

Amala Shankar turns 100

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Legendary Indian danseuse and choreographer, Amala Shankar turned 100 years old yesterday, amidst a variety of celebrations. Amala Shankar was born on June 27, 1919, in Jessore of then undivided Bengal and was introduced to the world of dance by maestro Uday Shankar, whom she met in France at the age of 12 and married over a decade later. Amala Shankar was Uday Shankar's primary dance partner and played instrumental roles in his dance productions. She also played the titular role in the feature film *Kalpna* directed by Uday Shankar. Mother to renowned actor Mamata Shankar and late musician Ananda Shankar, Amala Shankar has played a vital role in carrying forward the legacy of the Uday Shankar dance form for generations.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



"We will give Bangladesh something new" – LAISFITA



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Shunanda Sharmin, Antora Rahman, Ferdousi Moumita and Mustarin Ahmed Sheetal – are four young singers who fought off intense competition in the marquee show, *Sunsilk Divas*, to form Laisfita – Bangladesh's newest professional female pop band. With dreams of reaching for the sky, and mountains to climb in terms of gaining acceptance from the general populi, the divas are up for the challenge, as they have a conversation over coffee with The Daily Star.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Before *Sunsilk Divas*, you had no connection to the music industry. How do you feel after coming to the forefront as a band, and gaining so much limelight?

Antora: The feeling is quite overwhelming, and we are looking forward to making our presence felt. Honestly, we are all relishing our moment in the spotlight, and will work hard for everyone who believed in us.

What was the reason behind naming your band 'Laisfita'?

Shunanda: We were named Laisfita, because we want to represent young women in the country. 'Lace-fita' is a ribbon commonly worn by school-going girls in Bangladesh, so our management company, Creinse, thought that it was a good fit for us.

Your single, 'Swapno Akhon Amar Haatey', was recently released. What kind of response have you received?

Sheetal: *Swapno Akhon Amar Haatey* is the first single that we recorded together, and it was composed by Hridoy Khan.

We are very happy with the song, and the response that we have received is overwhelmingly positive. We were very nervous before the recording, but the support that we received from the composer, as well as our producers, helped us give our best. We are also working on an album, as well as a music video for *Swapno Akhon Amar Haatey*. Many have voiced out opinions regarding your group, especially regarding the fact that none of you play any instruments. What do you have to say about that?

Shunanda: We get that a lot. However, I'd like to clarify that we are not a conventional band, but a vocal group. Even though this term is not as well known in the country, pop bands are huge worldwide – take, for example, the likes of Blackpink, BTS and EXO from

South Korea. Our diversity comes from the range and texture of our voices, and how we work with it. We hope that in time, people will understand and accept who we are, and the kind of music we make.

What would you like to achieve together as a group?

Antora: We want to create a legacy, and become rolemodels for young girls in the country, whether they are urban or rural. We want to make them believe that through hard work, anything is possible, and that they should never quit on their dreams.

Do you have any message for the readers?

Moumita: I want to urge everyone to support us, and to stay with good music, regardless of the genre. We are still new, but we will give it our all to make good music, and we need your encouragement. As long as we are together, we will give Bangladesh something new.

BotTola stages Khona

AFSANA AZIZ NITOL

Theatre troupe BotTola staged the play 'Khona' at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on June 26. 'Khona', written by Samina Luthfa and directed by Mohammad Ali Haider, was dedicated to writer and activist Jahanara Imam on her 25th death anniversary.

The play began on a pleasant note with noticeably effervescent energy levels being displayed by performers on stage. The entire space was thoroughly used by the cast as they ran and danced around throughout the duration of the play. The astrologer's character, played by Mohammad Ali Haider, dominated the first few scenes of the play, where his rage and powerful performance perfectly complimented his character.

However, as soon as the limelight shifted to the character



Leelabati, also known as Khona, Kazi Rokhsana Ruma stole the show with her lively performance. Dressed in the colour of nature – green, Ruma effortlessly embodied Khona's spirit. The clarity of her voice did justice to what Khona was known for – her bochon (words). In the end, however, her words were taken away from her through the most gruesome means. Khona's story stands testament to society's collective effort to historically silence the voices of women.

BotTola's Khona, overall, was an

absolute treat. It celebrated Khona's optimism, courage and intelligence beautifully. Humour and music played instrumental roles in the play. A popular bochon by Khona regarding frogs, rain and nature was presented through songs, making the play more entertaining. Even the dull moments had their own elements of unique music. The cast and crew of Khona included Evan Riaz, Sheyuti Shahgufta, Taufique Hassan, Humayun Azam Rewaz, and Mahbub Masum, among others.



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