



Luva Nahid Choudhury

Although deemed by many as 'highly ambitious', the Bengal Classical Music Festival saw groundbreaking success and much of it can be attributed to Luva Nahid Choudhury. As the Director General of Bengal Foundation, she is fundamentally responsible for the event. A singer herself, she has an appreciation and understanding of music and performing arts. Star Showbiz presents to you an exclusive interview in which she talks about the Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay, the future of classical music in Bangladesh and much more!

Congratulations on another successful iteration of the Bengal Classical Music Festival. I wanted to draw attention on the talent and success of the children at the Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay.

What would you have to say about that?
The Chairman had said in his speech in 2012 that the Festival would not only be about showcasing good quality music and dance in the classical tradition, and developing an audience for it, but it would also be about creating a platform for new Bangladeshi talents. Bengal Foundation would like to see a long-term goal associated with the Festival.

I feel it is important to acknowledge the contribution of teachers who have for many years, continued to teach classical music in the district towns of Bangladesh, and groomed pupils; based on their selfless work, we are now able to create programming and launch a teaching institution.

What makes Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay different is the mode and quality of teaching. We are trying to reconnect with the *guru-shishya parampara*- the age-old tradition of handing down wisdom and learning from teacher to disciple. Such a relationship is

based on trust, commitment and respect. We feel these are important qualities for students to nurture, in addition to learning music. The teacher too has to have the qualities and the intellect to merit lifelong respect. It works on a one-to-one basis where the teacher invests in a small group of students and of them, a few gradually achieve the qualities of a high-level performer. Some students may not become full-fledged performers but with the learning and exposure behind them they may become good teachers.

It is important to develop worthwhile platforms where up and coming artists can aspire to perform otherwise it will be difficult to channel young people's interest in this direction. We believe Bengal Classical Music Festival (BCMF) is such a platform but there ought to be many more. Currently young artists have very limited scope and can only aspire to appear in the media where much of their art is lost in the medley.

When is a student good enough to sing solo?
The *guru-shishya parampara* is a slow, unhurried process which nurtures a deeper understanding of the art. There is no 'fixed' time within which someone can be readied for a stage performance; that

would depend very much on the pupils' aptitude and the gurus' conviction that the pupil is ready to display the skills s/he has mastered. You must have seen how well young students have performed in groups on the BCMF stage. Our goal is to gradually seek out the ones who have attained the capacity and present them as solo artists. We hope that for anyone pursuing the classical arts seriously, one of her/his primary aims will be to perform solo at BCMF. A high-class solo perform is the ultimate test and let us hope we have given young people a dream to pursue.

Both you and Bengal Foundation have achieved a lot, but what do you think about the continuity?

I cannot at this moment comment on how sustainable our initiatives are but I can say with certainty that we have made a difference, and will hopefully be remembered by posterity. We have created new benchmarks, introduced new and better ways of understanding the arts, encouraged people to express themselves, created audiences, helped open new horizons and we did all of this for public good while being rooted in Bangladesh.

Bengal Foundation is possible because

Mr Abul Khair believes our country is culturally incredibly rich but we have to do more to project it. His dreams and vision are grounded on this belief. Because the work and the outcomes are worthwhile, I like to believe that we have earned people's support and respect. The most satisfying thing is to know that you have inspired others to journey in new directions. I am sure Bengal Foundation will survive if more people identify with the cause and value what we give to society.

You have indeed been very successful in what you have set out to do. Do you have any new dreams for the foundation?

Look, there is no such thing as 'success' per se. We are always trying to improve, assess and look at new ways of discovering ourselves. Although we have expanded on many fronts, we have also closed off some which we felt were not adding value. Mr Khair likes to think in unconventional ways and sometimes the propositions can seem extremely challenging, even improbable. It is uplifting when we do find a way out and make it happen.