

DHAKA'S OPEN MIC SCENE: A platform for emerging artists to shine

The stage is set; you see an open platform in front of you, with the spotlight on the person holding the mic, what is going to happen? Will it be a stand-up comedy routine, which will make you laugh a lot, or a slam poetry recital that will awaken the artistic self in you, giving a timely nudge? Maybe the person will also have a guitar and start playing an original melody that you start singing along with; just think of any opportunity for artistic expression, and it will happen at an open mic venue.

Dhaka's open mic scene has evolved over the years, from humble beginnings to now being a platform for performers to highlight their talent and make a breakthrough in the industry. It is a vibrant scene, with stand-up comedy, solo musical performances, slam poetry, and more being featured. Among the venues, The Junction at Niketon, Banani's Jatra Biroti, and Third Space at Dhanmondi are prominent spaces that host open mic sessions frequently. If you want to become a performer, prepare yourself mentally and physically, and keep an eye out for upcoming events at these venues.



Stand-up comedy has carved out a solid niche among the Dhaka crowd who are always looking for something wholesome, with trailblazers like Naveed Mahbub providing a platform for up-and-coming performers. With Dhaka being a city in need of a laugh, this is an important industry, not only for its entertainment value but also for the community it brings together. In addition, Naveed's Comedy Club is a great place to hone your skills as an upstart stand-up comedian.

"I remember when we first started doing shows at open mic venues, there

weren't that many people present. Now it's good to see the venues have increased, along with performers getting their due recognition," said Amin Hannan, one-half of the Amin and Ashik standup duo who have become quite popular in recent years, performing in sold-out shows and just last year, performed at the inaugural Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2021.

While stand-up comedy is enjoying its spot in the limelight, slam poetry has become a medium where you can articulate your thoughts in front of an

open-minded audience. Slam poetry is gaining momentum as a way to express yourself. It is an art form that has been around for a while and it is gaining more recognition in the modern world. It allows for an audience to be taken on a journey as the artist uniquely expresses their thoughts. Slam poetry is an opportunity for individuals to express their ideas, emotions, and stories in a powerful and captivating way. Last year, The Daily Star Books and SHOUT hosted 'Slam Poetry Nights,' with 18 participants taking the spotlight to perform their poetry and some

impromptu performances at the end. "In one of our SHOUT meetings, my team and I were discussing how we could create a platform for young minds to come together and express themselves, while also creating a unique kind of experience for said people. I had been following Button Poetry on social media, and earlier that day, I remember thinking to myself how nice it would be to be able to experience that in person. Therefore, the idea dawned on me to create something similar, within our city, and thus the inception of 'Slam Poetry Nights' happened," said Afrin Tarannum, Sub-Editor of SHOUT, The Daily Star.

"We received an overwhelmingly positive response since our first event, and it has only been getting better. We honestly could not have expected a better outcome and feedback from our performers and our guests. We have been told that Slam Poetry Nights has become a safe space for many of our performers and participants to share their minds and their art in one platform, and we wear it as a badge of honour," said Afrin, when asked about the response from the audience.

Emerging artists have a positive audience, but they still struggle to be heard. Open mic venues give them a platform and much-needed support, essential for providing opportunities and building their confidence. They have a community of like-minded artists and mentors to help them, as well as access to resources. It is important to provide support for these emerging artists in Dhaka so that they can continue to pursue their passions and achieve their dreams.

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