



"HELLO, I AM NOBODY"

ANIKA HOSSAIN

TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a global set of conferences which are owned by the Sapling Foundation, a private non-profit organisation and operate under the slogan "Ideas Worth Spreading." Their talks address a variety of topics ranging from science to culture, often through storytelling. TEDx Dhaka is an independently organised TED event, by a group of TED enthusiasts.

This year, the renowned musician Farzana Wahid Shayan was approached by the organisers to deliver a talk/performance. "When Mohammad Touheed, the Curator and Licensee of TEDx Dhaka approached me, I asked him why he wanted me to do this, as TEDx is a talk oriented

programme and I'm a performer," says Shayan, "And he told me that my songs are a kind of talk, he complimented me that way, so I honoured him, and agreed. I maintained one thing though, that I wouldn't be attending rehearsals because I am a very spontaneous person, and I have never sung one of my songs in the same manner twice in my life."

Shayan began her talk with a startling statement, "I am a nobody," she said. This got the audience's attention and in one statement, described her philosophy of life. "I believe that everybody is a nobody," she says, "Life, I think is bigger than all of us and we are all nothing in the grand scheme of things. I think to label people as successes and failures is a sin."

Shayan's songs are a reflection of

this philosophy. She is a self taught musician, who writes in her songs what she witnesses and experiences around her. "When I was young I did not think much of becoming a musician, but it runs in the family so it was all around me. My mother used to love to sing and I would sit by her and listen," she tells us. "She would sing Hemanta's songs, Kishore, Lata Mangeshkar. As I heard and learned more songs, I figured out that Shahnaz Rahmatullah was one of my most favourite artists. I also encountered Kabir Shumon, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and Leonard Cohen as I grew older."

The first song that Shayan ever wrote was when she was 14, "It was because I was jealous of somebody," she recalls. "A friend of mine was fall-

ing for a boy who was an amazing song writer and I was getting less of her attention because of him. One day, I picked up my pen and started to write and as I wrote the song, my jealousy subsided, and I became so engrossed in writing, it changed my life."

For the next five or six years she wrote love songs, till she was sent abroad, to Toronto, for her BA degree. "When I left the country however, my world changed. I love it here. I am more at ease when I am in Dhaka than anywhere else. I suffered greatly when I left the city and my first one year was a hellish experience and that was when my songs helped me again," she tells us. First they got rid of my jealousy and then my pain, so I was developing a relationship with my pen and I was

gaining affinity from the process of writing. So whatever I was experiencing around me, I would express it in my songs. I will say that life has been my best teacher, I couldn't change the society, but I had to express it somewhere so my songs became a diary of sorts, recording my thoughts. As I grew my songs changed with me I wrote on more social and political issues."

Shayan's songs are witty and gutsy and have over the years captured the attention and admiration of many. "I believe that life is a gift that should be cherished and enjoyed. I always live in the moment. I believe nobody is important; only life is important, no matter how big a name you make, you are nothing in the grand scheme of things. This is not my modesty, it isn't a stunt, this is my truth."

The Animated Story

ELITA KARIM

For Manik and Ratan, two young Bangladeshi animators, talking at the recently held TEDx Dhaka, was all about reliving the journey from being cartoonists to Graphic Designers and Animators. "There is always the struggle in between!" say the genius twins. "There was so much to talk about - like how we broke the barrier and how we were able to follow our dreams."

Both Manik and Ratan have been involved in the graphics and cartooning scene in Dhaka from a very young age. Their witty graphic stories, and illustrations for teenagers have been published in leading newspapers and publications, including the monthly satirical Unmad. Recently, Manik and Ratan made waves with their animated short 'Unsolved Stars'. "We showed our film 'Unsolved Stars' at the TEDx, which had won an award at the AdFest Asia last year," they say.

It was not long before the audience began to cheer for the duo and their amazing work, at the talk. "The response from the audience was beyond our expectation!" say Manik and Ratan, "it was amazing to see the audience giving us a standing ovation. The best part was, when many from the audience told us that the animation brought them to tears-- that touched us!"

Manik and Ratan have been missing in action for quite some time now. "We were in Malaysia the last three years studying Animation at Limkokwing University," they explain. "We majored in 2D animation, using very classic techniques. We also studied the complete film production process -- script writing, pre-production and post production. Obviously, this would help us not only for animation, but also in other forms of filmmaking."

In the last few years, a healthy movement supporting the arts is seen to be rising in Bangladesh. Clearly, both Manik and Ratan are a part of this rising as well. "We are very happy to see this growing interest in the field of graphic design in Bangladesh," they say. "There are so many young graphic artists who are doing amazing work. We are very hopeful that in the near future, the young enthusiasts will be exposed to so much more in the field of design, and that too in Bangladesh!"

Learning and sharing is what they preach, which is also a part of the bigger plan. "We plan to share our knowledge in animation," say Manik and Ratan. "We will work especially on the principles of animation as there are still gaps in this particular subject. For example, when it comes to animation cartoons in Bangladesh, so much more is left to be desired. The animations look lifeless. We will work towards making them look complete and full of life."



When the Beat Drops

APURBA JAHANGIR

Moktadir Dewan Shanto, also known as 'Beat Baksho,' is known as the first recognised beat boxer to come across our country's music scene. This incredible musician is now a role model for the upcoming musicians in our country. On November 22, he participated as one of the speakers for TEDx Dhaka. During his talk he spoke about exploring different genres and the current evolution of our countries music scene.

"Three months ago Salman Beg, a co-organiser of the event, called me and asked if I was willing to be one of the speakers. Initially, I was very excited but as the day of the event came closer, I started getting nervous," says Shanto. His talk in TEDx Dhaka this year became one of the most popular talks of the event as he demonstrated how the human mouth can be the most versatile musical instrument. "I tried to explain how, as musicians, we should always try to think outside the box. Coming up with better sounds should be one of our main priorities. Some times what can't be accomplished on a drum or sampler can be accomplished with one's mouth," says the beat boxer. He first began beat boxing by accident when he tried to copy Michel Jackson. "Back then I didn't know what I was doing other than making sounds from my mouth. I learned the term when I saw MJ referring to it as beat boxing."

In his speech at TEDx, he also talked about the struggles he went through. "When I first started beat boxing on stage, I heard people saying things like there's nothing instrumental about it and I remember being called a 'wannabe DJ'. But I am very glad that this scenario is changing rapidly as a lot of young beat boxers are on the rise," he says. Though he has worked with many genres, Shanto doesn't follow any particular one. He says, "If you see my play-list you will see all kinds of artists in there. I think sticking to a specific genre will deprive you from a lot of great music. So for me if it's good, it's good!"

Right now Shanto is working as a senior copywriter at Bagher Bachcha Digital and also as a radio jockey at Radio Shadhin. Other than his own band, Blunderware, he's working with AvoidRafa as a beat boxer, vocalist, and sampler. To all aspiring musicians, he says, "Keep on exploring. You never know what might light the spark in your torch to glory."

