

CHANDRA TRIPURA

Hometown: Chittagong Hill Tracts
Styles: Tripura, Chakma, Marma, Shaotal
Inspirations: Mamata Shankar, Lubna Marium

My cousin Sucharita Raoza (residing in France) was my first ever dance teacher back in Khagrachhari, followed by Rupna Tripura who was a teacher at Shilpokala Academy Kahgrachhari. Our dance was portrayed as a part of folk dance and we practiced it along with a touch of Kathak and Bharatnatyam. My father was the founding member of an NGO named 'Nabarang Kalyan Shomiti' which still exists. Along with many other programs there was one workshop named 'Katharak Mwsamwng', which was arranged to train students in our traditional dance form called 'Katharak', also known as Bottle Dance, which happens to be my favorite dance form as well. That workshop program inspired and created many dancers and still does so, and I am one of them.

I did not specifically choose any form of dancing to master. I have a sense of a lot of types, especially the ones offered in Bangladesh from Tripura, Chakma, Marma, Shaotal, etc. When I came to Dhaka I joined Chayanaut Vidyaton where I learned Manipuri along with Mou Das and Nilmoni Sinha, and Bharatnatyam under Muhammad Kazi Rokibul Haque Ripon. I also learned Kathak for quite a while from Kochi Rahman. I took a short course on contemporary dance style from Shadhona and was supervised by Spectrum Dance Theater. All these to flourish my knowledge, but never narrowed down to any specific form. Moreover, I am still trying my best to learn other dance forms offered in different communities.

I am a founder member of a community called the 'Bangladesh Adibashi Cultural Forum', through which we wish to connect to every community to the root level, especially in Chittagong Hill Tracts. I am a choreographer and also a member of the executive body of this committee. Everybody is aware of the political instability in those areas but a very few are aware of the culture threat we are facing. Keeping this cultural movement in mind like Adibashi Dibosh along with other noticeable accidents and situations we have arranged Dance and Music Dramas in many districts along with Dhaka, and my future plan is to keep up our fight through dance.



PRODIGIES OF RHYTHM

Art has always been engraved into our culture, literature and thoughts. One form of art that has especially been prominent in Bangladesh is dance; and it is certainly true that our land is full of talented and promising dancers. Unfortunately, classical dance isn't a form that is frequently practiced in Bangladesh, which leads to homegrown talents seeking the help of Indian maestros and gurus. Nonetheless, the fusion of classic and contemporary, especially combined with the plethora of young Bangladeshi dancers, is giving rise to a new era of dance that is simply glorious to behold. It is unfortunate that we had to pick only one dancer for the cover, but these young artists all have amazing skills in their craft. Star Showbiz introduces you to ten young dancers who have not only learned specific dance forms professionally, but have also made a name for themselves in various national and international stages.

Rafi Hossain, Editor



ABU NAYEEM

Hometown: Borguna
Styles: Contemporary, Kathak
Inspiration: Akram Khan

As a dancer, I always felt that versatility is crucial. I do Kathak as well as Contemporary dance forms, partially because it helps a lot when I am doing choreography. I initially started learning from Ziaur Rahman and Shadhona Rani Ghosh in Borguna Zila. In Dhaka, I learned from M.R Wasek and Ivan Shahriar Sohag. Lubna Apa (Lubna Marium) gave me a scholarship to learn at Shadhona. After that, I left for Kolkata to complete a one-year academic diploma on contemporary dance. My instructors were Dr. Mital Sengupta

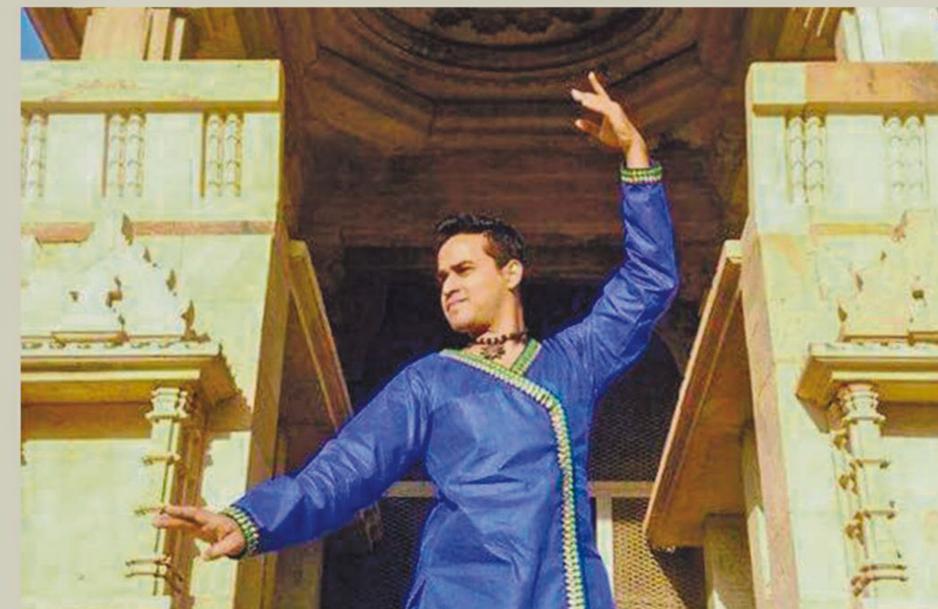
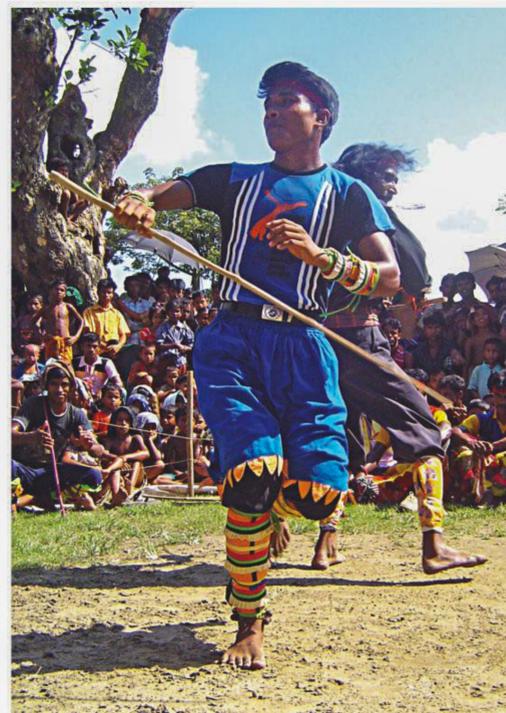
and Ronnie Shambik Ghose.

I do not have any side-professions except for dance. Although it used to be very difficult to earn a decent living while doing only that, I would say that I am managing pretty well. If one puts enough effort into it, it is very possible to make a decent living as a professional dancer. Last year, I represented Bangladesh at the Gati Residency Dance Festival, an international festival in Delhi, where dancers from many countries performed. My absolute favorite dancer is Akram Khan, and I really admire what Shibli Mohammad sir and his group has done for years now. I also really love 'Amra Kojon' from Bogura, they are incredible as a team.

ASHRAFUL ALAM

Hometown: Khidirpur, Netrokona
Style: 'Bouty', a variation of Lathi Khela

The dance form that I perform has been passed down to me from my grandfather, Ahsanuddin Munshi. Our family has been doing 'Lathi Khela' for generations, but in our region it is known by many different names and forms. 'Bouty Khela', 'Kalajira', 'Manraji' and 'Daina' are variations of it. I am a construction worker by profession, and used to work in Singapore until very recently. I have a dance group in my village, and we move around performing in functions like 'musolmani', marriage functions and other social gatherings that people call us to. We travel around villages dancing, and we typically receive 5000 to 7000 taka for each performance. I would like to continue my craft for as long as I can.



TAHNUN AHMEDY

Hometown: Sylhet
Styles: Contemporary
Inspirations: Mikhail Baryshnikov, Lubna Marium

I initially started to learn dancing from Shishu Academy when I was little. I was there for three years, and then shifted to Wasek bhai (M.R Wasek). I performed a lot during that period of time. After that, I learned Kathak from Shibli Mohammad sir for two years. In 2013, I got a scholarship from Shadhona and went to Hridmosaic Institute in Kolkata for further training in a one-year certificate course for contemporary dance. After my term was finished, they offered me another two years of scholarship and I consented.

After I came back to Dhaka, I took dancing professionally. Even though I agree that the situation is better than it used to be, it is also true that we rely way too much on corporate shows to survive. It is possible for someone to only teach the art of dance for a living, but it is rare. You will see that dancers get a lot of funding both from the government and other organizations. Our government should step up in helping the further growth of dancing as a serious art. I have recently participated in the biennial Attakalari Festival in Bangalore. I plan to continue doing contemporary in the future, but I want to keep a strong classical base to it. I want to infuse the genre of folk into the stories of my choreography, and make it more Bangladesh-related to create a distinct genre that is recognizable worldwide.

ZUAIRIYAH MOULI

Hometown: Sylhet
Style: Bharatnatyam
Inspiration: Amit Chowdhury

I like to identify myself as a Bharatanatyam dancer. I have been learning Bharatanatyam from Amit Chowdhury in Kolpotoru since the last five years, but I initially started learning dance from Chayanaut. When I started dancing, I never thought of taking it as a profession. I initially began because my mother really wanted me to learn dancing. Over time, I developed an irrevocable love for my craft as the beautiful geometric lines that Bharatanatyam operates in really had me gravitate towards it.

One gripe that we have with our society is the fact that dancing isn't considered as a serious profession. I think it is up to us artists to rectify that point of view through hard work and dedication. In my opinion, a dancer should be taken as seriously as a doctor or an engineer. Another thing about Bangladesh is, we do not have any good documentation/books about dancing. What we read is almost always imported from outside. If we can come up with our own identity and documentation through local books, then I think many more people will gravitate towards the art of dancing.



Shweta Podder PHOTOGRAPHY
COVER STORY