

THROUGH THE EYES

MAGUS MAGNUS!

JEWEL AICH

A freedom fighter, a magic maestro and a flute virtuoso – Jewel Aich is the only of his kind who has introduced the name of the land he had fought for to countless of countries across the world. The pioneer of 'global brotherhood through magic' has been featured on *Magic Times*, *MagicTricks*, *UNICEF* and many more renowned international platforms throughout his career spanning of over 50 years. In an interview with *Star Showbiz*, the connoisseur opens up the deepest corners of his heart.

FIRST SPELL CAST

At a very early age I was impressed by magician Abdur Rashid. He had been performing at Lion Circus in Pirojpur. One day, I went inside his little tent. It was a mid-July afternoon, and I became all sweaty within five minutes. That is how I realized what hardships the magician had to endure. Without any hesitation, he taught me a few tricks, perhaps my ABCD of magic! After our great liberation, Bangladesh hockey team lost to Pakistan by a 17 goal margin. That incident hit me like a rock. My guts told me we needed to rise as a nation utilizing whatever skills and traditions we had. I picked up my love, the art of magic! I also started to write in the very famous magicians' magazine called *Genii*. It was an amateur approach, but I did it with sheer devotion. I was curious and experimental about tricks. I would often figure out various methods of one single trick. Then, when I performed in front of magicians who already knew the trick in another method, they would become flabbergasted. A magician's best feeling is to surprise another fellow magician. I have invented many magic tricks ever since, many are even authorized by my name. My signature article series 'Magic My Way' in *Genii* magazine helped my gain a good exposure in the global magicians' community. And eventually I received a letter in 1980 from The Society of American Magicians, requesting me to join their next event in Boston as the show-stopper! Previously, I had done a show in the WAPDA auditorium, where an admirer named Mostafa Kamal Wahid was present. He had recorded my performance in his video camera, and that very footage had reached some prominent members of the 'Society of American Magicians'. They were so amazed by that uncut, unedited footage that they instantly invited me abroad. I could hardly refuse one such offer! This was how the world first recognized the magician Jewel Aich, the one from Bangladesh. After that, I never had to look back again. I started getting calls from Europe, America, Far East even in the Middle East. This way I learned that the world is an immensely competitive place, but once you prove your worth and uniqueness, success will embrace you in ways you could never even imagine.

THE PLEASURE OF DEFEAT

I still remember the first ever standing ovation I received. It was the show in Boston, at the Convention of the Society of American Magicians. After my performance was over, the curtain had fallen. I was about to go to the backstage, the stage manager dragged me to the center stage again, and I saw, even after the curtain had dropped, the audience did not stop clapping. Instead, they all had stood up to create a better impact. There I saw an old gentleman with long, white beards, he was so amazed that he got up over his seat and was literally jumping! Later, I came to know that that gentleman was actually a Nobel Prize winning physicist. The beauty of magic is that it can induce a pleasure of defeat. When you beat someone with your art of amazement, it's a win-win for both. Magic is solely a kind of one-man-show. In films, you can edit or re-shoot to make things perfect. But magic does not allow that. Everything is done right in front of



live audience, and only your dexterity and presence of mind will decide your fate.

TUNES OF FARAWAY LANDS

In my village, there used to be someone near my home who played the flute every day. I was amazed by the beautiful tune. One day I finally made up my mind that I had to reach this person. There used to be a canal near my home. I was banned from swimming in there, as the stream was too strong for a boy of my age to swim across. But once I realized the beautiful tune was coming from the other side of the canal, I just couldn't hold myself anymore. With all my stamina I swam across, and to my utter surprise, I found out that the flutist was just a little boy, perhaps even younger than me! I asked him if I can learn to play the flute as well. "Why not?" he said, and instantly offered me his flute! But I felt very embarrassed, because the boy

belonged to a very poor fishermen family and had no other toy to play with except his flute. So I couldn't take his gift.

Eventually, I got myself a flute and started to learn. Till this day I am learning, and trying to make myself a better flutist. I have been fortunate to take music lessons exclusively from maestros like Ustad Abdur Rahman, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and Pandit Ravi Shankar.

IN THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

I have always maintained a strictly disciplined life. I have smoked cigarette only one puff in my life. I have always believed that an addiction that does not enhance you as a person is not an addiction worth having. We have to be very careful while choosing our addiction, know whether it is destructive or constructive. I have performed countless times in Las Vegas, but have never put a single coin in any gambling machine. At some points of my life, I listened and practiced music like crazy. From scholarly manuscripts to bedtime

have sought perfection. Another fact that many are not aware of is, I exclusively design all my music, dresses, props and magic equipments. With my assistant Robin's help I prepare the items. Many international magicians have also been surprised to hear this fact. They even compared my handmade props to those of world famous illusion builder John Gaughan's!

DEAR TO MY HEART

One of the books that has a huge impact on my view of life is *Nothing is Impossible*. Then comes *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale and *Public Speaking* by Del Carnegie. *Citizen Kane*, *Pather Panchali* are two of the best films I have ever seen. Another favorite film is *Meghe Dhaka Taara*. I was also interested in theatre performances. In terms of classical music, I think all the ragas have their own flavor, own aura. I especially love to play *Baagesree*, *Hamsdhwani*, *Dhanya Dhaibat* and *Malkons*. My idols in classical music are Bholanath Prasanna, the mentor of Pandit Hariprasad, Hariprasad himself, Ravi Shankar, Bismillah Khan and Ghulam Mustafa Khan. The great Harry Houdini has been one of my biggest idols in magic. Another idol was Charlie Chaplin. I learned how to be a performing artist by examining his works. He made everyone burst out in laughter, but when the laughter ended, there were also bits of wisdom, pinches of skepticism, sincerely delivered. He made people think, and that is not as easy as it sounds. The ability to make people contemplate any idea from a different angle is a strength worth appraisal. Motivated by Chaplin, I started conveying benevolent messages of global brotherhood through magic as a totally unique initiative. Many people across the world know me especially for this initiative.

FOR THE MEMOIR

Time is the biggest investment of our lives. Money might be the second or third, but time is the only investment that you can never get back. A beggar's one minute is just equal to a billionaire's one minute. It all depends on how we use this one minute. This is why I despise wasting time. The clock is always ticking away, and that is the biggest truth of all. Another significant observation of my life is human beings. And what I have realized through much is that, the 'human' factor lies in everything. Your art resembles your being. Your music is you. Your business shows who you are. In total, the subjective identity of the earthborns is articulated in everything and everywhere the human beings have stepped on. This may seem like a very ordinary fact at first, but the more you think about it, the more you realize the depth of this beautiful concept of human singularity!