

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Solo Art Exhibition

Title: Open the Door
Artist: Monica Bose
Venue: Dhaka Art Centre, H-60, R-7/A, Dhanmondi
Date: July 16-26
Time: 3pm-8pm



Exhibition

To commemorate Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah's Birth Anniversary
Organiser: Bangalee Shamagra
Venue: Bangalee Shamagra Museum, Khair Mansion, 235/2, Elephant Road
Date: July 10-24
Time: 10am-8pm



Solo Sculpture Exhibition

Title: Sylvan Forms
Sculptor: Ferdousi Priyabhashini
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
Date: July 19-28
Time: 12 pm-8 pm



Solo Photography Exhibition

Title: The Life and Struggle of Garment Workers
Photographer: Taslima Akhtar
Venue: Drik Gallery, H 58, Rd 15A (new), Dhanmondi
Date: July 18-24
Time: 3-8pm



Yesterday once more...

Shabnam and Robin Ghosh reminisce on Rahman

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

"Jharna and I met for the first time on the sets of *Rajdhanir Bukey* (1958), Ehtesham's debut film. It wasn't love at first sight though. We came closer to each other gradually, as we worked together and created ripples in the film world," says Robin Ghosh, the eminent music composer of numerous blockbusters.

Robin and his beautiful wife Jharna were reminiscing on the good old days, the golden years of filmhood and memorable personalities that they had been acquainted with. Robin's wife has a larger than life image of her own. Jharna aka Shabnam was one of the leading ladies both in Bangla and Urdu films for years. Her vivaciousness, radiant beauty and superior acting skills have earned her a legendary status.

For *Rajdhanir Bukey*, Ehtesham signed Robin Ghosh as the music composer. Rahman played the hero and Talat Mehmood was chosen for the playback. Thus Robin received his first big break.

Director Ehtesham changed Jharna's name to Shabnam and offered her a major supporting role in his first Urdu film *Chanda* (1962). *Chanda*, a big hit at the box office, was Shabnam's first Urdu film as well.

The distributors were not so enthusiastic at first, as they thought that an unknown cast would not attract cine-goers. So Ehtesham opened an office in Lahore and released the film on his own. Soon *Chanda* became the talk of the town and attained a super hit status. The charm of Bangla folk-based tunes such as *Aankhiyan teri raaha niharey*, *O pardesia* and *Saaiyyan bedardi mora na jaaney* rendered by Mehdi Hasan, Anjuman Ara Begum and Ferdousi Rahman captivated the audience in both East and West Pakistan.

After the grand success of *Chanda*, Ehtesham's brother, Mustafiz cast Shabnam in the lead role in



Shabnam

his film *Talaash* (1963). The film starred Rahman in the role of the protagonist. The music was composed by none other than Robin Ghosh. Thus a superhit trio was formed that included Shabnam, Rahman and Robin. Meanwhile the intimacy between Shabnam and Robin led to their marriage in 1965. After their marriage, they moved to Karachi.

Shabnam recalls, "It was in the year 1964, while working on the sets of *Preet Na Janey Reet* in Sylhet,

we were all chatting and relaxing when Rahman came up dressed in his new outfit. We literally had to coax him to join us. Rahman was, however, in a different mood. He wanted to go to the shooting spot and show off his new getup. That evening we heard the terrible news that his jeep had been hit by a speeding truck. We rushed to the hospital where it seemed like the whole city had poured in. Sylhet Hospital was not well equipped then. Rahman lay unconscious and he needed blood immediately. It was actor Khalil's blood that matched his and later Rahman was shifted to Dhaka. After six months he was sent to London for further treatment.

"He was a born survivor," Shabnam went on. "At the apex of his popularity, Rahman lost a limb but he never even contemplated retiring from films. You see, films were his life. During shooting, he would often have difficulties, yet he never complained. We watched in awe when he managed to walk uphill in Rangamati with great effort," adds Shabnam. Rahman was very outspoken and sincere towards co-artists, besides being the centre of attention at parties, she recalls.

By the late '60s, Shabnam's professionalism and acting skills were unmatched in Pakistan. More films were released in the then West Pakistan than here. It was sometime during the mid '70s, when Rahman moved to Lahore. One fine morning he called Shabnam and said, "I'm here to make a film." "What's your budget?" asked Robin. "About 7,000 rupees," he replied. "That's not enough for a day's shoot, let alone an entire film," was Robin's reaction.

However, Rahman was determined to make the movie. Now it was Shabnam's turn to see to it that the 'golden boy of Bengal' did not return empty handed.

She and her husband chalked up a plan. Shabnam worked at Ever New Studios in Lahore, which was certainly the best in those days. She approached Agha Gul, the owner of the studio, and asked for a favour. Agha treated Shabnam like his daughter and agreed to forego the studio rent and other expenses till the final print was done. Professional musicians decided to work free of cost till the film was released. Runa Laila did the playbacks for free. The film titled *Chahat* (Longing), featured Rahman and Shabnam in the lead roles and was a huge success.

During her movie-career that spanned over 35 years, Shabnam worked with all renowned Pakistani actors. Films featuring the Shabnam-Nadeem pair are extremely popular in Pakistan to this date. However, the movies *Darshan*, *Chalo Maan Gaye*, *Chahat*, *Do Saathi*, *Dosti*, and *Milan*, where Rahman was paired with her, received accolades from both the critics and masses.

Shabnam and Robin moved to Dhaka for good in 1999. They now reside in Baridhara. Rahman lived nearby. Shabnam says, "Due to a stroke, he was bedridden and I made it a point to visit him often."

"In 1966, on Bhai Phota (a festival celebrating the bond between brothers and sisters), I was at his place and I said that having a brother would be really nice. Stretching his hand, Rahman said, 'I'm your brother, why don't you tie the rakhi around my wrist?' Since that day, he used to call me 'Piu apa'," remembers a nostalgic Shabnam.



Shabnam and Rahman in the film *Darshan*.

Natyalay Theatre Festival

Abdullah Al Mamun's "Shapath" staged



A scene from the play "Shapath".

PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Theatre troupe Natyalay arranged a three-day festival to celebrate its third anniversary, from July 21-23. The festival was held at the National Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA). On the second day of the festival, the Department of Drama and Film, BSA staged its production "Shapath". Written by renowned playwright Abdullah Al Mamun, the play was directed by Arif Haider.

"Shapath" is one of Mamun's notable works. The play was first staged on December 11, 1965 at the Bangla Academy premises. The play recounts the negative aspects of imperialism for a society through a revision of history.

In the play, the actors enacted different events and subject matter of history such as Biswa (the universe), Mahakal (time), Surjo (the Sun), Batash (air), Mitrika (the earth), Akash (the sky), Shanti (peace), Juddho (war),

Shamrajyobad (imperialism) and Uponibeshbad (colonialism).

Actors from different popular troupes joined up for the BSA production. They included Apel Arif, Momena Chowdhury and Firoz Al Mamun (Aranyak Natyadal); Tarequl Islam and Monir Ahmed (Theatre Art Unit); Ali Mahmud (Drishyapat) and Chaitali Shomaddar (Prangone Mor).

Ali Ahmed Mukul is the set designer of the play. Mohammad Jasimuddin and Tapan Sarkar respectively did light and music for the play.

The festival featured three plays by three different troupes. Organiser Natyalay staged its current production-- Rabindranath's "Daakghar"-- on the inaugural day.

Yesterday (the last day of the festival), Shubham Natyachakra from Tripura, India staged "Operation Flashlight" at the National Theatre Hall. The play has been written and directed by Shangram Guha and Shibabrata Roy.

U2's Spider-Man musical gets back on track

After months of financial woes and casting changes, rehearsals for "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark", the Broadway musical featuring songs by U2's Bono and the Edge, will finally begin on August 18, a spokesperson for the musical told the New York Times.

The \$50 million production has yet to announce details about its new premiere date, but actor/singer Reeve Carney, who will play hero Peter Parker, confirmed on his Twitter that choreography rehearsals were already underway. "I can't wait for the world to see this thing-- it's finally happening," he tweeted.

Both of the musical's marquee names, actress Evan Rachel Wood and Broadway veteran Alan Cumming (Mary Jane Watson

and the Green Goblin) left the show when "cash flow problems" pushed Turn Off the Dark off schedule.

Bono and the Edge penned original music for Turn Off the Dark, which will be directed by Julie Taymor, who previously worked with the U2 frontman in "Across the Universe". Wood also appeared in the Beatles-themed film, and earned rave reviews from Bono. "She's the greatest actor of her generation, she's the one to watch," he said. No word yet who has replaced Wood and Cumming in the musical.

The Edge described Turn Off the Dark as a blend of genres. "It touches on opera, it touches on rock n roll," he said.

Source: Rolling Stone



Spider-Man and Bono

Big B as Tagore?

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan has played the role of King Lear in director Rituparno Ghosh's celluloid adaptation "The Last Lear". But how about the actor essaying the role of Rabindranath Tagore?

Well, that could be a reality if the actor agrees to play

the role in a proposed biopic on the poet to be directed by Ujjwal Chatterjee, said The Times of India newspaper.

The film, whose script and dialogues will be written by Javed Akhtar, will deal with the last 20 years of Tagore's life till his death in 1941, said the daily.

For the Tagore film, Akhtar had first asked Chatterjee to help him and it was decided that they would make a film

out of the Nobel Laureate's novel "Shesher Kobita" with Priyanka Chopra in the role of Labonnya and Ranbir Kapoor as Amit Ray.

However, Priyanka's inability to give dates for shooting led Akhtar to do the biopic, said the newspaper. "We will see Tagore from the perspective of his son Rathindranath Tagore, his daughter-in-law Protima Tagore and C F Andrews who had worked with both Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore", Chatterjee was quoted by the daily.

Akhtar said the story for the film is being readied by Tagore scholars William Radice and Nilanjan Bandopadhyay.

He said he would begin writing the script receiving the research material from scholars working at archives in Shantiniketan and other places.

The working title of the biopic is "The Sound of Silence": derived from hugely popular album of Paul Simon and Gurfunkel, the newspaper said.

"Lafange Parinde" set for release



Deepika Padukone

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone, who plays the character of a visually impaired girl in her upcoming film "Lafange Parinde", feels this was the most challenging role of her acting career so far.

"To play a blind person when someone can see...to pretend to be blind despite having vision...is really difficult. This is by far the most challenging role of my career," Deepika said.

Deepika had to do a lot of homework to get into the skin of Pinky Palkar, a dancer who is blind but

ambitious and dances on roller skates." I observed visually impaired people... learnt how they react to surroundings... spent a lot of time with them. Also, scenes were rehearsed by being blindfolded and then re-rehearsed with eyes open to compare performances," she said.

"But for this, one needs to be focused and it requires a lot of concentration. While skating...I had hurt myself a lot and suffered bruises," she added.

Directed by Pradeep Sarkar, "Lafange Parinde", the latest offering of Yash Raj Films, stars Neil Nitin Mukesh and Deepika in lead roles and will release on August 20.

