

WHAT'S ON
Programmes on Victory Day
 Organiser: Liberation War Museum
 Venue: Liberation War Museum and Jalladkhana Boddhobhumi, Mirpur
 Date: Dec 10-16
 Time: 4pm onwards

Bijoy Utsab
 Organiser: Sammillito Sangskritik Jote
 Venue: Shaheed Minar and Rabindra Sarobar
 Date: Dec 13-20
 Time: 4pm onwards

Solo Exhibition
 Microtears
 Artist: Dilara Begum Jolly
 Venue: Daily Star-Bengal Arts Precinct
 Date: Dec 12-Jan 9; Time: 12-7pm

Bangladesh Film Festival 2015
 Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
 Venue: National Art Gallery Auditorium, BSA
 Date: Dec 10-24; Time: 6pm

Solo Art Exhibition
 Artist: Kalidas Karmakar
 Title: Alluvial Realization
 Venue: Athena Gallery of Fine Arts/Uttar Badda
 Date: Dec 4-22
 Time: 10am-8pm



WHEN THE WORLD SANG FOR BANGLADESH

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Deep into the night on December 1, 2015, a stadium full of about 40,000 people at the Army Stadium had just been left awestruck by a masterful tabla recital by Ustad Zakir Hussain at the Bengal Classical Music Festival. In his sign-off, the legend said something not heard often from visiting musicians performing in this country. "Joy Bangla!" he said, and very few would have made a connection. But there was one.

Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Alla Rakha and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan perform at the historic "Concert for Bangladesh".

It was 44 years ago, when a 20-year-old Zakir Hussain watched on as his father, tabla great Ustad Alla Rakha, played in front of 40,000 people at the Madison Square Garden in New York with the biggest names in World music of the time, to raise funds for a land locked in a David vs Goliath battle to become a nation, thousands of kilometers away. On August 1, 1971, George Harrison held together two concerts (at 2:30pm and 8pm) that featured Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, Billy Preston, Leon Russell, Ringo Starr, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Ustad Alla Rakha -- and Ravi Shankar, who was the scintilla of this concert that bloomed into a beacon.

Ravi Shankar, son of the Bangladeshi-born Shyam Shankar, had mentioned to his friend and co-musician Harrison about the atrocities happening in Bangladesh when they were recording for Raga, the

documentary on Shankar's life. He asked Harrison to help alleviate the sufferings, as Harrison later immortalized in the song "Bangla Desh" with which he would close both the concerts:

*"My friend came to me, with sadness in his eyes
 Told me that he wanted help, before his country dies
 Although I couldn't feel the pain, I knew I had to try
 Now I'm asking all of you, to help us save some lives..."*

Harrison later said (in his autobiography "I Me Mine") "So I did get involved, and for three months I was on the telephone sitting up what became the concert for Bangla Desh, trying to talk people into it, talking to Eric and all those people who did do it."

And so his supergroup, backed by three sets of artists -- the band, The

Hollywood Horns and the backing vocalists, rehearsed in bits and pieces. It was on July 31 when Clapton and Dylan showed up to rehearsal for the first time. The incredible stories of the concert -- of how the crowd applauded Ravi Shankar, mistaking his tuning of the sitar to be a performance to the uncertainty of Dylan's performance: a set-list taped to Harrison's white Fender Strat read "Bob?" -- are legendary. But beyond the concert, it was a statement, written and showcased through music: as Harrison said, "The musicians completely put down their own egos to play together. The whole vibe of the concert was that it was something bigger than the lot of us." Eric Clapton was quoted as saying "This will always be remembered as a time that we could be proud of being musicians."

Nearly US\$2,50,000 was raised and handed to the United Nations



A supergroup of performers including Harrison, ex-Beatle Ringo Starr, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Leon Russell and the band Badfinger.

Children's Fund for the Relief to Refugee Children of Bangladesh, just from the concert. "There were a lot of kids and general public who, having had the inspiration to go and do something, all started collecting

money and were banging on UNICEF doors, saying 'what can we do to help?'" Harrison recalled later. Before any country, and political and geographical entity had recognised Bangladesh, the world of music did.

It was the big centerpiece around which a number of other creative minds rallied for Bangladesh: most notably US folk legend Joan Baez with the heart-wrenching song "Bangladesh" and poet Allen Ginsberg's "September on Jessor Road". Ravi Shankar had also released an EP "Joi Bangla" in collaboration with Alla Rakha and Ali Akbar Khan (produced by none other than George Harrison) to raise awareness for The Concert for Bangladesh. But it was the woes and screams from Bangladesh that had traveled half a world across to reach Harrison, and he relayed it on:

*"Bangla Desh, Bangla Desh,
 Where so many people are dying fast
 And it sure looks like a mess
 I've never seen such distress
 Now won't you lend your hand and understand?
 Relieve the people of Bangladesh..."*

And the world took notice.

Fighting for the country with music

Shaheen Samad to hand over her memorable harmonium to LWM

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Liberation War of 1971 ignited patriotic passion of many artists, singers and cultural activists who, on their front, fought for the country. Eminent artiste Shaheen Samad joined Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha during the War of Liberation, and inspired millions with her sonorous voice raising funds for the refugee camps and boosting the morale of Freedom Fighters. The cultural troupe used to travel to refugee camps and different areas in Mukta Anchal, perform patriotic songs, arrange puppet shows and stage dramas.

"Liberation War has always been an inspiration for me. I sang a lot of songs during that time and feel honoured to have been able to inspire our Freedom Fighters. The memorable harmonium that I played while performing the spirited songs is still with me. I take great care of it every day. I wish to hand it over to Liberation War Museum (LWM)," said Shaheen Samad.

Shaheen Samad vividly remembers the turbulent days in 1971; on a truck with fellow members of Bangladesh Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha --



Shaheen Samad with her well loved harmonium. PHOTO: RIDWAN ADID RUPON

Lubna Mariam, Naila Zaman, Bipul Bhattacharjee, Mahmudur Rahman Benu, Dalia Nausheen, Debu Chowdhury and others -- she went from camp to camp, singing to refugees and Freedom Fighters to boost their morale. The 1995 documentary film "Muktir Gaan" (The Song of Freedom), directed by Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud, explore the impact of cultural identity on the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, where music provided a source of

inspiration to the Freedom Fighters. Tareque and Catherine Masud used original footage by American filmmaker Leor Levin, as well as other archival footage collected from the UK and India.

According to Shaheen, "We used to sing the Tagore song 'Oi Pohailo Timir Rati', Nazrul song 'Karar Oi Louho Kopat', Mushad Ali's 'Shonen Shonen Bhaishob', 'Barricade Bayonet Berajaal', 'Jago Jago', 'Bishom Doirar Dheu' and many more."

"This was our contribution to the War. The sight of Freedom Fighters being moved to tears while listening to these songs is something I'll never forget," said the artiste.

"I was touched while approaching wounded Freedom Fighters at refugee camps. At one night around 1:30am, I was immensely moved by the sight of a hundred freedom-loving faces waiting under a tree for us to cross them with our truck. They insisted us to perform."

The eminent artiste wants live performance of those moving songs on TV channels, at least one song in a week and thus covering all the year round, and not only in the months of December and March.

One of the torchbearers of Nazrul Sangeet in Bangladesh, Shaheen Samad has an illustrious music career over five decades. Taking tutelage in classical music from Ustad Ram Gopal, Ustad Fazlul Haque Mia and Ustad Ful Mohammad, she attended BFA and later on, entered Chhayanaut where she found Sheikh Lutfur Rahman, Sohrab Hossain and Anjali Ray as mentors. At one point, she also learned from Dr. Sanjida Khatun, one of the troupe leaders of Mukti Sangrami Shilpi Sangstha.

"Bijoy Nishan Urcche Oi"

Rafiqul Alam reminisces on Victory Day at Shadhin Bangla Betar

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Rafiqul Alam has made a name for himself in the country's music industry in the past few decades with his melodious voice. A singer of the famous Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro he sang many patriotic songs to lift the spirits of Freedom Fighters during the Liberation War. The veteran recently spoke to The Daily Star about the songs rendered by him ahead of the day of victory.

"We felt helpless and sad when we left the country for West Bengal in India and started singing as a singer of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro during the 1971 Liberation War," Rafiqul Alam told The Daily Star.

"It all happened because we were very worried over country's independence, but on December 14, we the artistes of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro heard that the occupation forces retreated to Dhaka from Jessore Cantonment, and started to feel like the country would be freed from the Pakistani army soon."

"The following day, we recorded a chorus song, titled 'Bijoy Nishan Urcche Oi', composed by Sujeyo Shyam. It was the last song we recorded for Shadhin Bangla Betar."

"On December 15, some artistes of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro came back to the country but I stayed there for few more days. The country became independent on December 16. After getting the taste of freedom, it seemed to us that we had been reborn. I still remember the celebrations that began with crackers blasting on the night of Victory. We had great fun the whole night then."

"Finally, I came back to the Independent Bangladesh. As I'm a singer, I got more involved with music later. In my long career span, I rendered many songs of victory and country, including 'Amar Baul Moner Ektara Ta', 'Ekti Doyel Bon-e Dakle Ami Bangladesher Gaan Shuni' and many more."

"Ahead of this year's Victory Day, I sang a song 'Keu Bojhe Keu Bujhte Chai Na' to be aired on ATN Bangla. Apart from this, a profile on me will be screened as the artiste of Liberation War and Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro. The programme has been directed by Hanif Sangket. Besides, I will perform at Bangabhaban on the day."

"Music is very powerful. When we rendered songs at Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro, the tracks inspired the Freedom Fighters. It makes me very proud that I did something for the country during the Liberation War as a singer."



"MUKTIJUDDHER ITIHASH"
 on ATN Bangla

A CORRESPONDENT

Marking Victory Day, ATN Bangla will air a special documentary "Muktijuddher Itihash" today at 11:15am. Planned and directed by Mahfuzur Rahman, the programme depicts the history of Bangladesh's Liberation War. Starting from the Language Movement to the War of Independence, the programme sheds light on many untold tales and includes rare documents such as the announcement of independence by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and more. The documentary aims at spreading the spirit of the Liberation War with its historical overtones.

"Barir Naam Shadhinota" on Channel i



A CORRESPONDENT

Single-episode television play "Barir Naam Shadhinota" will air tonight at 7:50pm on Channel i. Written by Faridur Reza Sagor and directed by Arun Chowdhury, the play encircles three immi-

grant siblings who come to Bangladesh to sell their paternal home. After finalising deals with builders, they discover the history of their home.

Mamunur Rashid, Abul Hayat, Raisul Islam Asad, Shampa Reza, Mithila and Samia Sayed are in the cast among others.