

WHAT'S ON

Bengal Classical Music Festival

Organiser: Bengal Foundation

Venue: Army Stadium, Dhaka

Date: Nov 28- Dec 1

Time: 5:30pm-5am



Musical Soiree

Artist: Tapan Chowdhury

Venue: Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, H-35, R-24, Gulshan 1

Date: Nov 30

Time: 6:30pm



Group Exhibition

Title: Very Graphic: The Art of Storytelling in Graphic Detail

Venue: 60 Gulshan Avenue, Circle 1

Date: Nov 16-Dec 7



Theatre

Play: Eksho Bosta Chal

Troupe: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

Venue: National Theatre Hall, Shilpakala Academy

Date: Dec 1



Discussion and Musical Soiree

Organiser: Amra Surjomukhi

Venue: Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium, National Museum

Date: Nov 30

Time: 5pm



In the realm of melody's paradise



Vidushi Girija Debi

ZAHANGIR ALOM

The second installment of the Bengal Classical Music Festival 2013, dedicating to the memory of Gyantapas Professor Abdur Razzaq was set off on November 28. The festival is being organised by Bengal Foundation in collaboration with ITC-Sangeet Research Academy of Kolkata to promote, nurture and to celebrate the shared legacy of classical music in Bangladesh.

A fascinating dance piece, participated by 60 Bangladeshi artistes, produced by Bengal Foundation, was showcased before the festival began. The piece, scripted by Kamol Khalid and choreographed by Anisul Haque Borun, showcased the thousand-year heritage of Bangla songs.

Kathak prodigy Vishal Krishna set off the opening day's performance enthralling the Dhaka audience. The performance was followed by the formal inauguration of the festival. Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, KCMG, Founder and Chairperson of BRAC inaugurated the four-day extravaganza as chief guest while Pankaj Saran, Indian high commissioner to Dhaka; Anjan Chowdhury, Managing Director of Maasranga TV and Director of Square Group and Ravi Mathur, executive director of ITC-Sangeet Research Academy (SRA) were present as special guests. Apart from the guests, Bengal Foundation Chairman Abul Khair thanked everyone who made the return of such an event, and especially the strategic partners The Daily Star and The Daily Prothom Alo; broadcast partner Maasranga TV and radio partner ABC Radio; and all those who have supported their endeavours.

The inaugural day's performance featured classical vocal and instrumental music.

Living legend of *Purbanga*-styled classical music,



Tejen Majumdar

Vidushi Girija Devi was the first vocalist, who performed Raga "Jogkauns" at the festival. Her vilambit bandish "E Jhanjhariya Jhanake Kaisa Kar Aaon Tore Paas" performance -- based on vilambit ektal -- generated Radha's deepest passion for meeting with Krishna. Raga Jogkauns is the intermingling composition of two distinctive ragas --Raga Jog and Raga Chandrakauns depicting the unparallel emotional expression. Girija Devi's drut bandish "Bohuta Dina Biti Ajhoo Na Aaye Mori Shaam," performance, set on *teentaal*, carried forward the exquisite emotive plea and plethora of Radha's pining heart. The maestro beautifully styled distinctive musical phraseology while rendition of the raga.

The artiste then performed a bol banao ki thumri, based on Raga Mishra Tilak Kamod and jat taal. The bandish "Ayo Piya Morey Ayo Jin Na Jaye Ratiyan" expressed the emotion in a dramatic way. Later, she performed her own composed dadra -- "Purab Des Se Ayee Gorja Jadua Daar Geyi Rey". Sanjay Adhikari (tabla), Rupashree Bhattacharjee (harmonium), Sarwar Hussain (sarangi) and Aparajita Lahiri and Rupan Samanta (tanpura and vocal support) accompanied the entire performance by the legend.

Bangladeshi artistes Goutam Sarker, Swarup Hossain, Iftekhar Alam Prodhan and Md. Zakir Hossain performed in a tabla quartet next. Based on teentaal and Raga Kirwani, they started off the tabla lahara with the kayda "Dhin Kre Dhindha". The accomplished artistes showcased various types of kayda, tukra, chakradar and chakradar tehai. They presented traditional compositions of renowned gharanas -- Benaras,



Kaushiki Chakraborty

Delhi, Ajrara and Farrukhabad in their respective solo and group recitals. The packed audience received their presentation with pride and praise.

Noted sitarist Ayan Sengupta, immersing in the melodic bliss, mesmerised the Dhaka audience with his divine recital on Raga Maru Behag. The performance, based on vilambit jhaptaal and drut teentaal, had many reminiscent features. Ayan's raagdari, dhrupad-ang aalap and speedy gamaki taan performances took the audience into the transcendental world of music.

The audience welcomed Vidushi Kaushiki Chakraborty -- who termed herself a girl from Mymensingh, Bangladesh, with rounds of applause. She rendered Raga "Abhogi" at the festival. "Abhogi" is a melancholic raga quite similar to raga Bageshree. Kaushiki's performance featured a dramatic vistar, decorative murki, various combination and permutation of sargam, gamaki aakar taan and many types of tehai, together with aakar taan and sargam taan -- which are hallmarks of her father Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty. The vocalist effortlessly touched all the "Sa" of four octaves several times. She also presented a composition (a thumri on raga Jog) by her father. She was accompanied by Pandit Yogesh Shamsi on tabla and Allarakha Kalawant on sarangi, along with Rupashree Bhattacharjee on harmonium.

Sarod maestro Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar started off his part playing Raga Kaushiki Kanhada on the instrument. He first presented aalap, jod and jhala in a conventional way. Kaushiki Kanhada is an intermingling of Raga Darbari Kanhada and Malkauns.



Ayan Sengupta

PHOTO: RIDWAN ADID RUPON

Pandit Majumdar stunned the audience by taming the distinctive musical phrases of Darbari and Malkauns and playing a subtle melodic and rhythmic game incorporating the notations of two ragas. Tabla maestro Pandit Yogesh Shamshi was predominantly on teentaal. The Pandit duo enthralled the music connoisseurs with fashioning off-beat layakari and tehai along with off-beat Sawal-Jawab. Later, the artiste performed Raga "Chandra Nandan," originally composed by his guru Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. Chandra Nandan is a portrayal of pathos and is quite similar to Raga Jogkauns.

The Mishra brothers -- Pandit Rajan and Pandit Sajan Mishra -- were the last performers of the night. Pandit Rajan Mishra said, "Music is our prayer." They melted the audience's heart with their rendition of Raga "Bhatiyar". The vilambit bandish (on vilambit ektal) "Uchat Geyi Mori Nindia" was evocative of musical prayer that they presented through pukar while the drut bandish "Ayo Probbhat" (on teeltaal) displayed jugalbandi rendition by the brothers. While performing vistar, the pandit duo showcased Marwa and Bilawal ang in mandra and taar saptak. Pandit Samar Saha on tabla and Rupashree Bhattacharjee on harmonium fashioned a musical high. Set on the same raga, a tarana on madhya and drut ektal came next. Later, the pandit duo performed a Gujri Todi bandish "Banke Panchi Bhayi Bawari", originally composed by Ustad Ameer Khusrrou. Based on the same raga, the brothers performed a tarana on ektal. Their performance was so fascinating that the audience wanted more renditions from them. Later, the pundits wrapped up the inaugural day's festival performing a Bhairvi Sandra "Bhabani Dayani Maha Baak Bani".



The stadium comes alive

FAHIM FERDOUS

The classical music festival last year, in all its grandeur, had slipped through the calendars of many, as they got to know about it late. The audience grew over the days in the 2012 festival -- thanks to on-spot registration -- as people got to find out about it as it was happening. Many people missed the festival altogether, getting to know about it too late.

This year was different. With the platform set last year, many people had kept this event on their radar, and Bengal Foundation's in-advance online/cellphone-based registration policy meant anyone interested were prepared for it from beforehand.

Even as Vishal Krishna -- one of the lesser-known names of this year's lineup -- took the well-designed Army Stadium stage at 7pm, the seats were filling up quickly. And not just the registered users; complimentary VIP pass holders were also uncharacteristically early to the grounds, not willing to miss any of the marvel. As the night progressed, the number grew -- with many taking seats in the gallery at the back, while others sat at the dining area -- a bigger zone this year with a higher ceiling and better viewing on one of the several big projection screens.

Bengal Foundation's attention to details in organizing the festival was praised last year, and it seems they have improved on that. The entire venue was structured more or less like last year, with a few stalls displaced.

Water-containers were placed at quite a few points for the audience to drink, while stalls selling tea and coffee were also spread around. The food court was a long, single line selling a wide variety of delicacies -- from bhapa pitha to light snacks to heavy dinner items.

There were quite a few other stalls of the partners of the events, at the other side of the grounds; people visited The Daily Star Books and Prothoma Prokashoni (from The Daily Prothom Alo), while stalls by Bengal Foundation, Square group and BRAC Bank were also set up.

The exhibition space that drew interest last year -- featuring photos and short bio of all the classical music and dance greats of this region of the past few centuries -- was set up this time as well, and many were seen spending time there in between performances. A sculpted version of the logo of the festival was also put up there.

The media centre set up this year -- for coordination with journalists conveniently, was also appreciated by the media-men, as they collected required information, and availed services such as internet and charging their electronic gadgets.

If the first night of the festival -- amid an ongoing strike in the city prompting a halt to the shuttle service to the festival venue -- was any indication, the next three nights, two of which are weekends, were only going to see a more pulsating, throbbing festival thronged by people of all ages and class, brought together by the common denominator of taste for good music and dance.

Of grace, mudra and ghungru

Vishal Krishna's showcasing of Kathak

RACHEL PRIYANKA PERRIS

Kathak prodigy Vishal Krishna sets off the second edition of Bengal Classical Music Festival 2013 through showcasing aesthetic grace and expression, enthralling mudra and movements along with speed. For me, the artiste seemed like performing across the universe, tossing the sky and air yet at the same time, kissing the beauty of earth.

Kathak is one of nine classical dance forms, initially practiced in royal court of Mughals. The evolution of Kathak dance followed three major changing courses/trends --Devdasi, Rajdashi and Baiji. Kathak predominantly portrays telling tales through dance recitals.

Vishal showcased several kathak pieces on the opening day of the Bengal Classical Music Festival '13 held in Dhaka's Army Stadium. The artiste started off with a devotional piece "Devi Stuti". Based on teentaal and raga Charukeshi; he performed alapchhari that is actually termed as nritya (pure dance). His next item was paran with the bol of pakhawaj. The paran was composed by Nataraj Gopikrishna. Vishal's great grandfather Sukhdev Maharaj is the forerunner of Benaras gharana.

Vishal styled new techniques of kathak incorporating Chhau and Kuchipudi dance mudra in presenting layakari with balanced footwork in plate dance.

Later, he performed off-beat tehai,



PHOTO: RIDWAN ADID RUPON

chakradar, chalan of a horse amid tehai and abhinoy-ang dance gaut where he first enacted Lord Krishna and later a blissful peacock shaking its feature amid rain. Vishal's concluding performance was truly fascinating where he recited a composition of his grandmother's sister Alokandana Devi's special dance style. His footwork was exquisite. He produced sounds of only ghungru and nothing else that captivated the audience. Vishal's interaction with his brother Kushal Krishna, on the tabla, was excellent. Their father directed music for the entire performance

The erstwhile "Selami" of Mughal

Darbar and the presentation of Vishal "Pronami" had quite dissimilarity. Vishal Krishna styled splitting and stretching amid his performances. The inception of "Marg" in Kathak dance is a new addition. It covers bandana, alapchhari, paran, gaut etcetera. In his performance, Vishalji used costumes and props -- dhuti and benian, Krishna mukut at head and belt at waist -- which showed a significant difference with the costumes of decades ago.

Vishal, as child prodigy, attained the excellence and expertise of Kathak within a very short span of time. He is an expert on the mathematics of Kathak dance. His dance style containing softness, thamak and idiosyncratic gesture-throwing while returning to shom were fascinating. Classical dance is always creative and modern. Vishal's presentation seemed like a modern kathak style. Though Kathak has a legacy of a thousand years, this performance reminded of classical dance as always evolving and creative.

In a nutshell, the essence of the genres Vishal performed was as colourful as the twilight sky. I was fortunate to watch a documentary film on Nritya Samraggi Sitara Devi, the grandmother of Vishal Krishna. The mudra throwing of Sitara Devi and Vishal Krishna had quite a striking resemblance.

The writer is a Gaudiya dancer-scholar, and a disciple of Professor Mahua Mukherjee.

TV WATCH

Celebrating Life on Channel i

A CORRESPONDENT

Channel i will continue their broadcast of the 'Standard Chartered-The Daily Star Celebrating Life 2013' award gala ceremony, showcasing the second part of the celebration at 11:05am today. Gazi Mazharul Anwar, photographer Anwar Hossain and late actor Anwar Hossain received the Lifetime Achievement Award this year, while winners of the film, photography and lyrics contests were also announced. The grand event, held last month at the Mirpur sohrawardy national Indoor Stadium, also features performances by Rezwan Ali Lavlu, Priyanka Gope, Sheuli Bhattacharjee and Nishit Dey, along with contemporary dance production by noted dance school Shadhona. The programme, planned by Bitopi Das Chowdhury and Rafi Hossain, was hosted by Tropa mazumder and Iffat Ara Nawaz, and produced by Raju Alim.



Today's Performances

6:30pm: Rajrupa Chowdhury (Sarod)

7:30pm: Kumar Mardur (Vocal)

8:30pm: Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma (Santoor)

10:15pm: Pandit Uday Bhawalkar (Vocal -- Dhrupad)

11:45pm: Pandit Swapan Chaudhri (Tabla)

1am: Reenat Fauzia (Sitar)

1:45am: Vidushi Padma Talwalkar (Vocal)

Hariprasad Chaurasia

