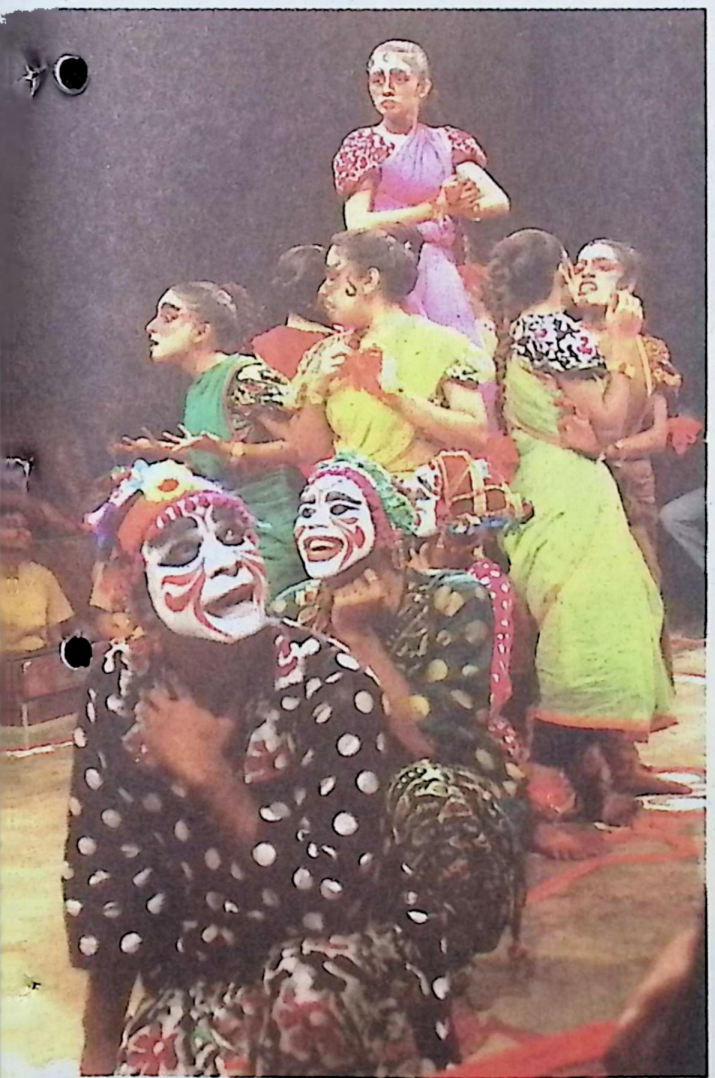
Around

As done by the traditional *Shongjatra* artistes to attract the audience in a night-long show in rural areas, the students of the Department of Theatre and Music of Dhaka University presented amusical number with dhol and kortal for prior to the start of Shong Bhong Chong. The instrumental was followed by the presentation of a series of stories by the *shongs* (roughly can be translated as clowns). Like the traditional artistes, the students of the department have also satirised the anomalies of contemporary society through jeering and apparently meaningless dialogues, which had the potential to take the audience into the embedded sorrow and depth of the stories.

The drawbacks of student politics, the current trend of 'crossfire', corruption by the press, rise of fundamentalism and its international connections, hurdles of getting justice, teacher politics at public universities, deterioration of the standard of national politics and many debated current issues have been addressed through skillful gestures and movements. The performance maybe labeled as 'exaggeration', but not at all irritating, rather entertaining. In fact, a group of potential actors' ability of incorporating the required sentiment, power of enacting the diverse characters and their synchronised movements enthralled the audience.

Besides dialogue and movements, social disorders have been addressed through parodies, as done by the rural artistes in traditional Shongjatra performances.

However, sometimes the performance appeared repetitive like the traditional *Shongjatra*, which the rural artistes perform through improvisations. Since the production was performed keeping the demand of the urban theatre in mind, the director could have avoided the repetition and could have concentrated on selected topics instead of focusing on so many anomalies.





Students of Department of Theatre and Music of Dhaka University perform in traditional Shongjatra based theatre performance titled *Shong Bhong Chong*.

Shong Bhong Chong was presented as part of the academic discipline of 'traditional theatre based production' of the department of Theatre and Music. After a residential workshop conducted by a traditional Shongjatra troupe named Kalihati Shong Dal of Tangail district, the students of the department developed the theatre production through improvisation under the guidance and direction of Syed Jamil Ahmed.

Shong Bhong Chong was staged during the first week of August at the Natmondal, Dhaka University. ■