

## WHAT'S ON

BENGAL ITC SRA CLASSICAL MUSIC FESTIVAL 2012  
New Hope for Traditional Music

AZAD RAHMAN

Bengal-ITC SRA Classical Music Fest  
Organisers: Bengal Foundation & ITC-SRA  
Venue: Army Stadium, Banan, Dhaka  
Date: Nov 29-2012

Print Exhibition  
Title: Chapai Chobi-1  
Venue: Galleri Kaya, H-20, R-16,  
Sector 4, Uttara  
Date: November 24-December 4  
Time: 11am-7:30pm

Group Art Exhibition  
Title: In Search of Roots-2  
Venue: Zainul Gallery, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka  
Date: November 24-30  
Time: 10am-8pm

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

Rooted Creativity-11  
Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dhamrai  
Date: Nov 26-Dec 5  
Time: 12pm-8pm

15th Asian Art Biennale  
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segunbagicha  
Date: December 1-31  
Time: 11am-8pm

Solo Art Exhibition  
Title: Sonangan  
Artist: Prophanta Karmakar Budhi  
Venue: Nordic Club, Gulshan-2  
Date: Nov 21-27  
Time: 9am-7pm

Group Art Exhibition  
Title: Senses-7, H 60, Rd 7A,  
Dhanmondi  
Venue: Dhaka Art Center,  
Date: December 1-10  
Time: 3-8pm

classes in schools, colleges and universities -- while music institutions are also operating, which produce a number of graduates of various levels every year. Aside from that, many are returning home after completing training or degrees on music from India and Indian universities. Why then, do people think there are no classical musicians in the country?

From personal experience, I am saddened and worried about one thing. Everyone appreciates classical music. Acclaimed artistes from India's SRA (Sangeet Research Academy) -- Vidusha Girija Devi, Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Pandit Birju Maharaj, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Ustad Rashid Khan, Pandit Ulfah Kashalkar, Ustad Mashkoor Ali Khan, Pandit Rajan Mishra, Pandit Sajjan Mishra, Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan, Alarman Valli, Buddhadeb Dasgupta and others -- will come to Dhaka for the festival, while grandson of Ustad Allauddin Khan's brother Ayet Ali Khan, sarodiy Ustad Shahdad Hossain Khan, Dhaka University teacher and vocal specialist Priyanka Gope, and eminent sitarist Alif Laila will also participate representing Bangladesh at the festival.

Festivals like this are very important for the development of classical music. I thank all those involved with the initiative, and I am sure they will be highly praised for providing all listeners, experts and followers of classical music with this welcome opportunity.

According to a report published in the daily Prothom Alo on September 28, the festival would be held every year, while a festival featuring Bangla music will also be held at Kolkata's ITC Sangeet Research Academy, where nearly 50 Bangladeshi artistes will take part. This is very encouraging news for me.

While raga-based music has its rules and restrictions, it also has limitless liberty. The same raga can be presented differently, according to the artiste's skills. Even the same artiste may sing the same raga differently at different times. Due to this characteristic, raga-based music is always alive, and a festival like this provides a massive opportunity for all music lovers to enjoy the performances of such stalwarts.

Music education has become more accessible in present times, with music

been able to make permanent place in their minds for classical music. Most artistes who had received extended classical training are disappointed and frustrated today, being sidelined by singers of more popular genres.

Bengal ITC-SRA Classical Music Festival is a beacon of hope for all of us patrons of classical music. I believe it can benefit classical artistes from both Bangladesh and India.

If we want to get our desired results from the festival, we have to ferret the talents who have taken classical music training, or are currently learning, those who have potential and the willingness to continue with classical music. We have to evaluate their talents and help them earn a livelihood.

As per norm, whenever artistes from multiple countries perform at a festival, artistes of the host country perform in their own language first. Since after a long hiatus a joint India-Bangladesh classical music festival is being held, a group or solo performance of a Bangla Dhrupad or Bangla Khayal to begin the festival would be very nice. I would expect that the festival begins with a Bangla classical piece, and I believe it would be honorable for both countries.

Our mother tongue is Bangla, and so is our state language. All the major movements this country has gone through -- be it the Language Movement, or the Liberation War -- centred on our language. I have been composing and practicing Bangla Khayal and classical music, along with young and veteran musicians alike. I am overwhelmed with the support and appreciation I have got, and I am privileged that many artistes, at home and abroad, are performing music written by me.

It would also have been great if the cultural reporters of our media could be brought together for a workshop before the festival. There is often misinformation in the newspapers, when ghazal artistes termed as dhrupad artistes or a dhrupad singer being termed as khayal singer. Misinformation is a matter of embarrassment, and I believe a cultural reporters' workshop is very important for proper coverage of future classical music programmes.

The writer is eminent music director-composer and exponent of classical music.

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