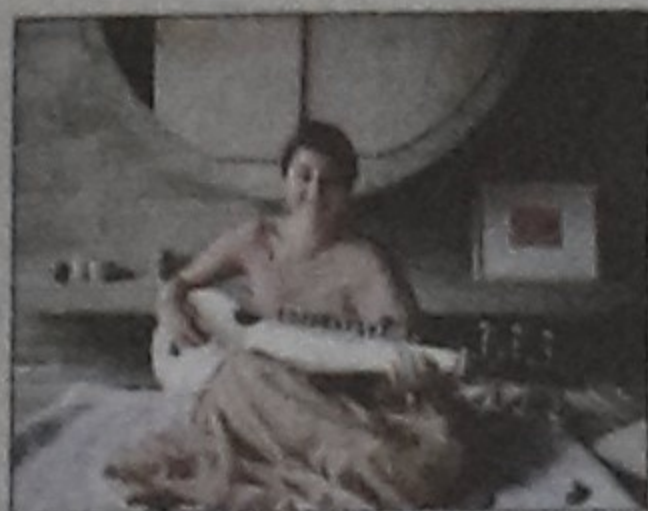
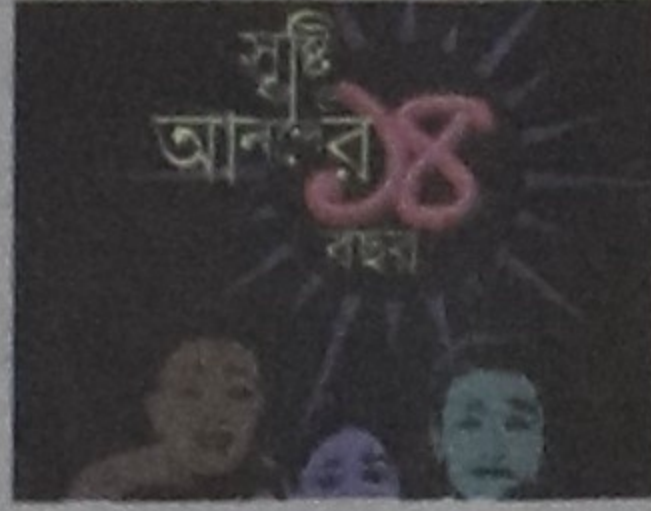


WHAT'S
ON THIS
WEEK

Recital of Sarod
Artist: Rajrupa Chowdhury
Venue: HCI Cultural Centre and Library, H 35, Rd 24, Gulshan 1
Organiser: Shadhona
Date: March 20
Time: 7pm



**National
Pantomime
Festival '09**
Organiser: Pantomime Movement
Venue: Theatre Institute, Chittagong
Date: March 20-22
Time: 4pm everyday



Concert
Troupe: In the Mood
Organiser: Goethe-Institut Bangladesh
Venue: GIB, H 10, Rd 9, Dhanmondi
Date: March 19
Time: 7pm



**Francophone
Film Festival**
Organiser: Alliance Française de Dacca, Zahir Raihan Film Society
Venue: Auditorium, AFD, Rd 3 Dhanmondi
Date: March 16-24
Time: 5pm onwards
Today: Halfpoulie: Child of the Tempests (Tunisia), Tabalaba (Madagascar)



In Conversation

Raza's efforts to popularise
Bhawaiya songs

NADIA SARWAT

Regional folk songs have a pride of place in Bangladesh. However, though the genre is widely appreciated, such songs do not share the magnitude of popularity as other genres.

Take the case of 'Bhawaiya', a genre indigenous to north Bengal, mostly popularised by the folk maestro Abbasuddin. This genre is certainly not getting its rightful due today.

This is exactly the point where artiste Shafiqul Alam Raza steps in. A regular artiste of Bangladesh Betar (radio) and Bangladesh Television, Raza is fast becoming a familiar name to 'Bhawaiya' enthusiasts in the country. Recently he had his second solo performance at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA). The Daily Star caught up with the talented artiste as he shared his views.

In his words, "Most people are under the impression that songs like 'Oki gariyal bhai', 'Baukumtha batash jemon' and a few others define the repertoire of the 'Bhawaiya' genre. However, in the rural areas of north Bengal, so many songs that the local artistes and Bauls sing are yet to receive exposure. Personally, I feel an inclination to bring these numbers before city audiences."

And Raza practices what he preaches. Along with popular music, he always tries to present new, lesser-known 'Bhawaiya' songs. At the major cultural events in the city, such as 'Pahela Baishakh', 'Bashonto Utshab', 'Ekushey February' and 'Bijoy Dibosh', Raja performs 'Bhawaiya' songs exclusively written



Raza (right) is fast becoming a familiar name to 'Bhawaiya' enthusiasts in the country.

Born in Chilmari of Kurigram district, known as the hub of the genre, Raza was understandably fascinated by these songs. Since childhood, he was an avid listener of Rangpur Betar; he sought to learn his favourite songs and as it happened most of these were 'Bhawaiya'.

"I don't clearly know the reason for my interest. Maybe having grown up in that area, I was irresistibly drawn to 'Bhawaiya' songs,"

said the artiste.

Though he didn't receive formal education in music, this didn't prevent him from receiving several prizes at competitions in his school. As it happened, at an Upazilla competition where he bagged the first prize, he met his music guru, Nurul Islam Zahid. A singer, composer and music teacher, Zahid has written over 3,000 'Bhawaiya' songs. Zahid was a major source of inspiration for the young Raza, though the latter could not receive practical

training from Zahid at that time. Years later, Raza managed to contact the artiste once more; since then, he has been among Zahid's talented disciples.

However, when Raza came to the capital, he could not continue his musical pursuit. He joined the daily Jugantor as a crime reporter and showed immense potential in this field. His achievement as a reporter fetched him awards from TIB, Democracy Watch, UNESCO and more. However, his passion for music led him to change his beat and today he has carved a niche in cultural journalism. After winning a nationwide talent hunt organised by Bengal Foundation in 2006, he was able to make an entry once more in the musical world, this time, with more confidence and determination. While his potential as a folk singer gained him recognition, he decided to concentrate on 'Bhawaiya'.

"I thought that as an artiste from the land of Bhawaiya, why not work to popularise the genre? Every time I get a chance to perform, I turn the spotlight on the genre, which is warmly received by the audience. This wide support fires my dream to re-introduce the powerful Bhawaiya tunes not only within the country but abroad as well."

Now Raza is set for a visit to Pakistan this month to participate in an official cultural tour organised by BSA. His first album of 'Bhawaiya' songs is in the pipeline. The album will be released under the banner of Sangeeta.

Art and imagination come together

Installation by Wakil and Dhali on Prothom Alo's 10th anniversary

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Wakilur Rahman and Dhali Al Mamoon are celebrated artists in our country. Viewers, therefore, are likely to head for a 10-day installation exhibition by the two artists, titled "Kagojer Chhayaye." The exhibition, marking the 10th anniversary of the daily Prothom Alo, will be inaugurated by former Chief Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman on March 20 at Nalinikanto Bhattashali Gallery, Bangladesh National Museum.

Wakilur Rahman has been a resident of Berlin for years. He frequently visits Bangladesh and seeks to incorporate innovative elements in his work. For the upcoming exhibition, Wakil selected Prothom Alo as a subject. Over the last year he has concentrated on the headlines of the daily. The artist said, "Prothom Alo likes to use black and red in their headlines. The paper has a distinct philosophy and personal hallmark. Newspapers carry new headlines everyday. We want to forget some headlines as they often enervate us."

"Prothom Alo's Eid-special always makes me nostalgic. They evoke memories of the excitement on the faces of my mother and grandmother when they had Puja-special publications from Kolkata in



Dhali Al Mamoon (left) and Wakilur Rahman doing last minute preparations for the installation exhibit at National Museum.

hand," he added.

Dhali, in turn, is recognised for his metaphoric works. For this project, his prime

concern was to build a bridge between a newspaper and communication. Most recently, he has concentrated on the relation-

ship between people and communication. His installations are made of paper, board, metal and other familiar elements.

Super price for first
Superman comic book

Cover of Action Comics No. 1, the first comic book featuring Superman.

A rare copy of the first comic book featuring Superman has sold for \$317,200 in an Internet auction. The previous owner had bought it second-hand for less than a buck.

It is one of the highest prices ever paid for a comic book, probably a testament to the volume's rarity and excellent condition, said Stephen Fishler, co-owner of the auction site ComicConnect.com and its sister dealership, Metropolis Collectibles.

The winning bid for the 1938 edition of Action Comics No. 1, whose cover features Superman lifting a car, was submitted Friday evening by John Dolmayan, drummer for the rock band System of a Down, according to managers at ComicConnect.com.

Dolmayan, who is also a dealer of rare comic books, said he acquired the Superman comic on behalf of a client. He declined to iden-

tify the client.

"This is one of the premier books you could collect," he said in an interview. "It's considered the Holy Grail of comic books. I talked to my client, and we made the move."

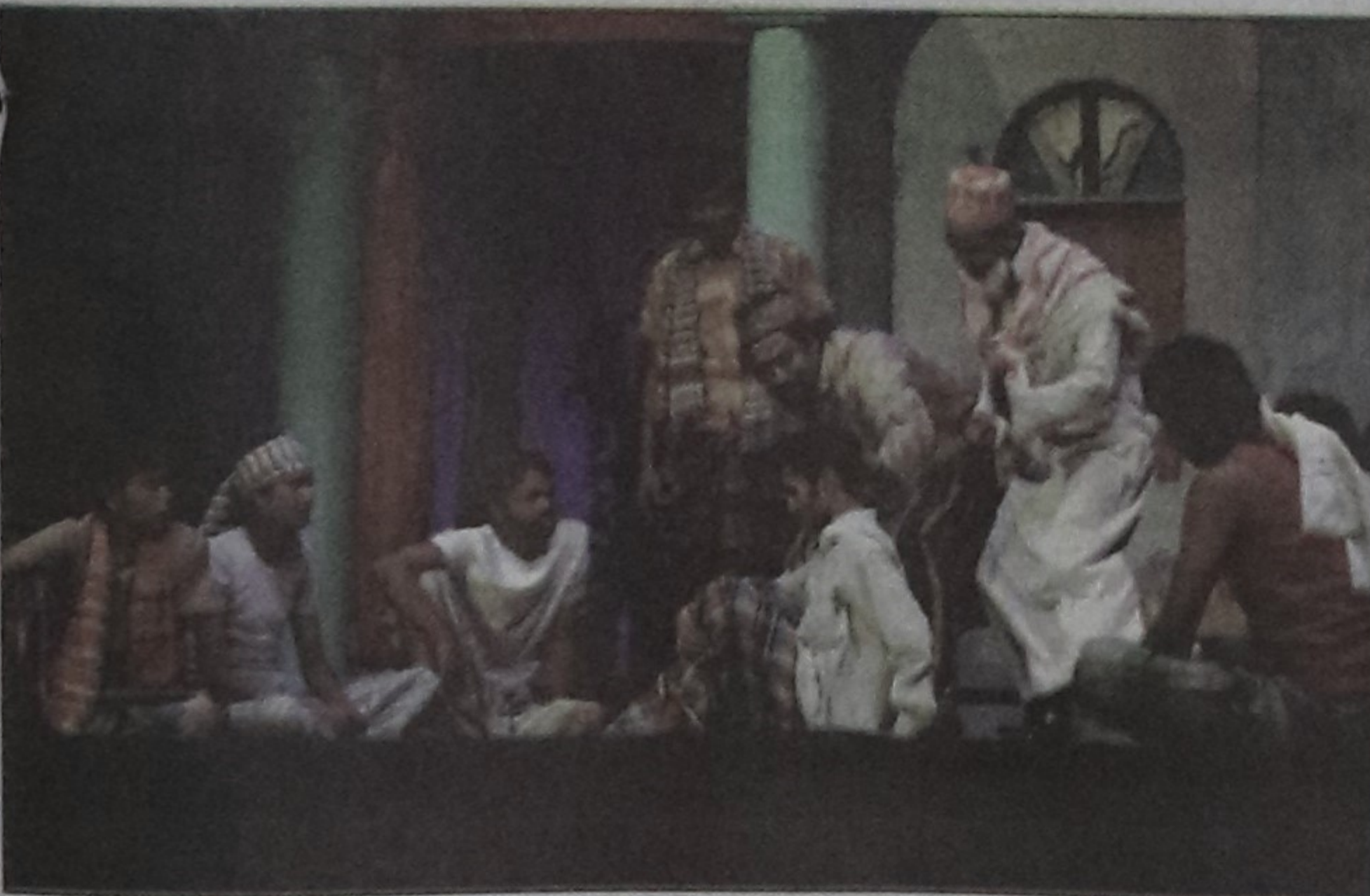
Dolmayan said the client has "a small collection, but everything he has is incredible."

Only about 100 copies of Action Comics No. 1 are known to exist, and they seldom come up for sale.

Fishler said, "Maybe in a booming economy, it would have done a hundred grand more, but in this economy, I think the price is great."

The previous owner had purchased it in a second-hand store in the early 1950s when he was 9 years old. He paid 35 cents.

Source: Associated Press



On March 15, Swadhin Theatre staged its production "Neetir Eti" at the National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Written by Professor Zakir Hossain, the satire was directed by Monir Hossain Jiban.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Duende Quartet, a Latin Jazz band from U.S., held an interactive workshop at Natmandal, Dhaka University campus on March 15. The troupe performed two Duke Ellington numbers -- "Angelica" and "Things ain't what they used to be," "Love for sale" and some other numbers, introducing the students to various forms of Jazz music. The workshop aimed at cultural exchange and promoting Jazz. The visit is part of a tour titled "The rhythm road: American Music Abroad," sponsored by the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka. At the programme students of Theatre and Drama Department, DU performed folk and patriotic songs with traditional instruments like 'dotara,' 'pakhawaj' (a north Indian drum), 'tabla' and more.

