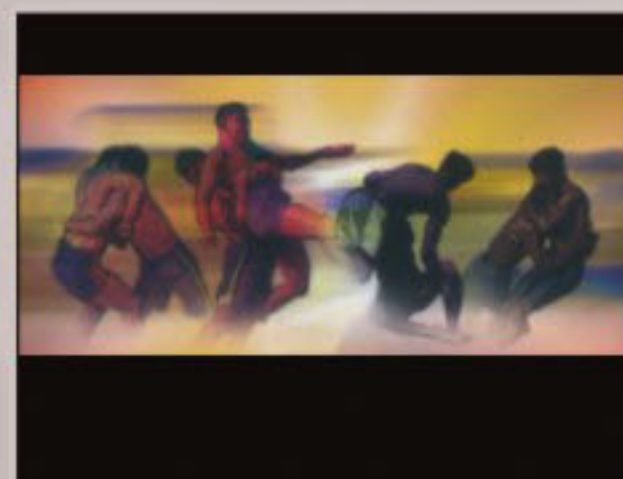


## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

**Jabbarer Bali Khela O Baishakhi Mela**  
Venue: Lal Dighi Maidan, Chittagong  
Date: April 24-26



**Group Art Exhibition**  
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, 275/F Road-16, Dhanmondi  
Date: 16-30  
Time: 12pm-8pm



**Musical Programme**  
Organiser: Nandan Dutt  
Venue: Ramesh Chandra Dutt Memorial Auditorium, Chhayanaut Shangkriti Bhaban, Dhanmondi  
Date: April 30, 2010  
Time: 6:45pm



**International Dance Day**  
Organiser: Dance Artists Association and Shilpakala Academy  
Venue: National Theatre Centre, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
Date: April 23-29  
Time: 6:30pm



# Kochi Sharok Padatik Natya Utshab

Call for war crimes reiterated by 11 Freedom Fighters



Lighting the Mongolprodeep (top), scenes from "Jolbalika", A dance sequence (right)



ZAHANGIR ALOM

Upholding the spirit of our sublime Liberation War, one of the city's well-known theatre troupes, Padatik Natya Shangsad Bangladesh, inaugurated Kochi Sharok Padatik Natya Utshab for this year at National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala

Academy (BSA) on April 24. Eleven valiant Freedom Fighters, including the deputy chief commander of Liberation War and Planning Minister Air Vice Marshal (ret.) AK Khandakar, inaugurated the festival by setting illuminated Mongolprodeep afloat on water.

Vice-president of Shammilito Shangkritik Jote Golam Kuddus; secretary general of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, Jhuna Chowdhury; general secretary of Shammilito Shangkritik Jote Hasan Arif and Tagore artiste Nargis Chowdhury presented 11 Freedom Fighters AK Khandakar, editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, eminent cultural personality Nasiruddin Yousuff, Gazi Golam Dastagir Birprotik, Shahidullah Khan Badal, Habibul Alam Birprotik, M. Hamid, Minu Haque, Bipul Bhattacharya, Pijush Bandyopadhyay, Sharmila Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Naila Khan with *uttario*, followed by speeches by the former four.

Termining his participation in the Liberation War as the most glorious part of his life, Mahfuz Anam said, "Independence is our pride. We all hate those who dare to disregard this pride. War criminals who committed crimes against humanity during Liberation War must be brought to book."

Demanding trial of war criminals, Nasiruddin Yousuff urged all to establish a Bangladesh free from all forms of exploitation, a principle which underpinned the Liberation War.

"I observed hundreds of freedom loving people killed by the cronies Rajakar, Al Badr, Al Shams of Pakistan army during the Liberation War. The culprits should never go unpunished," said AK Khandakar.

Troupe leader and chief executive of Padatik Selim SH Chowdhury thanked the guests for their presence at the inaugural ceremony.

Later Padatik staged their production "Jolbalika" in the festival.

Written and directed by Masum Reza and Shamsul Alam Bokul respectively, Jolbalika focuses on rural Bangladesh. The play depicts the joys and sorrows of the rural people where the upper classes do not compromise with the lower ones in times of crises. The play also lays emphasis on the gender issue where a male child is given priority over a female one. When a storm faces Joy Baul, one of the main characters, it is his son that he saves from the waves rather than his daughter. Ghonoshyam, a mental patient, loved by the entire village, saves everyone but is himself bitten by a snake. An element of romance is brought in by the relationship between Chandbodan, the son of the village head, and Chumkibegum, Joy Baul's sister.

Choreographed by Anik Basu and Tamanna Rahman respectively, artistes of Spondon and Nrityam also presented two dances at the inaugural festival.

Acclaimed reciter Bhaswar Bandyopadhyay anchored the programme.

Starting from April 24 the weeklong festival will go on till May 1. Popular production Meraj Fakir-er Maa was staged yesterday by Theatre (Baily Road). Today theatre troupe Shubachon will bring "Rupobati" on stage.

## Firing a dream

JONATHAN RICHMOND

It started off as a brave experiment in social mobility by the Shah Cement Company, and the management consistently showed enthusiasm and support for the contestants in the singing competition they sponsored -- and also delight in seeing workers in their industry recognised as talented human beings.

Consistently, the organisers have emphasised lifting up those with hard lives of manual labour.

Six semi-finalists were presented at the glittering gala event. A first prize winner (awarded 5 lakh tk and a car) and two runners up were announced.

Twenty percent of marks for scoring the winners went to audience voting by SMS. Even with 80 percent of marks going to judges' votes, the SMS score can determine the outcome if there are major differences in SMS volumes received. The scoring method is seemingly flawed for two reasons. Firstly, it biases the result according to the composition of the television audience. If, for example, TV audiences for this kind of show are older than average, there will be a tendency to vote for older contestants. And two of the three winners were very much older than the typical youthful candidate in this competition. Secondly, there is no control mechanism over how many SMS can be sent from any one mobile phone. This lays voting open to a matter of how often a contestants' friends and other contacts can be persuaded to SMS, making the result an inefficient measure of true popularity.

The three clearly astonishing singers among the six semi-finalists were Ishtiak, Mohidul and Mosharof. Each has a different voice, but all have a commanding presence

produced smooth and colourful tones with utter self-confidence. And Mosharof's singing was sweet as well as radiant, conjuring up the very soul of Bangladesh. Memories of his lyricism and grace will linger for a long time.

Other contestants deserve special mention. Throughout the competition, Shamim sang with a rapturous beauty that evoked to me the tone painting of Schubert lieder. His is a very special sound. And Adi came forward as the voice of the people -- his boundless impish energy as well as musicality could draw an audience anywhere.

The TV presentations were mixed in quality. The band music was exceptional. I fell in love with the richness of instrumental sounds. The three judges treated the contestants as professionals and offered them sound advice. On the other hand, the shows too often took unhealthy pleasure in humiliating the losers over their defeat. Red crosses appearing on screen to send daggers through hearts or exaggerated pathos (gut-wrenching musical sounds, for example) focused on drawing tears. There is nothing to be said in favour of making a series of talented youth cry on camera for the supposed entertainment of a national audience.

The six finalists, at least, are now on salary for a year. The ten runners up are being invited to participate in further events over the coming twelve months.

Adi told me his dreams of a musical career are over: Accepted to study music at Chhayanut School, he has family to support and cannot take time off work to develop a career in performance. The reality for most contestants, however talented, is a return to the grind of uninspiring daily hard work.

The organisers in interview showed concern for the welfare of the runners up. They should now act to ensure they are paid for



The reality for most contestants, however talented, is a return to the grind of uninspiring daily hard work.

on stage and the promise of a serious career in music if given the necessary support. Throughout the competition as well as during the recorded numbers synced at the final, Ishtiak demanded attention with eloquent as well as penetrating singing that captured the nuances of his music with a depth and maturity quite beyond his years. Mohidul was the definition of suave: utterly professional and the image of a seasoned performer as he

professional work they perform over the coming months and to make provision for scholarship assistance or other funds to aid their professional development in the arts. That way, perhaps the dream of social mobility that started the whole event can become a reality.

The writer is a freelance contributor, music enthusiast, and a consultant in Bangladesh.

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