

NEWS bytes

# Torchbearer of a legacy

In conversation with Rahul Sharma

Streep to play Maria Callas in HBO film



Meryl Streep is to star in an HBO film as legendary opera singer Maria Callas, the US network has confirmed. Based on the Tony-winning 1995 play by Terrence McNally, "Master Class" shows Callas in later life, teaching students at New York's Juilliard school. The film will reunite Streep with director Mike Nichols, with whom she collaborated on the films "Silkwood", "Heartburn" and "Postcards from the Edge".

"Master Class" was named best play at the 1996 Tony awards, where Zoe Caldwell was also recognised for her performance as Callas.

HBO are also producing a biopic of Bessie Smith, the celebrated US singer known as "the Empress of the Blues". Queen Latifah will play the title role in Bessie, currently in production in Atlanta and scheduled for a 2015 premiere.

Source: BBC



Rahul (R) performs at the Bengal Classical Music Festival.

PHOTO: RIDWAN ADID RUPON

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Perhaps even before he was old enough to sense it, Rahul Sharma's connection to the santoor was established. The direct descendent of santoor's living legend Shivkumar Sharma and Uma Dutt Sharma -- music, and more specifically santoor, had to be his calling. Today, Rahul Sharma is regarded as one of India's most creative and dynamic classical musicians, who has vowed to take the immensely intricate Kashmiri folk instrument beyond borders and musical genres, but not by totally shying away from the classical foundation. He was one of the more-anticipated performers at last year's Bengal Classical Music Festival, and in a rare opportunity, this correspondent found a chance for a one-on-one conversation with the torchbearer of the santoor right after his performance. Excerpts:

**What was it like to perform in front of this audience?**

**Rahul:** It was fantastic, really. It's not just the big numbers that are here, but they were such a discerning, appreciative audience that it is an honour for any artiste to be presenting their art in front of them. I really loved performing here.

**You come from the richest of bloodlines**

**in terms of classical music. What is it like to be the torchbearer of such a rich musical lineage?**

**Rahul:** It is humbling, to be honest. I realise the stature of my father (Shivkumar Sharma) as a musician, and my grandfather, Uma Dutt Sharma, was also a master of the santoor. It is a big task to be carrying forward their legacy, but that sense of responsibility is also very motivating. I hope I can carry this legacy forward, not just uphold it.

**The santoor is a little unconventional from the more commonly known North Indian classical instruments, with characteristic features of like gamak and meend of the sitar, sarangi or sarod not normally present. Do you look at it as a setback, or an advantage?**

**Rahul:** To be honest, my father has changed the entire concept of the santoor as an instrument, with the techniques and tonalities that he has brought in, and so those things really don't matter now. The timbre of sound that the santoor can produce is unique, and in terms of ornamentation of notes and composition, my father has revolutionised it. If you talk about the santoor's relevance or popularity, the reason we have 'Santoor Pan Masala', 'Santoor Soap' and 'Santoor Talcum Powder' in the market today,

is all credited to him.

**You have stepped beyond just the classical aspect of santoor and collaborated with big names on global music. What was the motivation?**

**Rahul:** My vision is to reach the sound of the santoor to as many music listeners I can, on the globe. And in this age of technology and connectivity, the platform is wide open. You can communicate and work with musicians from across the world very easily now. I have collaborated with artistes like Kenny G, Richard Clayderman and Deep Forest, who have millions of listeners all over the world. Through collaborating with them, I have the opportunity to reach with my music to a bigger audience, so why not?

**Finally, Shivkumar Sharma as a father and as a teacher?**

**Rahul:** As a father, he is as liberal and supportive as strict he is about music. He has been a great influence and support. But I want to mention, as a teacher, my father is exceptional. For a master of his level, it can be very easily frustrating to be teaching a new student, because the santoor is a very difficult instrument to learn; but he is patient and calm, and is ready to go at a pace the student can keep up with. It's a very special quality in a person.

# GOLAM RAFIQ

## Artiste for all seasons

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Octogenarian Mohammad Golam Rafiq, a veteran and diversified actor with a career span of over 44 years, drew curtains on his career in 1990.

Rafiq acted in acclaimed stage, film, Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Radio productions.

He made his film debut with "Chaowa Paowa" (1966) and played a side role with legendary film artiste Golam Mustafa.

Remembering some of the prominent artistes with whom he has worked such as Anwar Hossain, Mithun Chakraborty, Utpol Dutta and Sohel Rana, Rafiq says the artistes were not only great professionally but were good souls.

Rafiq has appeared in over 200 plays on stage and over 100 plays including serials on BTv.

Some of the plays in which he appeared on stage are "Dui Purush", "Baro Ghanta", "Beder Meye", "Siraj-ud-daula", "Tipu Sultan", and "Anarkali".

Rafiq set off on his TV career with the play "Chakra" (1967). Later, he acted in works like "Joma Kharach Ija", "Neel Neel Swapno" and many more.

Rafiq's talent was recognised when he enlisted as regular artiste of BTv and Bangladesh Betar in 1966.

Rafiq also continued his career in some 100 films till 1990; among them are "Ashirbad", "Bheja Chokh", "Master Samuraj", "Dinkal" and "Beporaa".

Unfortunately, the veteran artiste now suffers from old age ailments and is dependent on his only daughter Dr. Jannat Afroz Nupur.



Rafiq (L) with friend Chittaranjan Sengupta. PHOTO: STAR

Talking to this correspondent, Golam Rafiq said he received much affection and honour in his extensive career.

Rafiq added that contemporary artistes have an edge over their older counterparts as they have more opportunities to polish their acting skills. They also get a better financial deal and can live with dignity, said the artiste.

Rafiq has been honoured by prestigious theatre groups and cultural organisations such as Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Mymensingh Sheba Niketan and Mymensingh Zila Parishad.

Recently, Mymensingh Zila Shilpakala Academy honoured five personalities including Golam Rafiq with "Zila Shilpakala Academy Sammanona-2013" for their contributions to their respective fields. Ramendu Majumdar was the chief guest at the event.

Mrinal Dutta, a prominent film and theatre personality said, "Golam Rafiq deserves national recognition for his outstanding career as an actor."

IT'S TRUE!



Jennifer Love Hewitt, known widely as an actress-producer and TV director, had her debut music album "Love Songs" (1992) launched at the age of 12, funded by Japanese music and video game company Meldac. The album was released exclusively in Japan, where Hewitt became a pop star. She signed a deal with Atlantic record, but after her two albums with the label failed to make the charts, she did not return to the music industry for three years. She has recorded soundtracks for her movies and TV shows and released a fourth album, but has been inactive in music since 2004.

## ATN Bangla turns 18 today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ATN Bangla, the first satellite channel in Bangladesh, turns 18 today. Beginning its journey in 1997, the channel has traversed much ground in its mission to entertain viewers and keep them abreast with current affairs. The channel has also extended its footprints by reaching Bangladeshi expatriates all over the world.

To mark its anniversary, the channel

has arranged a large array of programmes. Musical programme, Golpo Ganer Amotroney will air today at 8:30 am. The show will feature noted singers Syed Abdul Hadi and Ferdous Ara.

Special episode of cookery-show "Vim Jhatpat Iftar" will feature Sharmin Lucky as guest. Directed by Lobby Rahman and hosted by Munmun, the programme will air at 4:10 pm. A special single-episode play "Chirkut" will air at 8 pm. Written by Belal Hossain Dhali, the drama has been directed by SA Haq Ali.

## Nostalgia on ATN News

A CORRESPONDENT

The 10th episode of cookery show "Nostalgia" will air on ATN News on July 18 at 9:30 pm. Fashion designer Emdud Haq and his wife Dipti Haq will be present in the episode as guests. The couple will share some of their favorite traditional recipes of Old Dhaka and recount stories about those dishes.

The audience will also get to see the guests cooking using traditional utensils and clay stoves.

The show Roopchanda Nostalgia, hosted by renowned designer Chandrashekhar Saha, creates nostalgia and connects the audience to the rich and diverse heritage of Bangladeshi cuisine. Afsana Mimi has directed the docu-fiction, based on the concept of Munni Saha.



A still from the show.

## "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas": A moving tale

SAURAV DEY

"The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas" is a movie that can strike the innermost chords of emotion in any viewer. Written and directed by Mark Herman, the movie tells the tale of an eight-year-old child and his unlikely friendship with Shmuel, a Nazi concentration camp inmate.

Bruno (Asa Butterfield), the son of a high-ranking Nazi commandant, is growing up in a comfy house in Berlin along with his mother and sister. The news of his father's sudden promotion does please him, as the family has to move to the countryside. Bruno and his mother do not welcome the move, but his father reassures them by saying that the new place is a farm and they will enjoy being there.

Eventually they come to a big dreary house, surrounded by high walls. Bruno finds it pretty difficult to adjust to this place, while his older sister seeks the attention of handsome Lieutenant Kotler (Rupert Friend). Bruno spends his days trying to find something to do, while his mother monitors his movement so that he doesn't go outside the boundary of their house.

The child can see the "farm"



(which in reality is an extermination camp) from the window of his bedroom but cannot figure out why all of the farmers are wearing striped pyjamas. He cannot fathom why Pavel, (David Hayman) a doctor, wears the same striped pyjamas and peels potatoes in a corner of their kitchen. While Bruno's mother naively believes the "farm" to be an internment camp, her husband has sworn under oath never to reveal the truth.

One day Bruno breaks his mother's rules and ventures out of their backyard. He heads out to the

farm trying to explore the nearby areas. He ends up near a barbed wire and meets Shmuel (Jack Scanlon), a Jew boy of his same age. Like Bruno, the other boy does not have any clue what is going on inside the "farm". As their friendship grows fast, the tension intensifies gradually leading the plot to a heartbreaking ending.

Mark Herman excels in telling the story from a child's perspective. But it is the heartfelt acting of the children that make for a profound film.

## Mahakal Natya Sampraday celebrates 31 years

A CORRESPONDENT

To celebrate its 31st anniversary, theatre troupe Mahakal Natya Sampraday, organised a reunion of its former members, which included a discussion on the long journey of the troupe, and staging one its most accomplished plays.

The programmes were held at the Studio Theatre Hall of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) yesterday, with Liaquat Ali Lucky, Director General, BSA and chairman, Group Theatre Federation attending as chief guest. Vice Chairman of Sammito Sangskritik Jote, Golam Kuddus was special guest while Advocate Afzal Hossain presided over.

Following the discussion and Iftar, the troupe staged "Shikhondi Kotha", one of their best-reviewed plays, at the venue.

