

WEEKENDER

"I'm looking forward to stage shows" ... Liza

ROBINA RASHID BHIYYAN

Sania Sultana Liza's path to stardom began since her crowning glory at *Closeup 1* in 2008. Today marks a new chapter in the singer's life as she celebrates her birthday amidst a demanding schedule full of stage shows, and in a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, the star opens up about her plans for the year ahead, and more.

**Happy Birthday! Do you have anything planned today?**  
Thank you. I have to perform at a show in Savar tomorrow, so I haven't planned anything special.  
**Winter is a ripe season for stage shows, and so I have a full schedule ahead this month.**  
**What would be your birthday wish?**  
I have a small family; there's my parents and young brother, and the people I perform with are akin to



PHOTO: SHEKH HEMED: HOSHIED

family as well. My only wish would be for all of us to get along for as long as we exist, without complications or hurt feelings.

**What is your favourite weekend haunt?**  
That would be my bed. I am often on the road for work, and so during those rare moments of respite I don't feel like going anywhere.

**What are you looking forward to right now?**  
I'm currently looking forward to stage shows, and more importantly, "Gohin Baluchor's" release on December 29 because I have done a song for the film. It was supposed to premiere two months ago, and so the anticipation has only grown stronger and more impatient. From February I will be touring outside Bangladesh; I have a show in Melbourne that month, and three more lined up in April where I'll be performing in Spain, Germany, and Switzerland. It has been a long time since I performed so extensively abroad, and so I am looking forward to it as one of the highlights for next year.

**Your loved one is preparing a grand birthday feast for you. What would you like to see prepared?**  
I'd love to walk into a room filled with flowers- my favourite is the orchid, but I'm also fond of Arabian and night jasmynes. I'm not a picky eater and I never had a favourite cake, but that probably changed on one of my trips to the USA when someone brought me a *tres leches cake*. It's incredibly indulgent and creamy, but also light and fresh at the same time when served with fruit. I don't know if I'd find it here, but I'd be very happy if I could.

**What was the best thing to happen to you this past year?**  
The best thing would be when I released "Bhalobashi Bola Hoye Jaak" two months ago. I absolutely love the song.



Pt. Jasraj



Sasika Rao-de Haas

BENGAL CLASSICAL MUSIC FESTIVAL '17

Five debuting solo artists to watch out for this year



Pt. Kaivalya Kumar

FAHIM FERDOUS

The Bengal Classical Music Festival has brought nearly every who's who of Indian classical music to the Dhaka Audience over the last few years, and every year the organisers have added new feathers to the proverbial cap of the grand festival. This year, despite organising the festival on a month's notice after the original plan had to be scrapped, Bengal Foundation has managed to bring in almost the entire originally-scheduled lineup, and that naturally includes some big names of Indian Classical Music performing for the first time on the festival's stage. Here are the five most exciting solo-performing debuts to look forward to at this year's festival -- that begins

December 26.

**Pt. Kaivalya Kumar, khyal vocals (performing on Day 5)**  
A third-generation member of a family representing the prestigious Kirana Gharana of Indian classical music, Pt. Kaivalya Kumar is as blue-blooded as classical musicians come. His grandfather, Pt. Ganpatrao Gurav was one of the first disciples of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, the founder of Kirana Gharana. Beginning his training at a very young age and from his family, Kaivalya Kumar is the youngest Hindustani Classical vocalist to receive top grade on All India Radio and Doordarshan, India's state radio and TV channel respectively. For aficionados of khyal pertaining to a classic gharana, Pt. Kaivalya Kumar's high-pitched, mellifluous voice and exquisite phirak, murki and taans and will be a treat.

**Kala Ramnath, violin (performing on Day 3)**  
Grammy-nominated violinist Kala Ramnath was born to a prodigious musical family in Chennai and began her training at age two and a half by her grandfather and



Vishwa Mohan Bhatt

noted Carnatic violinist Vidwan Narayana Iyer. When she was 14 and was performing with her aunt, noted violinist N Rajam, Ustad Zakir Hussain is said to have complimented her for playing like her aunt, but also saying "Who will listen to a copy when the original is still around?" That spurred Kala Ramnath to make her own mark, for which she trained for 15 years under Mewati Chaurana legend Pandit Jasraj. With her unique playing style, Kala Ramnath has performed worldwide, collaborated with artists across genres including Kai Eckhart, Edgar Meyer, Bela Fleck, Terry Bozzio, Ray Manzarek (of The Doors), and has worked in creating background of Hollywood films, including "Blood Diamond".

**Sasika Rao-de Haas, cello (performing on Day 4)**  
Both the name and the instrument seems a misfit for an Indian classical music festival, yet Sasika Rao-de Haas' embellishments of Hindustani ragah on the cello will be one of the definite sounds to behold at this year's festival. The accomplished Western Classical cellist first came into contact with Indian classical music when she studied at Rotterdam's (Netherlands) Codarts conservatory of music where flute legend Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia was a teacher. She came to India and trained under Pt. DK Tatar, Pt. Deepak Chowdhury and Pt. Shubhendra Rao (to whom she is now married). She has remodeled the cello, a typically western classical instrument, and developed her own technique to play Indian classical ragas.

**Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Mohan veena (performing on Day 5)**  
Speaking of remodeled instruments, there aren't many Indian classical musicians whose instrument is named after them. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt turned the Hawaiian guitar into an instrument of its own, the Mohan veena, the sounds of which has created waves all over the globe.

A 1994 Grammy winner (for his album "A Meeting By The River") launched him to international stardom, and the instrument's popularity among Western musicians as well. A direct disciple of Pt. Ravi Shankar, he is known for his fusion and pan-cultural collaborative work. The Mohan veena - consisting three melody strings, four drone strings and 12 sympathetic strings, produces a unique timbre of audio that Bhatt plays assimilating techniques of sitar, sarod and veena.

**Pt. Jasraj, khyal vocals (performing on Day 5)**  
Even so rarely even in an intense art form like classical music, a name becomes more than a person, and becomes an institution. It has taken six years, but Sangeet martand Pandit Jasraj, the unequivocal legend of the Mewati gharana will be making his mark at the biggest classical music festival in the world this year. Initially training as a



Kala Ramnath

tabla accompanist, Jasraj was inspired by Begum Akhtar to become a vocalist and unhappy with his treatment as an accompanying artist, left his house at age 14 and vowed to not cut his hair until he learned to sing. Pt. Jasraj's voice is said to extend to four and a half octaves, and his style includes incorporating a flexible singing of khyals incorporating elements of lighter styles like thumri. He is also the creator of the novel form of jugalbandi performance between a male and female vocal - called Jistrangi. Pt. Jasraj has been a lifelong advocate of popularizing classical music and making it more accessible to the general audience, recording film soundtracks and adapting a lecture-demonstration model of performance to educate the audience. He is also the founder of Pandit Jasraj Schools for Indian classical music - in Atlanta, Tampa, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, New Jersey, Pittsburgh, Mumbai, and Kerala.

TV WATCH

"Niyoti" on ntv tonight



A CORRESPONDENT

Single-episode TV play "Niyoti" will air tonight at 9:05pm on ntv. Written by Sabbir Chowdhury and Tanin Rahman, and directed by Sheikh Selim, it casts Aparbo, Nawsheen, Subroto Barua, Mahmuda Nisha and others.

The play revolves around a young man named Fortune, who believes strongly on luck. When he fails to get something despite trying hard, he leaves it to destiny. Although other people's lucks turn around with his help, his luck does not change for the better. However, when things go right for him it brings bad luck for others. It is the dilemma that Fortune has to live with.

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