

# OF LOCATIONS AND DISLOCATIONS

## Rehearsed reading of Ben Musgrave's bi-lingual play on Bangladesh



**ARTS GAZE**  
**BY LUBNA MARIUM**

As a riposte to 'Brexit', award-winning British theatre director Marianne Elliott states, "I feel that art, somehow, has to be at the heart of what's happening now. We need to relay stories. Ever more needed in moments when there is an atmosphere of extreme right politics gaining ground." With this apparent death of cosmopolitanism in the background, British playwright Ben Musgrave's bi-lingual play about Bangladesh, scheduled to be performed in both English and Bangla, is just that artistic response which is needed in the day. It looks at 'homelands', beyond the boundaries of the 'nation'.

On April 17, 2017, a small but enthusiastic audience at the EMK Center in Dhanmandi was given a foretaste of the upcoming production through a rehearsed reading of the play "Mad Bees Riot in the Light" by a talented cast of Bangladeshi actors and two visiting artists from England, named Imogen Bulter-Cole and Rosamunde Hutt. Hutt also directed the play through a ten-hour workshop exploration of the script.

The event was co-produced by Imogen, who has been part of a few Bangla-British initiatives since she first came to Dhaka in 2009 as a part of a BBC project. Later Imogen helped to take Nasiruddin Yusuf's play "Tempest" to the 'Globe' in 2012. She deserves credit for being a staunch friend of Bangladeshi creative arts.

An online blog about Ben Musgrave

states that "much of his work is inspired by his international childhood" which he spent in England, Bangladesh and India. It is Bangladesh, though, where his parents came to work in a Christian Mission, which left a lasting impact on Ben. As a successful and well-awarded playwright, Musgrave has been courting Bangladesh in quite a few of his projects. 'The British Club', an audio-play about a Bangladeshi cop, was broadcast on BBC in 2012. And, even while working on "Mad Bees", Ben Musgrave has been commissioned by theatre pioneers 'Tara Arts' to write a new play about the Indigo Revolt in 1859-60. The revolt, also known as the 'Blue Mutiny', erupted in Bengal in response to terrible exploitation by British Indigo planters. To do this, Ben has toured 'indigo land' and extensively researched Dinobandhu Mitra's political play "Nildarpan".

Given this context, it is easier to understand the impetus behind Musgrave's play "Mad Bees" where the personal and the public intersect and interrogate through the portrayal of a tumultuous relationship between a mother, Carol Kite, and her estranged daughter, Rachel. Carol is, obviously, an expatriate woman from the West who is wedded to Bangladesh and it concomitant joys and woes. Rachel, much like Ben, spent a carefree childhood in rural Bangladesh, having made intense emotional bonds with people close and protective of Carol. At the crux of the



mother-daughter conflict is Rachel's decision to return to a 'homeland' far from her mother's adopted country of residence. This immediately sets the stage for a discourse on 'locations' and 'dislocations' and makes us reflect on this matter, as Homi Bhaba so eloquently states, "the need to think beyond narratives or originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences". "Mad Bees" very effectively makes us question core issues related to our identities. It ques-

tions 'nation-ness' and 'nationality'. Are we of the land in which we are born? Or, do we belong to the land where we form life-long bonds of love and friendship? Add to this the narrative of a 'white-woman', Rachel's mother, dedicating her life to the upliftment of the destitute and the forgotten. Do we see here the overtones of Ben's own childhood spent with his Christian missionary parents, coming to the boondocks to spread the message of the gospel?

The audience was left to wonder about the finale, as the readings were from only a few excerpts of the play. It is to be hoped that such a fine initiative will look beyond clichéd messages and go the extra mile to speak up for the need for a constituency of global commonality.

All the actors deserve kudos for coming up with such a lively and innovative presentation. Veteran actor Naila Azad, as Carol Kite's world-weary legal representative, and Imogen, as the initially uptight daughter, neatly set the tone with their portrayals. Imogen was especially good in portraying Rachel's transition from edginess to certain tranquility, as childhood memories supersede antagonism. Others, too, played their roles effectively. Rosemunde Hutt is to be congratulated for the imaginative presentation. The audience was informed that eminent theatre activist Ishrat Nishat too put in a lot of effort during the workshop.

We look forward to the final staging of the play.

## A FORGOTTEN HERO

Pinaki Bhattacharya

(Continued)

Waheed started his American life as a security guard to the company until 1991 when he became a Vice President. In 1997 he started his own company and became a CEO of USS Security Services which provided security guard services to companies like UPS. As successful as Waheed was in his business and the industry, he was still unhappy because this was not his passion. His passion was always acting and being involved in the entertainment. In late 2001, Waheed had a falling out with one of his partners in his business. Within a year from losing his business Waheed had experienced severe financial difficulties. Waheed became depressed and dependent on alcohol to try to cope with taking care of his wife and three boys. Waheed's eldest son Matthew and wife Rona had been working in 2001 and began to help the household while Waheed searched to start a new company.

Waheed came from an elite family but his parents were never helpful in any way to him, and always refused to help him. In 2003 Waheed's mother Shireen traveled to Afghanistan to sell their properties in excess

of over 3 million dollars. Waheed found out that they had given their youngest son 500,000 dollars to start his own company. Once Waheed found this out he was heart-broken. By 2003 Waheed's family had downgraded from a 4-bedroom house with a pool to a 2-bedroom apartment because that was all that they could afford. Waheed's downfall continued and the depression spiraled until November 28, 2004, when Waheed left a note that was directed towards his parents, which said:

"I don't want to cause anyone any issues. Cremate my body. I have already looked up the price. It is only \$800. Do not bury me as I know the cost is very high and I don't want to give you guys that hardship. I love my wife and my three boys but it's time to go."

Later that night Waheed had decided to end his life by committing suicide via a bullet wound to the head. Waheed Kader left behind a wife and three young boys aged 21, 17, and 13 years old.

One thing that Waheed would want you to know is that this story might have ended tragically for him, but not for his boys and wife. Waheed would be very proud to tell you that his family preserved and made it on their own. All the chips were stacked against them

without their father and leader around, but Matthew Kline Kader took over the role of the man of the house and in 2004 started his own company without any capital or financial help from anyone. Matthew provided for his family until 2014 and now owns a home in Las Vegas with his wife and 7 month old son. Yama Kader, Waheed's middle son, who was 17 at the time of his death, went on to get a full paid basketball scholarship from a Division 3 college in Indiana by the name of Holycross. Yama graduated from Holycross in 2014 and moved back to Orange County Ca and lives with his girlfriend in Irvine California. Yossef Kader, Waheed's youngest son, was a star and captain of his high-school basketball team and graduated in 2010. Yossef is also the father to a 7-month old son. Rona Kader in 2012 received a job as a linguist for the United States Army and traveled to Afghanistan to translate documents and conversations from Pashtu and Persian to English. Today, Rona is back living in Irvine Ca with her son Yossef. We know Waheed is watching his sons, wife and grandsons, and he couldn't be happier.

Bengali movie lovers will always remember Waheed who, along with his performance, will be remembered in Bangladesh long after his countrymen forgets him.