

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

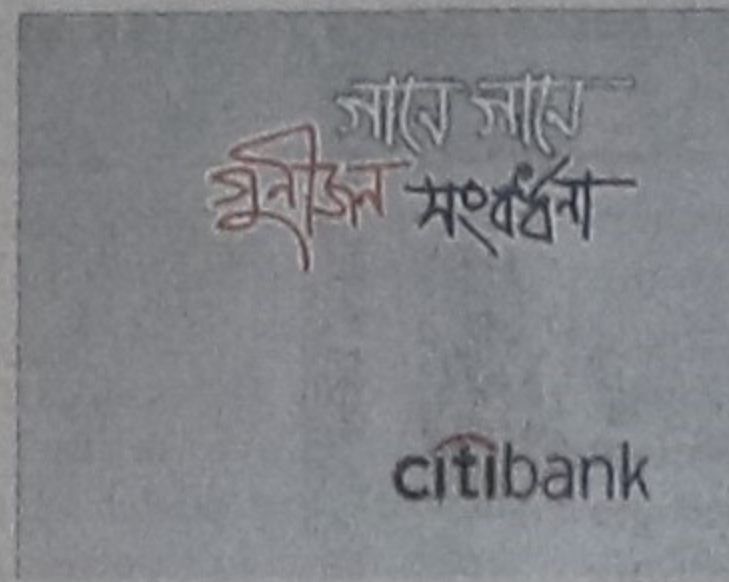
Solo Exhibition

Title: The Limitless
Luminosity of Lines
Artist: Safiuddin Ahmed
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27 (old), Dhanmondi
Date: June 23-July 13
Time: 12pm-8pm



Award Giving Ceremony

Title: Gane Gane Gunjon
Sangbardhana
Organiser: Citibank
Venue: Utsab Hall, Radisson Water Garden Hotel
Date: July 11
Time: 5pm



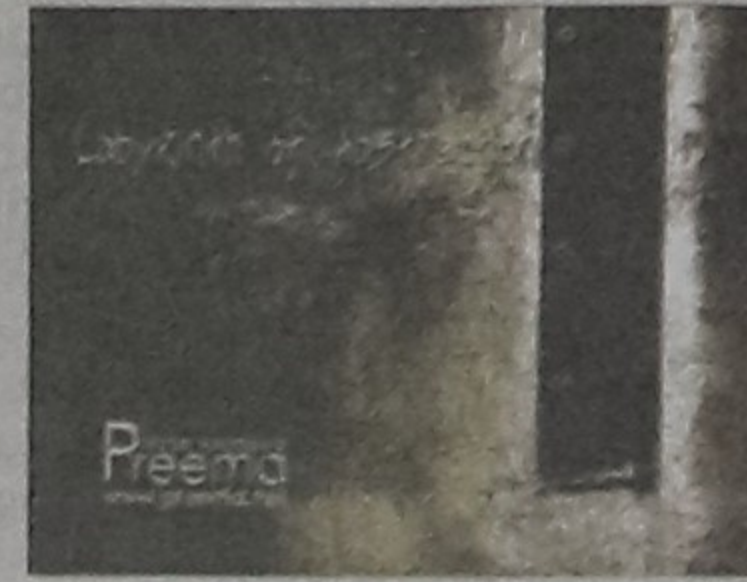
Theatre

Play: Roshadhar
Sudhadharer Rajya
Troupe: Bongorongo
Natyadal
Venue: Experimental Theatre Stage, BSA
Date: July 9
Time: 7pm



Solo Exhibition

Title: Labyrinth of Abstraction
Artist: Nazia Andaleeb
Prema
Venue: La Galerie, Alliance Francaise, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
Date: July 3-16
Time: 9am-12pm; 5pm-8pm (Saturdays 5pm-8pm)



A passion for the stage

A steaming cup of tea with sizzling shingara

SADYA AFREEN MALICK

After the curtains come down to a successful play, have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes? To be honest, I was at a loss recently, coming out from the Experimental Theatre Hall. The young enthusiasts I had taken along with me had many questions: How do the actors remember their lines in a three-hour drama with no cue cards? How could anyone but locals develop such a flawless dialect? Does it pay to be a stage actor?

The more I talked to experts, the more awed I became at how unchanged this industry has remained since the British era when theatre groups were formed by passionate groups of actors and playwrights. Back in those days, different theatre troupes flourished under the patronage of wealthy individuals. Ticket sales, even for the same play, depended on which group was staging it. And theatre troupes are still driven more by "passion" than "lucrative contracts".

Theatre actors like to call themselves "professional amateurs". Most commonly, stalwarts who attract the talents around them form groups. Even though they belong to groups and are the lifeblood of the team, founders and new entrants alike become members on an honorary basis.

Every production needs a rigorous six-to-nine months of preparation. The actors are informed well ahead about rehearsal dates through a notice, put on the walls of the rented rehearsal rooms. Over a cup of tea and favourite snacks of *shingara*, the actors take part in rigorous rehearsals and script reading day in day out for three months in a row. As an actor smilingly pointed out, "It's not



true that we are unpaid professionals; we simply accept snacks in place of money."

Then the director, designers and the technicians step in to outline the stage settings. Allocating the characters to actors requires a lot of neutrality (and diplomacy) on part of the director. "Like the old days, it is often subject to bias," says a theatre activist. Then begins the rehearsals for blocking.

Typically it takes about three months for the team to memorise the script. But sometimes it takes significantly longer. After the successful staging of *Hath Hodai*,

Shahiduzzaman Selim mentioned how it took their team nearly nine months to master the Noakhali dialect before they could finally stage the play.

During the long months of rehearsals, beginners have a time-bound traditional role to play. During the first two years, they are in charge of the kitchen, making sure the tea and *shingaras* keep flowing and keeping up the spirits of the team! Not unlike an internship, the beginners learn the many arts of acting through these informal interactions with the senior actors. During this entire period, neither intern nor actors are paid.

What struck me was how the theatre groups keep up with their passion despite the odds stacked against them.

Firstly, they are assured of no livelihood. The theatre groups thrive on proceeds from ticket sales of their stage performances and a limited number of sponsors. "A standard production can cost up to Tk 80,000 or more, while a modest one costs around Tk 60,000. The groups often have to stage the play for two to three years to recoup the production cost," says Nasiruddin Yousuf.

In contrast, in West Bengal the Ministry allots Rs 3,000 per head

for the theatre activists, which translates to Rs 60,000 per month to theatre groups with 20 actors each. Since there are several theatre houses, the groups can perform 'call shows' year round and also see acting as a livelihood.

Secondly, despite its popularity, there is an incredible shortage of theatre space. Before the Experimental Theatre Stage was inaugurated, there was only one theatre venue, The Mahila Samity Mancha; the Guide House auditorium was closed years ago. Since there are altogether 35-40 groups including the top ten groups in the city alone, each group is allowed to perform at most once a month at the auditorium. According to Liaquat Ali Lucky, the general secretary of People's Theatre Association (PTA), the City Corporation can rent the community centres in different localities to overcome this bottleneck.

Thirdly, there is an unexplained lack of recognition for the stage actors. Every year, we are bombarded with so many glamorous 'award giving ceremonies' to reward silver screen actors, models, singers, TV-productions, but rarely one for stage actors.

When you take away livelihood, opportunity to perform and recognition, there doesn't seem to be much left for the actors except an undying passion for their art. How we can expect to develop and nurture talent under such conditions is a complete puzzle to many. As a critic pointed out sarcastically, "the most imminent danger to our theatre culture is, if the price of tea and *shingara* were to increase..." Sadly, he probably didn't realise there was more than passing humour than he intended.

The article is a reprint from an earlier issue

Buzz

"Jago": Love of football and the country



Managing Director of BFDC A.N.M. Badrul Amin (5th from right, back row) and former national football player Kaiser Hameed (2nd from left, back row) seen with cast and crew of the film *Jago*

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

It takes courage to take a stand, to face a formidable challenge; sometimes boys become men overnight to tackle these challenges -- "Jago" is all about that. This new film, produced by Sharjeel Karim and Adnan Karim, will be directed by Khujit Hayat Khan who has also written the story, screenplay and dialogues. "Jago" is Interspeed Production's first feature film.

Jago is the first sport based

feature film in Bangladesh. The film revolves around a group of young football players from a small town in Bangladesh who face a formidable opponent. The theme is that there is no shortage of talent in Bangladesh. With proper guidance, determination and unwavering nationalism, impossible can be made possible.

The cast of the film includes Tareq Anam, Faisal, Bindu, Raunok, Naim, Arefin Shuvo, Kaiser Hameed, Palash, Jotika Joti, Sharleen, Daina and a group of

young talented actors. Arnob is the music director of the film.

Shooting for the film began yesterday (July 3) in Comilla and will continue till August 10, according to sources. Other locations include Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. The movie will have total five songs including the theme song.

"Jago" will be shot in HD format; the entire postproduction work will be done in USA. The producers intend to release the film on December 16 this year.

Shakira signs with Live Nation

Shakira has become the latest pop star to leave a major record company for Live Nation, the international touring giant that has begun signing marquee names for lucrative all-purpose contracts. After months of speculation, the 31-year-old Colombian singer of Lebanese descent who is a strong international touring draw, has signed a 10-year deal that encompasses tours, recordings, sponsorship and merchandise.

Neither Shakira's representatives nor Live Nation would disclose the value of the deal, but

people close to the negotiations, who spoke anonymously because they were not authorised to discuss them, said that depending on Shakira's performance over the 10 years, it would probably be worth \$70 million to \$100 million. Shakira's contract with Epic Records calls for three more albums -- one in English, one in Spanish and a compilation -- but the touring and other rights of the Live Nation deal would begin immediately.

Source: Internet



Shakira

Shreya Ghoshal

The bright singing sensation

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The 24-year-old Indian playback singer Shreya Ghoshal goes from strength to strength. Lately she bagged the prestigious Star Screen Award for Best Female Singer for *Barso Re* (from the film *Guru*). The same song won her the Filmfare Award, the Apsara Award, the Zee Cine Award and the IIFA award. She also took the German Public Bollywood Award for Best Singer (Female) for *Yeh Ishq Haaye* (Jab We Met).

Though she enjoys western music and her favourite group is Abba, her heart lies in Indian music. Remember *Jadu Hai Nasha Hai* (from *Jism*)? She is also comfortable singing sad or upbeat songs. Besides Hindi, she has recorded in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, and Marathi. Apart from *Jism*, she has recorded for *Devdas*, *Saaya*, *Inteha*, *Out of Control*, *Munnabhai MBBS*, *Dhoop*, *Aarman*, *Tujhe Meri Kham* and *Aetbaar*, among others.

Shreya was born in a Bengali family on March 12, 1984 and spent her early years in Rawatbata, a small town near Kota, Rajasthan. From the age of four, she accompanied her mother on the harmonium. Her parents enrolled her for formal training in Hindustani classical music in Kota with Maheshchandra Sharma.

Shreya's first milestone was the TVS *Sa Re Ga Ma* music talent show on Zee TV. Being a constant contestant and winner of several

episodes, she was selected for the 75th Children's special episode of the show, which she won. Later on, she also won the children's mega final show way back in 1996 at the young age of 12. During one of the episodes she attracted the attention of film director Sanjay Leela Bhansali who roped her in as a playback singer in *Devdas*. Her song, *Dola Re*, in particular won much acclaim.

Since then she has gone on to sing for music directors such as Himesh Reshammiya, Anu Malik, AR Rahman and Mano Murthy. Along with songs for Bollywood and regional films, she has also sung for Indian soaps such as *Kasturi*. Today she ranks along with top female playback singers in Bollywood, among them are Alka Yagnik, Sunidhi Chauhan, Sadhana Sargam and Kavita Krishnamurthy.

In the sphere of Hindi films she has lately lent her voice in *Mohabbatain*, *Sachiyaan*, *Guru*, *Salaam E Ishq* and *Ta Ra Rum Pum*. As for Bengali cinema, Shreya did a cover of the Rabindra Sangeet *Pagla Hawa* for the film *The Bong Connection* (2007). The same year, she also sang playback for *Cholechhi Poth*, along with Babul Supriyo for the film *Bidhatar Lekha*. In 2005 she featured on the track *Mon Diye Mon Niye*, a duet with Kumar Sanu for *Agnipath*. To her credit, the young singer has released several Bangla pop albums, including *Ei Akash Tomari*, *Rupashi Raate* and *Mukhor Porag*.



Shreya Ghoshal

Shishu Ananda mela ends in Khagrachhari

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari,

Speakers in a closing discussion and prize giving ceremony said that the Shishu Ananda Mela enriches creativity of children, encourages an exchange of views and helps in boosting self-confidence.

The three day long Shishu Ananda Mela O Pustok Pradarsani was jointly organised by District Administration and District Shishu Academy. The event was held at the premises of Khagrachhari Government High school in the hill town.

Additional deputy commissioner Mohammad Khalilur Rahman presided at the concluding day; Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) chairman Monindra Lal Tripura was present as chief guest.

Speakers also said considering the reality of children, the government had decided to organise such events in each district. The young learners will benefit and enjoy this fair in a disciplined environment, they said.

A total of 10 stalls with books, alphabet charts, toys, sports equipment and education-related items were on display. Each day, a discussion was held based on famous poets Nazrul, Rabindra followed by the benefits of tree plantation.

District child affairs officer of Shishu Academy Ushan Choudhury, BATB area manager Dewan Aminul Islam Nasim, headmistress of Khagrachhari Government High School Srila Talukder delivered speeches.

Later, prizes were distributed among the winners of various events.

Two young Bangladeshi filmmakers attend Iranian festival



Shiropa (3rd from right, front row) and Arjo (right, back row) with other young filmmakers in Iran

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The 22nd Hamedan International Film Festival in Iran was held recently. Well-known filmmakers were invited to judge short films while child jury members were called to evaluate full-length adult films.

Arjo Sreshtho and Shiropa Purna, prize-winning young directors went to the festival to represent Bangladesh. There were 25 children from 13 countries, apart from 10 adults. While the prizes

were given at Hamedan, the selections were done in Tehran. Arjo Sreshtho, speaking to *The Daily Star* about his experience in Iran as a member of the jury, says, "It was a great opportunity for me to see that part of the Middle East. I found the cities beautiful and the people hospitable and jolly. I had gone there to judge films with other children and adults from different parts of the world, like Italy, Germany and Spain. I made friends with the other young jurors and spoke to the adults, from which I gained a lot of

experience. For sightseeing we went to Hamedan, the oldest part of the city.

They had to judge more than 15 films, Arjo said, like "Danes Singing Softly on the Clouds" (Indonesia), "Time to love" (Iran), "A story of Leo" (Italy), "Hands of Mississippi" (Germany) and "Lola from Gadgetville" (Italy). He and his sister, Shiropa, stayed there for eight days. Arjo made an interesting documentary film on their visit to Iran, which was shown recently at the Bengal Cafe.