

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Int'l Baul Festival and Seminar
Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Date: December 11-12
Time: 10am onwards



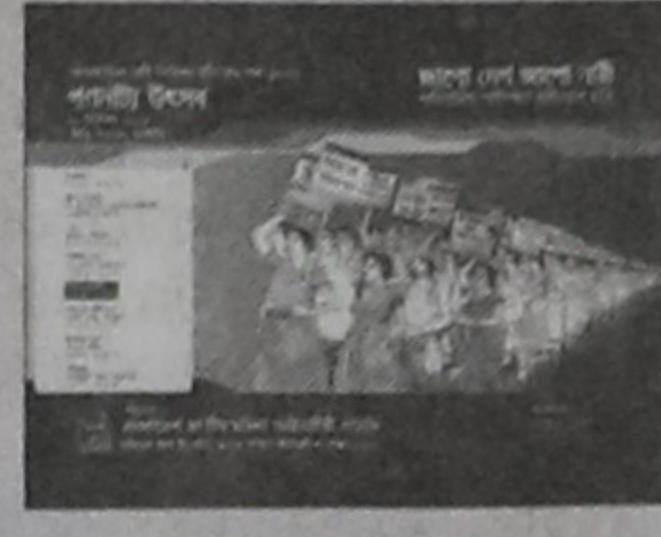
Solo Art Exhibition
Painter: Rejaul Karim
Title: Twilight Zone
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, H 275/F, Rd 27, Dhanmondi
Date: December 8-19
Time: 12pm-8pm



Documentary Screening
Film: Al Badar
Filmmaker: Fakhru Arefin
Venue: Muktomancha, Jahangirnagar University
Date: December 15
Time: 7:30pm



Theatre Festival
Organiser: Bangladesh National Woman Lawyer's Association
Venue: Rabindra Sharobar, Dhanmondi
Date: December 11
Time: 10am onwards



The Japanese connection

Min'yo wins over Dhaka audience



Japanese artistes perform Min'yo at Shilpakala Academy.

KARIM WAHEED

Taking Japanese folk music or *Min'yo* at face value, one will notice the dissimilarities between the genre and its Bangla counterpart. The predominant style of rendering Bangla folk songs is free spirited, whereas *Min'yo* vocalists switch between full-throated and restrained (often nasal). Bengali folk singers are accompanied by *dhol*, *sarinda*, *banshi*, *mandira* and *ektara* whereas a *Min'yo* troupe includes *shamisen* (three-stringed musical instrument played with a plectrum

called a *bachi*), *tsugaru-jamisen* (a large *shamisen* with thicker strings; the plectrum is proportionately small), *shakuhachi* (an end-blown flute made of bamboo) and *uta-bayashi* (drums).

But when a visiting Japanese troupe -- of six folk musicians -- performed *Min'yo* songs at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on December 9, the similarities between Japanese and Bangladeshi folk music became apparent and the audience lapped it up. In association with Japan Foundation, the Embassy of Japan in Dhaka and Bangladesh

Shilpakala Academy organised the event.

Apparently, there are 58,000 Japanese folk songs -- an oral heritage. Many *Min'yo* songs are connected to work or specific trades and were originally sung as a form of recreation during breaks. Think, *bhatiyali* or *bhawaiya*.

Some *Min'yo* celebrate and delineate the four Japanese seasons, while others are performed on special occasions. Not that far off from our folk numbers.

The lovely crooners Tanaka Shoko and Nakamura Hitomi won the audi-

ence over with their broken Bangla but it was the music that brought the house down.

A winter song, aptly the first rendition, set the mood. The first session featured songs of seasons: serene, snowy winter, vivacious spring with its *sakura* (cherry blossom), festive summer and the sky illuminated with fireworks, and fall, when nature displays a dramatic change of colours.

The latter half featured a fishermen's song, a farmer's song, a lullaby and a parting song.

The audience wanted more and the artists didn't disappoint. Yoneya Satoshi on *shakuhachi*, Sawada Katsuharu on *tsugaru-jamisen*, Fujimoto Atsuhide on *shamisen* and Nishida Miwa on *uta-bayashi* joined artistes of Shilpakala Academy and played Bangladeshi tunes.

A friendly rivalry between the *deshi banshi* and the Japanese *shakuhachi* drew many from their seats; audience swaying and dancing, without being rowdy, is always a good thing. The only unfortunate incident was an obtuse photographer getting up on the stage; he was immediately removed.

The Japanese troupe will be performing next in Malaysia. The performers, however, hoped that the enthusiasm and appreciation demonstrated by the Bangladeshi audience would remain unmatched.

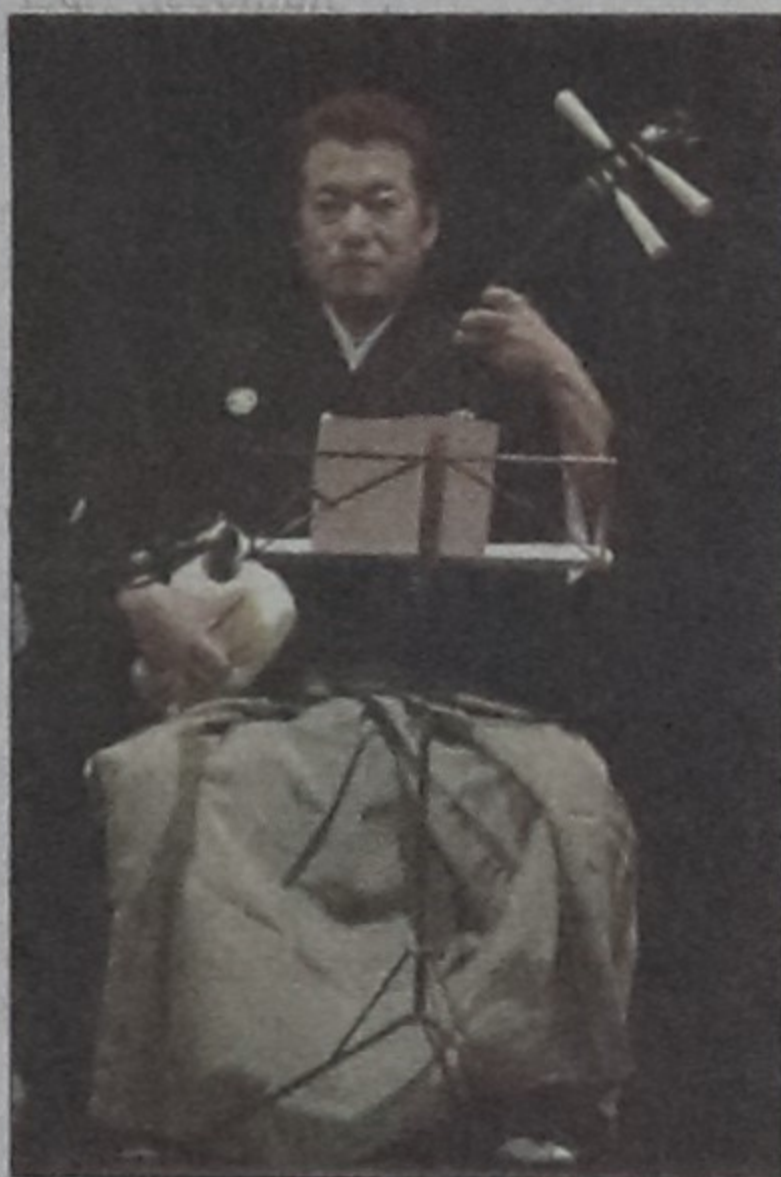


PHOTO: MUMIT M.

Music for the soul

"Praner Gaan" around the corner

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Music soiree "Praner Gaan" (Songs of the Soul) is to be held at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre at 7 pm on December 13.

The programme will be jointly arranged by Shurer Dhara, a cultural organisation led by noted Tagore singer Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya, and The Gandharva Loka Orchestra, a 75-member international orchestra, featuring star musicians and singers from over 15 countries: USA, Canada, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, the UK, Scotland, the Netherlands, Columbia, Brazil, Poland, Slovakia, Macedonia, Iceland and New Zealand.

Artists from both organisations are expected to perform both Tagore and Sri Chinmoy's songs.

"Sri Chinmoy was a son of the soil. When his parents died in 1942, (Chinmoy was 11) Chinmoy Kumar Ghose along with his brothers and sisters left his small village Shakpura near Chittagong and enrolled at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a spiritual community near Pondicherry in South India. Later, he moved to New York in 1964 and devoted himself to serving mankind till his demise on October 11, 2007," says Vilupti Barrineau, a student of Chinmoy.

Formed in January 2007, the orchestra is working as a seamless ensemble and is led by Panchajanya Burri, a classically trained guitarist, whose symphonic arrangements of Sri Chinmoy's pure and simple melodies bring the Songs of the Soul to its dramatic

and moving finale.

"Music became the most important thing at the tender age of six; and is still a life breath to me. It is the peaceful foundation of the soul and unleashes us to productive works and keeps us aloof from destructive ones," comments Panchajanya.

"We are heartily inspired by the teachings and creative works of Sri Chinmoy, a spiritual teacher who dedicated his life in the service of humanity. In his 43 years in the West, he endeavoured to inspire and serve mankind with his soulful offerings - his prayers and meditations, literary, musical and artistic works," adds Panchajanya.

Questioned on several lyrics of Sri Chinmoy, both Panchajanya Burri and Vilupti Barrineau hummed "Amar-e jodi basho bhalo niye jao amarey aaj", "Amar jibon amar moron tomar choron o lagi" and more.

Quoting the teachings of Sri Chinmoy, both Panchajanya and Vilupti say "Life is a mountain; religions are the roads to the top of the mountain. While singing divine songs you are just feeding your soul."

Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya says, "It is a kind of achievement of our beloved language Bangla, our multidimensional cultures and the way our music is; that people of different nationalities are going to perform Tagore's songs and Sri Chinmoy's songs."

A rehearsal session is on at Lalmatia Girls' High School. The Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh was also seen there humming with a number of local and foreign artistes and slum dwellers.



Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya (R) and artistes of Gandharva Loka Orchestra at a practice session.

A chronicle of commitment

In conversation with Nishat Arzoo

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Nishat Afza Arzoo is a popular classical singer. In addition she is a special grade artiste with both Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television -- proving the truth of the old adage that hard work coupled with commitment can win the day.

Born in a respectable Muslim family in Shankipara of Mymensingh town in 1969, her passion for music surfaced early on. She was lucky to have the unstinting support of her parents Dr. M.A. Halim and Shamsun Nahar, both sports organisers. Nishat also expresses her debt to her maternal uncle Mohammad Abdul Hannan.

A meritorious student,

Nishat did her Honours and Masters from the Faculty of Fisheries, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) in 1996 and 1997 respectively. Later she joined Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI) as a Scientific Officer.

She continued in the service for three years but resigned from her post after her marriage. Her husband Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a high up police official, also supported her unstintingly in her dream of venturing more fully into the sphere of classical music.

A regular performer of Nazrul, Tagore and modern songs, she took her early 'taalim' (lessons) under the guidance of Ustad Mithun Dey, Gopal Dutt and Omar Faruq. While her passion for

classical music soared, she later shifted to Dhaka and took lessons from eminent Nazrul artiste Sohrab Hossain, Sudhin Das and Khalid Hossain.

She also took lessons in Tagore songs from Sanjida Khatun, Fahmida Khatun, Ajit Roy, Wahidul Haque, Dr. Nurul Anwar and Sadi Mohammad. "I still take 'taalim' from eminent classical masters of the country so that I can improve my performances," said the artiste.

Nishat was enlisted with Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television in 1983 and 1985 respectively as a regular artiste. Now she is a special grade artiste of both.

"I am greatly impressed by the performances of Fahmida Khatun and Khalid Hossain," said Nishat adding, "Samina Chowdhury's rendering of modern songs is mesmerising."

Nishat wants to pursue her mission to promote classical music. However, she is pained by the current lack of practice in classical music. In her words, "The so-called music of today is injurious in many cases to the traditional music of the country. We need to transform the taste of the younger generation to ensure the survival of our music, which enriches our tradition and heritage."

"For the better survival of our culture, practice of classical music should be geared up at every level, including greater government patronage," she concluded.



Nishat Arzoo

Susan Boyle's album is largest ever female debut

Susan Boyle's dreams continue to come true. The singing sensation who emerged from obscurity on "Britain's Got Talent" is topping the charts, selling the most albums of any artiste in a single week this year with the largest ever sales debut for a female artiste.

Boyle's "I Dreamed a Dream" album is on top of the Billboard 200 albums chart with 701,000 copies sold in its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

"This is a big deal considering some of the superstar acts that came

out this year that couldn't get to that number, said Billboard's director of charts Silvio Pietroluongo. The year's previous high-water sales mark came when Eminem's "Relapse" sold 608,000 in its opening week.

Boyle, a 48-year-old churchgoing celebrity who lives in a modest government-owned home in Scotland with her pet cat, captured the world's attention and hearts eight months ago when she performed on the British talent competition.

Now Boyle is competing against two "American Idols" for sales this holiday season. Idol runner-up Adam Lambert's debut "For Your Entertainment" is at No. 3 on the Billboard 200, and "Idol" champ Kris Allen is at No. 11.

When it comes to album sales, Boyle is even fiercer than Rihanna, whose fourth album, "Rated R," is in the No. 4 slot on the charts with 181,000 albums sold during the first week.

Boyle's large album sales reflect larger changes happening in the

music industry as younger audiences tend to buy single-song downloads, while more mature audiences, who make up Boyle's fan base, still purchase entire albums.

"Hit-driven artistes tend to do well on the download side but aren't moving as many albums as they once did," Pietroluongo said. "If you have an artiste who resonates with an older audience, you have an artiste who can sell more albums."

Source: CNN

When Lady Gaga met the Queen



Lady Gaga performed and met the Queen at the Royal Variety Performance in Blackpool.

The "Poker Face" hitmaker, wearing a red PVC outfit, which featured a 20ft long cloak and Elizabethan-style collar, seemed to have toned down

her outrageous style for Queen Elizabeth II.

However the performance had her play a "floating" piano, which was suspended in the air on giant stilts.

"Good evening Blackpool. Let me hear you rattle your

jewellery," the Telegraph quoted her as saying.

She added: "My father is here tonight and I wrote this song for him, it's called 'Speechless'."

But the singer declined to reveal her conversation with the Queen.

She quipped: "That is private."

The Duke of Edinburgh accompanied the Queen at the Opera House for the event.

Classical singer Katherine Jenkins and Hollywood legend Bette Midler were among the other performers.

The fund collected through the show will be forwarded to the Entertainment Artists' Benevolent Fund, which supports entertainers suffering from age-related ailments.

Source: Internet

