

WHAT'S ON

Photography Exhibition
Title: Death Trap
Photographer: Abir Abdullah
Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka, Dhanmondi
Date: April 10-24



International Dance Day Programmes & Fair
Organisers: Bangladesh Nrtiya Shilpi Sangstha & Shilpakala Academy
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Discussion and Musical Soiree
In loving memory of Bashir Ahmed
Organiser: Star Melodies
Venue: AS Mahmud Seminar Hall, The Daily Star Centre



Group Exhibition
Title: 1134 - lives not numbers
Organiser: Pathshala
Venue: Pathshala, 16
Date: April 22-26
Time: 3pm-8pm



Classical Music Soiree
Organisers: Sargam and Sargam Cultural Troupe
Venue: National Press Club, Dhaka
Date: April 24
Time: 9pm till Morning



TRIBUTE

'The villainy you teach me ...'

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

William Shakespeare would be four hundred and fifty years old, had he lived, on 23 April this year. When you reflect on him, you tend to focus not just on literature but on an entire range of philosophy as well. He does not just come back to you every April. He is, has always been, with us. And just how he has managed to do that comes through the everyday acts in life you go through. You watch the stars in the night, beside some rural pond in Bangladesh or somewhere in a bush deep in Africa. And you recall Hamlet: "There are more things on heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio."

And there you have it, this acknowledgement of the huge mystery we call Creation. It is something that comes to us through the tranquil waters of faith. And Shakespeare evokes that call of faith, that sure sense of feeling involving the real and the imagined, or the shadow and the reality. You think of the ghost of Hamlet's father, of the truths that sometimes come revealed to men in their dreams or in their treks through deserted woodland paths. And you remember Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare is our man for all seasons. He brings to his thoughts the broad compactness of the universe and then transfers that compactness of experience to us. His comedies are perhaps the places where the common, huddled masses come resplendent in their pedestrian gleam. Nick Bottom. There is little question he is a buffoon, but then, aren't we all buffoons of some degree or the other in life? And the young fairy-land woman who falls for his charms? Call that the effect of blind love. And love must be blind. What is that memorable line from the Bard again? Ah! "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind / And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind." So true, so true. If you wish to be in love, shut your eyes and imagine the feminine object of your desire in all her diversity of beauty. You will love the levels of adrenalin coursing through your being.

Macbeth loved his wife, even if it was, at a point, love induced by the lady's domineering tendencies. The proof? Well, he did go and try to kill Duncan, didn't he? And then there is Othello for you. He was a jealous man, a possessive husband. And he thought he was symbolic of masculinity. But make no mistake about it -- he loved Desdemona, for he could not imagine any other man passing on to her the priapic affections he so lavishly heaped on her. He did away with her life. The handkerchief is not important. Othello murders Desdemona. Browning, in later times, makes another envious lover kill Porphyria. Call it murderous love, call



it whatever you will. It is there. You cannot run away from it. Shakespeare's women, at least most of them, happen to be challengingly intelligent. No, not Amazonians, but women like Kate who throw down the gauntlet before proud men and then end up being in fierce love with them. But if Kate is fire and fury, Portia is cool, collected and inclined to the reasonable. She makes a gash on her patently alluring thigh to demonstrate her spousal feelings for the brooding, doomed Brutus. You have a sure sense that if Portia and not Calpurnia were married to Caesar, the Roman dictator would be persuaded to stay home and not walk to his death in the senate. Tragedy would not happen.

Oftentimes in Shakespeare, as also in the banality of life through the millennia, tragedy has been a straight offshoot of arrogance. Caesar believes he is constant as the north star. He is dismissive of the ides of March prediction, taunts the man who has served warning on him: "The ides of March are come." The response is cool and deadly: "Ay, Caesar, but not gone." In Caesar, you spot the human flaw which leaves scores of lives reduced to wrecks of dreams and ambitions. He understands the malignancy in Cassius: "Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look. Such men are dangerous." And yet he does not, will not smell the mischief already afoot. King Lear too will not see the brutish in his elder daughters' demeanour toward him. He pays a price, cradling the dead Cordelia in his arms and wondering why a rat, a horse, a dog will have life but his dear daughter none at all.

In Shakespeare and through him, you wonder all the way. Even as the blossoms dance before you, you wallow in the winter of your discontent. You do not take kindly to the grasping Shylock, but when he comes close to you, breathes down your face in all his centuries-old fury, you understand his loneliness. "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands . . ." The pain in him is asphyxiating, for you, as you hear him condemn his tormentors: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die . . . The villainy you teach me I will execute. It will go hard but I shall better the instruction." It is Shylock's desperation and your resultant morbidity at play. Ah, the morbid! "Where's Polonius?" asks the king of the Prince of Denmark. "At supper," answers the surly young man. "At supper?" wonders a worried monarch. And then comes the last word from Ophelia's lover: "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten." (William Shakespeare, born in 1564, died in 1616).

The writer is Executive Editor, The Daily Star

The torments at our garments

Andrew Biraj's three-part exhibition

"Bonded Stitches and Struggle"

FAHMIM FERDOUS

The readymade garments industry of the country is massive; it contributes billions of dollars in foreign exchange to the country's reserves, employment for hundreds of thousands of people -- particularly women, and has kept the country's economy afloat even at times of global economic turmoil. Yet, behind the clothes that end up on the hangers of major clothing brand showrooms across the world, are stories of despair, danger, neglect and indifference. Be it factory fires, building collapses, or inhumane treatment of labourers that -- when it breaks out as unrest -- is brutally dealt with, lives and livelihoods of those at the core of our garments industry are fascinatingly touching tales.

Photojournalist Andrew Biraj is one of the most prominent contemporary names in the country's photography arena. With major global photography awards, including World Press Photo and National Geographic, and being published in Time.com, New York Times and International Herald Tribune, his works have been known to bring out vivid, in-depth stories of people. As a photographer of international news agency Reuters, Biraj has been a close follower of the events transpiring at our garments industry over the years, and his latest photography exhibition, "Bonded Stitches and Struggle", is a powerful narrative on the life of garment workers.

The exhibition, held in three parts -- near the Savar Central Hospital, Drik Gallery in Dhanmondi and Chhobi'r Haat at



Each photo is a striking narrative of garments workers' struggles.

Shahbagh -- encompass a myriad of issues. Aptly timed at the one-year anniversary of the tragic Rana Plaza incident, the Savar chapter of the exhibit shows photos of one of the worst man-made disasters to have happened in recent history; the incident and the aftermath. Valerie Taylor, founder of Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) where many victims of Rana Plaza have been treated, and a humanitarian icon, opened the exhibition along with survivors of the collapse, on April 22.

The Drik Gallery part of the exhibition -- that opened yesterday -- is possibly the most striking of them all. It's amazing how the photographer has touched so comprehensively on such a wide array of garments incidents -- Rana Plaza, Spectrum, Hamim, Tazreen and Smart -- in just 24 photos. Placed on thick, black frames, the photos -- some placed on the ground while

some remain on the wall -- touch on the marginal lifestyle of garment workers, their helplessness, struggle against adversities, and the fight for their rights. The portraits are multi-layered, with masterly background setting and framing treatment, while the wider shots zoom out seamlessly to show the bigger picture.

The opening ceremony was attended by Canadian High Commissioner Heather Crudden, Dutch Ambassador Gerben Sjoerd de Jong, economist Professor Anu Mohammad, noted photographers Taslima Akhter and Saiful Huq Omi, and environmental lawyer Syeda Rezwana Hasan.

The Chhobi'r Haat display is also interesting: it's a seven-photo series on a single garment worker, who fought a rowdy bunch of policemen charging hard on garments workers in unrest. The display opens today. The exhibition ends on May 1.

PHOTO COURTESY: ANDREW BIRAJ



PHOTO: RIDWAN ADDID RUPON

A DISASTER UNFORGOTTEN

Pathshala marks one year of Rana Plaza tragedy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pathshala South Asian Media Institute is paying homage to the victims of the Rana Plaza tragedy, on the first anniversary of the devastating incident (April 24), through a group exhibition at the Pathshala premises in Panthapath in the capital.

Titled "1134 - lives not numbers", the five-day exhibition, featuring photographs, art installations, perfor-

mance arts, music and theatre, was inaugurated on April 22 by this year's World Press Photo Award winner Taslima Akhter, mother of a deceased Rana Plaza worker Shomapti and Professor Ahmed Kamal Mahbubur Rahman. The programmes at the exhibition will include launching of a website, artist talk, staging of a play by theatre troupe BotTala, and musical performances by Kafil Ahmed, Shomogeet and Arup Rahee.

The participating artists at the exhibition include Abir Abdullah, Amdadul Haq, Ayesha Sultana, Ayon Rehal, Joydeb Roaja, KM Asad, Kabir Ahmed Masum Chisti, Mahmud Hossain Opu, Parvez Ahmad, Promotesh Das Puluk, Rahul Talukder, Reetu Sattar, Shulekha Chowdhury, Suvra Kanti Das, Taslima Akhter, Tushikur Rahman and Yasmin Jahan Nupur. Munem Wasif and Mahbubur Rahman are the curators of the exhibit.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" staged at NSU

Students of NSU performed Shakespeare's classic romantic play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on April 20-21, arranged by The Cine & Drama Club of NSU (NSUCDC). The annual theatre performance is a 22-year tradition of NSUCDC. On the opening day, Ramendu Majumder, President of International Theatre Institute inaugurated as the chief guest, while where Prof. Amin Sarkar, Vice Chancellor, NSU chaired the session, says a press release.

On April 21, the closing day, VC Prof. Amin Sarkar, attended as the chief guest while Prof. ANM Meshquat Uddin, Pro Vice Chancellor, NSU chaired the session.



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