

WHAT'S ON

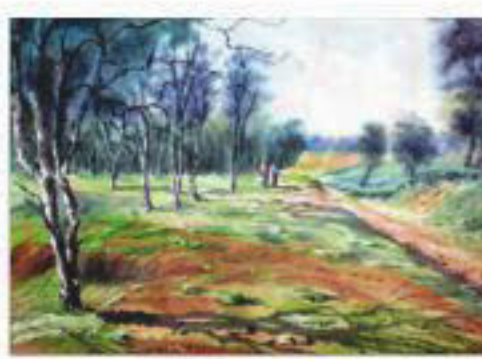
**Group Print Exhibition**  
Venue: Gallery Chittrak, R-6, H-4, Dhanmondi  
Date: July 28-August 3  
Time: 10am-8pm



**Group Print Exhibition**  
Title: Under Pressure  
Venue: Bengal Art Lounge, Gulshan-1  
Date: July 5-August 10  
Time: 12pm-8pm



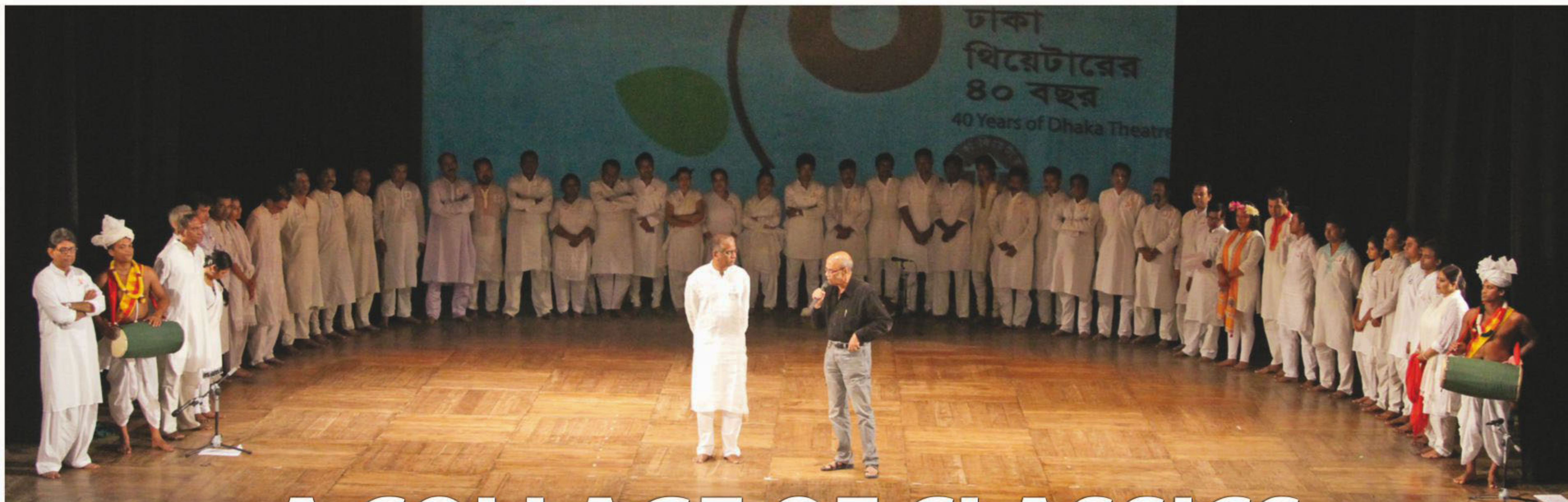
**Group Exhibition**  
Title: Finding A Voice  
Venue: Athena Gallery of Fine Arts, Cha-72/1/D, Progoti Shorani, Uttara Badda  
Date: July 5-31



**Solo Sculpture Exhibition**  
Title: Shekor-er Gaan  
Artist: Samiran Dutt  
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery, H-7, R-13, Dhanmondi  
Date: July 29-August 10



**Film Screening**  
Title: World Best Comedy Film Show  
Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
Venue: International Digital Cultural Archive, BSA  
Date: July 22-31; Time: 7:30pm



# A COLLAGE OF CLASSICS

## Dhaka Theatre walks down memory lane

FAHMIM FERDOUS

"Dhaka Theatre" was aptly named when it was founded 40 years ago by a group of young, spirited cultural activists with a dream to bring something new to the table. Today the name has become immensely close to the hearts of anyone who has followed the theatre scene of Dhaka. And not just here in Bangladesh, the troupe has taken their productions to the international arena as well, performing on some of the most prestigious stages across the globe. The troupe also claims the bragging rights of producing some of the finest artistes of the country whose works have transcended the stage and blossomed on television and film as well; the likes of Raisul Islam Asad, Humayun Faridee, Pijush Bandhyopadhyay, Afzal Hossain, Subarna Mustafa, Shahiduzzaman Selim and Shomi Kaiser have belonged to and enthralled audiences for years on the stage of Dhaka Theatre.

So it would come as no surprise that the 40-year celebration of the troupe will be graced by the presence of some of the stalwarts of the country's theatre arena, and a packed house at the National Theatre Hall of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on Monday was treated to glimpses of the best of the troupe's productions, in chronological order. Dressed in all white seated in a semi-circle at the edge of the stage were the current and former members, and as articulated narrations walked the audi-

ence through the glorious history of the troupe, pieces of some of their most acclaimed productions were staged.

Beginning with their 1973 production "Shongbad Cartoon", scenes from "Jaundice O Bibidho Balloon", "Muntasir" (originally titled "Muntasir Fantasy"), "Shakuntala", "Kirtonkhola", "Keramot Mongol", "Hat-Hodai", "Chaka", "Joiboti Konya'r Mon", "Bonopangshul", "Prachyo", "Nimojjon", "Dhaboman" and "The Tempest" were brought alive by veterans and current artistes alike.

But they were not just pieces from plays; on one end, they were a timeline of the troupe's evolution -- showing the various styles they adopted, the experiments they did and how they became what they were, and in a bigger picture, showed how Dhaka's theatre culture itself has blossomed since Independence till now. Striking instances of the various genres -- starting from satire to surrealism to their very own genre of narrative "Kotha-Natyo", from vastly experimental pieces to the classical textbook formats that the troupe's playwright -- the eminent Selim Al Deen -- had explored, were all brought together. Add to that the imposing presence on stage of the likes of Raisul Islam Asad, Shimul Yousuf, Afzal Hossain, Shahiduzzaman Selim, Apurbo Majumdar, Saifudin Ahmed Dulal, Shomi Kaiser and Rosy Siddiqui -- playing out some of the most special characters of their career, and you have the perfect recipe for a theatre connoisseur's all-you-can-experience buffet.

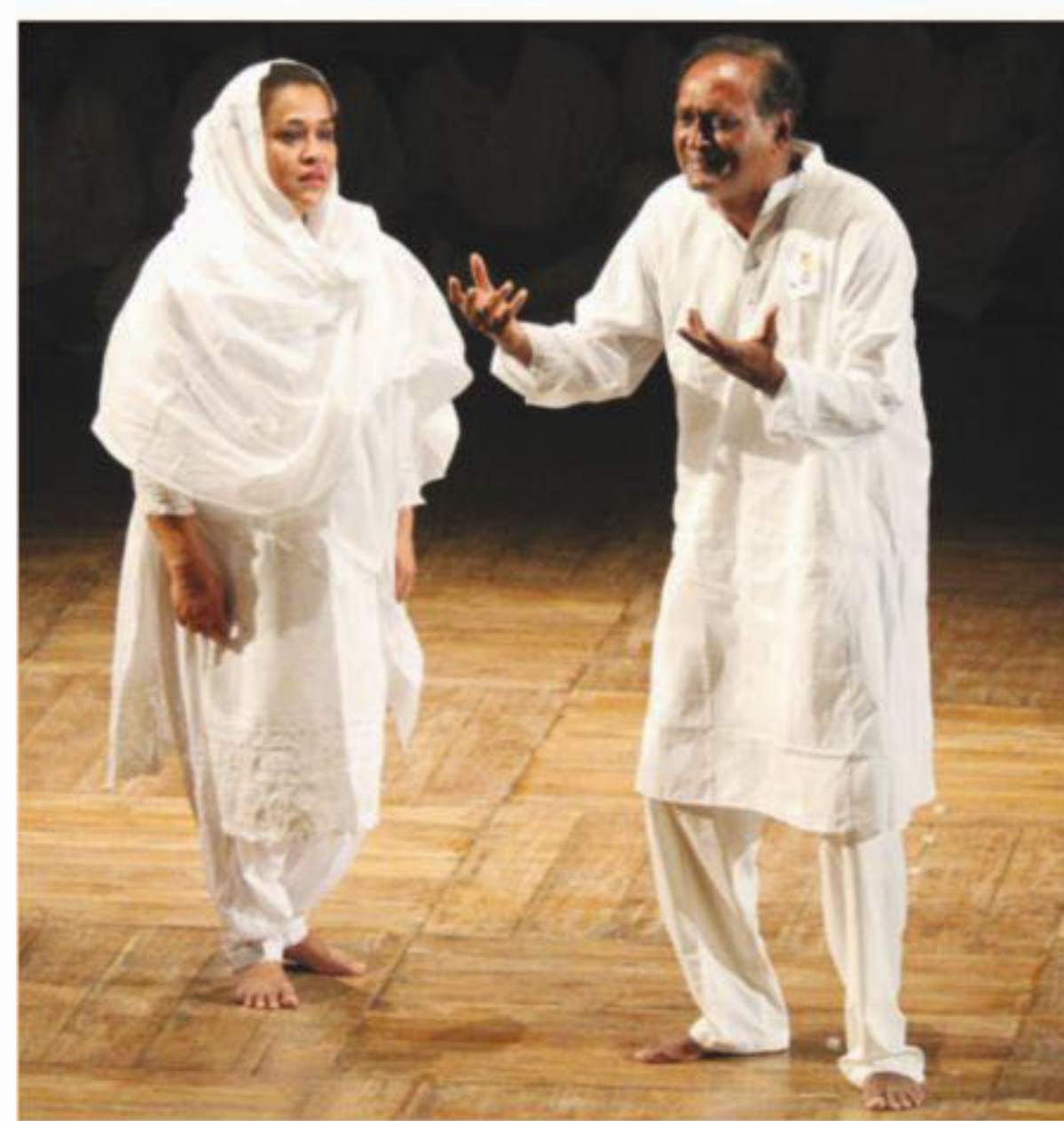


PHOTO: ATL AAKASH

Forty years down the line, Dhaka Theatre has the rare distinction of having produced some of the best artistes in the country: standing tall on stage are Raisul Islam Asad, Shimul Yousuf, Afzal Hossain, Shomi Kaiser and Rosy Siddiqui, among others. Syed Shamsul Haque delivers the welcome address. Beside him is Nasiruddin Yousuff, director and organiser of Dhaka Theatre.

## It's True!

US folk-country singer-songwriter Joan Baez remained a socially and politically aware persona through most of her career. In 1971 at the iconic "Concert For Bangladesh" at the Madison Square Garden, she wrote and performed "The Story of Bangladesh", based on the Pakistan Army crackdown on unarmed sleeping Bengali students at Dhaka University on March 25, 1971. Baez also played a significant role in the 1985 "Live Aid" concert for African famine relief in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has toured on behalf of many other causes, including Amnesty International's 1986 "A Conspiracy of Hope" tour and a guest spot on their subsequent "Human Rights Now!" tour.



## A cut above the rest Fifteen celebrated artists display their works



Serigraphs by Monirul Islam and Suhas Roy.

FAYZA HAQ

Silk screen is a type of graphic art, says Monirul Islam, of Spain fame, one of the 15 celebrated artists, whose works are on display at a week long exhibition at Chittrak. Sometimes his drawing appears like a horse, and at times, it appears like the wind. "The artist offers an image, and the art lover uses his imagination to interpret whatever he fancies," says Monir. Normally he uses colour, but here he has used black and white, which personally appeals to him because of its dramatic effect. The composition and tonal variation has a universal appeal.

"Line also has a language," Monir says. Tension and nervousness can be read in the lines, says the artist. This is very different from the work he has done earlier. Thus it is easy to communicate with India from Bangladesh. It is like films, where there is one main actor and other supporting actors. If Monir uses lines, he stresses on lines for effect, says the artist himself.

Shahabuddin Ahmed, says Moinuddin Khalid, the famous art critic, has here used serigraph, which is important in the print-making process. Serigraph is like a screen print. There are two artists from Bangladesh and 13 from India, says the critic. Shahabuddin deals with force. He has brought in a bull with horns and hooves. One sees the legs. There are two types of treatment that makes the force visible, we see the face and the horns, the hind legs are out of focus. Black and gray are used in the print.

Jaya Ganguly has brought in the distortion of a face. The face relates to expressionism--but there are other elements like arrows and nails. One can make out the details, such as the tongue and the nose.

Squiggles enter the composition pertaining to life around us. Sunil Das, from Kolkata is famous for painting different types of horses. Here the steed appears to be dancing, and snorting at the same time--as if it were a circus horse. The front hoofs are in the air. It is in gray and black. The eyes are focused to the front.

Amitabh Banerjee has two figures--in a nightmarish conception of a male and female element. They appear to be balanced on a see-saw like element. This is to illustrate speed or a mood.

Joysree Chakravorty portrays a bird. This wild bird has a long tail and beak. Around it are squiggles. There are also dots in white, around it. The bird appears to be pecking at something. The piece is in black and white.

Dilip Renata presents a fantasy. There is a westernised doctor with a suit and bowler hat. The patient is dressed as any local Indian. They both carry a bunch of flowers. There is an earthenware vessel in between. There are medical science elements, as Moinuddin Khalid puts it. The piece is called "Duet".

"The Nude" is by Kashinath Salva. The minimal lines of the figure drawing shows the back of a beautiful woman. Her fingers, knees and backbone have been delineated with care and harmony.

Other artists of repute such as Sudhir Patwardha, depicts a farmer with his master strokes. Samir Aich portrays a breathing dragon.

Suhas Roy's portrait captures a remarkable face with eloquent features and a massive bunch of curly hair.

Ganesh Haloi with his abstract landscape speaks for the dignity of each piece in the exhibit.



Boutique Empress at Banani, is known for its exclusivity be it signature long kameez, clutches, bags or shoes. This Eid, Empress has a whole new range for shoppers: elaborate salwar kameez that set a trend in the fashion scene. The long, flowing silhouette coupled with exquisite embroidery and sequin work promises a perfect synergy between the drama of a sari and the elegance and convenience of a kameez.

## Ranjana Gauhar presents "Ksheer Sagar" Odissi ode to the ocean

KAVITA, New Delhi

Renowned Odissi dancer and exponent Ranjana Gauhar's "Ksheer Sagar--The Might of the Ocean" was staged recently in Delhi. The dance production wove together two mythological stories: "Chandrabhaga" and "Matsya Avatar", both with the ocean as backdrop.

In the first production, innocent Chandrabhaga, daughter of the ocean, is a hapless pawn in a wager between the Sun God Surya and God of Love Kamdev, who try to win her hand in an attempt to prove their might. When Surya's attentions prove too much, the traumatised Chandrabhaga prefers to jump to her death in the ocean. "The gods are also revealed to be fallible," says choreographer-dancer-writer, filmmaker Ranjana who played a graceful Chandrabhaga and conceived the story.

The mythological story of Chandrabhaga lives on. The area around Chandrabhaga beach, located east of the famous sun temple of Konark, Odisha is a sacred site even today.

"Chandrabhaga" was performed by the students of Utsav-Ranjana's Dance Academy. The production combined the lyrical grace of Odissi with the strong martial moves of Chhau dance. If one couldn't take one's eyes off the delicate footwork of the Odissi dancers, neither could one resist the prowess of the two Chhau dancers who took on the roles of Surya and Kamdev.

"Matsya Avatar" is an episode drawn from Indian mythology. Here the focus was on the first avatar of Lord Vishnu, the preserver, who was supposed to have been incarnated 10 times over. "The underlying meaning was the importance of environmental preservation and saving nature," says Ranjana.

Transforming the complex tale of "Matsya Avatar" into the medium of dance, is a feat. But then Ranjana's is a powerful force in the world of dance as winner of the Padma Shri and Sangeet Natak Akademi award.

Apart from the aesthetics of dance, she underscores her productions with live issues such as gender and environment.



A scene from Ranjana Gauhar's 'Matsya Avatar'