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PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

DIFF 2018 takes off with an array of folk dances

APORAJITA MUSTAFA

The fourth installment of the Dhaka International Folk Festival (DIFF) at the Bangladesh Army Stadium opened with a vibrant and engaging dance performance by one of Bangladesh's top dance companies, Bhabna Nritya Dol, led by Samina Husain Prema. The presentation commenced with a folk piece, *Shohag Chaand Bodoni Dhoni*, performed by a group of girls in perfect synchrony, donned in an assortment of colourful saris. The bubbly and charismatic composition truly set the tone for what is to come in the upcoming days of this year's iteration of DIFF. The second item was an indigenous dance performance, native to Tripura, known as Katharak Nritya, choreographed by Fifa Chakma. With nuanced and graceful steps, dancing atop *kolshis*, with glass bottles balanced on their heads and golden plates on both hands, the group performance was a mesmerising sight for the eyes. The third, and final, piece was a remarkable presentation of the martial art form,



Raibeshe, against a resonant backdrop of the rhythmic syllables inherent to the style. Adorned with *lathi khela*, cartwheels, bamboo fights, two storied human structures, amongst many other stunts and tricks, the performance was a magnificent, crowd-pleasing conclusion to Bhabna Nritya Dol's performance. Samina Husain Prema, the artistic director of Bhabna

Nritya Dol said, "We are truly honoured to be presenting Bangladesh's folk dances on such a prestigious, international platform. I am thankful to the organisers for facilitating such a significant global cultural exchange. Bhabna's aim has always been to represent Bangladesh's culture in the most accurate manner and our vision behind today's performance was no different."

Avengers: Infinity War rules People's Choice Awards 2018

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The 44th People's Choice Awards was hosted in Santa Monica, California, recently, where fans got to see if their picks won at the only major awards show in the USA that is voted on entirely by the public for favourites in films, television, music, fashion and much more. In total, the event had awards in 43 categories.



'Avengers: Infinity War' won the awards for Movie, Action Movie and Female Movie Star of 2018 at the People's Choice Awards.

It was a night of victory for Marvel Studios as *Avengers: Infinity War* had the most film nominations, with seven nods. The film won the awards for Movie, Action Movie and Female Movie Star of 2018. Chadwick Boseman and Danai Gurira won the awards for Male Movie Star and Action Star respectively, for their roles in *Black Panther*. On the other hand, Netflix's *Shadowhunters* took home the awards for TV Show, Female TV Star and Male TV Star of 2018. When it came to music, Shawn Mendes won the award for Male Artist, while Nicki Minaj bagged the award for Female Artist and Album of the Year. The Korean band, BTS, who were declared as Group of 2018, also

won Song of the Year for *Idol*. Taylor Swift received the award for Tour of the Year. In addition, Melissa McCarthy was honoured with the People's Icon of 2018 award, while Victoria Beckham took home the Fashion Icon award. The People's Champion award went to social activist and Equal Justice Initiative Founder Bryan Stevenson. John Legend, Nicki Minaj, Rita Ora and Lady Gaga were among the performers at the event. The award show further saw winners pay tribute to the firefighters and first responders who are battling the California wildfires, and encourage fans to make donations for the state of emergency.

"Music is the most ephemeral form of art"

– Satyaki Banerjee

Famous for his rendition of *Moner Manush*, Indian composer Satyaki Banerjee spread the magic of his music on the first day of Folk Fest 2018. Earlier in an intimate conversation, he spoke about his musical experience.

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

You began with classical music, what made you shift to folk music?

It happened through music, of course. I used to be an instrumentalist. When I visited Paush mela for the first time during college days, it changed my outlook on music overnight; I wanted to be a singer.

You play a number of instruments, what got you interested in them?

Nowadays, almost all musicians play multiple instruments. I play a couple, but I am a trained sarod player so I use that same knowledge to play the other instruments. When I play the oud, I do not play the traditional tune. It does not have any exotic value for me; I only use the strings of the instrument to play my music. I felt if *alap* is played right on oud it, actually sounds like veena.

Did your experience as a historian help you in your music?

As a student of history, the knowledge helps me make the choice of music. My education acts like my teacher, which helps me take a conscious decision. I can

then create my own philosophy and care for the music I follow.

Are you working on your own compositions? Do you plan on an album soon?

The songs I compose are all recorded in my phone. The process of making an album looks very arduous to me. Honestly, I lose interest in my own compositions very quickly. I suppose I have not yet created anything which I can really call my own. I admire singer-songwriters, like the Baul mahajans who sing their own songs. If I can ever be one, I'll consider myself truly blessed.

What is your opinion on the Bangladeshi audience?

The love for music in Bangladesh is immense. They are dilettante of good music. If the music does not excite them, they immediately react and that is how it should be. When I was returning home after playing with Arko the last time, this man grabbed Arko and told him how he loved his music. Music is the most ephemeral form of art, and it is that instantaneous emotion that matters.

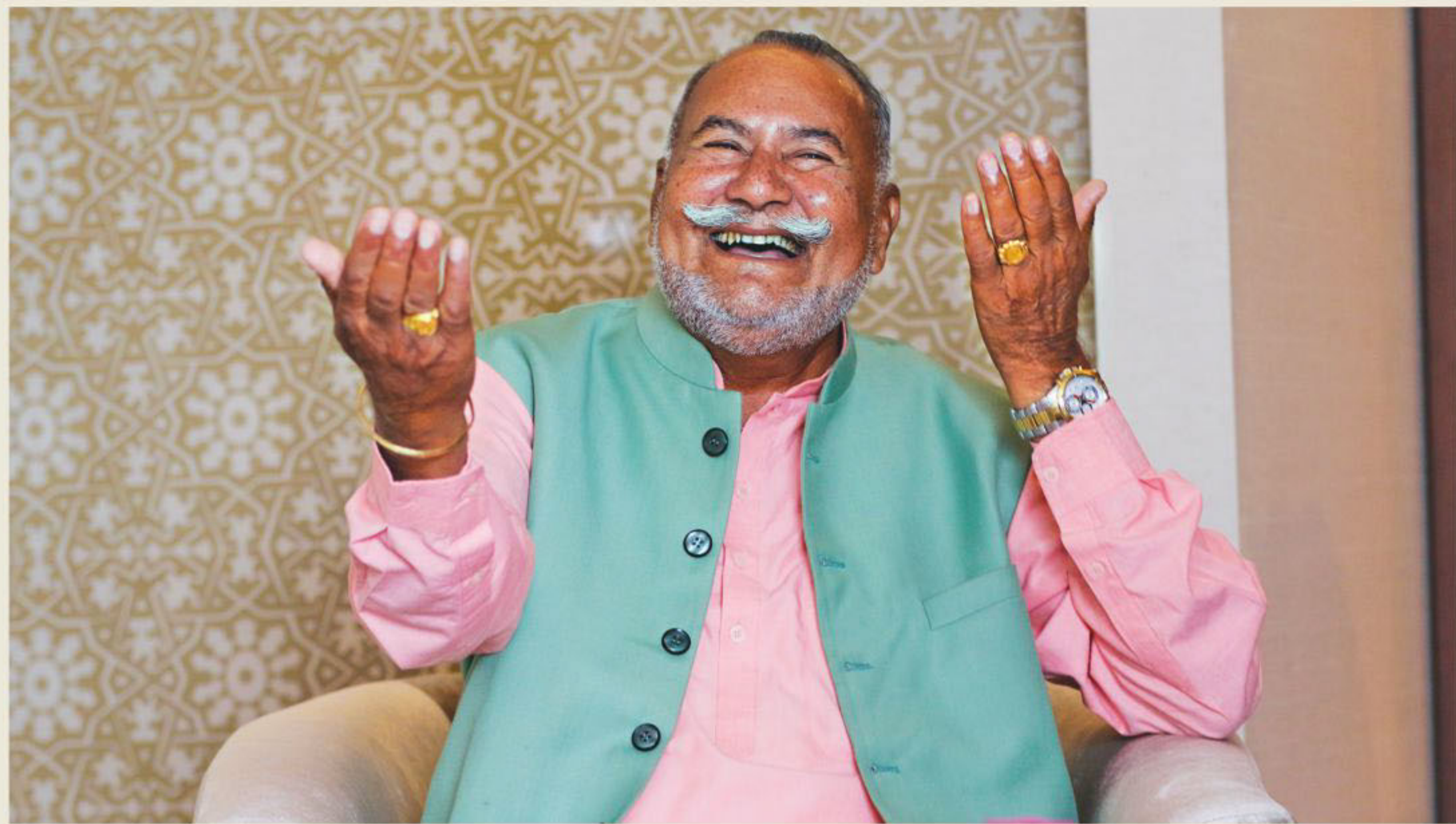


PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Performing for THE SOULS

As Puranchand Wadali and his son Lakhwinder Wadali settle down to start singing for the audience, the senior Wadali runs his eyes through the crowd and smiles as he figures out the songs he and his team are about to perform. For years now, this is how the Wadali Brothers have been no matter where they perform – fixing a list of songs as they set up on stage, after a brief interaction with the audience, trying to read their minds and faces before commencing with the performance. "The Almighty knows what they will want to listen to," exclaims an ever-smiling Puranchand. "We sing for love, God, relationships, mankind – we will sing for the audience as well!"

ELITA KARIM

Yesterday, at the opening night of the Dhaka International Folk Fest, the Wadali Brothers mesmerised the crowd with their melodies, entralling them with their words and style. The audience was absolutely in love with the rhythm and spirituality that they created with their music.

Sufi singers and musicians from the gharana of Guru Ki Wadali in Amritsar, Punjab, the Wadali Brothers initially consisted of the two brothers Puranchand Wadali and Pyarelal Wadali. On March 9 this year, Pyarelal Wadali, the youngest of the two, passed away due to a cardiac arrest.

The older brother now is performing with his son, Lakhwinder Wadali, who used to accompany his father and uncle in many earlier shows as well. Lakhwinder is an established performer himself.

"I wanted to become a wrestler, not a singer," Puranchand says, talking about his father Thakur Das Wadali. "I was a *pehelwan* for 20 years, until my father forced me to take up singing. It was only because of him that I got the opportunity to train under great musicians. Pyarelal, my younger brother, took his lessons from me."

Puranchand Wadali spoke of how grateful he is to his father for changing his life with music. "There is a saying – where the body does not reach, the soul

reaches," he says. "That is what happens when we perform music for others. Music can change the hearts and minds of so many people belonging to all walks of life. While we perform on stage, people ranging from a simple day labourer to the president of a country come to listen."

Singing freely and with the heart is what the Wadali Brothers believe in. That is what they did last night while performing their gurbani, kafi, ghazal and bhajan genres. Free from electronic gadgets and the worldly materials, the moments listening to the Wadali Brothers seemed to pass by rapidly, leaving everyone with a desire for more.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED