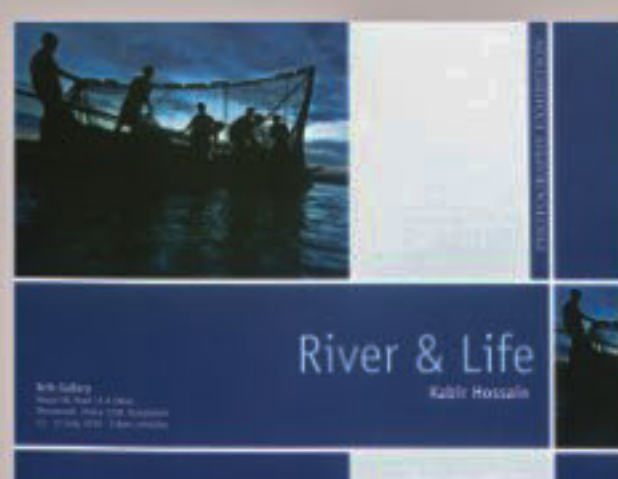


WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Solo Photography Exhibition

Title: River and Live
Photographer: Kabir Hossain
Venue: Drik Gallery, H 58, Rd 15A (new), Dhanmondi
Date: July 12-17
Time: 3-8pm



Theatre Festival

Organiser: Theatre Art Unit
Venue: National Theatre Hall & Experimental Theatre Hall, Shilpakala Academy
Date: July 9-14
Time: 7pm everyday
July 14: "Court Martial" (Theatre Art Unit) & "Ghum Nei" (Mahakal)



Solo Art Exhibition

Painter: Samiran Chowdhury
Title: Connecting with Nature
Venue: Galleri Kaya H-20, R-16, Sector-4, Uttara,
Date: July 2-15
Time: 10am-8pm



Solo Lalon Evening

Singer: Farida Parveen
Venue: Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, H 35, Rd 24, Gulshan 1
Date: July 16
Time: 7pm



Remembering a theatre icon

Abdullah Al Mamun's 68th birth anniversary observed



Mamun's plays address bigotry, exploitation in the name of religion, gender discrimination and other social issues.

ZAHANGIR ALOM

To commemorate the 68th birth anniversary of the late actor-director-playwright Abdullah Al Mamun, Theatre arranged a memorial speech at the seminar room of Bangladesh Shilpakala academy (BSA) on July 12. Professor Bishwajit Ghosh of the department of Bengali Language and Literature, Dhaka University, delivered the speech at the event.

Analysing Mamun's plays, Dr. Ghosh, in his speech, focused on Mamun's development as a playwright and the themes of his plays during different eras.

"As responses to the changes in society, Mamun focused on various issues in his social satires," he said.

The discussion was presided over by National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Director of Theatre and ITI Worldwide President Ramendu Majumdar moderated the discussion. "We considered Mamun a member of our big family. A multifaceted genius like Mamun is rarely found in the cultural arena of Bangladesh. Mamun's plays address bigotry, exploitation in the name of religion, gender discrimination and other social issues. Liberation War and its values would often take the central position in his plays," Kabir Chowdhury said.

"Mamun was a powerful actor. He personified the most complex characters -- Shakespeare's Iago; Tagore's Nihilesh; Munier Chowdhury's Netai; his own creation Bakka Mian and more. Though I was the principal of Theatre School (at present called Abdullah Al Mamun Theatre School), Mamun did all the work as the vice principal of the school," he added.



Ferdousi Majumder and co-actors in "Meraj Fakir Ma."

Theatre activists and media personalities Keramat Mowla, Muhammad Jahangir, Saymon Zakaria, Arif Haidar, Mohsin, Moushumi and

others also participated in the discussion. Ferdousi Majumdar, Tropa Majumdar, Khairul Alam Sabuj and others were present on the occasion.

Urban theatre took a remarkable turn after the country was liberated. Abdullah Al Mamun ushered in what is known as the neo-theatre movement. He was a successful playwright, skilled director and a master actor. Moreover, he was an exceptional filmmaker and TV play director. He had held many important positions such as the DG of National Institute of Mass Communication and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. For his remarkable contribution, Mamun received many prestigious awards including the Ekushey Padak, National Award for best film director and scriptwriter and Bangla Academy Award.

"Spordha," "Shapath," "Subachan Nirbashoney," "Bibishab," "Shenapati," "Tritio Purush," "Mike Master," "Ekhon Dushshamay," "Kokilara," "Meraj Fakir Ma" and more are notable plays by Abdullah Al Mamun.

All of these plays address ongoing social turmoil. The diminishing spirit of Liberation War in the contemporary society, class struggles, uncared for elderly -- these are some of the themes he had worked on.

After the discussion, Theatre staged Mamun's play "Meraj Fakir Ma" at the Studio Theatre Hall of BSA. It was the 128th staging of the production. "Meraj Fakir Ma" highlights a debate between fundamentalism and progressiveness. The play raises questions like "should one's religious beliefs compel one to disown his/her mother?"

The protagonist is Meraj Fakir (played by Tofa Hossain). He is one of the main clerics in Polashpur village. Meraj dreams of an Islamic state and holds a deep resentment towards non-Muslims. His world comes crashing down when one day it is revealed that his parents eloped 39 years ago and his mother Alo Bibi (played by Ferdousi Majumder) happened to come from a Hindu family. The situation deteriorates further when Meraj realises that Alo Bibi never actually embraced Islam; she has been a Hindu all along. An outraged Meraj runs to the house to kill his mother but stops as he remembers the Islamic instructions on how a son/daughter should treat his/her parents.

The news that Alo Bibi is actually a Hindu quickly breaks out in the village and Meraj's archival, another cleric Geda Fakir (played by Shekanul Islam Shahi) tries to exploit the situation to his benefit by turning the simple-minded villagers against him.

The cast also includes Ramendu Majumder, Tropa Majumder, Khurshid Alam and Tamanna Islam.

TV Watch

Special play "Karigor" on ATN Bangla anniversary

A CORRESPONDENT

Single-episode TV play "Karigor" will be aired at 11pm on July 16 on ATN Bangla. Written by Anisul Haque and directed by Shokail Ahmed, the play will be aired on the occasion of 11th anniversary of the TV channel.

The story revolves around potters. Mahfuz Ahmed plays the role of a potter who is upholding his ancestral profession. Nagging poverty, helplessness and lack of appreciation in a potter's life are the key elements of the play. The young potter (Mahfuz) wants to marry a



A scene from the play. local girl (played by Tisha) but his destitution becomes an obstacle. The cast also includes Pial, Mahmudul Islam Mithu and Shahnaz Khushi.

'Rathjatra' and 'Rath-er Mela' begins in Manikganj

ZAHANGIR ALAM BISWAS, Manikganj

The traditional 'Rath-er Mela' began at Sree Sree Anandamoyee Kalibari Temple in Manikganj district town yesterday. The mela is organised every year to celebrate 'Rathjatra', a festival of the Hindu community.

The 15-day long festival began with rolling the rath (chariot) of Sri Sri Jagannath Deb from the Anandamoyee Kalibari premises at 2 pm. Hundreds of devotees from different areas in the district took part in the procession.



A view of the 'Rathjatra' procession. PHOTO: STAR

The fair had around a Shaheed Rafik Road with hundred stalls. Alongside, many vendors sat by the fruits, spices, sweets, domestic goods etc.

Movie Watch

"Despicable Me": A charming tale of bad intentions and happy endings

A big, bad but reformable meanie meets his match in a pint-size trio of orphaned sisters in "Despicable Me." And lo, another 3-D animated kid movie demonstrates that cartoon storytelling pitched to young people is the last, best refuge of sprightly filmmaking this hard, hot summer.

Steve Carell lays on a rich Hungarian goulash of an accent to become the voice of Gru, an overgrown brat who drives the town's biggest environmentally incorrect vehicle and plans to steal the moon.

The little girls who worm their way into his calcified heart are a sibling threesome Gru adopts only for their usefulness in his nefarious scheme -- a baroque business plan involving a ray gun that can shrink the moon to transportable proportions.

Students of celebrity voice acting may want to know that Jason Segel plays Gru's nicely obnoxious young competitor and "iCarly's" Miranda Cosgrove is the oldest of the sisters.

Students of psychology will understand that everything rotten in Gru's disposition can be traced to his impossible-to-please mama, a sour bat whose dismissive "ehhhhs" come forth from the cultured throat of Julie Andrews.

Lastly, students of cultural influences would be intrigued to know that "Despicable Me" (produced by the folks behind "Ice Age" and "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!") is an American story, from a Spanish animator's idea, fleshed out by a French animation house; no wonder a certain Euro je ne sais quoi influences the aesthetic of this charming tale of bad intentions and happy endings.

The 3-D-ness of the adventure, meanwhile, is handled with globally translatable understatement. It would be despicable to leave before the credits, where the whole 3-D craze is summed up in a well-shaped joke.

Compiled by Correspondent



"Despicable Me" stars Steve Carell as the voice of Gru.

Kathak and Rabindra Sangeet come together

KAVITA, New Delhi

Kathak dancer Monisa Nayak had reason to be pleased in the run up to her latest performance. The Sangeet Natak Academy has just awarded her the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in Kathak dance for this year. This honour was a good augury for a recent programme where she led a Kathak troupe to the accompaniment of the mellifluous Rabindra Sangeet. Bringing up the Tagore songs was

Jayati Ghosh, a chemical engineer by profession.

The evening began with "Nrityer Taaley Taaley," an offering to Natraj. The performance then moved on to the songs of *Bashanto* (spring) taken from "Bhanushingher Padaboli" -- "Gahano kumun...Aaju sakhi muhu muhu." The latter half of the evening featured songs on *Borsha* (monsoon) -- "Sawan gaganey ghor ghanaghata...Sakhi Andhare..."

"Tagore was a great believer in the cyclic nature of time -- the cycle of

creation and destruction to pave the way for new creation. So my group and I ended with the last song of the evening, where he invited everybody to join in the game to end the game -- 'Aaj khela bhangar khela khelbi aai aai...aaj khela bhangar khela,' says the talented Monisa.

The performance by Monisa and Jayati fused perfectly. Says Jayati, "Normally the choreography is compromised to meet the needs of Rabindra Sangeet and vice versa. We tried to avoid this pitfall."

Likewise, Monisa asserts: "It was certainly a challenge for me to create a coordination between the soft melody of Rabindra Sangeet and the fast rhythm of Kathak. Usually what I have seen in these kinds of experiments is that the dancers change the *laya* and speed of the songs according to the speed of the dance they want, but in doing so they break the beauty of the songs."

Explaining how she met this challenge, Monisa points out that she kept the same *taal*, melody and speed as it used to be in the respective songs and tried to merge the Kathak *bol* in the same *jaati*, the pattern in which the song is based.

This is not the first time that dancers have teamed up with Rabindra Sangeet in a performance in the Indian capital. At various points of time classical Indian dancers such as Sonal Mansingh, Yamini Krishnamurthy and Kiran Sehgal have given performances to the strains of beautiful Tagore songs -- typically rich in evocative lyrics, matching melody and rhythmic structure. Of late, renowned Odissi dancer and teacher Madhavi Mudgal choreographed Odissi and Kathak dances to blend with Tagore songs celebrating the six seasons.

Here's looking forward to more such fusion in the future.



A Kathak performance at the programme.