



Alauddin Ali at work. (2) Gazi Mazharul Anwar, Alauddin Ali and Syed Abdul Hadi in conversation. (3) Alauddin Ali with Syed Abdul Hadi. (4) A young Alif Alauddin with her father, Alauddin Ali.

ALAUDDIN ALI

and his unforgettable melodies

SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

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It was one of those rare moments when I caught a glimpse of renowned composer Alauddin Ali, oblivious to the world around him, humming a catchy tune he probably just came up with. As I continued working on my songs in Sruti Studio, I occasionally saw him from the other side of the glass window.

Seeing the nonchalant way the piece of paper was left on the harmonium, my first intuition was that Ali was possibly creating yet another classic like *O amar Bangla ma tor, Shurjodoy-e tumi, Prothom Bangladesh amar shesh Bangladesh, Achhen amar mokhtar, Hai-re kopal mondo, Keu konodin amar-e tho, Tumi aarekhar ashiya, Ei duniya ekhon tho aar shei duniya nai, Harano diner moto*, among others. This certainly was not the time to intrude into his world, I reckoned.

It has been nearly two decades that we ran into each other once more. We talked about the days at the Shahbagh radio station, when he had not yet made his mark as a composer. Our conversation veered on his vast popularity as a music director.

Alauddin Ali's father, Jadob Ali, was a staff artiste at the radio. His uncle, Ustad Sadek Ali and cousins Dhir Ali Miah, Mansur Ali, Yunus Ali and Momotaz Uddin were all renowned music directors and composers of the Dacca Radio Station during the 60s.

When Ali was only a student of class three, his uncle, Ustad Sadek Ali had given him a Chinese violin as a gift. At that age he would be on the tabla, accompanying his



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

sister while she practised on the sitar; he even ventured on his father's esraj, composing tunes.

"In 1964, I won the 'All Pakistan Children's Award' for violin from President Ayub Khan. It was at that point that I dropped anchor in the world of music. I realised I was going to be here for the rest of my life," he had said.

By 1967-68, Ali, besides practicing violin, learnt the piano under music director Karim Shahabuddin. "I spent almost 18 to 20 hours practising every day, which gave me confidence to emerge as a violinist in playbacks," he had mentioned.



The maestro playing a piano.

Ali feels fortunate enough to have worked under eminent music composers like Khan Ataur Rahman, Altaf Mahmud and Robin Ghosh. In 1970, his urge to work in music direction intensified as he got the opportunity to assist late Altaf Mahmud. Prominent music directors Dhir Ali Miah, Mansur Ali and Anwar Parvez also guided him for several years.

Ali made his debut as a music composer through the film Shondhikkhon in 1974. In 1977 his compositions for the films *Golapi Ekhon Train-e* and *Fokir Mojnu Shah* earned him enormous popularity.

Ali was selected as the best music director and composer for three consecutive years (1978-80), which opened the door for him to work at HMV in India.

In 1978, one his best-selling albums featuring the diva Runa Laila was released. "The album broke all previous records and my songs attained greater popularity in West Bengal. In the last 20/25 years I'd recorded several songs in Dhaka, Kolkata, Mumbai, Lahore and Karachi. I consider myself fortunate that I've been able to have this kind of exposure," he had said.

His genius did not go unrecognised as

he received the greatest number of National Awards as a music director in our country.

In 1990, during the grand celebrations of 300th anniversary of Kolkata, Ali was accorded a reception at Salt Lake Stadium in the city, along with maestros including Salil Chowdhury and others. He was the music director for the SAAF Games Ceremony in 1993 at Dhaka Stadium, where over 8000 artistes sang to his tune. "Many prominent singers of the subcontinent have sung my compositions. A reputed French music company has included the background scores for the movie *ShurjoDighol Bari*, composed by me, in the curriculum of several music schools," Ali had said.

Speaking on upcoming talents, Ali saw no alternative to proper grammatical know-how. Despite access to modern electrical gadgets, it is next to impossible to venture into this field without a firm foothold in the basics of music, he had asserted.

"Substandard lyrics and compositions are an embarrassment. Audio piracy has fuelled this unwanted phenomenon, where people (I do not like to call them composers) simply copy or lift off popular (mostly Hindi) songs, in an attempt to become famous overnight," he had said. "Stern measures should be taken against them or we will soon lose our identity and like a tree with its roots severed, wither away into oblivion."

The author is a famed Nazrul Sangeet exponent and the Chief of Culture Initiatives, The Daily Star.

Zahid Gogon on his film 'Prem Puran'

PRİYANKA CHOWDHURY

Young filmmaker Zahid Gogon has a number of accolades to his credit, including the Tareque Masud Young Film Maker Award (2014). Through his remarkable talent, he has been steadily making his mark in the industry. Although his previous films *A Book Behind the Shoes* and *Ekti Mrityu = Tin Bigha Jami* (*One Death = Three Bighas of Land*) appeals to political ideas directly, his latest film, *Prem Puran* (*Myth of Love*), takes a different route. With the Honorable Jury Mention - Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival 2020 among twelve more international honours, the trailer of the film has attracted a large audience. In a conversation with *The Daily Star*, Zahid Gogon discusses his aspirations.

"I worked with the script of *Prem Puran* for one year. In 2016, I nearly completed half of the film. Sadly, the producers refused to make further investments, and the entire project was scraped off," recalls Zahid.

The story, however, was close to his heart. As a result, Zahid, along with his team, opted for crowd funding for the film. "You have to prove your worth before you step into a field. I tried to follow every aspect of filmmaking grammar with *Prem Puran*," asserts the director.

The film is inspired by *The Gift of The Magi* by O' Henry, *Rain coat* by Rituparno Ghosh, *Bhanga chora* by Zahir Raihan and some true stories of jute mill worker leader Shahid Tajul Islam, who demanded justice for workers in our country. For someone who has been politically driven



Zahid Gogon

PHOTO: COURTESY

from a young age, taking on the romance genre seems rather odd. "I get that a lot, especially from those who know me closely," smiles Zahid. "However, the name is a signifier - *Puran* - as we know, connects to myths and mythology. The story is romantic, but it also carries the essence of my beliefs."

Be it regular rehearsals, script readings, blockings or characterisations—Zahid was involved with every aspect of the

filmmaking process throughout *Prem Puran*. "I was the only one who knew the story and the characters precisely. "It was important for everyone in the team to be on the same page. I am grateful to the cast and crew for putting up with my demands," laughs Zahid. Manoj Kumar Pramanik, Samia Othoi, Arman Parvez Murad, Ashok Bepari and Pankaj Majumder play leading roles in the film, which was shot in Pabna and Dhaka.

Dhaka theke ashchen? Okhankar khobor ki ajkal? Manush bhalobashte shikheche?—these lines from the film have won hearts. "Dialogues are crucial. I did numerous drafts until I got everything right," says Zahid. "I am grateful to Zahidur Rahim Anjan for his guidance and supervision."

Zahid also had plans to enter the festival circuit. "Our advisor Mohammad Shazzad Hossain watched the first show and immediately announced some funds, with which we applied to some festivals. I cannot express my gratitude to him words," he says. The film will be available on OTT platforms soon.

Prem Puran won the Mumbai Shorts International Film Festival 2019 and Chittagong Short Film Festival 2020 for best actress for Samia Othoi, Finalist in International Moving Film Festival 2019, Semifinalist in Jaipur Film World 2020 and Official Selection from Goa Short Film Festival-19, Lift-Off Global Networks - 19, Kaaryat International Film Festival of India 2019, Chittagong Short Film Festival 2020 and Kuala Lumpur International Film Festival 2020.



A still from 'Prem Puran'.



PHOTO: STAR

SHAH ALAM SHAZI

Rumana Rashid Ishita is one of the most beloved faces in our television industry. Her powerful acting and charisma has immersed the audiences for decades. For the last few years, the actor has been very selective of her work, and often comes back into the limelight with intriguing performances. This Eid, she appeared in a lead role in the telefilm *Eti Ma*, directed by Ashfaq Nipun. It has been one of the most popular works this Eid, and was widely appreciated by audiences across the country. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, Ishita talks about her role in this project.

How was your experience working in 'Eti Ma'?
It has been wonderful. This was my first project with director Ashfaq Nipun, who has been producing some of the best works for television in the last few years. I finally had the opportunity to work with him, and it has been a great experience overall. We finished the shoot before the lockdown was issued.

The telefilm tells the audience a powerful story, which is scarce in today's television industry. Do you think this will create a positive impact overall?
Eti Ma was not a borrowed story --this is the story of our lives. The primary aspect of a telefilm is its script. A powerful script comes to life with the actors' performances. Our television industry often falls short in the storytelling aspect. I believe more projects like this will positively affect the industry.

How did you feel after watching it on the screen?
Whenever I work on a project, I always make time to watch it. Usually, the mistakes are noticeable while watching it on screen, but this time, the story captivated me completely. I received praises from friends and

acquaintances after it aired. The audience also had many expectations from this telefilm, and it could deliver.

How was it like working with actor Afran Nisho?
I have worked with Nisho before. He is an excellent actor, who is adept at portraying various characters - versatility is very important for any artist.

How are you spending time during this pandemic?
At home, mostly. My kids are participating in their online classes and I have to help them out. I am usually busy with them.



PHOTO: JISAN MIRZA

Afran Nisho, Rumana Rashid Ishita and Ashfaq Nipun on the sets of 'Eti Ma.'