

## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

**Int'l Ibsen Seminar and Theatre Festival**  
Title: Ibsen Through New Eyes  
Venue: Shilpakala Academy & JU  
Date: November 12-23  
Time: Everyday 5pm onwards  
Today's Play: 'The Communicator' (CAT)



### Book Fair

To celebrate Humayun Ahmed's 61st birthday  
Venue: Central Public Library premises, Shahbagh  
Date: November 12-14  
Time: 10:30am-8pm



### Film Screening

Venue: Auditorium, Alliance Francaise, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi  
Date: November 13-20  
Time: 5pm onwards  
November 14: '8 Women' & 'The Lady and the Duke'



### Solo Painting Exhibition

Artist: Mustapha Khalid Palash  
Venue: Asiatic Art Gallery, Nimtoli, Ramna  
Date: October 23 November 22  
Time: 10am-8pm



## Celebrating an iconoclast who became an icon

*International Ibsen Seminar and Theatre Festival '09 begins*



Honorees (back row) with the discussants at the programme.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

ZAHANGIRALOM

The 12-day long International Ibsen Seminar and Theatre Festival 2009 opened at National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), on November 12. The festival aims to celebrate the legendary playwright and see his works from new perspectives.

Centre for Asian Theatre (CAT), in collaboration with Centre for Ibsen Studies (University of Oslo), Norwegian Embassy, BSA, ICCR, Jahangirnagar University and Grameenphone, has arranged the festival.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury formally inaugurated the festival while Dipu Moni, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was present as the chief guest.

Presided over by Professor Abdul Mannan, president of CAT, the event was attended by the Norwegian Ambassador to Dhaka Ingebjorg Stofring; Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty; Frode Helland, director, Centre for

Ibsen Studies (University of Oslo); Kamaluddin Nilu, chief adviser of the festival; Ramendu Majumdar, president, ITI Worldwide; Ataur Rahman, president, Bangladesh Centre of ITI; noted litterateur Selina Hossain; Professor Sharif Enamul Kabir, Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University; Professor Shafi Ahmed, coordinator of the festival; director general of BSA, Kamal Lohani and other dignitaries.

The discussion started with a welcome speech by Kamaluddin Nilu of Centre for Ibsen Studies (University of Oslo). He elaborately discussed the purpose of the festival. Terming Ibsen as the "father of modern drama," Nilu said, "Ibsen's works are marked by symbolism, often blended with new artistic expressions."

In his speech, Professor Kabir Chowdhury said, "Ibsen wrote 26 plays, all of which are masterpieces. But we are drawn to his plays not only because of the technical perfection of his craftsmanship, but also for their relevance. He drove home messages of freedom: women's freedom from male domination, freedom of expression and freedom from dogmatic

religious outlooks and so on."

In her speech Dr. Dipu Moni said, "This festival belies the fact that Ibsen is a Norwegian playwright. He is for all nationalities and times. In his day he dealt with subjects that were highly controversial, such as divorce, incest, venereal disease and public health. But the driving force behind all his works was social commitment, which every person, especially politicians, can learn from his plays."

"There is no denying the fact that Ibsen is Norwegian, but his themes have crossed the limits of national borders," said Ingebjorg Stofring. The Norwegian Ambassador also lauded the works of Selim Al Deen and Abdullah Al Mamun.

In recognition of their outstanding contribution to various fields of arts, theatre, film, literature, painting and Liberation War, seven renowned personalities were honoured with Ibsen Award. The recipients are Syed Shamsul Haq, Begum Mushtari Shafi, Ferdousi Majumdar, Milon Kanti Dey, Sayeed Ahmed, Mohammad Kibria and Soovas Dutt.



An installation has been placed at the lobby of BSA on the occasion.

## Social awareness through music

*Hyder Husyn and Krishnokoli perform at Dhaka Club*

MAINUL HASSAN

Dhaka Club Limited, in association with Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), organised a musical programme at the club's tennis court on November 12. Titled "Amar Ponyo Amar Desh", the programme featured solo performances by singers Hyder Husyn and Kazi Krishnokoli Islam.

The programme was part of the 'Amar Ponyo Amar Desh' campaign by BCI.

"This campaign aims at generating mass awareness on the importance of buying locally manufactured products," said Shahedul Islam Helal, president, BCI.

With an aim to promote the local industries, BCI initiated the campaign this year. The campaign is a two-year project.

"This campaign is a call of the time. Many countries across the world have already taken active initiatives to promote their identity and products," said Sadat Hossain Salim, president of Dhaka Club limited.

As part of the campaign, BCI will hold grand concerts in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and Chittagong. Special programmes, talk shows and promotional events will also be aired on TV.

"The government will assist BCI with this project, and if asked will also provide them with opportunities to air programmes on BTV," said Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad.

BCI will also bring out an audio album featuring Hyder Husyn, Warfaze, Bangla and other popular bands and artistes.

"It is a very positive initiative, and the success of

the campaign will need group effort and mass participation," said Hyder Husyn.

"In our country many products of global standard are made. When visiting other countries, I have seen Bangladeshi manufactured goods on sale, at higher price than here."

"We want to encourage a sense of comparison among people. So they at least compare between a local and a foreign product before buying. Many might find the locally made product better in quality and available at a

tey ekta nuri", also from the album.

The performance of "Jao pakhi", Krishnokoli's megapopular song from the "Monpura" soundtrack, received a warm response from the audience.

Other songs performed by the crooner included "Bondhu amar", "Ichhey moton" and "Jao harao", a track from Krishnokoli's upcoming album.

"The album is almost complete. We will try to release it before the coming Puhela Baishakh," said Krishnokoli.



Krishnokoli performs at the event.

much cheaper price," added Husyn.

Hyder Husyn has written the theme song for the campaign. The song is currently being aired on TV channels as part of the promotional programme.

Krishnokoli also expressed similar views.

The musical programme began with Krishnokoli performing "Neel joley chokh meleyshopno kekhojey".

A vivacious rendition of the number "Dubi dubi", from her first solo album "Shurjey Badhi Basha" followed. Next she performed "Hat-tey hat-

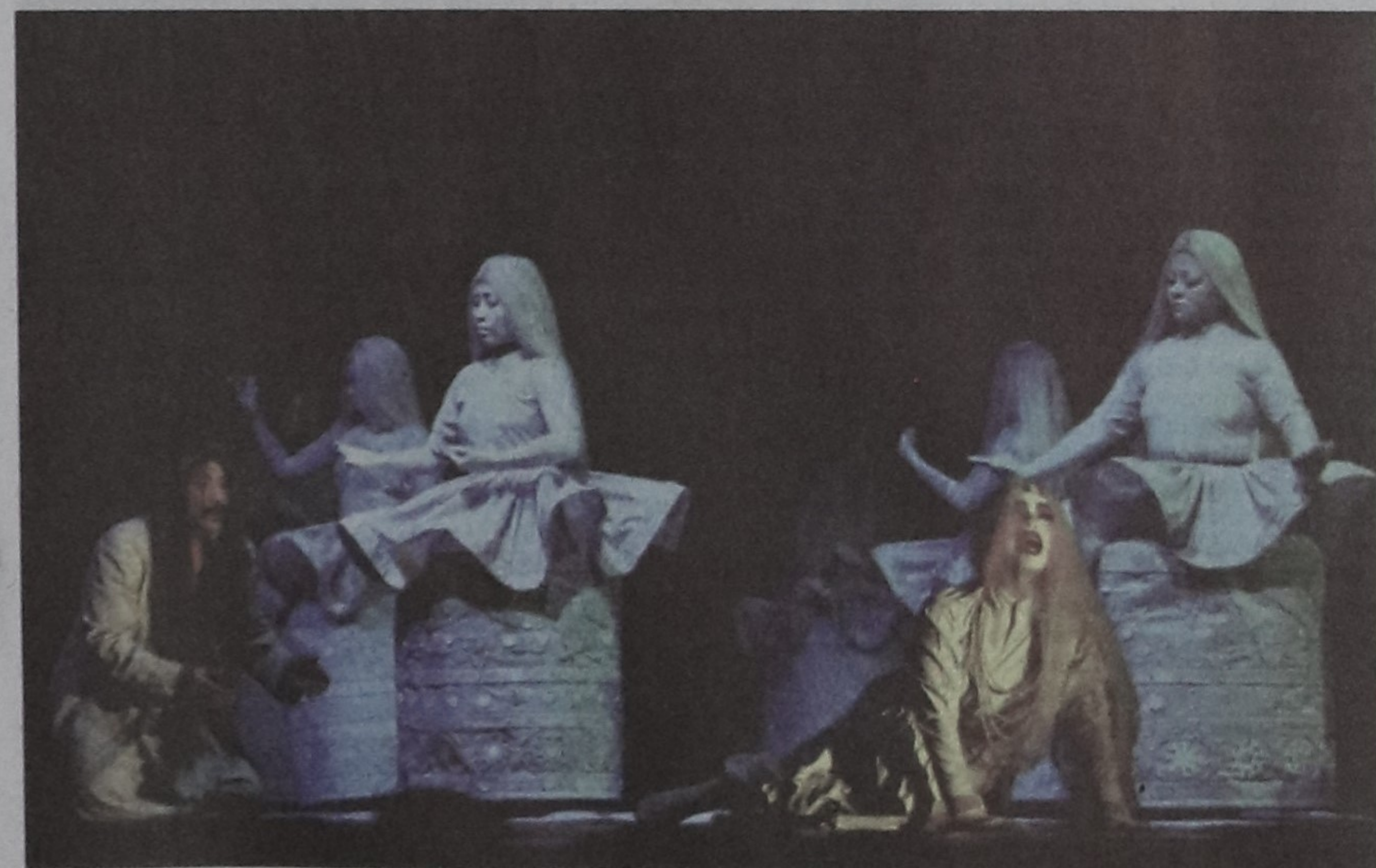
Next on stage was Hyder Husyn. Husyn opened his performance with "Mon ki jey chai bolo" -- a popular number of the '90s.

Other songs performed by Husyn included "Chokhey chokh porley", "Sari", "Muktijoddhara", "Shadhinota" and more.

Renditions of songs "Shorkari officer" and "Kotha geley buddhijibir license paowa jaye" -- addressing corruption and hypocrisy with a comic approach -- won Husyn rounds of applause from the audience.

## Going beyond mortality

*Chorus Repertory, Manipur stages "When We Dead Awaken"*



JAMIL MAHMUD

Henrik Ibsen's last play, "When We Dead Awaken" (1899), is one of his most adventurous and intensely personal works. As the author intended, it is a 'dramatic epilogue' to his naturalism and a return to the poetic symbolism of his earlier plays like "Peer Gynt" and "Brand". In the play, a sculptor, a surrogate for Ibsen, suffers "sorrows for a forfeited life."

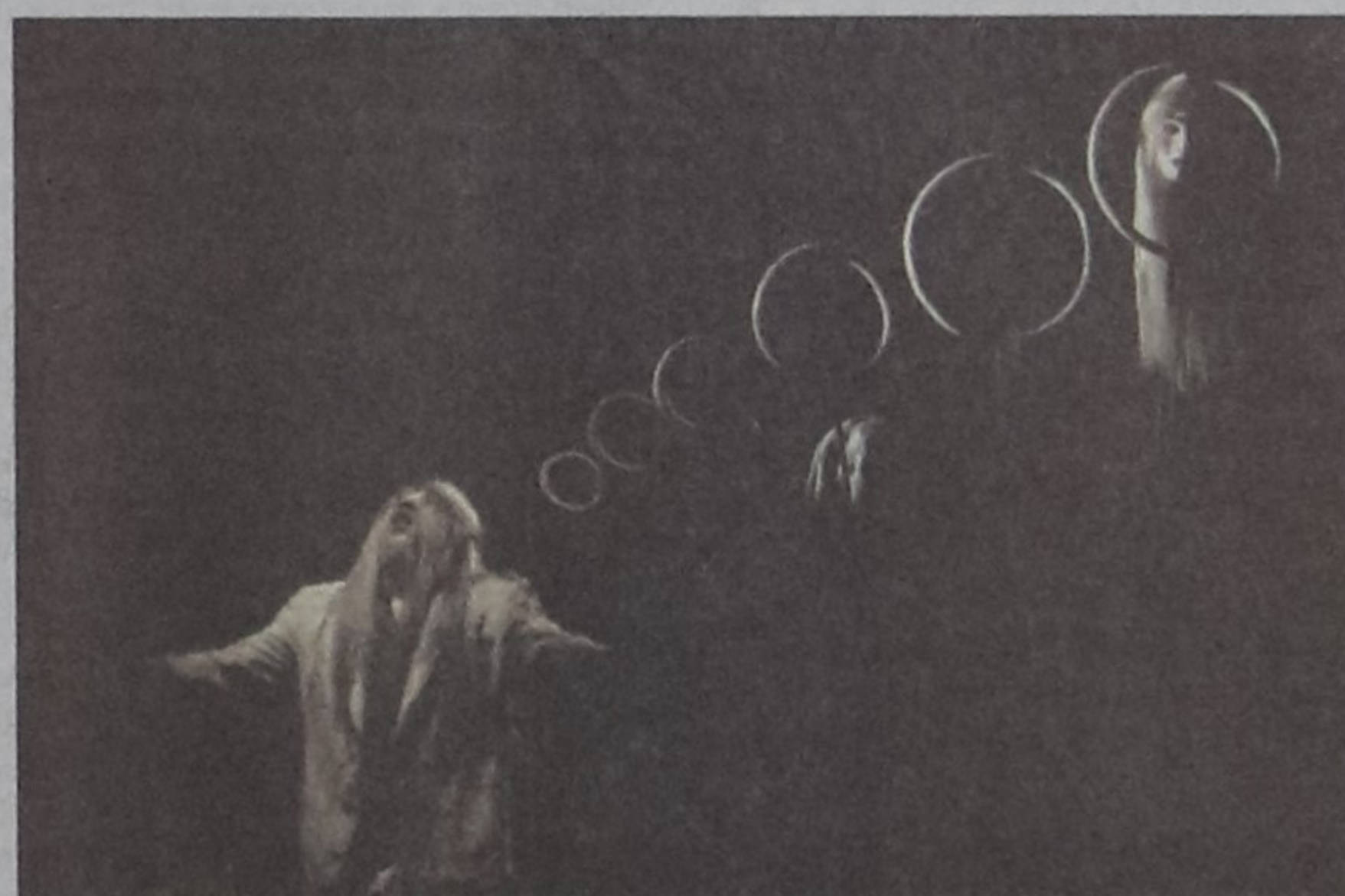
Internationally renowned Indian theatre troupe, The Chorus Repertory

from Imphal, Manipur staged "Ashibagee Eshei" -- an adaptation of Ibsen's "When We Dead Awaken" -- on the opening day of the International Ibsen Seminar and Theatre Festival '09. The show, along with a gala inaugural, took place at the National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on November 12.

Ratan Thiyam, one of the foremost international theatre personalities, directed the play. In his directorial note Thiyam wrote, "In this piece of work I just wanted to feel a different Ibsen with imagery, fantasy and ecstasy."

As the name suggests, "When We Dead Awaken" centres on the non-reality of characters or the symbolism of characters. The play has a lot of metaphysical references, which are remarkably absent in Ibsen's other plays.

Sculptor Arnold Rubek, the protagonist of the play, has made a name for himself through his work, but cannot seem to find peace. He is at ease with his wife Maja. On the other hand, Maja is drawn to Ulfrheim, a bear hunter. Irene, a beautiful woman and a model for his artworks from Rubek's past, re-emerges.



"A balance has to be maintained to keep the essence of Ibsen intact and make it palatable to the Manipuri speaking people since the culture, lifestyle and traditions of the Norwegians that form the background of the play are poles apart from that of the Manipuris."

-- Ratan Thiyam

Awakening memories, desires, and an acute existential crisis in Rubek, Irene leads him to a mountain through a dreamy journey. As they approach the summit, both are killed in an avalanche. From the valley below, Maja sings exultantly.

Story apart, Thiyam's concern was to fit the characters in the Manipuri adaptation "Ashibagee Eshei". The master director took this as a great challenge.

"A balance has to be maintained to keep the essence of Ibsen intact and make it palatable to the Manipuri speak-

ing people since the culture, lifestyle and traditions of the Norwegians that form the background of the play are poles apart from that of the Manipuris. It also has to work the other way around -- a Manipuri 'Ibsen' play for the global audience," suggested Thiyam's directorial note.

Despite having a language barrier (the whole play was in Manipuri), a standing ovation from the full-house pointed out Thiyam's success.

The dramatic change of the set between acts, gestures and body language of the performers and brilliant use

of chorus kept the audience glued to their seats till the end.

Use of surrealistic elements was also apparent throughout the play: Dali's 'Melting Clock' and the journey of Rubek and Irene on a dreamboat through a lotus garden with flying fish and doves surrounding them, for instance.

Rajkumar Bhogendra Singh, Sorokhaibam Ibomcha Singh, Chirom Jilasana Meetei and Pebam Somo Singh, among others, were the lead actors in the play.

Another show of the play was held yesterday at the same venue. Today, Centre for Asian Theatre will stage its brand new production 'The Communicator' at the National Theatre Hall. The play is directed by Kamaluddin Nilu.



PHOTO: MUMIT M.