

## A WALK DOWN THE MEMORY LANE

## Looking back with Mamunur Rashid

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Noted thespian, director and playwright Mamunur Rashid also spearheads Aranyak Natyadal, one of the most popular theatre troupes in Bangladesh. For many in the industry, the veteran artiste is a role model and is credited to have helped many find their break in the showbiz world. In a recent conversation with *The Daily Star*, the artiste reflects on his memories, past accomplishments and more.

"I completed my SSC from Bolla Coronation High School," recalls the veteran. "There was a river lined by *dumur* trees on my walk to school, and during monsoon, flowers would be in full bloom. They looked stunning in the rains, and I was willing to get soaking wet to just catch a glimpse of such beauty."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSED

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Mamunur Rashid, along with his friends would row out a boat into the river which overflowed the banks during monsoon. With plenty of nuts to snack on, they would stop the boat wherever they wished, to just chat and spend quality time together.

He came to Dhaka in 1963. "Back then our capital city was full of paddy fields, just like villages," recalls Mamunur. "Life was bustling only in Gulistan and Sadarghat. Sadarghat was home to Rupmahan Cinema, where I bought tickets for the first time to watch a film in the city. My friends and

I would also gather at Gulistan Cinema Hall whenever there were new releases."

In the 1960s, he, along with his friends, spent countless evenings chit-chatting at the famed Modhur Canteen. "Before there was Nat Mondol, we bought plates of tehari at Sharif Miya's Canteen for just 8 annas, which would be split and shared between us in pairs. Sharif Miya's Canteen was home to passionate conversations between artistes, which would start from the early hours of the morning and continue till very late at night," he adds.

When Shahidullah Kaiser lived in Kayettuli, Mamunur Rashid worked on

adapting his famous novel, *Sangshaptak*. "I had produced the theatre adaptation of the novel," says Mamunur. "I went to Shahidullah Kaiser's house in the morning, where I would read out my work to him. Shomi Kaiser was very young then, and I remember Jahir Raihan would also frequent the house. Each morning, Shahidullah Kaiser and I would indulge in milky, sweet *chhana* together. This memory is still freshly etched in my mind."

He eventually formed Aranyak in 1972. Actors Aly Zaker and Subhash Dutt were in the troupe from the start. "We would all gather in Aly Zaker's Rajarbagh residence to catch up and rehearse," says Mamunur Rashid.

He further spoke about some good memories with his friends. "I have been unfortunate to witness the passing away of many old friends over the years. But on the other hand, I am lucky to have a few remain with me to this day," asserts the actor, adding that one of his close friends is Nirmalendu Goon. "The two of us, along with the late poet Abul Hossain, lived together in a tiny room in Paribagh at one point. Nirmalendu Goon penned his famous *Huliya* poem inside that very room."

The three of them talked into the late hours of the night, and had walked the dark empty streets of Dhaka many times together. "Whenever I look back on my life, these are the memories that float into my mind," says an immensely emotional Mamunur Rashid.



## Shilpkala's hommage to Kazi Nazrul Islam

Marking the 119th birth anniversary of our National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy arranged a programme, featuring a discussion and a cultural event at its Music and Dance Centre auditorium. Professor Hosne Ara Joly of the Department of Bangla, from Jagannath University discussed the life and works of the poet, while Jahangir Hossain Chowdhury, BSA secretary, presided over the programme.

Several prominent and promising Nazrul singers including Chhanda Chakrabarty, Sumon Chowdhury, Rawshan Ara Shoma, Shahid Kabir Polash, Nahyan Durdana Shuchi and Mahmudul Hasan performed solos while elocutionists Rafiqul Islam, Laila Afroz, Ashraful Alam, Shirin Islam and Mizanur Rahman Sajal recited Nazrul poems.

BSA authority, along with a number of Nazrul singers, enthusiasts and organisations paid their homage to the poet, placing wreaths at his grave.

Source: Press Release

OYNDRI  
Born to Dance

AFSANA AZIZ NITOL

Shomriddha Shams Oyndri was barely three years old when she began accompanying her mother to her sister's dance classes. Renowned dancer Shamim Ara Nipa was her sister's dance teacher, who, looking at Oyndri's enthusiasm at a very young age, told her mother that the girl had a knack for dancing.

Proving her right, Oyndri now has won three gold medals in Bharatnatyam, Kathak and Lokonriya categories in *Jatiya Shishu Puroshkar Protijogita 2018*, organised by Bangladesh Shishu Academy. It is a national level competition where children from all over the country participate. Out of 2,61,688 participants in various categories including dancing, singing and recitation, Oyndri stood first in the competition by bagging three medals. She received the award from the Hon'ble President of Bangladesh.

About winning the competition, Oyndri says, "I have been trying for four years to win this competition and finally I did it. My mother, teachers and family have supported me. This award was a gift to my mother on Mothers' Day."

Oyndri has been trained under the finest of teachers including Shamim Ara Nipa, Shibli Mohammad, Shoma Momtaz and others in Nrityanchal Academy. According to her mother, Oyndri excels in each category of dancing separately. She says, "When Oyndri dances Kathak, you will not be able to tell that she's a Bharatnatyam dancer too, and vice-versa."

Rehearsals and performances become difficult at times for Oyndri, since she is still a student. However, she makes sure that she practices every night before bed.

In the future, she aspires to be an architect, but at the same time, continue pursuing her passion in dancing.

## 'Mohajoner Nao' sails to Bhutan

ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Bhutan brings a most popular theatre production of Bangladesh in Thimpu, named *Mohajoner Nao* (The Boat of Infinity). It is a significant initiative taken by the embassy in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enhance the artistic and cultural relations between the two countries. The play will be staged at the auditorium of the Royal University of Bhutan in Motithang on May 26 2018.

*Mohajoner Nao* is a traditional Bangladeshi musical play that gives a glimpse of the mystic bard Shah Abdul Karim's life and philosophy. Karim spent his entire life in preaching the truth about himself and his Creator. He also composed many



Actors performing in the play.

songs on that thought. Having no institutional education, Karim experienced the land, the water, the boats, and the landscape in his birthplace Sunamganj. In most of his songs, he describes his body as a rented boat

from his 'merchant,' (referring to the Almighty or Infinity), which has to be deposited on time. The play touches upon his thoughts on the Creator as well as bigotry and discrimination.

The play is written by Shakoor

Majid. The cast includes Ahmed Gias, Mohammad Ansar Ali, Asadul Islam, Sonia Hassan, Tanveer Dipu, Shah Salauddin, Rupa Hasan, Mehedi Shohag, Sohel Khan, Imtiaz Shaon, Imran Hossian.

Sudip Chakroborty, a theatre practitioner and an assistant professor at the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Dhaka, directed and designed the play. He also has *Lal Jamin*, *Macbeth*, *Chaka*, *Dokkhina Sundari*, *Gohonjatra*, *MEMORI*, and *Brick Lane '78* to his credit as a director. He has also worked as a designer-dramaturge in *Jiboner Gaan*, *Kabar* and *Shakuntala*. Chakroborty's theatre work has been showcased on international stages in the UK, US, Canada, France, South Korea, Iran and India.



## 'Bhaijan Elo Re'

ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The action-packed trailer of Shakib Khan's *Bhaijan Elo Re* was released recently and it looks fantastic. The upcoming Indo-Bangladesh venture features Shakib in a double role. The film, which has been shot at some exotic locations in West Bengal and the UK, has some amazing dance numbers which is sure to be played in *Gaaye Holuds* and parties this year. Bengali

beauties Srabanti Chatterjee and Paayel Sarkar play the leading ladies in this film, which will be released during Eid. Produced by Eskay Movies, the film is directed by Joydeep Mukherjee.

*Bhaijan Elo Re* narrates the fascinating tale of two brothers who get separated early on in their lives and grow up to be men with different personalities. Now, the real question is, will they unite and overcome all challenges?

John Malkovich  
Rupert Grint

## 'The ABC Murders' Cast Announced

Agatha Christie fans are in for a delightful treat as her classic title *The ABC Murders* is headed for television. *The ABC Murders* is a joint venture production between Mammoth Screen and Agatha Christie Limited for BBC One. The executive producers are Sarah Phelps, Damien Timmer, Helen Ziegler, James Prichard, Basi Akpabio and Elizabeth Kilgarriff.

Due to start filming in June, John Malkovich will lead the cast as Hercule Poirot. Also joining the cast are Rupert Grint as Inspector Crome, Andrew Buchan as Franklin Clarke, Eamon Farren playing Cust, Tara Fitzgerald as Lady Hermione Clarke, Bronwyn James in the role of Megan and Freya Mavor as Thora Grey.

*The ABC Murders* is one of Christie's most unsettling and intense stories and Hercule Poirot is one of her most intriguing characters. The quality cast the team has lined up for the show is exciting. It will be great to experience the unique approaches these actors bring to their roles in this television adaptation.

## What's Mim up to?

ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Bidya Sinha Mim has been tremendously impressive on the silver screen in recent times. Now, she will be seen in a brand new television commercial and several exciting films.

The commercial has been shot in Gazipur and Dhaka. Mim says she had fun working on the commercial as it was very story-based.

Other than that, Mim's upcoming films have been keeping her busy. Among other things, she is shooting for a film called *Daag* as of now.

She will also be seen opposite Kolkata stud Jeet for the first time in *Sultan*, which she has recently wrapped up. Two beautiful songs from the film came out recently. When asked when the audience can expect to watch *Sultan*, Mim says she hopes for an Eid release.



PHOTO: MOHSIN AHMED KAWSER