



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

GHAASHPHORING CHOIR

hops on to an international platform

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

When Armeen Musa gathered a bunch of enthusiastic and talented individuals for an ensemble in 2015, she was unsure of the direction she wanted to go with it. The popular singer-songwriter and Berklee graduate had already been in multiple choirs, and wanted to replicate the beauty of multiple vocal harmonies. What Armeen did end up with, however, was magical. Ghaashphoring Choir grew to become not just the most unique ensemble of raw talent, but a musical family.

Recently, 8 members from Ghaashphoring Choir had the opportunity to participate at the Berklee India Exchange (BIX) Bootcamp: Vocal Intensive for 5 days. The Berklee India Exchange is a cross-cultural exchange between India and Berklee College of Music, lauded as the 'Hogwarts of Music' by many. Celebrated musician and composer Annete Philip was the artistic director of the boot camp, which accommodated 107 singers from all over Asia. "This was a life-changing experience for me," says Bishal Dhar, a young singer from Ghaashphoring Choir. "The camp doesn't just concentrate on vocal drills, it ensures that you learn to maintain your body. I have met a lot

of people from around the world here, and have opened up more as a person." "I am grateful to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs for partially sponsoring the trip," says Armeen. The singer believes that music is much more than just passion, it is a lifestyle choice. Most of the young talents from the group agreed that the biggest flaw in Bangladesh's music industry is that it accepts mediocrity. "They (Indian singers) dedicate their lives to music, and never forget their roots," says Zamiul Alam, another talented musician from Ghaashphoring. The participants of the camp got to partake in three performances, out of which one

was a 'special' audition-only entry. Four members from Ghaashphoring Choir, including Armeen, performed in the song. Off the heels of what was an enlightening experience, what are the future plans for this immensely talented group? "As long as we are performing together, we want to keep serving the music that we do," says a thoughtful Armeen Musa. The ensemble is currently working on their first solo album, which will contain unique renditions of beloved songs. If the band's past work is something to go by, we are about to receive something incredibly special from the ensemble of voices filled with love and laughter.



PHOTO: SHANTO LAWRENCE COSTA

Saria Saguaro's many creative endeavours

SHABABA IQBAL

Saria Saguaro, popularly known by her alias Pretty Sh.tty Art, is a visual pop artist whose work involves everything in pop culture, starting from music to political figures to socio-behavioural patterns. Apart from the canvas, she likes to experiment with textile, foot wear, jewelry and art prints. She is a part of the Milkshake Collective, a group of different local artists specialising in art forms starting from pop to modern and graphic among others. She was also one of the featured artists in *HerStories*, both the book and the exhibition that focused on empowering women and girls through art, storytelling and capacity building. She enjoys teaming up with bands and creating posters. "I loved working on the Chris Cornell tribute by Indalo, where they had 21 musicians coming in to play and I got to draw them all," says Saria. Her first international art show was held in Bangkok at Ari Arthouse recently.

Apart from being a gifted artist, Saria is passionate about animals. She has employed her talent for social welfare and safety of animals through her initiative called *My Pet Project*, which started in 2016 after she rescued her dog. "I wanted to help other stray animals and I realised the best way to do that would be by raising money and donating it to animal-oriented organisations," explains Saria. "Taking a cue from my personal sketchbook where I draw my dog, Pookie, I figured that I could offer to draw people's pets in exchange for donations." People could choose which shelters the donations would go to: Care for Paws, Paw Foundation, ALB Animal Shelter or Obhoyaronno. In four months, Saria received over Tk 1.5 lakh in donations.

When she is not painting and cuddling with animals, Saria, who went to Le Corden Bleu, is busy with her duties as a pastry chef. She started her own cake studio, The Flourist, in 2013. She feels that her approaches to painting and baking are quite different from one another. "When it comes to the concept for my cakes, I just ask my clients to choose a colour, and then I work around it with elements that feel right and are at hand," says Saria. "But when I draw, I usually need to visualise a painting in my head before I start." She has just moved The Flourist into a new location in Banani, where she currently hosts baking demonstration classes for adults, cookie classes for kids, cake tasting events and supper clubs.

Bhashwar Bandopadhyay's artistic experiences in USA

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Dr Bhashwar Bandopadhyay is an eminent elocutionist, theatre artiste, trainer and connoisseur of dance. This year he went to Atlanta, GA, USA to attend in FOBANA 2018, a three-day convention of poets and artistes. He was the chief invited elocutionist at the event.

Following his participation in the convention, he performed in several other programmes held at different states of USA and conducted workshops there.

FOBANA (The Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in North America) convention was themed on the cultural fraternity connecting the entire Bengali community to celebrate our culture. "I started off the three-day event with reading out a prose piece. The entire cultural performance included songs, dances, recitations by the poets and the elocutionists," said Bhashwar Bandopadhyay.

"The warmth I received from the Bangladeshi people was amazing," said the elocutionist, who also took part in an FM radio programme *Ek Cup Cha* with



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

one of his students, Maruna Rahi, where he recited poems and shared his artistic views.

He later conducted two workshops – one in New Jersey and another in New York. "One of my students, Golam Sarwar Harun, has directed a play titled *Nirostro*, written by Mahasweta Devi.

The troupe is coming to Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy to perform in the upcoming December," said the artiste. "It was an intensive and interactive workshop. The next day, I went to New York to conduct another daylong workshop followed by a solo performance." Bhashwar Bandopadhyay performed

several poems at the event. His repertoire included *Bedonar Padabali* by Mostafa Mir, *Amar Porichoy* and parts of *Nurul Din-er Sarajibon* by Syed Shamsul Haq, *Kanu-Sidhu* by Debabrata Singha, *Prithibi* and *Dushsomoy* by Rabinranath Tagore, *Aat Bochor Ager Ekdin* and *Banalata Sen* by Jibananda Das, and *Kobir Mukti* by Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The artiste has two books – *Natya: Swar O Sanglap* and *Abhigyan Natyakatha* (both published by Sahitya Prakash). *Natya: Swar O Sanglap* is an important recommended textbook for the students from theatre departments of most Bangladeshi universities.

His father, Lohit Kanti Bandopadhyay was a renowned theatre artiste who was a member of Kolkata-based theatre troupe, Amateur. He performed in a Tagore play *Sheshrokkha* in front of Rabinranath Tagore himself. Both Bhashwar Bandopadhyay and his wife Sharmila Bandopadhyay, an eminent dancer-choreographer-teacher, received ICCR scholarship twice. Their daughter, promising dancer-actor Sudeshna Swayamprabha is also an ICCR scholar.

'Tomari Matir Kanya' staged at Ganga Jamuna Sangskritik Utshab



PHOTO: KAZI SALAUDDIN RAZU

AFSANA AZIZ NITOL

Dancers' Guild, an Indian dance group, brought Rabinranath Tagore's tale *Chandalika* to life in the form of a dance-drama at the Ganga Jamuna Sangskritik Utshab 2018. Their production, *Tomari Matir Kanya* was staged on the first day of the festival at the Jatiya Natyashala Auditorium of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

Tomari Matir Kanya portrays the story of a girl from a lower caste named Prakriti (played by Shadhona Hazra). Due to the ill treatment she received for belonging to a low caste, Prakriti despised her life, until one day when a thirsty disciple of Lord Buddha, Ananda, came to her doorstep.

Despite warning him about her being an 'untouchable', he drank the water from her. Ananda's kindness helped Prakriti realise her worth as a human being, and after his departure, she was adamant to meet him once again. Desperate, Prakriti convinces her mother (played by Jonaki Sarkar) to bring back Ananda through witch craft.

Navanritya – a dance form invented by dancer and choreographer Manjushree Chaki Sarkar, beautifully weaves the feelings of need, desire and love throughout the dance-drama.

Tomari Matir Kanya was directed by Jonaki Sarkar. Dancers' Guild will perform in Bangladesh Mahila Samiti tomorrow, before they leave Dhaka.

WHAT'S ON

Literature Fest
 Title: BUP LitFest '18
 Venue: Bangladesh University of Professionals
 Date: October 11 – 13
 Details: www.facebook.com/BUPLC/

Toy Fair
 Title: Khelna Mela 2018
 Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy
 Date: October 7 - 13
 Time: 3 pm – 8 pm

Cultural Festival
 Title: Ganga Jamuna Sangskritik Utshab 2018
 Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
 Date: October 5 – October 15
 Time: 7 pm

Art Exhibition
 Title: Museumplein 2018
 Venue: Mrinal Haque Creative Arts House#5/A, Road#2, Gulshan 1
 Date: October 18 - 20
 Time: 3 pm - 8 pm

Music Festival
 Title: Lok Sangeet Utshob
 Venue: TSC, University of Dhaka
 Date: October 12
 Time: 5 pm – 9 pm

Metal Concert
 Title: Drones of Destruction
 Venue: Russian Cultural Centre, Dhamondi
 Date: October 12
 Time: 2:30pm – 8pm
 Ticket: BOT 200 (from venue)