

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

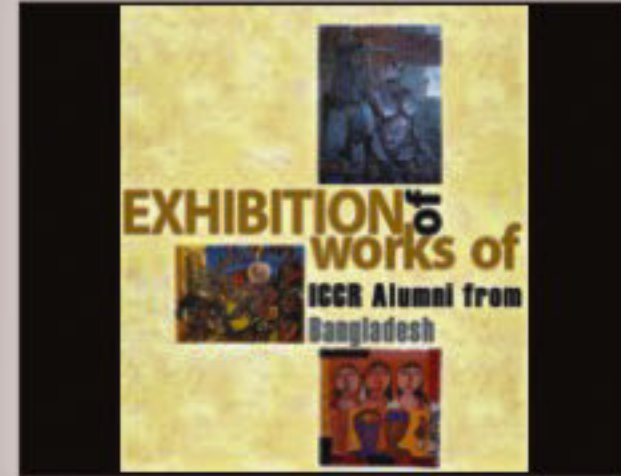
Group Art Exhibition
Title: In Search of Roots
Venue: Zainul Gallery 1, Faculty of Fine Arts, DU
Date: March 11-17
Time: 2pm-8pm



Solo Painting Exhibition
Title: Not Here
Artist: Ali Akbar
Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka, 26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi
Date: March 13-27
Time: 3-9pm (except Fridays and Saturdays)



Group Art Exhibition
Organiser: High Commission of India, Dhaka and ICCR
Venue: Indra Gandhi Cultural Centre, H-35, R-24, Gulshan-1
Date: March 10-23
Time: 10am-6pm



Theatre
Play: Umajal
Troup: Nandimukh (Chittagong)
Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, Shilpakala Academy
Date: March 19
Time: 7pm



The blossoming of a dancer

Up close and personal with Arpita Shome

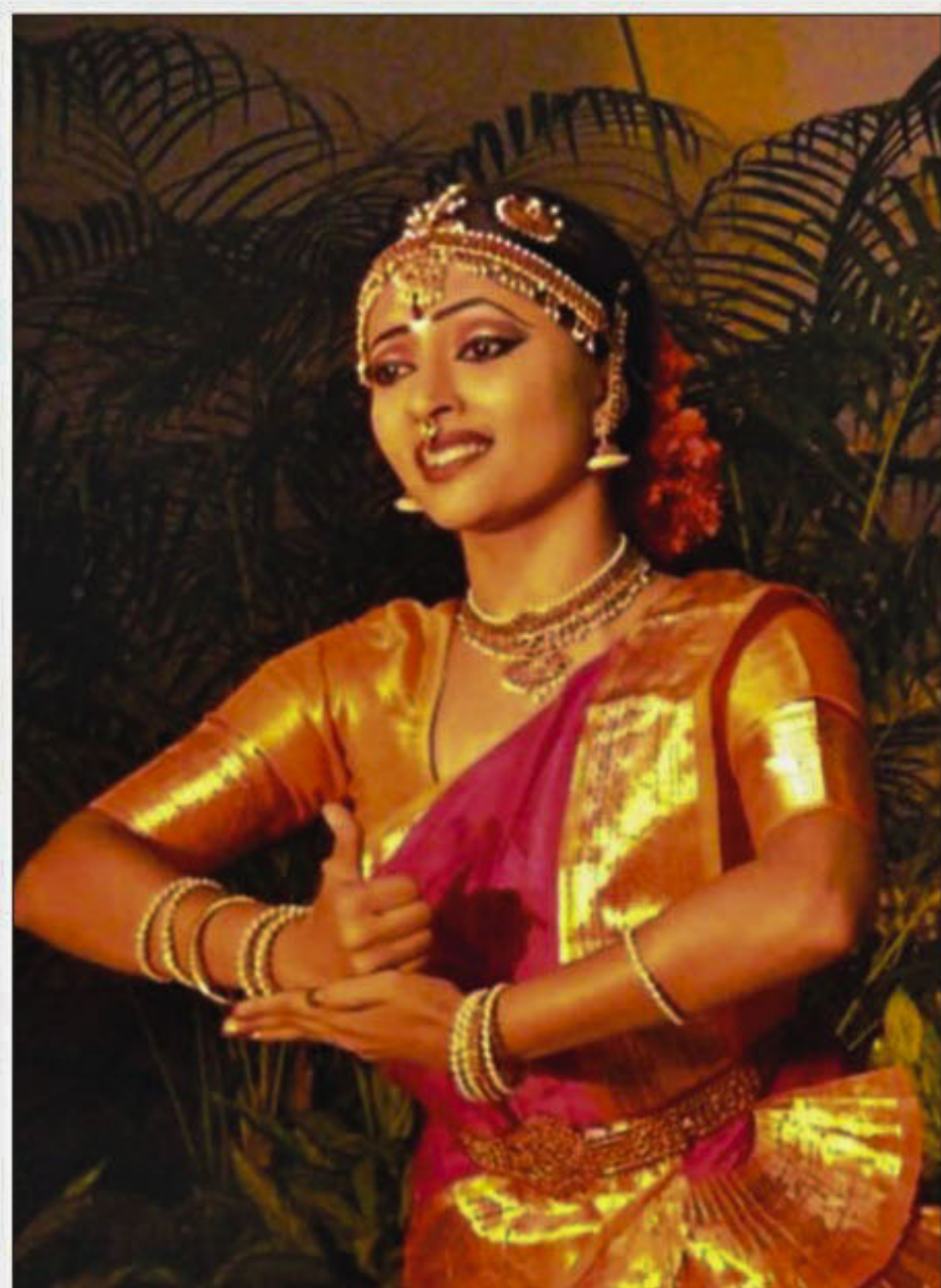
NUSRAT JAHAN PRITOM

It is said that Arpita never could go on stage without her mother by her side. On many occasions, the little dancer, aged six or seven, would have to be reassured by her teachers and friends that her mother was near at hand, but the adamant, nervous child would listen to no one, refusing to perform and holding back the show. Then her mother would appear, just a bit lower the stage at 90 degrees to where she was standing. Arpita would find back her strength and confidence and begin her wonderful performance, drawing a big round of applause from all.

That Arpita is no longer a child. The girl who could not even step outside without holding her mother's hand, traveled miles away from her mother and her family to Kolkata to pursue her and her parent's dream that was intertwined in the art of classical dance.

"It still feels funny and strange to think about it--how I lived without my mother for five years, mostly on my own in a flat in Kolkata," said Arpita, "Perhaps this acceptance of the change of times and the determination to learn classical dance made it possible to do so. I went to Calcutta soon after Intermediate studies. I remember crying a lot at the beginning and wanting to come back. However I soon adapted to it."

Arpita Shome is one of the



Arpita Shome is one of the youngest and promising classical dancers of recent times.

youngest and promising classical dancers of contemporary times. She started her dance in Rajbari, Bangladesh under Abdus Sattar Kalu.

Her parents, both of whom are fond of the arts and culture, often encouraged Arpita. "You can say all us three brother and sisters are somehow connected to the cultural world. My sister sings, my brother plays the tabla, and I

like dance." Her mother often used to encourage her to get an Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship and go abroad to learn more about classical dance. As it so happened, she did get the scholarship and traveled to Rabindra Bharati University in Calcutta to complete her graduation and post-graduation in Bharatanatyam under the supervision of Guru

Khogendra Nath Barman and Guru Rajdeep Banerjee.

Arpita has recently done several shows, including one commemorating International Women's Day on March 8 at midnight in Shaheed Minar. On the following evening, she performed in Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on the Nari Shommanona programme of Channel-i. On Friday she had a programme at the National Museum, also celebrating Women's Day.

Arpita is currently a teacher of Kolpotoru-a school for performing arts. "About a year ago, I started with 10/12 kids. What amazes me is that every week that I take a class, I find one new face!"

Arpita is currently working in the office of a non-governmental organisation. "They often allow me various facilities like they allow me to leave whenever I have a rehearsal. This really encouraged me to pursue my dream. Also Lubna Mariam from Shadhona has inspired me in many ways. She has created various opportunities so that dreams of dancers like me could be fulfilled."

"When I returned to Bangladesh from Kolkata in September, 2008 I came back as a different person. Now I had a responsibility to pass on what I had learned. That sense of duty still is absorbed within me, and maybe will always be. Perhaps it is the reason why I will never give up teaching classical dance."

Spring Art Fair

Mélange of Contemporary Arts

A CORRESPONDENT

An assortment of the various blends of art in the country today were much in evidence at the Spring Art Fair 2010 in Lakepark, North Gulshan. The fair was organised by Bangladesh Art Council. On display were art works in such mediums as print-making, burnt clay, portraits, watercolour, sculpture, metal crafts, ceramics, glass painting, textile and photography, among others.

"Breath of fresh air, near the scenic spot of Gulshan Lake, where else would you experience art more?" questioned Maheen Khan, General Secretary, Bangladesh Art Council. She further added, "The reason behind this initiative was the exposure of art as well as promoting interaction between the artists. I am not being critical here, but speaking as an artist myself, there are potential artists who do not get the inspiration or platform to succeed. The galleries usually give scope to big artists, and the artists need the gallery to flourish. So it's kind of a vicious circle where the new talents tend to drop out. There is also a lack of patronage from connoisseurs which is barricading the growth of new artists".

Artist Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed who has had solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad in India, Pakistan, USA, Sri Lanka, etc said that it was a wonderful experience to be present at the fair with other artists. The modernist artist Sarkar Nahid Niazi Nipu shared similar experiences.

How much time does it take to create a work of burnt clay? "Ten minutes" was the surprising response. Artist Tayabuzzaman Topu added that it depends on the time it takes to burn.

Sukanta Banik of Dhamrai Metal Crafts said, "We met a lot of people. The main intention here was not to sell but display our works".

Dilruba Latif whose forte is glass painting, said, "I am also a designer. Basically whatever I do has a feel of art in it. Here that feeling reverberates in the



Browsing for culture.

PHOTO: NELOY HOSSAIN

air." Elham Huq, who is a teacher, echoed a similar view.

Dina Tawfik had sketches of her daughter and son on a table ahead of her. "Basically most who are here are from the Fine Arts, but I am a freelancer and do it as a passion," Dipak, a sculptor, said that although the art form is very detailed and emotive, due to the high costs involved, it doesn't thrive easily.

Fahmida Khatun who experiments with water colours had dazzling flowers in most of her works. She also had miniature paintings of the shape of cards.

Abdul Guffar Babu talked about his arena; print-making. "It's not yet familiar to most. This fair is an excellent means of exposure."

Ratnashwar who works with water colours said, "The ambience here is not like the ones you get indoors."

Afroza Jamil (Konka), President of Bangladesh Art Council said that she used to see many art fairs when she was in LA, where artists used to interact and wanted to undertake a similar event in the country. Gulshan seemed the natural choice as most of the art connoisseurs are located here.

"It's a beginning. Bangladesh is very



Maheen Khan and Afroza Jamil in the splendor of spring.

rich in art and culture. We have a lot to offer, but we just have to show it. The artists are all very happy and we want to make it a regular fixture, may be once or twice a year. May be we would move out of Dhaka to Sylhet, Chittagong, etc. Let's see. It's just the beginning."

Baul Rashid Festival in Netrokona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

The Baul Rashid Memorial Festival was held at Rajurbazar Collegiate School premises in Netrokona town on Saturday to pay tribute to the late Baul Rashiduddin and recall his outstanding contribution to folk culture.

The festival was organised by Baul Rashid Smaran Utsab Udjapon Committee (BRSUUC). The festival was presided over by Nazrul Islam Khan Mayor of Netrokona Poursava where DC

Netrakona Mohammad Nurul Amin; Netrokona Sadar Upazila Chairman Tafsiruddin Khan; renowned writer Golam Ershadur Rahman; ASM Kamaluddin and other Bauls from different parts of the country performed the songs of the bard at "Manush Dhora Manush Bhajo Shuno Bolira Pagol Mon Manusher Bhitara Manush Koritacha Birajon"---

Lyrics such as this by Baul Rashiduddin won the hearts of the masses.

He was born in Bahirchakra village on January 21, 1889 and passed away on

September 10, 1964. He was awarded by Bangla Academy in 2003 for his outstanding contribution to folk culture.

Rashiduddin along with some other renowned folk singers including Abdul Karim, Jalal Kha, Ukil Munshi and Chand Mia formed a society of bard singers in the downstream areas under greater Mymensingh region at the beginning of 19th century to highlight the folk culture of the region.

The memory of Baul Rashid remains alive in the minds of the rural people of the region.



Theme park Fantasy Kingdom is set to celebrate its 8th anniversary on March 19. The long awaited event will include a two-day mega concerts featuring several bands including LRB, Souls, Shironamhin, Feedback, and Prometheus and artistes such as Asif, Balam, Akhi Alamgir, Mimi, Muhin, Fakir Alamgir and Alam Ara Minu.



Your name has figured in the Guinness Book of World Records for the highest number of albums in the shortest time, an honour for Bangladesh. What are your feelings?

Abdul Jabbar, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Momtaz: It feels great. I firstly thank God, and next my listeners as without my fans it wouldn't have been possible. It was in 2005 that I got my name in Guinness. From 1992 to 2005, I did 500 albums. At present, after five years, the number has risen to 750. Also the work of processing and compiling those albums has begun so that they are not lost--- like before there were audios but now things have changed. Very soon we would have put them in order.



We take you closer to your favourite artistes and celebrities. Our readers will be able to fire away all their queries to cultural personalities fortnightly and we provide the platform for you to do so.



Who influenced you most in life?

Arifa, Dhanmondi Dhaka

Bari Siddiqui: Firstly my mother had a major influence on my musical endeavour. Then it was the amazing tunes of the *Biyer Geet* (wedding songs) that I heard from my grandmother, when I was only five years old. Even my elder brother who plays the flute had a tremendous impact on my career. Apart from him, my grandparents have had an immense influence over me. My grandfather was a noted *sarod* player and an expert singer.



After the success of "Third Person Singular Number" do we expect to see more of you on celluloid?

Abida Shabnaz, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Topu: I would always love to act in quality movies. Soon after the release of "Third Person Singular Number", I was approached by several other filmmakers but unfortunately the storyline did not appeal to me. I want to contribute to the entertainment industry by acting in quality productions. Currently I am working on an album of music video featuring five songs which is scheduled to come out on Pahela Baishakh.



What do you enjoy most about acting?

Champa Baidya, Green Road, Dhaka

Chanchal Chowdhury: For me, the most enjoyable part of acting is characterisation. When I can successfully set apart different characters as they are thought to be, my joy knows no bound.

Who are your favourite directors?

Chanchal Chowdhury: Mamunur Rashid in theatre, Gias Uddin Selim and Mostafa Sarwar Farooki in film and Salahuddin Lavlu in TV plays..



You have recently participated in a music festival along with Miles, Black, Bohemian and artists from other countries like Mitali, Nochiketa, Srikanto Acharjo, Alamgir (from Pakistan) etc. What was the experience like?

Shamima Perveen, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Mehreen: It was really great to be there. The ambience, the feel was just excellent. Young people, old people, individuals of high calibre, experienced personalities--all kinds of music lovers were there. As it was a live setting, there was a bit of tension, but the crowd was so vibrant and live. In other countries, they have such festivals and it's really important that we do too, they should get bigger and bigger.