



**WALK  
THE TALK**

# STAGE HAS WINGS!!

SARA ZAKER

Just like the bird, the stage too has "wings". A well-staged play can take you to world of imagination where you willingly suspend your disbelief. Say, on a stage there is no door through which you enter the room, yet when you enter the acting space you can always make the audience believe that you have entered a room. If it's a typically Bengali household, you open your shoes at the "wing" and enter barefoot, place the umbrella in the corner. It's clear to the audience that you have entered the house and before entering, you were outside.

The detailed setting of the stage has its charm. But simple setting has its own magic as well. One of the directors I have worked with is a master craftsman in a creating simplistic set. In Classics such as Syed Huq's "Nurul Deen er Shara Jibon", all that my director had made in terms of stage design was a sloping platform what you call a "dhal" in Bangla. On this sloped platform Nuruldeen gave his crying call to rebel, the British Collector and his juniors drew out strategies to put them down and Ambiya cried for her rebel husband (Nurul) who had gone off to fight the British. No other piece of furniture or installation was required to make the audience believe that it was the lawn of the house of the British lieutenant and in the next scene it was the battleground of the peasant leader Nuruldeen.

Then I saw a Manoj Mitra play directed by this same director. There were just two platforms which created a space to act on. At the end, with one untying of the knot, the painted backdrop comes down to indicate the tragic fall of the travelling "theter" (as one would pronounce in the early days of 20th century).

Again coming back to Syed Shamsul Huq's "Khatta Tamasha", the setting of the famine was

a tattered red sari hanging from a suggestion of a side of a "berar baree"; thatched house. On his seventieth birthday of Aly Zaker, his designer Bipasha Hayat spoke of the liberty she was given to make this very simplistic set.

When you watch a play in Broadway or off Broadway or off off Broadway however, you will usually see the magic of good acting with the magic of a finely constructed set. People are stary eyed to see the helicopter land on the stage in Le Saigon.

In Bangladesh, the Acting has to carry all. In the empty stage of "Khona" or "Mallam Iliya" by Bottola or the empty stage of "Dhaboman" by Dhaka Theatre, or the empty space of "Mohajoner Nao" by Shubochon, the empty stage plays magic on the audience wherein good direction and superb acting sweeps the audience off its feet and they willingly suspend disbelief - the empty stage therefore becomes a palace, or a river.

But gone are the days when Abul Hayat, Asaduzzaman Noor, Humayun Faridi, Ferdausi Majumdar, Aly Zaker or Khaled Khan set their foot on stage. In the present scenario, physical acting has taken the place of good acting. However, that is a different debate for another day.

Coming back to "wings". A Stage does have "wings". They are not the feathered wings like the birds have. Wings of a stage are black curtains or framed black cloth, put slantingly on the two sides of a stage. It masks the actor repeating his/ her lines or whispers her last minute "doa" or does "pranam" to the stage before he/ she enters the world of Magic!

Like I said, just as birds, stages too, have wings!!

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**DOWN MEMORY  
BY LANES....**

## Great movies, great Hindi songs

SHAHNOOR WAHID

As I said in my last week's piece, all great Hindi songs are basically from Hindi films. Even if a film failed to click, its songs lived everlastingly for their appeal to the listeners. But then again, many films did good business, despite poor story and acting, only for having some memorable songs sung by singers per excellence. Great lyricists, great composers and great singers of the day had gotten together to create some beautiful songs that make us play them again and again even today. I shall mention the names of some films of the '40s, '50s and '60s that had some soul-stirring songs in them.

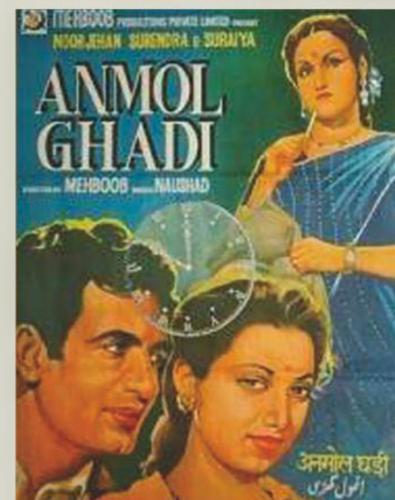
'Anmol Ghadi' is one such film made in 1946 that didn't have much to offer as far as the story, script and acting were concerned. It had Surendra, Suraiya, Noor Jehan, Zahur Raja and Leela Mishra in the lead roles. It was Noor Jehan who stole the show in the film. No, not for acting, but for giving her soul into some of the songs, composed by none other than the maestro Naushad Ali (simply known as Naushad). Naushad, so early in his career as a music composer and director, proved his class to the world. The songs were written by Tanvir Naqvi.

"Aawaaz de kahaan hai..." is one number from the film, a duet, sung by Noor Jehan and Surendra Nath. Noor Jehan, for her part, makes the song hauntingly overpowering as she pours pathos and romance in the song in perfect measure. The song goes like this, "Aawaaz de kahaan hai, Duniyaa meri jawaan hai, Aabaad mere dil mein, Ummeed kaa jahaan hai Duniyaa meri jawaan hai, Aawaaz de kahaan hai...". Interestingly, when Noor Jehan came to Bombay some years ago, she did sing this song in a show organized in her honour, with Naushad directing the musical hands. It was amazing to see the two legends performing on the stage in the twilight hours of their life.

Another lyrical romantic song from the same film is, "Jawaan hai muhabbat, Haseen hai zamaana Lutaayaa hai dil ne khushi Kaa khazanaa..." sung by Noor Jehan. But the two sad numbers that will perhaps last few more decades more than other songs from the same film are, "Aaja meri barbaad muhabbat ke sahaare, Hai kaun jo bigdi huyi taqdeer sanwaare..." and "Kyaa mil gayaa Bhagwaan tumhen dil ko dukhaake, Armanoki nagri mein meri aag lagaake...".

Uran Khatola is a film made in 1955 with Dilip Kumar and Nimmi in the lead roles. Though the story is quite weak with a boring script, people went to watch the film many a times only for the haunting songs. This time again it was Naushad who created magic with Shakeel Badayuni, Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammad Rafi. Anyone growing up in the '50s in a town would remember the chirpy song being played in every restaurant, "Mera salam leja, dil ka payaam le ja, ulfat ka jam le ja, uran khatole waale aare, urata hawaan mein, baadal ki chhaon mein, kaun se gaaon men jaayega tu, neeche zameen hai, duniya haseen hai, dil ko yakeen hai aayega tu...". Lata Mangeshkar sung this song with all the sweetness in her inimitable voice. The film had a few more memorable numbers like, "Haal e dil main kya kahoan, mushkil hai mere saamne..." by Lata and an all time classic by Mohammad Rafi, "O dur ke mushafeer, humko bhi saath lelere, hum reh gayen akele...".

All the songs of film Azaad (1955) were great hits of the time and continued to be in the chart for many more decades since then. C. Ramchandra was the music composer who also lent voice in a duet with Lataji. The lilting dance duet, "Aplam chaplam, chap laiteri duniyako chhor, teri gaali aire aire..." was sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Usha Mangeskar. The Lata-C. Ramchandra duet, "Kitna haseen hein mausam, kitna haseen safar hein, saathi hein khoosurat, ye mausamko bhi khabar hein..." used to be on every lip those days. Then there was the mind-boggling number by Lata, "Radha na bole na bole na bole re, ghunghat ke phat na kholey re...".



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