

Street Theatre Festival '08

Organiser: Bangladesh Patha Natak Parishad
Venue: Central Shaheed Minar
Date: March 1-7
Time: 4:30 pm onwards (everyday)



Theatre

Troupe: Prachyanat
Play: Raja o Onyanno (Premier show)
Venue: British Council
Date: March 4
Time: 7pm



Group Ceramics Exhibition

Venue: Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka
Date: March 3-9
Time: 12:00-07:00 pm



Film Screening

Organiser: Indian Cultural Center
Venue: Indian Cultural Centre Auditorium, House 25, Road 96, Gulshan 2
Date: March 3-31
Time: 06:00 pm
March 3
Sriman Prithwiraj



Feroza Begum on her musical journey

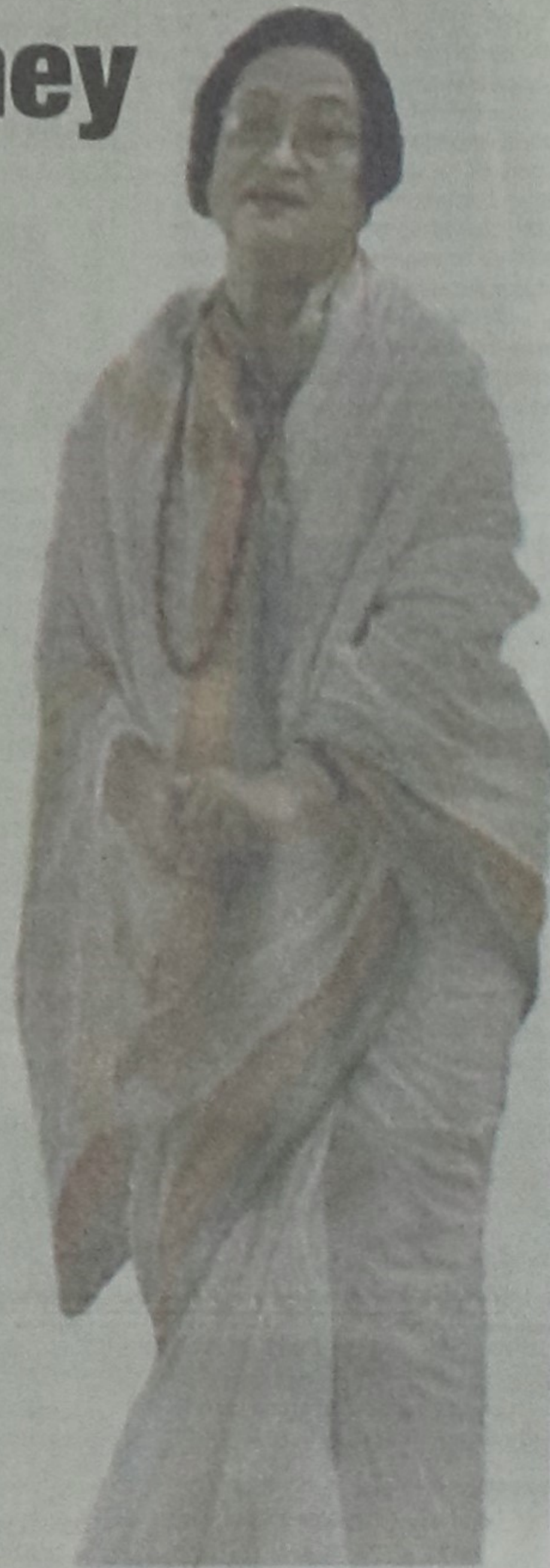
CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The legendary Nazrul singer Feroza Begum, recently spoke on her involvement with the genre and how she struggled to give Nazrul Sangeet the platform it rightfully deserved. As the chief guest she gave an in depth speech on Nazrul songs at North South University. Dr. Azfar Hussain of NSU was the coordinator and the programme was chaired by Dr. Selim Sarwar.

From childhood Feroza Begum's singing, as she puts it, came naturally. On many occasions elders were overwhelmed by her singing without any professional training. She came from a conservative family where several factors made life pretty depressing. Yet with all odds, she kept herself strong and managed to enter the music world. Feroza Begum was determined to reach whichever target she chose without being influenced by the commercial world. Her home tutor was Chitta Roy. Once the teacher performed a Nazrul Sangeet, which moved the young Feroza. Thus began her love affair with Nazrul Sangeet.

Later in her life there were many occasions where she refused to sing anything but Nazrul Sangeet. Many prophesised that she was destroying her career as Nazrul Sangeet was not that popular then. It was with unwavering devotion that the veteran diva popularised the genre. Her breakthrough performances were *Duur dwipbhashini* and *Mom-er putul momir desher meye*. The latter was the most requested song for three consecutive weeks on the radio when it was first aired.

The artiste feels there is much to be done about the genre. As she said, "If the singers of this generation take honest interest in Nazrul Sangeet, a wider audience will once again develop a taste for the genre."



Patho Natok Utsab '08 inaugurated

ERSHAD KAMOL

A weeklong Patho Natok Utsab (street theatre festival) '08 was inaugurated on March 1 at the Central Shaheed Minar premises. To mark the month of 'Freedom', Bangladesh Patha Natak Parishad (BPNP) has been organising the festival on the first week of March for the last 15 years.

Theatre troupes from all over the country including the Dhaka based ones such as Aranyak Natyadal, Subachan Natya Sangsad, Theatre Art Unit, Prachyanat and Dhaka Padatik (TSC) will stage their street theatre productions at the festival. A total of 49 productions will be staged of which 17 plays are new.

Eminent cultural personality Asaduzzaman Noor inaugurated the festival. Eminent economist Anu Muhammad, General Secretary of Shammilito Sanskritik Jote Golam Kuddus and Chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation M. Hamid were the discussants at the programme. General Secretary of BPNP Mizanur Rahman delivered the welcome speech. The inauguration ceremony was chaired by Mannan Heera, the president of BPNP.

Assistant General Secretary of BPNP Ahmed Gias read the declaration of the festival. According to the declaration, street theatre is the reflection of the socio-cultural milieu of the country. It further adds that the theatre activists of the country have been protesting against all forms of social injustice through the street theatre performances. The declaration also focuses on a few of the flaws of the current government.

The discussants at the programme criticised the ongoing



Actors of Opera Natoker Dal staging *Koibolya* on the opening day

socio-political turmoil and recommended staging more street plays featuring issues such as good governance, democracy and the trial of the war criminals. Moreover, they criticised the authorities

for creating hurdles to arranging the street theatre festival.

The inauguration programme was followed by staging plays. Bibartan Shanskritik Kendra, Shanchalok Natya Charcha Kendra

from Munshiganj, Abayab Natya Dal, Opera Natoker Dal and Padatik Natya Sangsad (TSC) staged *King's Bhabon*, *Atanko*, *Utori*, *Koibolya* and *Shomprir Shondhaney* respectively at the

opening day.

The leitmotif of these plays was to generate public awareness on the rise of fundamentalism, trial of war criminals, national unity and others.

Pancha Kobiir Gaan Musical programme by Nandan

NADIA SARWAT

Titled *Dakey Koyela Barey Barey*, a musical soiree arranged by cultural organisation Nandan was held at the Ramesh Chandra Dutt memorial auditorium, Chhayant Sanskriti Bhaban on March 1. The programme featured songs of the 'Pancha Kobi' (five poets) -- Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, DL Roy, Arul Prasad and Rajanikant Sen.

Nandan started their journey with a musical soiree featuring Tagore songs titled *Choley Esho Porobashi* at the Bishwo Shahitya Kendra Auditorium in 2003. Since then, the organisation has been holding programmes once every three months, presenting songs of the five poets, songs of yesteryears and more. *Dakey Koyela Barey Barey* was Nandan's 18th arrangement.

Several prominent and promising singers performed at the event that started with Saiful Islam Khan's rendition of the Tagore song *Eto din je boshey chhilem*. Next he rendered DL Roy's *Sheykeno dekhadilorey*. Farhin Khan Joyita's perfor-

mance followed. The mastery over both the songs she rendered -- Tagore's *Tumi kon kanoner phool* and the *Dakey koyela barey barey* of Atul Prasad -- impressed the audience. Joyita is the daughter of noted artiste Mita Haque.

Golam Haider rendered the Rajnikant song, *Ami shokol kajer pai je shomoy* and the DL Roy classic, *Bela boye jaye*. According to Ratan Siddiqui, the moderator of the event, the song was composed right after the 'Bango Bhango' (Partition of Bengal), which caused a great resentment among the masses including the creative minds such as Rabindranath Tagore. The song was a part of DL Roy's romantic-historical play *Shajahan*, a symbolic representation of the agony of partition.

Convenor of Nandan, Anjumman Ferdousi Kakoli was the next to perform. She sang *Fagun hawaye hawaye* and *Dhirey dhirey dhirey bau* -- both Tagore songs. In the meantime, celebrated Tagore artiste Rezwana Chowdhury Banya joined the event.

Appreciating Nandan's endeavour, Rezwana Chowdhury

Banya said, "There is lack of platforms for the young artistes who have devoted themselves to the traditional Bangla songs. Nandan's arrangement is significant as it serves as a platform for promising young artistes."

Tanzina Parvin Toma's performance reminded the audience of the ongoing season -- spring. Ushering the season, she sang *Jago Boshonto*, an Atul Prasad song and DL Roy's *Aalorituraj shojoni*.

Rezaul Karim presented songs of Kazi Nazrul Islam. After a devotional song *Ogo antorajami*, he rendered a romantic song by Nazrul, *Gulbagichar bulbuli ami*. Ratan Siddiqui informed the audience that the song was composed in 1927, while the poet was staying at Dhaka. Apparently, the poet wrote the song for Fazilatunnessa, a student of Dhaka University whom the poet was infatuated with.

Rezwana Chowdhury Banya did not keep the audience waiting and rendered *Kon shudhur hotey and Amar mollika bon-e*.

Mita Haque's performance wrapped up the evening.



Artistes sing at the programme

PHOTO: STAR

Film Review

"The Other Boleyn Girl": Sibling rivalry for royal attention



Scarlett Johansson and Natalie Portman in the film

More slog than romp, *The Other Boleyn Girl* tells the salacious story of two blue bloods who ran amok in the court of Henry VIII. Best known for losing her head to the king, first metaphorically, then literally, Anne Boleyn (Natalie Portman), along with her sister, Mary (Scarlett Johansson), entered the court of the king (Eric Bana) when he was still married to Catherine of Aragon (Ana Torrent). A man of considerable and changeable appetites, the king yearned for a male heir and anything in a frock who wasn't the queen. His wish was their command.

According to this oddly plotted and frantically paced pastiche -- written by Peter Morgan, directed by Justin Chadwick -- the girls were more or less the Paris and Nicky Hilton of the Tudor court. In the film's version of the Boleyn family saga, based on the novel by Philippa Gregory of the same title, they were pimped out by their scheming, ambitious father, Sir Thomas (Mark Rylance), who sought to advance the family on the backs of his daughters while Mrs. Thomas (Kristin Scott Thomas) clucked darkly from the sidelines. Forced to compete for kingly favours, the girls were soon rivals, a contest that, in its few meagrely entertaining moments, recalls the sisterly love in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*

The story of Anne Boleyn may sound as if it's been cut from classier cloth than that delirious Robert Aldrich film, but history tells a juicier story. Instead of letting the story rip, though, the film plays it safe and predictable by dividing the sisters into the bad brunette and gentle blonde, thereby displacing the courtly intrigue onto two warring women. The Boleyn sisters were the kind of trouble that can make for bodice-ripping entertainment, but they were also the kind of unruly women who sometimes risked burning.

Anne faced the sword, not the stake, but that's jumping ahead of this story and its galloping horses, bustling gowns and rampaging royals. It's a marvel that something that feels so inert should have so much frenetic action. Shot in high-definition video with a murky brown palette (perhaps to suggest tea-stained porcelain and teeth), the film is both underwritten and over-edited.

Many of the scenes seem to have been whittled down to the nub, which at times turns it into a succession of wordless gestures and poses. Given the generally risible dialogue, this isn't a bad thing, despite Morgan's previous credits (notably *The Queen*).

Source: The New York Times

The art of recitation: Then and now In conversation with Iqbal Bahar Choudhury

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Noted Broadcaster Iqbal Bahar Choudhury needs no introduction to the radio and TV audiences in our country. In fact, Bangla speaking people all over the world know the baritone voice thanks to VOA's (Voice of America) Bangla Service. Choudhury is in Dhaka to attend the 50th anniversary of VOA's Bangla Service -- being celebrated this month. The broadcaster whose career spans over almost six decades went over his experiences, reminisced over the good old days of recitation and his latest projects.

Though his career in radio is considered illustrious, Choudhury became involved in the local cultural arena through recitation. "I started recitation back in my school days. I took part in the Tagore Centenary (1961). Syed Md. Hussein, Ahmed Hussein, Golam Mustafa, Fateh Lohani, Lily Chowdhury and Khurshedi Alam were all prominent names in recitation back then. Selina Bahar Zaman, my sister, used to recite as well. Things were different then," says Choudhury.

"Recitation was more of a pastime back in the day. Singers and actors received remuneration for performances but recitators did not. However, recently at a programme by Bangla Academy I was offered a cheque for reciting. It did take me by surprise," he elaborates. Choudhury continues, "In recent times, there's a lot of experimentation happening with recitation. Now one finds a significant number of CDs featuring recitation in the market. Songs and narration are often combined with recitation to offer the audience something new. The overall practice of the performing art is much wider now."

Quite a few albums feature recitation by Iqbal Bahar Choudhury. *Shudhu Tomar Bani* features Choudhury and his three sisters. Selina Bahar Zaman and he did the recitation part and Tazin Choudhury, Nasrin Shams have recorded the songs. The album was directed by noted Tagore singer Sadi Mohammed.

The latest album that features recitation by Iqbal Bahar Choudhury is *Anandolokey: Esho Natun Prithibi Gori*. Highlighting the message of peace, the album is a novel approach to incorporating two performing arts -- music and recitation. Apart from Choudhury, noted Indian actor Saumitra Chatterjee and Madhumanti have rendered poetry. Among the singers who have recorded for the album is Choudhury's sister, Nasrin Shams. The album was recorded in Kolkata and was released there in 2007.

On the experience of working with Saumitra Chatterjee, Choudhury says, "Initially the album was supposed to feature only recitation by me and Saumitra. Our recording was done together. It was quite interesting."

Iqbal Bahar Choudhury's passion for poetry runs deep as he continues performing at programmes overseas -- at the Bangladesh Sammelan, Ekushey programmes, Rabindra and Nazrul anniversaries and more.



PHOTO: STAR