

WHAT'S ON

An Evening of Storytelling
Title: Amar Spreeha
Venue: Spreeha Bangladesh, Dhanmondi
Date: August 31



Photography Exhibition
Title: Shutter Up Exhibition 2018
Venue: Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi
Date: September 9-10
Time: 10am - 7pm
Contact: shutterupexhibition@gmail.com



Photographic Experience
Title: Photo Day at Panam City
Venue: Panam City
Date: September 1
Time: 7am - 6pm
Contact: tukitakifactory@gmail.com



Art exhibition
Title: 18th ASIAN ART BIENNALE BANGLADESH 2018
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Date: September 1 - 30
Visit: BANGLADESH SHILPAKALA AKADEMI



Musical event
Title: Celebrate Friendship with Armeen Musa
Venue: The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Bangladesh
Date: September 9
Time: 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm



'Behula Lachari': more than a tradition

Every year, on the last day of Srabon (monsoon), the 'Ojhas' (people who cure snake bites) in rural Bangladesh, organise Shaone Dala, a set of cultural performances held on boats in the rivers. The performance, which is presented on the river Elenga in Tangail, is called Behula Lachari. It narrates the story of fear and love for the mighty Serpent Goddess Manasa. Referred to as the Manasa Mangal Kavyain Bengali literature, the myth of Manasa is presented by many names in different parts of the country.

AFSANA AZIZ NITOL, back from Tangail

Behula's tale is an epitome of feminine power. She is the daughter-in-law of Chand Saudagar, a Brahman merchant, who refuses to pray to the Goddess of Serpents, Manasa Devi. As a result, Manasa Devi keeps killing Chand Saudagar's sons. His youngest son, Lokkhindor, is married to Behula.

On the wedding night of Behula and Lokkhindor, the groom is bitten by a snake as per Manasa Devi's will. The new bride Behula, unable to accept her husband's death, starts a journey to heaven with his dead body, which she carries on a raft.

She faces hurdles seven times before reaching her destination. After reaching heaven, she tries to please Goddess Manasa with her songs and dances. Happy with Behula's performance, Manasa Devi agrees to give Lokkhindor's life back only if Chand Saudagar prays to Manasa Devi.

With the arrival of the monsoon season, the fear of snakes amongst people living in the rural areas of Bangladesh is at an all-time high. On the last day of the season, the ritual begins with a Puja dedicated to Manasa Devi. Fascinatingly, this ritual is performed by Muslims. The ritual that is carried out, goes beyond religion and communities, thus reflecting tolerance.

This year, on August 17, the boats were decorated, as they are every year, on the last day of monsoon in Tangail. In addition, preparations took place to celebrate the



Performers enacting Behula's tale on a boat

PHOTO: AKIB ABDULLAH

festival -- Ojhas were fasting, and performers were dressed up to enact the story of Behula.

Stopping at seven banks of the river, Behula's journey of bringing her husband back to life from death is displayed in these boats. At each stop, Behula prays to Manasa and offers 'bhog' (food given to the Gods) while the Ojhas narrate a mantra.

The performers of this event are male members of the community. They dress up as women to play Behula and her 'shokhis' (friends).

The tradition of male performers cross-dressing as women started a long time ago, mainly because women were not allowed

to perform. However, today, the idea of cross-dressing to play Behula has become a genre called 'Chukri'. We may not live in the same conservative society anymore but with the creation of this genre, the tradition of cross-dressing lives on.

Behula Lachari is not just a performance; it is in fact, a form of prayer. Ojha Mohammad Bari has been a part of this tradition for thirty years. There is a type of tree needed to cure snake-bites and he collects the tree on the day of the ritual. Ojhas fast during Behula Lachari and are only allowed to eat after they find the tree, which his usually kept confidential. They follow all these instructions out of their love to serve the

people of their village.

Every year, Shadhona Cultural Circle promotes this event to reach out to more people and show the beauty of the rivers, culture and people of this country. However, Lubna Marium, director of Shadhona, thinks that it is necessary to be careful while promoting the event. "This ritual means a lot to these performers. We must keep in mind to not commercialise it, but to show the true essence and sentiments of it."

The story of Behula is an oral tradition with no written documentation. In order to safeguard this tradition, performances such as Behula Lachari are important.

Bazlur Rahman Badal passes away

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK
After a long battle with cardiac and respiratory complications, eminent dance artist Bazlur Rahman Badal passed away at 5 pm yesterday at Rajshahi Medical's Intensive Care Unit. He was born in India's Jolpaiguri district around 1921/1922. After partition, he relocated to Rangpur and eventually to Rajshahi where he began his dance training under the guidance of his first teacher, popularly known as 'Dukhu Master'. Over the course of his lifetime, he provided dance lessons to hundreds of students in Rajshahi's Shilpakala Academy, where he was a teacher till his very last days. Bazlur Rahman Badal has received multiple recognitions throughout his career including the Shilpakala Academy award, the Shadhinota Padak along with numerous other accolades by the Bangladesh Nrittya Shilpi Sangstha.



BRINGING BACK MELODIES A conversation with the celebrated sisters

ELITA KARIM
While one smiles and shares anecdotes, the other ponders upon her surroundings silently and offers suggestions. Fahmida Nabi and Samina Chowdhury, sisters famous for their beautiful songs and numbers they have been recording and performing for the Bengali audience for decades, are as similar as chalk and cheese. Their passion for music and the dreams that they look forward to achieve, however, are equally strong!
Recently, they paid tribute to their deceased father, the great composer, lyricist and singer Mahmudunnabi, in the album *Amar Gaaner Praante*. The album was released from Bengal Foundation.

both the singers. "All the songs were arranged and recorded in Kolkata by Aashu Chakraborti," says Samina Chowdhury. "He has done a good job, but I simply could not give a lot of time. I had hardly a day to record my parts."
Both Fahmida and Samina are singing and recording regularly for musicians and music directors -- ones who are established as well as the ones who are new and promising. "Everyone needs a place to start," says Samina. "I listen to the demo, and if I like it, I go ahead and record. It doesn't matter to me if the composer is new or a super star."
"I have recorded many songs with young people," says Fahmida Nabi. "In fact I run a weekly music workshop with



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEHD

Many of the lyrics and compositions in the album were written and composed by other famous names who were popular for their conceptions back in the day. However, each song speaks of the timelessness of Mahmudunnabi's creations.
"As his children, it lies upon us to keep his music and words alive," says Fahmida Nabi. "Otherwise, it would not take long for these beautiful elements to disappear forever."
While all the songs are solo numbers in the album, only one composition, *Diyechi Maa er Sneho*, is a duet sung by

young singers called Karigori. We work on music, lyrics and also talk about life."
Conversing with the two sisters turns out to be quiet eventful -- starting from talking about compositions, the music industry, they move on to talk about their children, some of the crazy fans they encounter on a regular basis and lastly about food.
Grab the album, *Amar Gaaner Praante*, if you haven't already. The Eid holidays spent listening to renditions of classics by the great Mahmudunnabi over a cup of tea, that too by his daughters, would surely be worth it.

Eid bonanza on Bioscope!



ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DESK
Online streaming site, Bioscope will bring a stellar Eid entertainment package with exclusive fictions and unique stories.
The much awaited *Laila Tumi Ki Amake Miss Koro?* will finally be seen exclusively on Bioscope this Eid. A modern take on the ancient love story of Laili-Majnu, the fiction has been directed by famed director Ashfaq Nipun. The tele-fiction stars Mehazabien Chowdhury and Afran Nisho.
Also exclusive on Bioscope, a thriller lover story *Koli 2.0* by young director Abrar Athar will be showcased -- starring Nusrat Imrose Tisha, Irfan Sazzad, and Pijush Bandyopadhyaya. The fiction showcases Tisha as an action heroine. The fiction is mainly a love story between the son of a powerful mafia don and a drug-addicted woman.
Dada, Guide Lagbe? is a comedy bringing together some of the biggest names from both the corners of Bengali entertainment -- shot in some of the most beautiful locations in India. The fiction will star Mosharrar Karim, Faruque Ahmed and Rituporna Sengupta.
Bioscope will also feature *Ei Shomoyer Golpo*, consisting of three new tele-fictions produced by Grameenphone. The series will present *Life is Beautiful* directed by Imraul Rafat, starring Apurba and Sabila Nur, *Bibaho Bibhat* directed by Saimun Islam, starring Yash Rohan and Mouri Salim, and *Biker* directed by Mabru Rashid Bannah starring Irfan Sazzad and Tanjin Tisha.
Download the Bioscope App (Android and iOS) or browse their website www.bioscopelive.com