

Faiz Ghar Communiqué

A Quarterly E-Newsletter

Happy New Year

Upcoming Events in 2013



Tina Sani

FEBRUARY 9th 2013

✧ TINA SANI sings Faiz

- ✧ NIGHAT CHAUDHRY & WAHAB SHAIKH – Dance Performance based on Faiz’s Poetry
- ✧ Dance Performance of *Lahore Grammar School Johar Town* Students on Faiz’s Poetry



Nighat Chaudhry

FEBRUARY 14th & 15th 2013

- ✧ “Chand Roz Aur Meri Jaan”- a rendering of letters written between Alys & Faiz
By Indian actors **SALIMA RAZA & BANWARI TANEJA** (from Delhi) in Lahore



Qaisera Shahraz

MARCH 6th 2013

- ✧ An evening with UK based novelist **QAISRA SHAHRAZ**
(Author of two books, Typhoon & The Holy Woman)



Salima Raza

MARCH 8th 2013

- ✧ Faiz Memorial Lecture by **GIRISH KARNAD** - renowned Indian Playwright,
Film Director, Film Actor & Poet



Asad Anees

MARCH 9th 2013

- ✧ TAHIRA SYED sings Faiz – An evening dedicated to **Malika Pukhraj & Alys Faiz**
- ✧ ADEEL HASHMI & ASAD ANEES (pianist) present Faiz’s Poetry through recitation & music



Girish Karnad



Adeel Hashmi



Tahira Syed

Please note that entry to all events will be strictly by Invitation Only

January 2013 Issue

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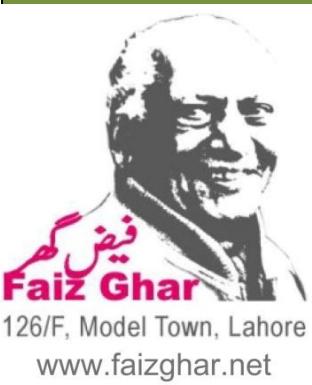
Upcoming Events in 2013

An Evening with Naseeruddin Shah @ HRCF

“Theatre is my first love” – Interview by Dr. Ali Madeeh Hashmi

Daastan-e-Chauboli By Nyla Daud

Naseeruddin Shah mesmerizes Lahore by Aisha Sarwari



An Evening with Naseeruddin Shah @ HRCP

In an informal setting *Naseeruddin Shah* talked candidly to an audience at the HRCP hall. It was an interactive session conducted by *Adeel Hashmi*.

Naseer spoke about his love for the theatre and also the hardships he faced when he was struggling to establish himself as an actor. Answering a question about how theatre actors are never paid well he described the time when he and another friend would take long train rides across Bombay simply to rehearse since they did not have any other place.

He also talked about how he accidentally came across the character of *Ghalib* which was to give him such prominence and fame. Answering a question whether he would consider acting as '*Faiz*' he laughed and said, '*that would be difficult since there are still many people who remember Faiz even today. Ghalib however is history*'.

Answering a question of whether he was a feminist (since all the stories of *Ismat Apa* performed in Lahore focused on the sad plight of women) he commented that he was an admirer of all people no matter the sex or gender.

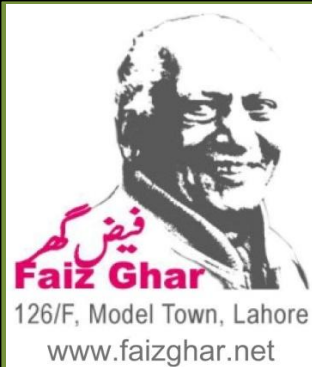
He also said he was not too keen to act on television and was not very complimentary about most films being churned out of Bollywood today.

Mr. Shah reiterated his promise to come again in 2013 with a new set of performances for the theatre lovers of Lahore.



**Naseeruddin Shah
&
Ratna Pathak Shah**
with Faiz's Family &
Friends





"Theatre is my first love"

An interview with **Naseeruddin Shah** by **Ali Madeeh Hashmi**

Following are some excerpts from a 3-part interview published in TFT.

For complete article, please visit

<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/articles.php?issue=20121207&page=24>

It might be a cliché to say that Naseeruddin Shah needs no introduction but in his case it is, literally, true. Shah is, to use another cliché, 'an actor's actor'. He started his career in the Indian 'New Wave' cinema (also known as 'Parellel' or 'Art' cinema) of the 1970s. In fact, along with Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil and Om Puri, he was one of the pillars of that movement and gave numerous memorable performances in films such as Nishant ('Night's End'), Aakrosh ('Cry of the Wounded'), Sparsh ('Touch'), Mandi ('Marketplace'), Junoon ('Obsession') and the like. He successfully made the switch to commercial Bollywood films in the 1980s with films like 'Hero Hiralal', 'Tridev' and famously, opposite Dilip Kumar in the multi-starrer 'Karma' (in which viewers got the rare opportunity to see the two master thespians emote opposite each other). He has also dabbled in Hollywood films, most notably opposite Sean Connery in 'The League of Extraordinary Gentleman' (2003).

But theater was his first love. In 1977, he founded his theatre company "Motley" with partners Tom Alter and Benjamin Gilani. The first play they staged was Samuel Beckett's iconic 'Waiting for Godot' which Shah felt would "totally flop since no one would understand it". Much to their surprise, the audience's response was overwhelmingly positive. "People were laughing at the right places, they were silent at the right ones, we were taken aback," recalls Shah. Motley has since staged 'Godot' more than sixty times and plans to keep on doing it. He has also worked on television, most memorably when he teamed up with Gulzar in 1988 to act in the mini-series '*Mirza Ghalib*', so far probably the most thoroughly researched visual representation of the life of that mercurial genius.

Naseeruddin Shah was recently in Lahore at the invitation of the Faiz Foundation Trust to stage a series of short plays titled '*Ismat Apa ke Naam*' based on the short stories of the late, great Ismat Chughtai whom Shah calls "the first truly emancipated woman writer in the sub-continent". Judging by the response of an overflow audience at Lahore's Alhamra theatre - the actors got a five-minute standing ovation at the end of their performance - Lahoris agreed with Shah.

Mr. Shah agreed to talk about theatre and movies during his stay. His wife, actor Ratna Pathak Shah, sat in and made contributions from time to time.

Ali Madeeh Hashmi (AMH): So what is it about theatre that draws you in so strongly?

Naseeruddin Shah (NS): Well, theatre has its own language which is very different from the movies. I am interested in the theatre of storytelling. My aim is the opposite of what they do on Broadway [in New York]. I am not interested in spectacle and bombast. I have been to plays in the West where there was a car chase on stage, once the 'Titanic' sailed across the stage, the whole ship! Why would you try to create that kind of effect? It has become difficult in the West to distinguish between theatre and film. Theatre is not film and you shouldn't try to make it so. My vision of theatre is what Polish Director Jerzy Grotowski articulated. He gave the notion of "poor theatre" and what that meant basically was that we had to make our lack of resources our strength. His vision was that theatre should foster no illusions, it should connect directly with the audience. He advised making theatre as stripped down as possible, trying to make the audience and the actor one. He wanted to remove the "fourth wall" between the audience and those on stage.

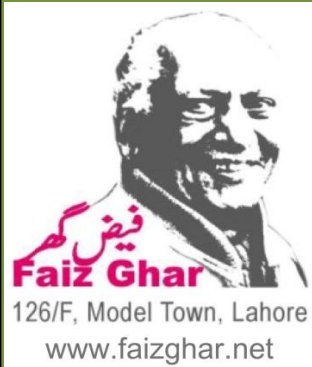
AMH: "Fourth wall"?

NS: Yes, you know how the stage has three walls and then there is a fourth one in front of the stage which separates the audience and the performers, well Grotowski wanted to make that disappear, really make the audience a part of the performance.

AMH: Tell us about [the 1988 TV series] '*Mirza Ghalib*'.

NS: Well I knew next to nothing about Ghalib's poetry or for that matter, about Urdu literature in general, back then. My only association with Ghalib was an uncle who lived in Muhalla Balli MaaraN and in fact on the same street as Ghalib, Gali Qasim Jaan. When I was in school in Nainital, we used to go there to visit my uncle and my family would always point out Ghalib's former house and I used to wonder why that whole area was so decrepit and rundown. Of course I had seen the [1954] movie on Ghalib with Mr. Bharat Bhushan as Mirza Ghalib and then I heard in the 1970s that Gulzar Bhai was planning to make a movie on Ghalib and that he had cast Sanjeev Kumar in the lead and I wrote him a registered letter to say that he couldn't do that. Anyone who has seen [acclaimed director Satyajit Ray's 1977 movie] '*Shatranj ke Khiladi*' will attest to that. He [Sanjeev Kumar] was all wrong for that role, I mean he was a Gujarati, how can you cast him for a role like that? I should have been in that role. So I wrote to Gulzar Bhai saying he couldn't cast Sanjeev Kumar for that role, he needed to cast me and of course I never heard back, this was when I was still a relative unknown and later Gulzar Bhai told me he never got the letter which was probably just as well*laughs*.





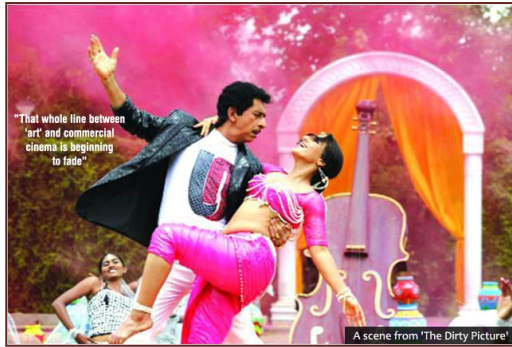
Anyway, later there was talk that he had tried to get Mr. (Amitabh) Bachchan for the role and that didn't happen either and then the movie got shelved. Many years later, though, when he revived that project for [India's State television] Doordarshan, the role fell into my lap. One day he just phoned me and said I want you to do it. It was just the greatest good fortune that brought the part my way. There can't be a better introduction to Urdu poetry and after I got that role is when I started to study Ghalib's poetry under Gulzar Bhai's tutelage and he gave me a very wise piece of advice. He said I know you are a method actor and you immerse yourself in your role and I know when you were acting in [Director Shyam Benegal's award-winning 1978 movie] 'Junoon' you would wear your sword at your side all the time and ride your horse to and from the set but don't try that with this role. Don't try to understand Ghalib, don't try to become the character because it will do you no good. Understanding Ghalib will take you 'saat janam' [seven lifetimes] so don't even try. I will give you the script and you follow the text and we will be fine and that's what I did.

AMH: Would you ever consider doing a project like that on Faiz?

NS: *smiles* Well I think that would be difficult first because Ghalib lived so very long ago and no one knew what he looked like and how tall he was and how he talked or walked or laughed so it was easier to embody him whereas with Faiz that would be hard to do but who knows.

AMH: Talk about 'The Dirty Picture'. What a wonderful picture and what a role!

NS: *laughs*



AMH: Now did they write the role [of aging superstar Suryakanth] the same way or did you tweak it for yourself?

NS: No, no, they wrote it exactly like that. I just performed it.

AMH: It looked like you were having fun with it.

NS: I was, it was great fun and it really wasn't that hard. I just tried to embody the various movie stars I have observed in the last thirty years in the industry and that role was an amalgamation of all those observations. That movie is a perfect example of a relatively small budget movie that went on to mainstream success. And it was also an example of a good movie which succeeded in its intention which was to paint a picture of life in Bollywood in those days.

AMH: Now that you are an "elder statesman" of Indian cinema, tell us about some of the actors that you admire.

NS: My favorite actors in Indian Cinema are Shammi Kapoor, Dev Anand and Dara Singh. Shammi Kapoor is one of the greatest actors to have ever appeared in Indian cinema. I loved him as a child, I grew up on him, he's "the man".

AMH: You are one of the few mainstream Indian actors that have collaborated with the Pakistani film industry (most recently in Shoaib Mansoor's 'Khuda Ke Liyay') and you are now working on another Pakistani film. Tell us a little bit about that.

NS: The film is called 'Zinda Bhaag' and its subject is illegal immigration. I was here in Lahore in February and worked on the script for a week. Then I came back for about 6 days and we completed my shooting. Illegal immigration is a very big problem both in India and Pakistan. We have young, desperate and unemployed people sometimes using very dangerous illegal ways to go abroad. I read about this one Pakistani boy who tried to go abroad while hiding in a plane's landing gear. Some manage to get to where they are going but the vast majority end up suffering terribly and some even lose their lives. You know, many young people seem to think that all they have to do is get to another country and their lives will get better and in most cases that's just a mirage they are chasing. I feel strongly about all this but the main reason I chose to work on this movie is because I found the script interesting. I just feel there's more creativity in Pakistan in terms of writing and ideas than there is in India. The energy at some of the gatherings I have been to is just amazing like our performances of 'Ismat Apa ke Naam'.

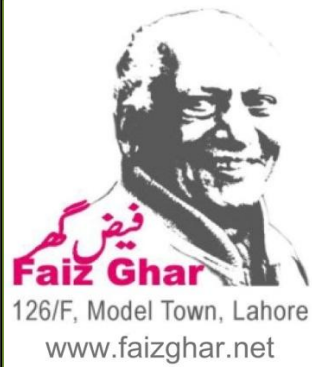
AMH: So a last question, this is a bit hackneyed. Any advice for aspiring young actors and film makers?

NS: For actors, ask yourself why you want to act. Is it because that's the only thing you ever want to do? Would you rather die than not act? And if the answer is yes, and *only* if the answer is yes, should you come into this field. And for filmmakers, the same thing I have said before: it is very necessary to shed the hangover of the West, stop aping them, look to your own traditions and history and mine that. It's like Quentin Tarantino said: If you want to make a movie, just go out and make it! Don't think, ponder too much, just make it.



Ali Madeeh Hashmi is a psychiatrist and a trustee of the Faiz Foundation Trust. He can be reached at ahashmi39@gmail.com

Dr. Ali Madeeh Hashmi interviewing Mr. Naseeruddin Shah



Daastan-e-Chauboli

By Nyla Daud

From a story telling tradition that originated in ancient Arabia , to its arrival in India in the sixteenth century when emperor Akbar commissioned life sized portraits of the fabled characters , from the development of its written versions , down to its translation into the clipped Urdu syntax of Rampur, Lucknow and Hyderabad by the nineteenth century performers, the art of *Daastan Goi* or oral story telling has had to come a long way before we in Pakistan finally got a taste of it, thanks to the Faiz Foundation . December 2012 was the second time in two years running, that connoisseurs of this traditional art form sat through a performance by two of its most renowned practitioners in recent times. Murtaza Danish Hussain and Mahmood Farooqui travelled from neighbouring India at the behest of the Faiz Foundation Trust which, in collaboration with the Lahore Arts Council arranged the performance, in keeping with its ideology of dedication to the promotion of the arts.

Initiating the evening with a traditional invocation to the Creator, Farooqui and Hussain carried a breathless audience on a journey into fantasy land, after the latter had given an introductory brief on the art of *Daastan Goi*. *Daastan-i-Chauboli* , the evening's story, centred around a *Rasjanthani* fable in which the hero habitually shoots arrows through the nose rings of his terrified wife in a bid to practice and boast of his acquisition of martial arts. However, it takes another wife of the Raja to prove the point because as she puts it "*chivalrous is when you can make the beautiful princess Chauboli who is sworn to silence, speak in four attempts.*"



Thus challenged, the Raja tells four stories in a bid to make the princess speak. Thence the performing duo wove a colourful fabricated account of the Raja's travails in his quest to make *Chauboli* speak. A beautifully and enticingly woven tale, the performance of the *Daastan* was an amazing act of speech delivery in all its forms. Moments of pure literary delight in the oral tradition alternated with changes in voice tones, syntax and perfectly modulated delivery and as much bodily expression as could be depicted without the performers moving an inch out their seats.

By the end of the evening it had become clear that *Daastan Goi* had entranced the audience to the extent that people were asking whether there was to be a repeat performance. The Faiz Foundation Trust, true to its motto had managed to imbibe that cultural curiosity in the dying arts that is the due of the art of oral story telling.



NASEERUDDIN SHAH mesmerizes Lahore!!

Written by Aisha Sarwari

On the invitation of the Faiz Foundation, on behalf of Saleema and Moneeza Hashmi, *Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak* and *Heeba Shah* representing *Motley Theatre Group* from India came and performed in Lahore on the first day of a cold December. Al Hamra Theatre roared with a welcome applause for Mr. Shah, but it was the thunderous ovation at the end of the performance that spoke of how starved Lahore was for quality craft, excellence in high culture and plain old entertainment. *Naseeruddin Shah's* fame as an actor is well known in the Subcontinent. His Urdu diction and pronunciation make him among the very few in Bollywood who can claim to truly be capable of playing an *adabi* role. From his recitation of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's, "Yey Dagh Dagh Ujala..." to his role



as *Mirza Ghalib* by *Gulzar*, he has performed

by being one with the author or character. Years ago he played both the old and young Ghalib convincingly, blending each ghazal into his moods effortlessly. Nothing, can however prepare one for the combination of *Nasseruddin Shah's* presence and *Ismat Chughtai's* fierce writings and commentary on Mughal culture and old India. Nothing can also make one realize that the performance was actually a reading of a story and not really a three act play. Before the performance, *Mr. Shah* explained his conviction behind this: '*Ismat Chughtai was known only by the headlines, especially by her contest in the courts over her story called "Lehaaf" being obscene (a case which by the way, she won). Most people thought Ismat Chughtai was a man because they believed no woman could be this bold. She however was more than that and the audience deserved to make the decision of whether her writings were obscene or art'.*



The first story, "*Chhui Mui*" was enacted by *Heeba Shah*. A pregnant woman gives birth in a train compartment, this in itself is told with the wit of Shakespeare, but juxtaposed with the story of *Bhabhi jan* who's only ambition in life was to become pregnant, and the story becomes profoundly deep. *Chughtai* is so unabashed in stating the ironies of life, in the roles women take up and those that societies impose and in how little difference there is between the two.

In the second, "*Gori Bi and Kaley Mian*" also known as "*Mughal Bacha*", *Ratna Pathak Shah* exposed a century of subcontinent's obsession with beauty & color, all while sitting on an old maid's chair, looking at what seemed like an album. A fair maiden was supposed to have her veil lifted on her wedding night while her dark husband, teased and insulted for being dark, marked his pride by insisting that she lift it herself. Kneaded in this dough was so much bitterness and false "*Mughal Bacha*" pride that it raised a lifetime of un-relinquished love, or what could have been love. There must have hardly been a taboo topic this seemingly benign story didn't touch. In "*Gharwali*" *Naseeruddin Shah* acted himself and played the role of *Mirza*, a frequenter of the brothel and Mosque with equal devotion: Living the life that George Orwell called doublespeak with absolutely no mental contradictions. In stark contrast to him is *Lajoo*, a maid who has questionable moral character, and is all spirit. All three plays defined women as more than just a possession, and at a time when women in the subcontinent are perhaps the most culturally oppressed and pervasively considered inferior. For citizens of Lahore the importance of these plays is immense, they not only get us in touch with our heritage but also offer an astute critique on the aspects of our culture that are contradictory.



ISMAT APA KE NAAM – a theatrical performance by MOTLEY

Motley's first Hindustani language production of three of *Ismat Khanum Chughtai's* short stories titled "*ISMAT APA KE NAAM*" were presented as solo enactments on December 1st, in Lahore by *Heeba Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah & Naseeruddin Shah*. Three other short stories by *Ismat Khanum Chughtai* titled "*KAMBAKHT BILKUL AURAT*" were performed on the second day by *Manoj Pahwa, Loveleen Mishra & Seema Pahwa*. This theatrical performance was a tribute to the witty, wise, warm, wonderful woman; truly a unique and amazing writer. The plays on both days were directed by India Veteran Actor/Director *Naseeruddin Shah*.



Faiz Ghar is a project of the *Faiz Foundation Trust*, a registered non-profit organization devoted to the promotion of the progressive & humanistic ideas of *Faiz Ahmed Faiz*.

For membership form and details contact **Faiz Ghar, 126/F, Model Town (042-5835289)** from 10.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. (except Tuesdays) Or visit our website: www.faizghar.net