

Tasnia Farin on "Ladies and Gentlemen"

ASHLEY SHOFTORSHI SAMADDAR

Tasnia Farin is known for hits like "Pocketmar" (2019) and "Valobasa Tarpor" (2020), among others. The talented actor will be seen playing the lead in Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's debut web series "Ladies and Gentlemen". In a candid chat with The Daily Star, Tasnia Farin talks about her OTT debut, experiences, and upcoming ventures.

How was your experience of working with Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, that too in his web series debut?

I have worked with Mostofa Sarwar Farooki before in advertisements, but this is the first time we have worked together on a proper story. He is a very hard working person, and collaborating with him has left me with a unique experience. He has the ability to transform any script into reality, and while shooting for "Ladies and Gentlemen", I felt like this is my reality. Thus, I never had to worry too much about acting, as everything came naturally to me.

Tell us a bit about your role. What challenges did you face while projecting this character on screen?

I play the character of Sabila Hossain. I would not call it a proto-feminist story, as there are a lot of other characters that revolve around Sabila's

being. "Ladies and Gentlemen" projects a lot of social issues that we seldom talk about, but such issues need to be addressed immediately. Sabila is a strong and bold woman and getting into her psychology has been the most difficult part for me while playing her.

The star cast of this production is very unique. How was your shooting experience?

I had never worked with these stars before, but for me, it worked in my favour. As I did not know them personally before, I got to know them through their characters. This helped me relate to my character and the plot in a more realistic way.

Tell us a bit about your most memorable scene from this production. Picking up a scene is difficult as each scene pick different volumes. However, I would pick the climax if I had to pick one. Shooting for the climax was thrilling and exciting at the same time, and I am excited for the audience to watch this.

What are your future projects?

I am currently working with Mizanur Rahman Aryan for his upcoming telefiction "Networker Baire", which will air on Chorki. I have also been busy with television productions for Eid ul-Adha.



PHOTO: STAR



Mostafizur Noor Imran in "Mohanagar".

'Mohanagar' brings Mostafizur Noor Imran into the limelight

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

Hailing from Bagerhat, Mostafizur Noor Imran has a master's in Drama and Dramatics from Jahangirnagar University. The actor got his start on the theatre stage. He has been a part of the industry for more than 14 years. Yet, it is only recently that he has come into the limelight. Starting from a six-second role in the film, "Guerilla", Imran made significant appearances in "Alpha", "Shimantar Choruibhati", and "Extra" (Iti, Tomari Dhaka), among many other films and television ventures. He also won the award for Best Supporting Actor in North Carolina Film Festival in the USA for Ashraf Shishir's 2014 film, "Gariwala". OTT platforms came as a blessing for him. After portraying key roles in web series like "Money Honey" and "Ekattor", his performance in Hoichoi's original web series "Mohanagar" as Sub-Inspector Moloy Kumar, has won over the audience. In a conversation with The Daily Star, Imran, known for his method acting skills, spoke about portraying this character, and more.

You are the grandson of renowned Jatra artiste Ali Mansur Pike. Was he an anchor and inspiration for you to enter the world of entertainment?

Perhaps. It is ironic that I never saw him. His death and my birth were around the same time. Although he was an accomplished performer, you would not find any picture of him. But apparently, I look a lot like him. Growing up, I heard many stories of his realistic acting for which he was often either attacked or adored by his audience.

You have been acting for more than 14 years. However, recognition started coming your way only recently. How do you perceive that?

(Laughs) I have worked in close to 28 films altogether, including shorts and full-length features. Most of them did not see the light of day. Actors in our country barely get their deserved recognition. It did bother me initially, but then, I got an



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award as best supporting actor, which was honestly inspiring. Currently, I am more focused on quality work, but audience response is still very important. In recent times, OTT platforms have welcomed new forms of storytelling, which makes me hopeful.

Let's talk about your recent web series, 'Mohanagar'. How was it working with director and writer Ashfaque Nipun, and the rest of the team?

Ashfaque Nipun, the captain of the ship as I call him, always knew what he wanted. He'd give me his briefing, and I only tried to put forward his vision on screen. I can only hope I did justice to the character and could realise the

director's vision.

The storyline of 'Mohanagar' is confined majorly in a police station. During the shoot, the cast and crew also remained in one space. Did that help your preparation? Fortunately, most of my working experiences have been similar. When the cast and crew remain in close proximity, it definitely adds fineness to the production. Especially as some of us were working with each other for the first time. The fact that Moloy Kumar and other characters that I played recently have stood out amongst star casts is a blessing, wouldn't you agree?

You have played similar roles in your last few projects. Are you looking for more versatile roles moving forward?

When a certain character gets a lot of appreciation, the actor usually ends up being cast in similar roles in other projects. I personally enjoy experimenting and would only take up a role if it excites me.

You created a repertory theatre group in Bagerhat. Can you tell us a bit about that? I like getting back to my roots. I was fortunate enough to receive education from a reputed institution, but there are many gifted people around the county, who may not get such chances. Talent does not need to be centralised to the capital. Survival is a struggle for many artistes, but I want to see them flourish even from a small town. It would be fantastic if in any way opportunities could reach them through the theatre group.

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Reshaping life through Manipuri Dance

ASHLEY SHOFTORSHI SAMADDAR

Manipuri exponent Warda Rihab is one of the most prominent classical dancers globally. While working towards her dream of becoming a dancer, she came across Sony Chowdhury nearly twelve years ago, who dreamt of becoming a Bharatanatyam dancer, just like she once wanted to. In a candid chat with The Daily Star, Warda and her protégé Sony share their how they have grown together over the years.

Despite being a business graduate, Warda chose to travel all the way to Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, with a scholarship of just Rs 6000 when her friends were building their careers in the corporate sector. "During the five years that I spent there under the guidance of my guru ma Kalavati Devi and my teacher Bimbavati Devi, a passion towards dance was instilled in my heart," she shares. "Without any further delay, I decided to take a leap of faith towards dancing."

Unlike Warda, Sony hails from the suburbs of Bangladesh. "Under the influence of media, I developed a misconception of glamour being more important than dance for a performer on stage," says Sony, who first started formal dance training at Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology. "However, this perception was fully altered when I joined the institute Dhriti Nartanalaya, spearheaded by Warda. She made me realise how the story behind the

routine is what matters, more than gorgeous clothes or exquisite makeup."

Warda and Sony have worked together in numerous local and international projects. Sony left for Rabindra Bharati University to seek tutelage from the same gurus who once were guiding lights to Warda. After completing his master's, Sony decided to return to his roots and establish a stronger ground for Manipuri



Warda Rihab

dancers in South Asia.

Bearing this in mind, the duo started choreographing and performing dance recitals, such as "Alor Pothojathi", "Shyama", "Mayar Khela" and "Hajar Bochorer Bangali", which emerged as some of the most prominent dance dramas in recent times. "We have performed in close to 8 countries together, including America, Bangkok, Turkey, and Australia, besides our homeland. Be it costume designing, choreography or script, Sony has always been around for me," says Warda.

Over the years, Warda and Sony learned a lot from each other. "I still look up to Sony's makeup skills as I am not as good at makeup as him, despite several attempts," laughs Warda.

Sony, who now assists Warda in running Dhriti Nartanalaya, has learned how Manipuri, even its simplest form, must radiate the essence

of literature. He aims to revive the culture and tradition of the Indian subcontinent, presented in the form of dance. "I have been working with Warda for over a decade now and during all this time, I have known how each aspect, starting from the lyrics of the song to the hand gestures, choreography, formation, and costume, have to be in harmony, echoing the same message. Without her help and guidance, I would never have been able to be selected for my fully funded programme under Rabindra Bharati University," adds Sony.

Over the years, both Warda and Sony have faced their own struggles. "As choreographers, we do not always get the budgeting we expect, but we still do the job from a point of love and respect for dancing. Nevertheless, contemporary dancers have been more inclined towards making dance as their source of income, rather than mastering the dance form they wish to pursue," mentions Warda. "Due to such trends, coming across well-trained dancers with good postures and techniques have become a rarity."

On the other hand, Sony has always been subjected to certain stereotypical misconceptions that a male dancer has to endure, especially in South Asian society. "Parents often feel unsafe to allow their children to train with male teachers and we can't blame them as today, the media is flooded with negative news," says Sony, who has received the Nriyakumodi Award, India. "I also think people's sense of punctuality and determination to achieve perfection in dance has lessened over time."

Warda and Sony have been working actively to keep their shows and Dhriti Nartanalaya running. Alongside online classes, their troupe performed recently at the Mujib Shotoborsho Programme. "We have grown together and now it's time for us to lead other birds towards the nest of Manipuri dancing," concludes Warda.



The mentor and student share a picture together.

PHOTO: COURTESY



Sony Chowdhury