

WHAT'S ON

Bengal-ITC SRA Classical Music Fest
Organisers: Bengal Foundation & ITC-SRA
Venue: Army Stadium, Baran, Dhaka
Date: Nov 29-Dec2

Duet Art Show
Title: Blue Mountain Scape
Venue: Shilpagan Gallery, H-7, Rd-13, New Dhammadi
Date: November 15-20
Time: 12-8pm

Int'l Theatre Festival
Organiser: Theatre Art Unit
Venue: Shilpakala Academy
Date: November 14-24
Time: 6:30pm

Solo Art Exhibition
Artist: Samir Aich
Venue: Dhaka Art Centre, Dhammadi
Date: Nov 9-19
Time: 3pm-8pm

Group Art Exhibition
Venue: Gallery Cosmos-2, New DGH, Mohakhali
Date: Nov 16-24
Time: 11am-8pm

Solo Art Exhibition
Artist: Mike Woodcock
Venue: Institute of Art and Culture, Gulshan
Date: Nov 15-30
Time: 12pm-8pm

Solo Art Exhibition
Artist: Sabrina Mouza
Venue: Bengal Art Lounge, Gulshan
Date: Nov 3-22
Time: 12pm-8pm

Television to compete for top award at Dubai film fest



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After its world premiere and coming by rave reviews at the 17th Busan International Film Festival, Mostafa Sarwar Farooki's "Television" will compete for the top award "Al Mohr" at the upcoming Dubai International Film Festival.

The film, which is about a village elder's fight against the influence of television, will compete along with 14 more films made by some recognised names from across the globe.

Farooki will attend the festival to be held from December 9 to 16 in the Gulf city.

So far, the organisers have announced a few films from the category.

They include "Valley of Saints" (USA) by Sundance winner Musa Syeed, "Ship of Theseus" (India) by Anand Gandhi and "Your Beauty is Worth Nothing" (Austria) by Hüseyin Tabak, according to international film refereed journals The Hollywood Reporter, Screen Daily, Variety and Film Business Asia.

The final 15 names will be announced on November 26.

"Television" was the curtain wrapper at the Busan fest, an honour previously earned by some of Asia's most acclaimed directors including Hong Kong's Wong Kar-Wai in 2000 with "In the Mood for Love" and China's Zhang Yimou with "Not One Less" in 1999.

"Television" is a collaborative venture of Chobial, Star Cineplex and German production house Mogador Film. Anisul Haq and Farooki jointly penned the script. The film has Shaheer Huda, Mosharraf Karim, Nurat Imroz Tisha and Chanchal Chowdhury in starring roles.

Bangla flavours the Bard

VEEJAY SAI

The Ranga Shankara annual theatre festival 2012 this year celebrated the eternal Bard of theatre: the legacy of Shakespeare. With plays in eight languages, from the famous Globe to Globe component, for the first time Shakespeare was reinterpreted with far more festivity than his own natives would have done it. The Dhaka Theatre from Bangladesh took audiences by storm with their colourful and lively adaptation of "The Tempest", directed by Nasiruddin Yousuff.

"The Tempest" as legend goes was supposed to be Shakespeare's last play. Dhaka Theatre's adaptation in Bengali saw a far more enjoyable adaptation of the play. An eager, packed hall of audiences sat in rapt attention from the very go with the sheer visual delight of the simple yet elegant set it erected. The backdrop was painted in masts of a wrecked ship with an image of the mythical Al Buraq prominent, all set to take viewers on yet another magical ride. Metal trunks painted in bright calendar art (from Hanuman carrying the Sanjeevani mountain to sceneries to horses) forming a wall had the audience in eager anticipation of what was to unfold on stage.

The story needs no introduction or elaboration. As the characters came on stage to pick their respective trunks and return to their position at the far end of the stage, the play began with the blowing of a holy conch, almost beckoning the opening of a war sequence, a metaphor for the shipwreck from which King Alonso and his fellow travellers land on Prospero's island. Prospero (brilliantly performed by Rubol Lodi) struts around on his toes like a ballet dancer, creating a slow dizzy effect as he orders his loyal magical spirit Ariel (once again brilliantly performed by a sweet-throated Shimul Yousuf). Who would have



Rubol Noor Lodi as Prospero at the Global Shakespeare Fest in the UK earlier this year.

thought a woman could perform the role of Ariel so well? With her other spir- its, they created magic and how! Manipuri resounded in the theatre as drummers Nila Moni Singha and Bidhan Singha flipped in circles on the stage. A few roles like that of Miranda (per- formed by Esha Yousuf), who ought to have been a more suave princess did not come forth in the characterization. Even Trinucleo (by Saimum Jahan Dola)

remained unconvincing in patches but was balanced out by her dialogue with Caliban (a robust-voiced Chandan Chowdhury). But most of the casting did justice to what their characters demanded. The Bard wouldn't have expected to see this kind of south Asian aesthetic in the most remote of his fan- ciful imagination, beyond the barriers of language and theatrical structures.

All the actors were also excellent

singers and this facet enhanced the production to a different level. In most South Asian theatre traditions and per- formance practices, music, dance and theatre aren't separated as they are in the western world. Utilising this quality, director Nasiruddin Yousuff explored the script in good detail to inculcate as much as possible.

As the story proceeds, we get to see a wealth of south Asian and eastern cul- tural traditions from Bangladesh. From poems by Tagore to Bhatiyali boat songs, from softly sung melodious raags to attractive costumes, from gamchas to ghungroos, Palagaan to Manipuri Naatpala traditions, dhols to turbans, the play comes alive as never before, as opposed to the dark and intense European versions of it. Pushing the Bard's supposedly inaccessible language over its edges, "The Tempest" presented by Dhaka Theatre recreated a different kind of magic, just apt for the cultural context to where they belong. A revela- tion was the young and talented Rubayet Ahmed, whose pen translated this arduous script into the confines of the sweetness of the Bengali language. Without a doubt, he can be counted among the next generation theatre pro- fessionals, and someone to look out for, from Bangladesh.

All in all, the play was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and probably one of the finest interpretations of the play one could watch. On a standing ovation from a packed hall, ending on an emo- tional note when the director reminded everyone of the support India provided during the 1971 war, a new bond of friendship was forged. For art sees no boundaries and artistes are global citi- zens with no nationalities to hold them and this point couldn't have been better put across.

A civilisation and its culture are evalu- ated by later generations through the traces left behind over a period of time. The Indian culture has expressed its best in philosophy, music and architecture. They all combined to define a set of values in life. The classical music or rather the classi- cal music system of North India has sup- posedly evolved out of an earlier music system of India. It is claimed to be still in existence in the South.

The Muslims, once they established themselves in the sub-continent from around the 12th century, took up the music

Veeyaj Sai is a well-known award-winning writer, editor and a culture critic.



ALIMUR RAHMAN KHAN

The Bengal Foundation and the ITC-SRA together are organising a grand music confer- ence in Bangladesh. Many well-known ar- tistes are coming from India and it is also perhaps going to include a great dance per- sonality like Birju Maharaj. It is expected that classical artistes from Bangladesh will get some chance to bloom in the company of the senior artistes from India.

The conference is to begin from the 29 Nov. and continue till December 2, in Dhaka. The sponsors should consider hav- ing small concerts in places like Chittagong, Mymensingh and Rajshahi also. These could be one-day programmes if the need be. These are places whose names are well-installed in the records of the history of classical music in Eastern India at least from the second half of the 19th century. There could be still a few listeners who should be honoured; perhaps the dying embers will ignite again.

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Nurturing the legacy of classical music

Celebration of melodies around the corner

of India seriously. The best of music till then was restricted, more or less, to the temples and was considered sacred from a religious point of view. The Muslims man- aged to bring it out of this framework, without being sacrilegious. They managed to secularise it without vulgarisation. They combined this music with whatever they could bring from the music of Central Asia, which in turn was influenced by the Per- sian and mainly Arabian music. The result altogether was charming.

During the early days, there were some conflicts regarding allowing music to flour- ish in the 'Dar-ul-Islam' (as it was consid- ered by the Muslims) but in the 13th cen- tury it was well-established through the intervention of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and his disciple Amir Khusru. Thereon the symbiosis of the two cultures bloomed in several ways, one of the best being through music. This is what is now the classical music of North India stretching from Kabul to Gauhati and Kashmir to Hyderabad including Maharashtra.

The North Indian Music system is based on Raagas. A raag is a musical expression of a stable modal pattern expressed through sound and rhythm. It is comparable to a painting where sound is used for colours, the raag being the theme of the picture. Various schools or "gharanas" are free to use their own methods to express the final product. With improvement in communi- cation, the gharanas do influence each other and are in turn influenced by them. There is no harm if it is done carefully and efficiently.

Cultural activities do not necessarily

establish culture in a society. Many activi- ties and efforts are needed to integrate it into becoming a culture. An isolated grand music conference will not integrate in the culture. It has to become a charcha. It has to be followed up with many activities and efforts as mentioned above.

In this connection a few suggestions are laid down below.

1. This should not be a one-time affair. It should be repeated annually and also small conferences should be held on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

2. There still exist in the country some avid listeners, people who appreciate this art fully and wholly. They are limited by age, financial constraints and absence of quality performers. However, a kind of revival of this art is also taking place. A younger group of people is coming in that fold but they have constraints too. These are financial constraints and absence or lack of quality performers. The music has to be taken to doorsteps of these new lis- teners, as far as possible.

3. Universities and their students should be brought into the fold of listeners. They should be wooed if necessary.

4. Newspapers, television and other media as well as a word-of-mouth diffusion of information have to be explored. More so, after the conference, the glow of it should be continued through the media by several follow-ups of parts of the programme and several articles should appear in the papers from time to time.

5. Several concerts should be arranged in private houses, with a kind of an open invitation to listeners.

6. Smaller concerts should be held simultaneously, if possible, in towns like Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Chittagong; there are listeners there.

7. Seminars should be held in Dhaka and in Kolkata, to start with so that the movement continues.

Before closing, a quotation from Imam Gazzali as he puts it in his Ihya-ulum-Udeen may not be inappropriate. Speaking about music he says (quoting from mem- ory) "...in the hearts of people there are caves which are filled with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other precious stones but there is also the presence of inferior stones even coal and ashes from burnt coals. To reach the heart one has to go through the portals of the ears with the help of music....but music cannot bring out what is not there.... This is a very sig- nificant and profound statement.

Other such statements are attributed to Al- Gazzali and even to Shihabuddin Shurawardi, but this is not the place for these discussions.

Our classical music is well-suited for the purpose of extracting the hidden jewels which lie dormant in the hearts of the peo- ple but it cannot draw out what is not there. This therefore draws readers to another area. It is the potentiality of the North Indian Classical music towards con- tributing to the uplift of the general moral and culture of a society.

There is much to be said but that has to be for another day and another time. This is enough for this day.

Alimur Rahman Khan is a connoisseur of music.

70 years of Martin Scorsese

ABAK HUSSAIN

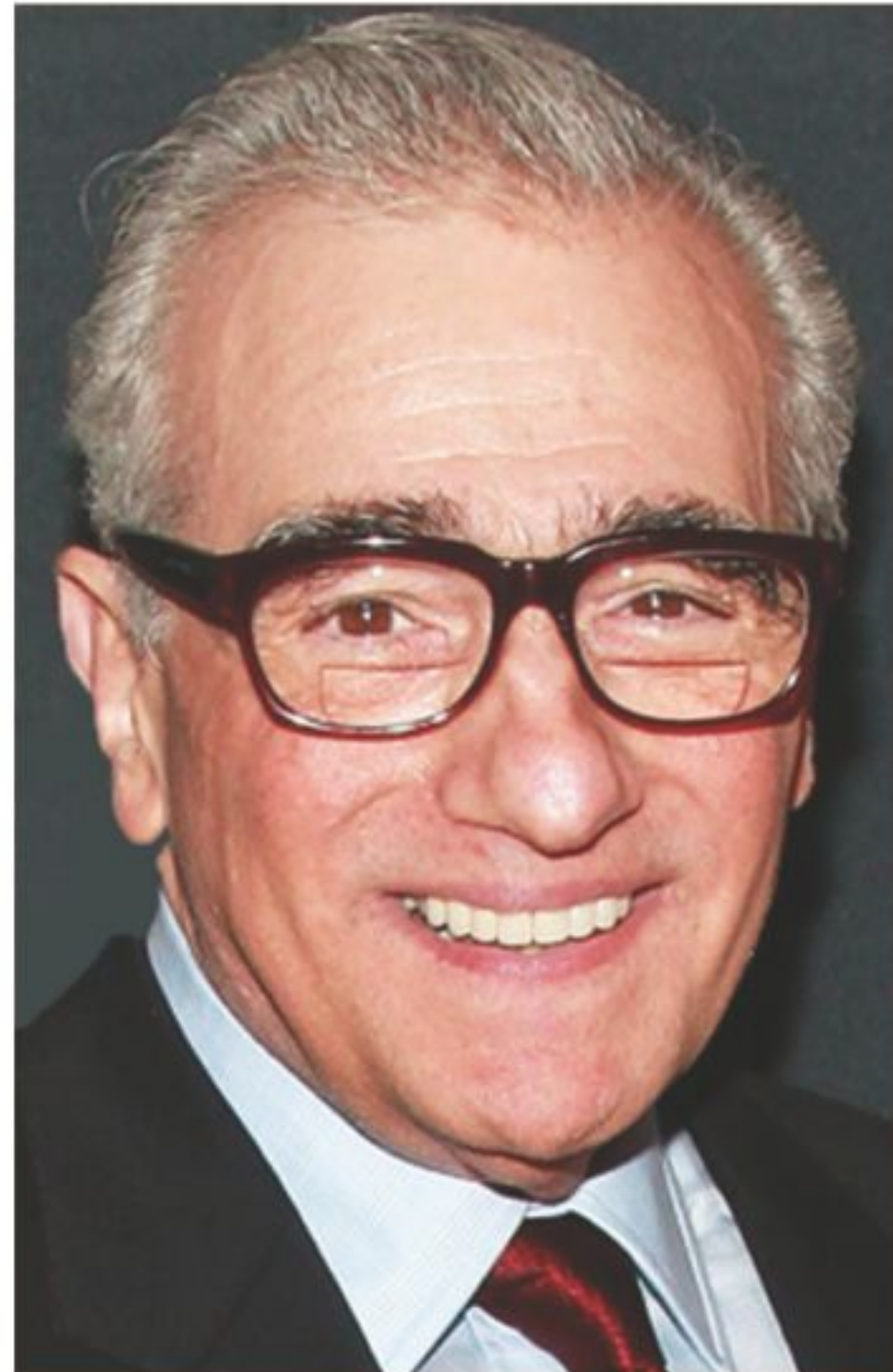
November 17 was the 70th birthday of one of America's greatest living film directors, Martin Scorsese. He has been making feature films for 45 years, and continues to do so today. Hailed as a living legend for decades now, Scorsese does not rest on his laurels like some of his contemporaries, but continues to work in new directions. He still wants to experiment, learn and grow, get better.

Martin Scorsese was born in Queens in 1942 to Italian parents Charles and Catherine Scorsese. You can get a closer look at his par- ents in Scorsese's 1974 documentary "Italianamerican". A film as simple as it gets, it shows his parents sitting around the dinner table, talking about their background. Look closely at the body language and dynamic of his parents and you will see how this is chan- neled in some of his later films, particularly "Goodfellas", where Catherine Scorsese plays the mother of the psychopathic Tommy and all she cares about is making something for the boys to eat, like Italian mothers everywhere.

Unlike his contemporary and friend Steven Spielberg, Scorsese keeps his work grounded in his life and reality; he himself has admitted that his movies are his life. The reel is indis- tinguishable from real. Watch any Scorsese inter- view; he peppers his conversation with refer- ences to movies. James Lipton asked him where his parents were from, and he replied that his father was from Palermo, and quickly mentioned the work of Italian filmmaker Visconti as a frame of reference. That's how deeply connected he is to movies.

His feature film career started in 1967 with the release of "Who's that Knocking at My Door?": The film is not perfect and Scorsese was only 25 at the time, but it is a very interest- ing first film that touches on all the themes that would return in his career later, in his more mature work- Catholicism, machismo, Italian-American culture, New York, guilt, redemption, violence. His technical hallmarks were also in place- quick editing, show-off camera shots and a rock and roll soundtrack. Rock soundtracks are common nowadays, but quite possibly Scorsese did it first.

After making "Boxcar Bertha" as a hired hand for Roger Corman, Scorsese moved back to his personal roots and made his first great film. "Mean Streets" gave him his reputation as a maker of "gangster movies", and also began his long collaboration with Robert De Niro, an actor with whom he seems to have a nearly psychic connection. If "Mean Streets" was his first great film, 1976 saw his first masterpiece-



"Taxi Driver". A nightmarish film about an alienated weirdo, "Taxi Driver" that resonated deeply with the American psyche, had some of the most memorable lines ("You talkin' to me?"), and continues to be voted as one of the best films of all time. It picked up the Palme D'Or at Cannes but was snubbed at the Oscars, the first of many snubs Scorsese would get in the years to come.

In 1980 he made his second masterpiece, "Raging Bull", a biopic of middleweight boxer Jake LaMotta. Shot in gritty black and white, it features a devastating performance from Robert De Niro who picked up his second Oscar for it. Appreciation for "Raging Bull" increased over the years and is widely hailed as the best film of the eighties. Throughout the rest of the eighties though, Scorsese continued to make good movies but critical reactions were mixed. "The King of Comedy" was too emotionally barren, some complained. "The Color of Money" was too commercial, critics said. "The Last Temptation of Christ", a project close to Scorsese's heart, confused viewers, bored those uninterested in religion and offended traditional Christians due to its depiction of Jesus as a human being with flaws.

In 1990, Scorsese returned to form with his third masterpiece, securing his place in the pantheon of American film legends. Like "Mean Streets", it was a film about Italian gang- sters in New York, but its technical mastery went to dazzling new heights. The film was

called "Goodfellas" and it is acknowledged today to be one of the two seminal gangster films of our era, along with Francis Ford Coppola's "The Godfather". The rest of the nineties was OK for Scorsese. He made some thematic departures with "The Age of Inno- cence" and "Kundun" but was on familiar turf with Casino- a film consistently underrated by critics due to its similarities with "Goodfellas".

The new millennium saw Scorsese partner up with a new actor, his "new DeNiro" some might say- Leonardo DiCaprio. This was a sur- prise to some. Leo, who had until then been a heartthrob with a pretty face known for roles like Romeo and Jack from "Titanic", was forged into a serious actor. He got bloody and brutal in "Gangs of New York" and "The Departed", the latter finally winning the Oscar for best picture and best director. "The Aviator" and "Shutter Island" also revealed Leo's acting chops in depicting, like so many Scorsese protagonists, a man's descent into insanity.

Last year Scorsese did something he had never done before in his long career. He made a children's film- "Hugo". Not only that, he filmed it on 3D, a medium often disparaged as a gim- mick to raise ticket prices at the multiplexes. And yet, at age 69, Scorsese learnt a new tech- nology, abandoned his allegiance to film as opposed to digital, and made a film about tech- nology, magic and yes, movies. No less an authority than James Cameron said it was the best use of 3D he had ever seen.

Martin Scorsese has had an astonishing career. He has made 22 feature films as well as many documentaries, short films, and TV projects. He has educated the world about the power of films and has infected many with his own passion. He has been in the forefront of film preservation and he contin- ues to teach us to respect the past with his Film Foundation, as he realizes that without pioneers like Georges Melies and DW Griffith, there would be no Orson Welles or Stanley Kubrick, and maybe no Martin Scorsese. His humility is one of his most amazing qualities; he gets fidgety when someone calls him a master. He is still learning. Right now, he is busy filming "The Wolf of Wall Street" with Leonardo DiCaprio in the lead again, hope- fully to be released next year.

While it is great to look back at his older works and marvel, it is more exciting to look forward to what is yet to come. I would like to congratulate him on reach- ing 70 and thank him for the work he has given us, for making our movies and our world so much richer.

The Legend Singer-Channel i Awards

A CORRESPONDENT

Singer-Channel i Bravery Award: Kingbodonti was held at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Center on Wednesday, for the second time. The presence of eminent social personalities adorned the event. Musical and dance perfor- mances were also showcased, beside the awarding ceremony.

Organisers said the awards were given to Bangladeshis who self- effacingly set examples of bravery -- to acknowledge, honour and inspire them.

Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed was recognised with the Lifetime Legend

Award for his movement of "enlight- ening" the country. Faridur Reza Sagor on behalf of Channel i, and managing director of Singer Bangladesh limited, Hamim Rahmatullah handed him the crest. Apart from that, Lucky Akhtar picked up the award in the "Fearless legend category", while policeman Babul Akhtar received the award in the "Bold legend category".

Ayesha received the "Limitless within Bounds" legend category, while Fule Ara was awarded the "Persever- ance legend award" for helping people in remote areas with healthcare. Legends of current times were sought from all parts of the country, and from among 2,500 applicants,

eight people were nominated in four categories by a jury board consisting of eminent personalities.

The winners were handed checks and crests, respectively by Shaikh Shiraj, illusionist Jewel Aich, Faridur Reza Sagor and Singer authorities.

The programme was hosted by actor and BFDC's managing director Pijush Bandopadhyay, and directed by Taher Shipon.

Musical performances at the programme included songs by Rezwana Chowdhury Bonya, Mahmuduzzaman Babu and Shurer Dhara group, while model Anika Kabir Shokh, and Waseq and his group also gave dance performances.



Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed(4-R) with the award recipients.

Different colours, different presentations

Theatre Art Unit's 20th anniversary fest in full swing

JAMIL MAHMUD

The 10-day International Theatre Festival mark- ing Theatre Art Unit's 20th anniversary began at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, on November 14. Over the first four days, eight plays were staged at the National Theatre Hall and Experimental Theatre Hall, while each evening also featured either brief traditional theatrical or musical presentations in front of the National Theatre Hall.

The organisers have invited five overseas troupes (four from India and one from Nepal). Fourteen local troupes have been presenting as many plays. They together add different colours to the festival, in a sense, with different theatrical presentations.

On the first day, Theatre (Bailey Road) and Indian troupe Swapnobhumi staged their plays "Payer Awaj Pawa Jae" and "Macbeth" respec- tively at the Experimental Theatre Hall and National Theatre Hall.

The lyrical drama "Payer Awaj Pawa Jae" had the everlasting appeal that once again reminded us about the trial of war criminals. The play aptly articulates the dangers of ignorance and the misuse of religion for devious ends. Sudip Chakraborty re-designed the play recently.

The Swapnobhumi play had a colourful and expensive set to depict the classic story of rage



Bhopal based Indian troupe Rang Bidushak stage "Sidhi dar Sidhi urf Tukke pe Tukka" at the festival.

PHOTO: JAMIL MAHMUD

and revenge. The play has been adapted by Ujjal Chattopadhyay, while Kaushik Sen has directed it.

The over two-hour-long play had an impact on the audience. However, the Kolkata based troupe could not overlap its neighbouring troupe Rang Bidushak (from Bhopal) in presenting a vibrant performance.

The troupe led by celebrated director Bansi Kaul presented two plays-- "Sawdagar" and

"Sidhi dar Sidhi urf Tukke pe Tukka"-- at the National Theatre Hall, on November 16 and 17. Directed by Kaul, both the plays were colourful. The director chose to go for some acrobatic skills. With clown costumes and heavily painted faces the actors created an aura of amusement, though according to the director the underlying message and social satire was not lost altogether.

The last three days saw the staging of three local plays-- "Mahajoner Nao", "Raraang" and

"Aroj Charitamrita" at the Experimental Theatre Hall. All the plays, respectively staged by Subachan, Aranyak and Natya Kendra, had folk elements and more than that our cultural ele- ments were very much apparent.

Information Minister Hasanul Haque Inu for- mally inaugurated the festival. Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran was the special guest. Among others, Ramendu Majumdar, ITI world- wide president; Liaquat Ali Lucky, director general, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy; veteran theatre personalities Ataur Rahman and Mamunur Rashid and Bansi Kaul spoke at the inaugural.

Rokeya Rafique Baby, chairperson of TAU and convener of the festival, presided over the inau- gural.

The organisers awarded noted playwright Syed Shamsul Haq and Indian director Bivash Chakraborty for their contributions.

Prior to the staging of the play, members of Theatre Art Unit staged a group dance with the theme song of the festival. The festive atmo- sphere in and outside the National Theatre Hall attained a fullness with banners, posters and feasts.

As the festival steps into its sixth day today, Indian troupe Writik and local troupe Prachyanat will stage "Shesh Rakha" and "Raja...ebong Onnanoy".

The festival will end on November 24.