

# A CHAT WITH DR. ISRAFIL SHAHEEN



Dr. Israfil Shaheen is a director and professor at the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka. After having graduated from the prestigious National School of Drama in India in 1991, he obtained his PhD from the Rabindra Vharati University, Kolkata, India, in 1999 on "Street Theatre in Bangladesh". His Bengali adaptation of "Phaedra" will be shown in the 9th Asia Pacific Bureau (APB) hosted by National School of Drama in New Delhi. We decided to sit and have a chat with him about his experience in theatre and arts.

**Tell us about the ongoing 9th Asia Pacific Theatre Festival and "Phaedra".**  
From the many Asia Pacific countries Bangladesh was selected in this festival and only the Department of Theatre and

Performance Studies, University of Dhaka was selected to take part in this prestigious event. I think we are very lucky that our students got to perform a classical play by John Racine called "Phaedra", which has been adapted in Bengali.

**How did you start your career in theatre and arts?**

Before I started teaching, I used to work with a theatre group from 1981 to 1988. This was the preliminary stage of my involvement in theatre where I learned most things about theatre not just in an academic way, but also practically as I got to have a profound knowledge on how group theatre works.

**How was your experience in National School of Drama?**

My journey in NSD took place between 1988 to 1991. I learned many things, of which, I believe the routine that they followed surrounding a play is what helped me the most. They work on all aspects of theatre that includes set designing, acting and many more. This helped me understand how a play should be directed, how to prepare an actor, how to analyze the literature among many other things. NSD provides the students with the full-theatre experience.

**What are your future plans?**

I plan to train students and simultaneously train myself. I also want to tour in many remote places with our troops. I strongly believe that the theatre needs to spread in remote areas of the nation and interact with different people in terms of class and community so that they can

understand and appreciate the quality of work being done here.

**What are your expectations from the next generation theatre performers?**

I believe that theatre is a form of entertainment that can bring joy and delight in the lives of people and at the same time it can carry strong social messages. I believe cultural activities such as this can bring an end to terrorism and all the unfortunate things going around us and it can be best achieved by the creative new talents who can really spread social messages through their drama in a way that can really convey the true essence. Hence, the next generation performers could be the solution to all our problems.

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Interviewed by Syed Ahnaf Sadeed

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