

A passion for THEATRE

I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.

— Oscar Wilde



Theatre is without a doubt the very embodiment of complex versatility in motion. It is not a book for an individual to enjoy at any time he or she pleases, nor is it a pre-recorded movie to skip and pause at will. Carried down from ancient times the theatre tradition is unique in every country in the world.

From Jatras held in village fairs to Shakespeare being staged in posh theatres to newer experimental performances, the variety and versatility in Bangladeshi theatre is simply remarkable. But to keep up with the fast-forward lifestyle, theatre too has taken back stage from the list of urban pastimes. The newer generation of performers are fuelled by their passion and are eager to deliver, but are the crowds really there? As for the performers themselves, how far they are they willing to go to really put this?

Talking to Ashraf Ashish of Desh Natok about his hopes and aspirations, he mentions that he is through and through a realist. He sees time as the only truth and is ready to go wherever it will take him. To him, theatre is what has made him what he is.

His recent catchy commercials too are an added flare to his portfolio of performances.

When asked about his frustrations, he immediately replied that it is an inherent element for any and all performers working actively in the theatre. What he does is not internalise the mental demons that try to bite back at him.

Speaking about the newer performers,

Ashraf Ashish praises their effort in this time and age. Answering a calling like this is one of the most praise worthy thing a young person can do and he wholeheartedly welcomes the youngsters.

Theatre itself is a living art and it needs to progress with time. A K Azad Shetu of Centre for Asian Theatre feels that there is a

gap during his time in the National Theatre in Oslo, Norway. He mentions that newer, younger audiences are not drawn to the theatres as each performance is staged. Maybe the tide of the time will eventually turn the younger people away from their screens to the stage even for a little while.

Dhaka itself is a host to multitude of

blue collar jobs. He dearly wishes that there was a way to reach to out to them in the same manner as the performers of Dhaka; their efforts are just as good or even better according to him. He sees the theatre as a voice for the people. No matter the drawbacks, he works for the betterment of his own performance to convey his message to the people.

Theatre demands time and attention on its own, from the backdrop to the actors and actresses giving their all to depict life within life and right down to the sound effects that heighten the senses — it is a picture painted in live motion.

Passion is simply one word, theatre needs true love and a vision to convey, yet a play can never be complete without the audience. While the actors and actresses of different ages are giving it their all, the crowd may still need some catching up to do. With all optimism, the performers and the stage await those who hear the call. Won't you listen to it?

By Iris Farina

Photo: Sheikh Mehedi Morshed

Special thanks to —

Ashraf Ashish, Actor at the Theatre Troupe: Desh Natok. He can be reached via Facebook at fb.me/ashraf.ashish for updates on his latest works.

A K Azad Shetu, Actor at Centre for Asian Theatre. He can be reached at fb.me/shetu002 Sayed Rinku, of Dhaka Theatre and Bangladesh Graam Theatre, also the owner of Raindrops Productions.



widening scarcity of local writers to bridge in the classics with the modern demands.

Theatre, unfortunately, is not highly regarded as an academic pursuit, but being educated in this regard is the key to progress. Shetu considers himself very lucky as he came into contact with prominent international choreographers and directors

theatre venues, but they are not adequate as an outreach for the city, let alone the entire country. Dhaka Theatre's Sayed Rinku speaks about the passions of the performers throughout the country.

He recalls a workshop at Rangpur where he encountered aspiring performers who had day jobs like waiters at a hotel, or other

