

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Japan Cultural Festival '09

Organiser: Embassy of Japan and BSA
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA
Date: March 4-7
Time: 10am-1.30pm, 2.30pm-7pm



Solo Painting Exhibition

Artist: Ludmila Gurar
Organiser: Russian Centre of Science and Culture
Venue: Exhibition Hall, RCSC, H 510, Rd 7, Dhanmondi
Inauguration: March 5 at 5pm



Photography Exhibition

By Julien Pannetier and Bruno Valentin
Title: Dhaka, a City and its People
Venue: AFD, 26, Mirpur Rd, Dhanmondi
Date: February 19-March 5
Time: 9am-12pm, 5-8pm (Saturdays 5-8pm)



Award

Title: Shilu Abed Master
Craftsperson Award '09
Organiser: National Crafts Council of Bangladesh
Venue: BRAC Inn Centre Auditorium, 75, Mohakhali
Date: March 5
Time: 6pm



Ode to motherland

KARIM WAHEED

"Music and rhythm find their way into the secret places of the soul..."

-- Plato

The impact of music on human psyche may never be fully comprehended. Music has the power to inspire, ability to change moods and bring about social revolution. It's everywhere in nature. Hence the idea that music may predate language is not shocking.

A culture's music highlights its every aspect. Bangladesh has an opulent musical heritage. As many scholars and exponents believe, music in this part of the world was perhaps formed as an expression of devotion. Most songs glorified some deity or mythological accounts while some narrated lifestyles of different classes. However, all that changed in the last two hundred years.

The 19th century saw a revolution in the realm of Bangla music. Thanks to a breed of immensely talented poets, composers, artistes and musicians, Bangla music outshined its contemporaries in the sub-continent during what was considered its golden age.

Interestingly enough, the idea that music can spark nationalistic sentiments among masses was also realised in 19th century Bengal. These songs can be categorised as patriotic songs and 'Gano Sangeet' (themed on struggles of the people).

Bangla patriotic songs are believed to have appeared first at the beginning of the 19th century through compositions of Ishwar Chandra Gupta and his followers. High on nationalism, Gupta started a movement for the development of Bangla and also created a positive atmosphere for writers like Bankimchandra Chattyopadhyay and Dinabandhu Mitra.

Bangla patriotic songs attained wide recognition during the 'Swadeshi Movement' (part of the Indian independence movement against the British Raj, encouraging use of everything local). These songs became even more popular during the 1905 movement against the partition of Bengal; usual themes were loyalty towards the land and valour of the freedom fighters and martyrs. Case in point: "Ekbar bidaye de ma ghurey ashi" on the teenage martyr Khudiram Bose.

This period in Bangla music saw the emergence of creative titans -- Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Dwijendral Roy, Rajanikanta Sen and Atulprasad Sen.

Motivated by the nationalistic senses, Dwijendral Roy composed several stirring songs, which went on to achieve classic status. Familiar patriotic songs by Roy include "Bango amar janani amar" and "Dhano dhanye pushpey bhora amader ei boshundhora." His passion for the motherland combined with his musical talent is reflected in these songs. Roy, however, did not reject western musical traits. "Dhano dhanye" for instance is based on "Raaga Kedara" but the line "Shey jey amar jonmobbhumi" -- with three types of musical

tempo -- follows the English music pattern. This trend of incorporating western styles in Bangla songs was soon catching on.

Rabindranath Tagore is perhaps the only poet to have written the national anthems of two nations. "Amar shonar Bangla, ami tomaye bhalobashi" gained popularity during the 'Swadeshi Movement.' Swadeshi activists, revolutionaries and those opposing the partition of Bengal (1905) used this song to ignite the spirit of nationalism among the masses. The song again emerged in mainstream when it was deftly used in Zahir Raihan's feature film "Jibon Thekey Ney"

"Dekh ma ebar duwar khuley...tor Hindu-Muselman dui chehey." "Moder garab moder asha a mori Bangla bhasha," also by him, made its way again among the masses during the Language Movement (1952) and the Liberation War.

The National Poet of Bangladesh, also known as the 'Rebel Poet,' Kazi Nazrul Islam became an icon for his poems and songs that formed a striking contrast to Tagore's poetry. His songs were not meant to appease the non-violent followers of the anti-British movements; Nazrul was very vocal about his stance against the Raj and the colonial sys-



PHOTO COURTESY: MUKTIR GAAN

(1970). The March 7, 1971 address of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the then Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) was preceded by the song. It was also aired on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra throughout the Liberation War (1971).

Though Tagore was never actively involved in politics, he was not alienated from the socio-political scene. He had his unique attitude towards nationalism. A staunch critic of the partition of Bengal, Tagore conveyed his views in the song "Banglar mati Banglar jol." Among other patriotic classics by Tagore are: "Jodi tor daak shuney keu na ashey" (one of Mahatma Gandhi's favourites), "Chitto jetha bhoy shunno" and "O amar desher mati."

Rajanikanta Sen, influenced by Tagore, composed a number of patriotic songs. "Mayer deya mota kapor mathaye tuley nery bhai" was hummed by the youth during the anti-Raj movement; the nationalistic appeal of the song remains undiminished.

Atulprasad Sen, who wrote relatively few songs compared to his contemporaries, carved a niche for himself in the literary scene dominated by Tagore. The poet and lyricist, originally from Dhaka, wrote a patriotic song underlining communal harmony --

tem put him behind bars for that. Armed with an impeccable base in classical music, passion for Persian, Arabic literature and music, and a flair for incorporating unfamiliar subjects and vocabulary, inspirational songs by Nazrul were hard hitting. Among them "Karar oi louho kapat," "Shikal porar chhal moder," "Durgamo giri kantar moru," "Amra shakti amar bol," "Jai hok shatyer jai hok" and more are still rendered with zeal. Nazrul did write some patriotic songs in the conventional form -- "Eki aporoo roop-e ma tomar" and "O bhai khanti shonar chey khanti amar desher mati," for instance.

During the Language Movement, the Mass Uprising in 1969 and the Liberation War, these songs motivated political activists, freedom fighters and the masses that wanted emancipation from repression. Ekushey (21st) February played a key role in making Bengalis aware of their culture and heritage and the song on 'Shaheed Dibash' that has reached an iconic status is "Amar bhairer rokter rangano ekushey February" (originally composed by Abdul Latif, the tune was later modified by Shaheed Altaf Mahmud; the latter, hugely popular version is rendered now). The nationalistic emotions sparked by 'Ekushey' ultimately led to Liberation War.

Noted artiste Shaheen Samad remembers

those turbulent days in 1971; on a truck with fellow members of Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Goshthi -- Lubna Mariam, Naila Zaman, Bipul Bhattacharjee, Mahmudur Rahman Benu, Debu Chowdhury and others -- going from camp to camp, singing to refugees and freedom fighters to boost their morale (featured in the documentary "Muktir Gaan," directed by Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud).

According to Shaheen, "We used to sing the Rabindra Sangeet 'Oi pohailo timir raati,' Nazrul Sangeet 'Karar oi louho kapat,' Mushad Ali's 'Shonen shonen bhaishob,' 'Barricade bayonet berajal' (written by Abu Bakar Siddiqui and composed by Shadhan Sarkar), Sarwar Jahan's 'Jaago jaago,' Sheikh Lutfar Rahman's 'Bisham doirar dheu' and many more.

"This was our contribution to the war. The sight of freedom fighters being moved to tears while listening to these songs is something I'll never forget. That was our achievement."

Popular songs played on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra during the war were -- "Jai Bangla," "Purbo digantey shurjo utchhey," "Mora ekti phoolke banchabo boley judhdho kori" (rendered by Apel Mahmud), "Bicharpoti tomar bichar korbey jara aaj jechhey ei jonota," "Shona shona boley," "Salaam salaam hazaar salaam" (sung by Abdul Jabbar) and "Ez shagor roker binimoye."

The post-Liberation War period saw a range of patriotic songs and 'Gano Sangeet.' Talented lyricists and music composers introduced diverse issues in these songs; some featured in films became overnight sensation. Undervalued contribution of the youth taking part in the war and their frustrations were brilliantly articulated when Shahnaz Rahmatullah sang "...Hoytoba itihashy tomader naam lekha robye na...ganyanion gunider ashorey tomader kotha keu kobey na..." Misty-eyed listeners still hum "Shobkoto janala khuley daona" with Sabina Yasmeen or "Amaye gethey daona mago ekta polash phool-er-mala" with Runa Laila.

Though patriotic songs thrived during '70s and '80s, the tradition seemed to wane in the '90s. However, the political turmoil and the current generation losing faith in the system have triggered a new tradition of patriotic and inspirational songs. These songs do not necessarily rave about the scenic beauty of the country but point out the bitter reality. Many of this generation agree when Hyder Husyn sings "...Swadhinota ki hotel-e hotel-e grand fashion show? Swadhinota ki annuner khojey kishori promodbala?" or "Keuba gorey shonar Bangla, keu swanirbhor Bangladesh...goragorir neiko shesh."

As long as Bangla music remains, lyricists and poets will express their devotion for the land, musicians will set appealing melodies to those words and artistes will breathe life into them. Here's hoping these songs keep our spirits high and nationalistic stance resilient come hell or high water, as they have for over 150 years.

Art competition for underprivileged children

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

Shajan Unnayan Shangtha, a Panchagarh-based NGO, organised an art competition for underprivileged street children and young domestic workers. The aim of the event was to raise awareness against child labour in the district. The venue: the Shangtha office.

Shangtha officials said that such art competitions would help in recognising artistic talents of underprivileged children struggling with poverty. Around 50 children took part in the programme and all partici-

pants received new clothes. Ishrat Tamanna Megha stood first in the art competition, while Mahfida Akhter Zahan and Latiful Islam stood second and third respectively.

Chief guest Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman, district Children Welfare official of Panchagarh, handed the prizes to the winners. Laila Kamrun Nahar, chief executive of Shajan Unnayan Shangtha; Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman, president of Panchagarh Press Club; journalist Mohammad Harun-Ur-Rashid Babu and lecturer Nasima Haque Munni attended the programme as special guests.



PHOTO: STAR

Around 50 children took part in the art competition.

A talent hunt for reciters

"Abriti Chhandey Anandey" on Channel i

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Talent hunt for reciters, "Channel i Abriti Chhandey Anandey," will be aired tonight at 7:50 pm. The programme is aired on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Tonight's programme will feature performances of 20 contestants, who have made it through the preliminary rounds. Ten contestants will go to the next round.

Bangladesh Abriti Shamanny Parishad is associating Channel i in the initiative. Noted reciters Shimul

Mustafa, Bhaswar Bandyopadhyay, Pagna Laboni, Laila Afroz and Kazi Arif are the judges on the show.

Noted personalities including Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Syed Shamsul Haque, Asad Chowdhury, Shimul Yousuf, Subarna Mustafa, Pijush Bandyopadhyay and Afzal Hossain will appear as guest judges throughout the competition.

Amirul Islam and Shahidul Islam Sachchu are the directors of the programme. Reciters Ahkamullah and Rabi Shankar Moitree are the coordinators of the programme.



Noted reciters Shimul Mustafa, Bhaswar Bandyopadhyay, Pagna Laboni, Laila Afroz and Kazi Arif are the judges on the show.

J.J. Abrams hints at a Cloverfield sequel

J.J. Abrams says the team behind the hit "Cloverfield" is kicking around ideas for a sequel, or at least a follow-up. Appearing in San Francisco to promote his upcoming "Star Trek" reboot at WonderCon, Abrams was asked about the chances of another "Cloverfield."

"We're working on one right now," Abrams said on Saturday (Feb. 28). "The key obviously is with a sequel, certainly with this film, is that it had better not be a business decision. If you're going to do something, it should be because you're really inspired to do it. It doesn't guarantee anything and it doesn't mean that it's gonna work, but it means you did what you did and not because you're trying to make a buck. We have an idea for something that's pretty cool that we're playing with. It's something that would be related to 'Cloverfield' and hopefully we'll do something sooner than later, because the idea's pretty sweet."

Produced on a budget of \$25 million, "Cloverfield" had a \$40 million opening weekend in mid-January of 2008. The film's plot revolved an attack on New York City by a large creature capable of mass carnage and decapitating the Statue of Liberty.

Shot documentary-style with an assortment of familiar faces and 170 veterans, the film rode a savvy viral ad campaign to \$170 million worldwide.

Abrams produced, with friends and longtime collaborators Drew Goddard and Matt Reeves serving as writer and director.

"Star Trek" opens on May 8.

Source: Internet

Fahmida Nabi and Tomal on "Gaanalap"



Tonight's episode of the show featured singer Fahmida Nabi and music composer Tomal (2nd from right).

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Popular singer Fahmida Nabi and young composer Tomal are the guests on tonight's episode of the musical programme "Gaanalap." The programme will be aired on Banglavisian at 9:05 pm. On the show, Fahmida will perform some of her popular numbers, which include Tomal's composition.

Fahmida Nabi is a celebrated artiste in the

country, while Tomal also has some notable compositions. Tomal had been a member of the band Nagar Baul. His musical career began as a member of the band Tirthak and he carved a niche with Tirthak's songs including "Tumi basho kina," "Duari" and "Bhalo achhi bhalo theko."

On the show, both artistes will share lighter moments with the host. Produced by Nahid Ahmed Biplab, the programme is hosted by noted singer and composer Nakib Khan.

Sourabhee becomes first female "Indian Idol"

After four years of its running, popular music reality show "Indian Idol" finally got its first female winner in the form of Sourabhee Debbarma, who won the grand finale of the fourth season of the TV programme in Mumbai on Sunday night.

Sourabhee, who hails from the northeastern Indian state Tripura, belted out popular numbers confidently and piped other finalists -- Torsha Sarkar from West Bengal and army man Kapil Thapa. She walked away with an Rs.10 million contract with Sony TV and a car. The result was based on public voting.

Special attractions of the event were Bollywood stars John Abraham, Katrina Kaif and Neil Nitin Mukesh.

Others from the Indian film and music industry, including judges Javed Akhtar, Anu Malik, Kailash Kher and Sonali Bendre, too were present to cheer the finalists.

The 22-year-old winner is petite, charismatic and adds glamour to her stage performances with her moves -- a plus point she has had since



the beginning of the show. However, Sourabhee has had no professional training in music.

She recently met veteran

Assamese composer Bhupen Hazarika who told her "my blessings are with you."

Source: Internet