

Pushpo O Mongol Int'l
Theatre Festival
Organiser: Aranyak Natyadal
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala
Academy
Date: Oct 22-28; Time: 7pm



Musical Soiree
An Evening of Geet & Ghazals
Artist: Manzurul Islam
Venue: AFD, Dhanmondi
Date: Oct 27
Time: 6:30pm



Duet Art Exhibition
Title: Diversity in Duality 2
Artist: Abdus Shakoor Shah & Ranjit Das
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery
Date: Oct 13-27
Time: 3-8pm



Kaifi Aur Main
Artistes: Javed Akhtar, Shabana Azmi
Organiser: Blues Communications
Venue: Krishibid Auditorium
Date: October 25
Time: 7pm



Solo Painting Exhibition
Title: Mrittika Maya by Samar Majumder
Venue: La Gallery, AFD
Date: Oct 13-26
Time: 3-9pm



The festival should be held at any cost

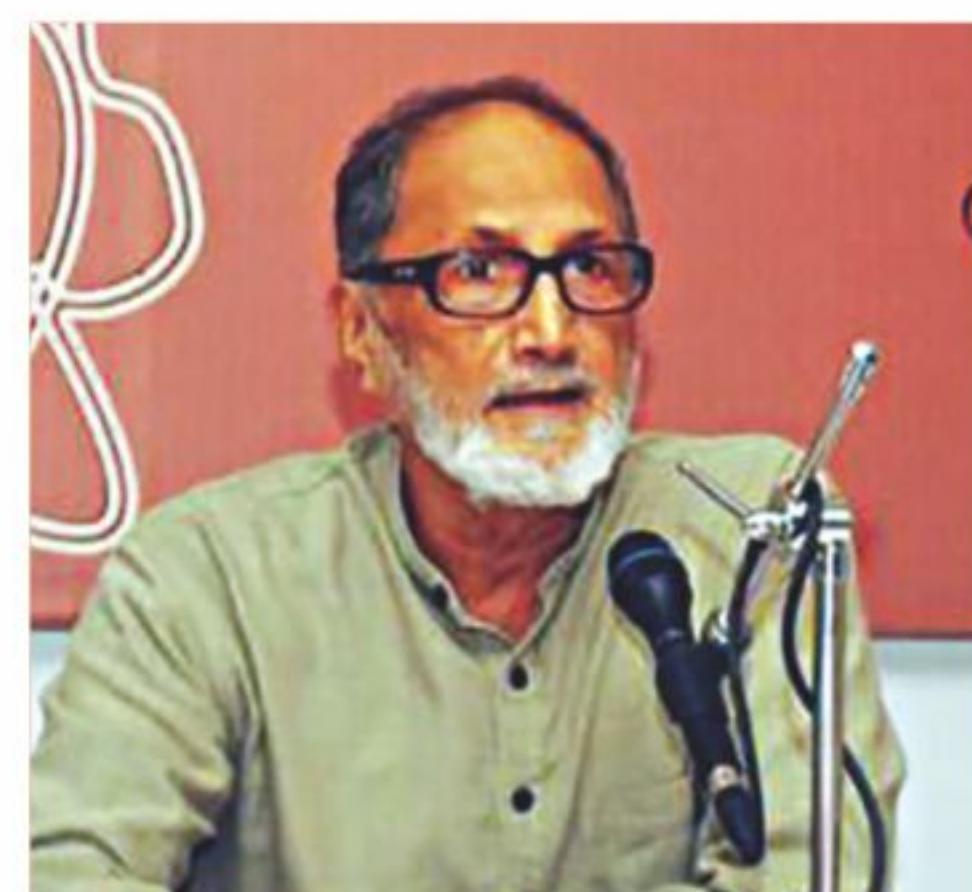
EMINENT PERSONALITIES SHARE THEIR VIEWS ON BCMF CANCELLATION



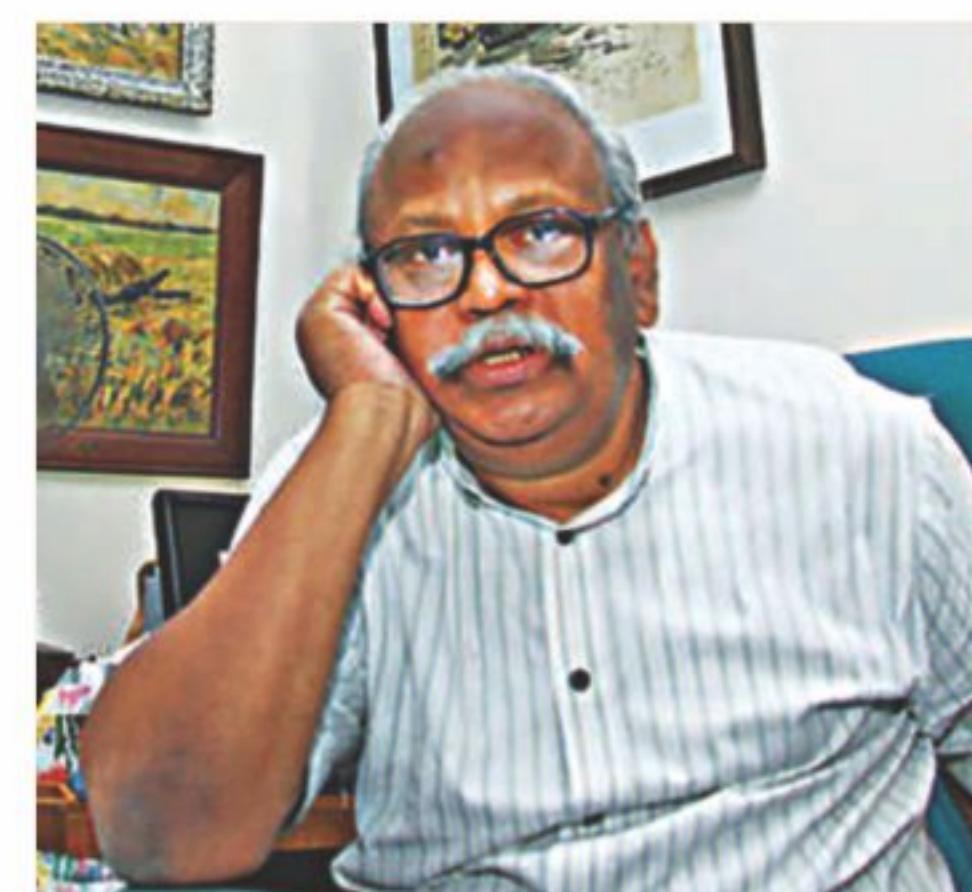
Asaduzzaman Noor



Ferdousi Rahman



Alimur Rahman Khan



Rafiqun Nabi



Ramendu Majumdar



Dr Asit Roy



Sharmila Banerjee

ZAHNGIR ALOM & NAZIBA BASHER

The sixth Bengal Classical Music Festival 2017 is off. This piece of bad news was disclosed at a press conference organised by Bengal Foundation. Not only Dhaka music lovers but also music enthusiasts from across the world fervently await the month of November when the world's largest classical music festival is held. Over the years, the festival has left a lasting impact of our collective psyche and culture. Eminent cultural personalities, in instant reactions, shared their dismay at the cancellation of the event with The Daily Star. Excerpts:

Asaduzzaman Noor, Cultural Affairs Minister
It is frustrating that the Bengal Classical Music Festival is not being held this year. The festival has so far greatly influenced our music and culture and set a world class taste among our artistes and music lovers. Finding an optional venue for such a prestigious festival has many concerns including the security. I am still optimistic that with the

direct initiative of the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the festival may be held at a re-scheduled timing.

Ferdousi Rahman, eminent singer

Of course it's heartbreaking news that the Bengal Classical Music Festival, which has set an example in the world, is not returning this year. The glory of our classical music was on the wane, when Bengal Foundation brought back that glory. Thousands of young audience would flock together every night and appreciate the proceedings onstage. My father would tell that it is to listen to classical music more than to render so that you can become a connoisseur to distinguish performance of any raga. I cannot even think that it is not

being held this year. I am feeling sad. The government, especially the Prime Minister herself, should look into the matter. The festival has so far attained world class repute.

The government should rather patronise this kind of initiative. A legacy of our own was being formed. At this stage it was cancelled.

Alimur Rahman Khan, eminent classical music exponent

What Bengal Foundation has done over the years, is outstanding. They have made the impossible possible. Not only I, lakhs of music lovers will miss the festival this year and they are surely heartbroken to hear the news. I cannot specifically give my opinion regarding why this festival is not being held.

But this should be held regularly for our own interest.

Rafiqun Nabi, eminent painter

Such a prestigious festival should not be stopped. For the last five years, I along with tens of thousands of classical music lovers eagerly wait for the month of November, as we are regulars at the festival. The Dhaka audience has the rare opportunity to listen to the pure form of music performed by world renowned maestros. Noted and promising Bangladeshi artistes too perform here. The festival brings like-minded people together. It's a large congregation of artists, musicians and music aficionados. There are many people like me who will be disheartened at

the news. The festival is a milestone cultural event. This should be continued. There might have been technical difficulties; I don't exactly know. If there's any problem in getting the venue on schedule, the festival might be rescheduled. It may be held in December. But anyhow and at any cost, the Bengal Classical Music Festival should be held. It's not easy to get Army stadium as the festival venue. And it is not mandatory to select Army Stadium as the festival venue. The organisers should look for other suitable venues while the government must provide proper security and other assistance like free movements of the artistes. I repeat. The festival must never be stopped!

Ramendu Majumdar, eminent theatre and cultural activist

The cancellation is tragic. We wait all year around for this event. Since the inception of the Bengal Classical Music Festival, we have been able to attract thousands of Bangladeshis to something as pure as classical music. So many young children developed a taste for the beautiful genre and now all of us are collectively devastated. This programme took place even during politically volatile times in our country, so I don't know why it has been cancelled this time or why the venue isn't being given. It is just very distressing for all of us.

Dr Asit Roy, classical vocalist & Head of Music Department, Rajshahi University

The cancellation of the Bengal Classical Music Festival is dreadful and unfortunate. We have created history with this event across the continent. It was cherished by people from all over the world, and this programme had immense influence in the cultural arena of South Asia. Such a cancellation will definitely hamper our cultural progress. All of us, who wait every year for these five days of classical music, including the heartbroken.

Sharmila Banerjee, prominent Manipuri dancer and founder of Nrityanandan

The cancellation is devastating. This year was going to be a major achievement for many young artistes who were scheduled to do solo performances this year. To get a platform like Bengal Classical Music Festival, and then to lose it, is heartbreaking for all of us. We were going to recognise and cherish many of our own young artistes this year, who have all been preparing and working really hard for their performances.

"I lost my uncle in '99, my son in 2000; Today I feel that same pain again" ... ABUL KHAIR



In agony of heartbreak; Abul Khair speaks at the press conference.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

FAHMIM FERDOUS

A Bengal Foundation press conference in October is usually a call for celebration itself for us journalists. It invariably means the announcement of the Bengal Classical Music Festival, and the list of new and returning musical maestros to the 'biggest classical music festival in the world' in the last week of November.

Yesterday at the Westin, it was different. The air lacked that excitement as journalists took their seats, and Luva Nahid Choudhury, as always, greeted them. After a couple of audiovisuals and live performances by students of the Bengal Parampara Sangeetalya music school underlining the impact of Bengal Foundations initiative, a visibly distressed Abul Khair, chairman of Bengal Foundation and the initiator of the festival, uttered the dreaded news of the festival being cancelled.

"When I was planning this festival, to take a small-audience chamber concert to a stadium, not many people believed in me. But people like Matiur Rahman (Editor, the daily Prothom Alo) and Mahfuz Anam (Editor, The Daily Star) gave me support, and from that year you

have seen what this festival has grown into today," he said.

"I had said last year that we will return with the festival if the government allows us, and that dreaded concern has come true," Abul Khair said. "I am sure they have their reason, and maybe some big plan for which they could not allocate the venue. We are very grateful to the government for all the support we have received. If they didn't provide the security and other arrangement, we could not have made it the 'world's largest classical music festival'."

"It is very painful for all of us to be cancelling this event, after completing all preparations. I lost my uncle in '99, my son in 2000; Today I feel that same pain again," a visibly distressed Abul Khair said.

"I only have one request to the government, to not let this festival be lost. If it goes away we will lose something big. I would like to request the Prime Minister to give instructions to organise this festival in Bangladesh. If we lose the consistency of this festival we will lose credibility to the artistes who come here every year, and to our large audience. Bengal Foundation will be

happy to provide any assistance they require, because we have received all assistance from them."

"Many people think we take the venue for free. We pay the entire rent for the venue, we pay all necessary taxes to the government, but we have still kept it free for the audience, because we want to develop their taste, to enrich them and make them more humane."

"We have proven our organisational success repeatedly. We did a large-scale Bengal Cultural Festival in a conservative city like Sylhet, without any problem. But since many internationally-acclaimed artistes are coming, we could not take the risk of doing it elsewhere; because providing security and taking care of the artistes and you all are our responsibility. I apologise to all of you."

"We can only rest three months after each festival; its entire planning and arrangement takes place over eight months leading to the festival. So we cannot really change the dates of this festival at the last minute. That is why we have to cancel it, after completing all other preparations," he concluded.

The Daily Star



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