

WHAT'S ON

12 ANGRY MEN
 Theatre
 Title: 12 Angry Men 14th show
 Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
 Date: February 24

Group Art Exhibition
 Title: Musicality in Wood
 Venue: Gallery Cosmos-Villa de Anjuman, New DOHS Mohakhali
 Date: February 22 – March 5

Exhibition
 Title: LAL - An Ode to the Moon & Menstrual Cycle
 Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani
 Date: February 19 - 23
 Details: Jatra Biroti's Facebook page

Book Fair
 Title: Ekushey Boi Mela 2019
 Venue: Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy, Dhaka
 Date: February 1 – 28

Photography Exhibition
 Title: PARK – In place for public
 Venue: Counter Foto Mirpur Campus
 Date: February 10 – March 10
 Time: 10 am onwards

“We have to move forward, but with our heritage”

– Kamal Ahmed

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

With a noteworthy singing career of seven national and international awards, Kamal Ahmed also holds the important position of Director of Programme at Bangladesh Betar, a cultural pillar of the country. Finding his comfort zone in Rabindra Sangeet, the ever-passionate musician keeps expanding his repertoire. He has 16 versatile albums of different genres to his credit. The artiste talks to *The Daily Star* about his latest albums, musical philosophy, and more.



PHOTO: SHEIKH ENAM



amount of music. Both of the aforementioned albums have 12 songs each, and since my banner, Laser Vision, does not compromise on the quality of songs, the response is good. Of course, we do plan to release music videos as well.

What inspires you as a singer?
 A sense of commitment towards my country and its music is what drives me. In 2016, my album, *Mohakabber Kobi* was released, which was a humble tribute to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. *Ganer Tori* was released in the same year, which was a tribute to the Teen Kobi.

Bangladesh Betar has been a lighthouse for cultural activities in Bangladesh for decades. However, as we enter a new era of lightning-fast internet and unlimited accessibility, what is the institution doing to keep up?
 We pride ourselves to be an institution which is unconditionally beside our heritage and culture. However, we have kept up with the changing times. From our analogue times to social media in the current era, we have maintained a great relationship with our listeners. We now interact with them through Facebook, and play songs according to requests there as well. We have to move forward, but with our heritage.

Could you tell us about your latest projects?
 This February, two of my albums were released under the banner of Laser Vision. *Ekusher Swaralipi* is a tribute to our International Mother Language Day, and to my knowledge, this might be the first album with all-original songs to commemorate the day. *Adhora* released on this Valentine's Day, and has contributions from the likes of Lucky Akhand, Kawser Ahmed Chowdhury and Moshir Rahman.

Releasing two complete albums within a month is not easy. How is the response from the audience?
 It's true that the current trend in the industry is to release one song at a time, with an accompanying music video. I, however, am not a believer of this methodology. With fewer songs released, the audience is basically deprived from a good

PORTRAIT OF A COVER ARTIST

Naeem Ahmed

Naeem Hossain began his career as an architect, having graduated in that field of study from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology. He went onto explore many avenues of design, including game, user-interface, product and others. Art, on the other hand, is a field that he is immensely passionate about. Currently a user-experience designer at a software firm, Naeem recently took up cover art and began making covers of books for the Ekushey Boi Mela in 2017. For this year's fair, Naeem has designed the covers of *Attopochanimulok Rosh or Self-Deprecating Humor* by Wahid Ibn Reza, *Bamoner Chandrobilash* by Anonto Rahat Rakib, *Juddho* by Ahsan Habib and *Shobar Jonno Ubuntu* by Nasir Khan Saikat. We caught up with him to find out more about his work.

SHABABA IQBAL

Tell us about the process you follow for the artwork while working on a book.
 My aim as a cover artist is to reflect the mood and tone of the book, keeping the title and text in mind. Readers should be able to understand how the cover complements the text once they have finished reading the book.

Who are some of your inspirations in the art community?
 I am huge fan of Satyajit Ray. I am also inspired by the work of Sabyasachi Mistry, Ahsan Habib and Mehedi Haque. Many young and emerging artists today are also doing remarkably well.

Ekushey Boi Mela is certainly a busy season for cover artists, but how do you keep yourself occupied otherwise?
 I am always sketching something or the other, be it book illustrations, story

boards or cartoons. However, I enjoy making art for myself the most.

How would you characterize your artworks and the messages you aim to portray through them?
 I am pretty versatile as an artist, which comes with its pros and cons. Even though my versatility gives me immense creative satisfaction and allows me to develop my skills in different platforms, maintaining specific messages or themes in my artworks proves to be difficult.

What kind of hurdles have you faced as an artist, progressing through your career?
 I face hurdles internally, in the sense that I do not push myself enough to reach my potential to the fullest and so, I think that I have not fully explored my capabilities as an artist yet. Otherwise, I believe that artists in Bangladesh today have plenty of ways to create their own opportunities.



PHOTO: COURTESY



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