met James T. Kirk and team up with his younger self (Quinto) to prevent Kirk and the starship Enterprise from being erased from history entirely.

The Lowdown: Director J.J. Abrams ("Lost") is hoping to relaunch the franchise by introducing a new cast and reimagining the look of the original 1960s show for today. By bringing back Nimoy and teaming him with Quinto, he's basically making a Spock buddy picture.



Shia LaBeouf and Harrison Ford in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*

Source: Internet

Tanveer Alam Shawjeeb: On the verge of a break through

KARIM WAHEED

At an informal shindig, he slowly walked up to the stage and started jamming. Accompanied by Nazrul's *dhol*, the singer started *Takdum takdum bajey Bangladesh dhol* and the nonchalant audience seemed to get "it". From hip youngsters to the reluctant elderly, most seemed to sway and sing along. The evening had picked up.

Tanveer Alam Shawjeeb may not be hogging the limelight just yet but his creativity is definitely getting noticed.

With a Bachelor's degree in Sound Engineering from Toronto Film School in Canada, Shawjeeb is busy with several projects. He has worked with directors including Nurul Alam Atique, Golam Sohrab Dodul and many others, composing title songs and background scores for their TV plays and telefilms. Among these *Mon-e Mon-e*, *Chokkor* and *Ahaki Filmi* are worth mentioning.

Shawjeeb is anything but a 'newcomer' in the music scene. With a diploma in Nazrul Sangeet from BAF, Shawjeeb has been a *Notun Kuri* contestant and won first prize in Nazrul songs at the Jatiyo Shishu Shilpi Puroshkar, Dhaka Division. He also performed on BTV regularly until he moved to New York in '94.

Though his passion for classical and semi-classic subcontinental music remains diminished, Shawjeeb's style has gone through

gradual metamorphosis.

His growth as a musician and vocalist becomes apparent as one listens to the album *Bari Kothaye Bolo* (released by Bengal Music Company Ltd in April 2007). The guitar riff in the opening number *Chaka ghurchhe cholchhe mayar khela* reminds one of an Eric Clapton in form. The prelude *alaap* and the effortless gliding in the third song *Raat-ero akash* sounds inspired by Pandit Ajay Chakrabarty. If that was not diverse enough, Shawjeeb's solo *Kobey jabo pahaar-e* in the mixed album *Jhalmuri-1* (also by Bengal Music Company Ltd), can be considered an urban interpretation of the *jhumi* genre.

According to the artiste, he has been "experimenting" with lyrics and tunes since the '90s. He worked as a singer, songwriter and composer of two tracks in the album *Urban Turban* by a fusion group called *Tasa* in Toronto in 2005. As a musician he has accompanied renowned artistes like Feroza Begum, Sohrab Hossain, Manna De, Anup Ghoshal, Shipra Basu, Rezwana Chowdhury Bonna, Rathindranath Roy, Farida Parveen and others at concerts in North America.

His yet to be aired projects include music for audio-visual clippings for UNHCR and Shandhani. In the latter, Shawjeeb has presented popular folk artiste Momtaz in a new avatar; certain to strike a chord with the audience.



Tanveer Alam Shawjeeb

Musical programme "Praner Khela" at Bengal Shilpalaya ends



Bulbul Islam sings at the programme

JAMIL MAHMUD

To promote traditional Bangla songs, Bengal Foundation arranged a three-day musical soiree titled *Praner Khela* at Bengal Shilpalaya in Dhanmondi. The programme ended on January 2. Tagore singers Bulbul Islam and Aditi Mohsin rendered songs at the closing programme.

The evening started with renditions by Bulbul Islam. The artiste rendered quite a few Tagore songs including *Tomarei koriachhi jiboner drubotara*, *Aji bijon ghorey*, *Bhalo jodi basho shokhi*, *Tomar shongey praner khela* and more. The audience seemed engrossed; that was evident as requests for encore were heard.

Next to perform was Tagore singer Aditi Mohsin. Aditi started her performance with *Shondhiya holo go*. Then she rendered *Shudha shagor tiry*, *Je raatey mor duwarguli*, *Shudhu tomar bani noy go* and more. Aditi also rendered a

Tagore song of the *baul* genre *Hridayekulokul*.

On the first day of the programme, renowned folk singer Chandana Majumdar and two promising artistes Shyamol Paul and Halima Parveen performed *baul* and folk songs. On the second day, Sharmin Shathi Islam rendered songs of *Panchokobi* and Mahiuzzaman Chowdhury performed *adhunik* songs.

Apart from launching music albums throughout the year, the programme is another initiative by Bengal Foundation to uphold and encourage appreciation of traditional Bangla songs. At the programme it was announced that from now on Bengal Foundation will arrange a three-day musical programme every month. The next programme will be held at Chhayanat Shangkirti Bhaban on February 1 to 3.

Nationwide Food & Beverage Ltd sponsored the programme.

100th show of "Meraj Fakirer Maa" today

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Theatre will stage 100th show *Meraj Fakirer Maa* today at the Mahila Samity Stage.

Meraj Fakirer Maa, written and directed by Abdullah Al Mamun, is a satire on the tendency of the fanatics,

who twist the religious doctrines for their own benefit. The play also highlights a debate between fundamentalism and progressiveness. *Meraj Fakirer Maa* raises questions like 'should one's religious beliefs compel him/her to disown his/her mother'.



A scene from *Meraj Fakirer Maa*



Nokia welcomed the New Year with an open-air concert titled 'MAD.Stop' in Cox's Bazar, says a press release. The concert included performances by bands and DJs, laser show and a spectacular display of fireworks. Bands Parthib, Bedowin, Bartaman, and Stiller performed at the event

Alluring antique replicas in metal Display of Dhamrai craft at Dots Gallery

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The recent Dhamrai metalwork exhibition at Dots Contemporary Gallery fascinated those into statuary. The Hindu, Buddhist and Christian sculptures dealing with Indian gods and goddesses, meditating Buddha and the Nativity scene of Bethlehem delighted art enthusiasts. The minute decorations on the faces, body and limbs of the statues are a decisive delight.

Not only human figures but also birds and animals such as racing horses, plodding bullocks, brooding owls, frogs and leaping fish were included in the exhibition in the form of delectable statues or decorative ashtrays and bowls. This clever work by Dhamrai artisans surely usher in a new horizon of creativity for Bangladesh. Some of the works of the handicraft experts like Rashida are to be found in the Bangladesh National Museum.

The Dhamrai Showroom markets these antique replicas at Rathkhola, Dhamrai Bazar, Dhamrai and Dhaka. The items are geared for expatriates and local connoisseurs.

At the exhibition one saw Ganesh, Saraswati, Laxmi, the romancing Radha and Krishna, Ganesh in all his splendour, Natraj and a galley of deities in burning brass with touches of black to lend the effect of age. Attending deities, handmaidens and bonded slaves of the courts, along with courtiers are included in the composi-

tions. Graceful and stylised, the pieces, ranging from small to large, can be selective decoration pieces for any home. The effect of antiquity and the realism, done in intricate details and with minute precision, gladdened the hearts of viewers.

With rings in the fingers and bells on the toes the delectable, voluptuous female forms had anyone interested in archaeology fascinated. The swirl of the gauze-like garments and the fall of the heavy, studded jewellery also pleased the lover of antiquity. The male figures in their splendid statuesque forms are complete with *dhoti* and jewellery.

The Nativity scene, in its immaculate details, is also attractive, even when one examines the pedestal, the animals in the shed and the gift bearing Magi. Gautam Buddha is depicted with a high nose, meditating eyes, and elongated ears. The mermaid, resting on a conch shell, with care for her cascading tresses and upper limb, is beautiful.

The animals and water-creatures too appeared realistic with their protruded fangs, swishing tail and details of hints of fauna around. Though copies, they have their delightful qualities.

The prices were fairly conducive for the haute bourgeois and the upper echelons of Dhaka.



A metal sculpture at the exhibition