



Monira Parveen



Shamim Ara Nipa PHOTOS: COURTESY

Messianic Era's 10-year journey to culminate in debut album

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Progressive band Messianic Era have seen their share of vicissitudes throughout the years. The talented underground band, inspired by the likes of Dream Theatre, Opeth and Porcupine Tree, will release their self-titled debut album on June 18.

"It has been a long road", says the band's vocalist and frontman, Navid Ehsan, known by his stage name EB. "We started recording for it in 2017, and we've been able to finish the album. There's no feeling like it."

Ehsan had the opportunity to share his musical chops with world-renowned guitarist Guthrie Govan in 2017, claims that this was the turning point in his musical career. "This was when I was inspired and finally took the initiative to aim for an album, the practice of which is declining nowadays."

The album, which will have 9 songs, comes with an intro and outro as the first and last tracks respectively.

The band has released two of the tracks, "Barzakh" and "Osshikar", as singles. Once the album is out, they will release physical variants of it on a limited scale.

Messianic Era consists of Navid Ehsan, Tahmid Rahman Jim and Sheikh Rafayyat Kabir Jim.

The band started their journey in 2011, as a rock band. As the years went on, they embraced their own inspirations to switch to the much more experimental progressive genre. "Our drummer Jim had a huge impact to play in the genre change, as it is impossible to play progressive rock/metal without a skilled drummer," says Ehsan.

The reigns of heavy music were popularized by bands like Cryptic Fate, Arctell, Metal Maze and De-Illumination. Messianic Era, however, was most inspired by Vibe. "Vibe's influence on our music, even if not on an outward level, is deeply evident," says Ehsan.

The band, however, promises to not stop at just a single album, like their inspirations. The album release on July 18 will dictate that future.



Shamim Ara Nipa and Monira Parveen on their devotion to dance

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Ekushey Padak winning dancer Shamim Ara Nipa co-founded Nrityanchal with dancer Shibli Mohammad in 2000. Since then, she has been a constant source of motivation for aspiring dancers. Monira Parveen, a lecturer at the Department of Dance, University of Dhaka, is a student of Shamim Ara Nipa. In a candid chat, the teacher-student duo share their views on dance, and more.



Monira Parveen and Shamim Ara Nipa

Nipa, with tutelage from renowned dance maestros such as G A Mannan and Nikunja Bihari Pal, also had the opportunity to learn from Pandit Birju Maharaj in different workshops, especially on Kathak.

Monira was a student at the Khulna Udichi and Shahid Altaf Mahmud Sangeet Bhaban, before coming to Nrityanchal in 2003. Under the tutelage of Shamim Ara Nipa in folk and creative dance, and Shibli Mohammad in Kathak, Monira later pursued her bachelor's and master's in Kathak, from Rabindra

Bharati University, India. She received a scholarship from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) for her bachelor's.

One of the founding members of the Department of Dance in Dhaka University, Monira expresses her gratitude and respect for her teachers. "Wherever I am today, is because of my teachers and their blessings. They are always a source of spiritual energy and inspiration for me," she says.

Monira does not only consider Nipa as her dance

teacher, but also as a constant source of guidance and support in every aspect of her life. "She always supports me and helps me in my personal problems as well," says Monira. "She is a role model for dancers. Her compassion and guidance has helped me to stay on the right path in life."

Monira is currently working on a book, the first of its kind about Bangladeshi dancers, to acknowledge dance gurus in Bangladesh and inspire new generations of dancers.

Nipa shares that dancers need to value the eagerness to learn and the blessings of their teachers. "Apart from being a talented dancer, Monira is one of those students who respects her teachers, and in doing so, she stands out," she adds. "Her dedication and admiration for her teachers make her a compassionate artiste."

On the other hand, Monira describes Nipa as a perfectionist. "She is also very liberal when it comes to accepting new methods and styles, working with her is always a peaceful experience," says Monira.

In 2014, Monira was awarded a gold medal for her outstanding result at Rabindra Bharati University. She was also awarded the Nirod Baran Memorial Prize, Sunit Basu Memorial Prize, and Asit Chattopdhyay Memorial Prize.

"Monira's expressionism and dedication are valuable qualities," says Nipa. "I can depend on her to execute any given task in a short time."

She further shares that it is through a student that a teacher gains different perspectives to hone their craft. "I expect my students to surpass me through their dedication," Nipa asserts, "however, we must never forget or deny our teachers' contributions in our lives. We must remember the valuable lessons they instilled in us."

Tajuddin Ahmed's "Faces" reflects on human resilience



ALI ADIL KHAN

Tajuddin Ahmed, a renowned Bangladeshi artist, started working on his reflective series "Faces", when the Covid-19 pandemic hit. He put human faces under the microscope to create minutely detailed miniature paintings of men, women and children in different moods, shapes



and shades. These paintings are executed in detail, and vary in sizes from standard letter size paper to some being as small as 1x1 inch. This collection of paintings reflects a major transition from Ahmed's large scale aerial abstract paintings that he is well known for, and are exhibited across Bangladesh at major banks and institutions.

Facial appearance is vital for human recognition and communication. Each face is unique and distinguishes a person and their personality. Ahmed's "Faces" is a tribute to his teacher and mentor Zainul Abedin, who fancied studying and painting faces. The artist's faces portray the strong desire and resilience of humans for survival and to fight the pandemic.

They are also a stark reminder that the pandemic is self-inflicted and that humans must stop playing with the balance of nature or be ready to face dire consequences. It has been scientifically proven that deforestations is leading to more



infectious diseases in humans and has a direct relationship with the appearance of new viruses and diseases. The coronavirus pandemic is suspected of originating in bats and pangolins. It has brought the risk of viruses that jump from wildlife to humans into focus.

These interactions often happen at the edges of the world's tropical forests, where deforestation is increasingly bringing people into contact with animals' natural habitats. Yellow fever, malaria, Venezuelan equine encephalitis, Ebola – all of these pathogens have spilled over from one species to

another at the margins of forests. This is why Ahmed's human faces have an assimilation of animal features and instincts.

His paintings of faces are complex abstract compositions. On closer examination, they appear to be present in their environment in mutated forms emulating the fragility of humans and their susceptibility to disruptive changes in the balance of nature. As Covid-19 is mutating into new forms and different strains of virus, it is playing havoc on humans.

Through his morbid yet profound paintings, Ahmed presents a stark reality – a warning for humans to stop their exploitation of nature or risk being wiped out from the face of this World.

The author is the founder and director of SAGA Foundation and South Asian Gallery of Art (SAGA) in Toronto, Canada. He is an art critic, writer, curator and collector.



Tajuddin Ahmed and his "Faces" series.

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