

SPOTLIGHT

The idea was initially to just make a platform, a platform for everyone who has anything to do with music. "We want to bring them all together, because that's when amazing things will happen. That's when music in Bangladesh will be at its greatest," says Nafis Ahmed, organiser of Bangladesh Music Week and Founder of LiveSquare.

support of this excellent initiative. Renowned and widely celebrated musical bands and other performers, such as Shironamhin, Chirkutt, Lalon, pop sensation Minar, the Brotherhood project and Arshinagar, from Lalmonirhat, performed on stage, while presentations with rare musical instruments by BITA (Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts), the Srilankan trio Shakhti, Triratna, among others, also gave the audience something to cherish forever.



PHOTO: RIDWAN ADIT RUPON



MANY MELODIES, ONE PLATFORM

NAZIBA BASHER

PHOTOS COURTESY: LIVESQUARE



Under the aegis of Norway-Bangladesh Music Cooperation, Bangladesh Music Week, a two day long conference, workshop and festival and showcase, was organised and by the famous entertainment group Livesquare, in coordination with Concert Norway, the largest communicator of live music of the Norway's cultural ministry. The festival was organised with an aim to establish a regional network of cultural activists and resource persons. Bangladesh Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy were also in strong

The Norway-Bangladesh Music Cooperation had begun in 2011, with the brave objective to promote cross-cultural understanding and reinforce dialogue between artists and others through various musical and cultural activities. Norway has been a strong player in the region for developing a strong network of musical or performing arts activists. Including Bangladesh in the circle led to successful trades and partnership between many professionals and artists, workshops and capacity building initiatives that connect Norway,

Bangladesh and South Asia.

"We have brilliant mutual relations with Bangladesh and we believe that culture is an agent for exchange and dialogue, and for building an understanding level," says Ambassador Merete Lundemo, Embassy of Norway. With the necessity of understanding and the dire need of dialogue in the music scene, Bangladesh Music Week was held on the 6th and 7th of November, 2015.

"I first had the idea a few years ago," says Nafis. While the idea was initially to hold a closed-door conference, it had

developed into the music week during the progress of planning. "Music Week is something that is hosted all over the world. Even India has a Music Week. So since we were planning for a conference anyway, we thought we could implant it into the music week."

Albeit the fact that it was supposed to be a week-long event, since this is the first of its kind here in Bangladesh, Nafis fit the function into three days. "A lot of professionals from different genres, different backgrounds and even different countries came to speak about music and



the vast potential it holds in the development of a nation," says Nafis. The first Bangladesh Music Week expects to form tight bonds with other countries in South Asia with music as a cause. Later, they plan to expand to European countries, having Norway already on-board. "We have been actively engaged in this region for more than a decade. The Music Week is an opportunity to learn from each other," said Solveig Korum, head of international projects of Concerts Norway.

Lundemo, Ambassador of Norway was present as the Special Guest. Eminent music professionals from South Asia, Europe, US and Australia were all in Dhaka to attend the conference and experience this unique cultural exchange.

On November 6, between 4pm to 9pm, the Shongitashala Auditorium of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, was thronging with music enthusiasts. On the same day, a light Engineering Master Class had taken place at the Shilpakala

addressed issues like technology, media, and intellectual property (IP) rights that the music industry often faces.

This exceptional music festival is the result of its recent activities in Bangladesh that include works to preserve some of the cultural heritage, mainly traditional instruments. "Other important topics that were discussed during the conference were the role of the government in connecting artists to one another, regional collaboration and the role of women in

the recent attacks going on, we could not ensure security to our foreign delegates in an open space like that. Thankfully, we had the support of Shilpakala Academy," says Nafis.

According to the organiser, this is a long term process. "We have just begun, so immediate results will come one after the other, in their own time. What I want to ensure is follow-up. Dialogues are held everywhere, by everyone. What keeps us behind is the lack of follow-ups."



"We've already had some wonderful guests with us this year. The Regional Director of Culture, SAARC, Soundarie David was here. Anupama Shekhar of the Asia-Europe Foundation was here, along with Anne Mobark of Concert Norway."

The opening ceremony of Bangladesh Music Week was held on November 6, 2015 at 10 am at the Shongitashala Auditorium of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The occasion was inaugurated by Asaduzzaman Noor, the Honorable Minister, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, as the Chief Guest. Her Excellency Merete

Academy, conducted by the specialist light engineer Naveen Deshpande, Director and Founder of Mixtape and Ground Kontrolle, India.

Never before had so many musicians, organisers, sponsors, light and sound specialists and government personnel come together under such a common platform to discuss their issues. Bangladesh Music Week not only ensured this very important coming together, but also made those who were present realise the importance of it. They shared their views in 13 panels that had

the industry," says Nafis.

One very important thing that they have already achieved through this festival is the interest of the local professionals. "Musicians from all walks of life were present. Although we were hoping for more exposure, especially among the youth, we were still quite happy with the turn-out since this is just our first Bangladesh Music Week." The event was supposed to be held in a bigger manner, in a bigger space, "we were preferring to hold this in an outdoor spot- like Rabintra Sharabar. But with

In the past three years, the music industry has taken surprisingly large leaps forward. With new artists coming in every other day, new labels and new organisers, the industry has begun to flourish beautifully. With Bangladesh Music Week, Nafis hopes to blend all genres and take them to a new level. "We have everything we need and an abundance of talent. What we lack is using the infrastructure. We just need to use it. With everyone having the same goal, all we needed was a platform. And here we are."