

Mad Balikas reunites friends on a quest for productivity

The audio-drama ensemble Mad Balikas intend to resuscitate the art of Shruti-Natok through their digital performances.





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Published on: 24 Dec 2021, 12:00 am

Updated on: 24 Dec 2021, 9:24 am 2 min read

Amidst the woes of COVID-19 outbreak, 1999 Madhyamik batch of Sree Sarada Ashrama Balika Vidyalay, New Alipore has found a ray of hope. A WhatsApp group that helped 61 batch mates situated across the globe keep in touch has paved the way for audio production group Mad Balikas. The 6 month old all-women initiative has already released over 28 audio-plays over YouTube and each of them have been put together by the members from scratch.

“Since we studied in a girls’ school, we had to get into the shoes of male characters whenever there was a stage performance. Mad Balikas was an attempt to revive our long lost talents that has been buried under the roles of a home-maker, or a professional”, shares Paramita Banerjee, editor-cum-screenplay writer of Mad Balikas, a banker by profession.

What initially started as performances to keep family and friends engaged amidst trying times is now all set to turn into a professional live performance. “We are not restricted to singular genres and have a multi-disciplinary approach. There are dedicated sub-groups in our ensemble such as the Gaan Balikas and Natya Balikas who specialise in certain fields of fine arts. Since we have minimal visual elements in our videos, we pay special attention to the methods of dialogue delivery. Members located across time-zones record performances from their home set-up”, adds Paramita.

Paramita also picks out how women tend to go into a shell and lose touch with their younger selves as they take on other important roles in life. Among the 61 batch mates, its only a score who contribute on a regular basis. “The initiative seemed like a whimsical attempt in the beginning as we had to adapt to so much of new-age technology. We accepted this eccentricity as a part o our growth and eventually named us as Mad Balikas” she explains.

A trilogy by the name of Borsha Mangal was released earlier this year during Calcutta monsoons which hosted a bunch of recitals, audio enactments from the perspective of a fictional political prisoner Asifa. The Baalikas have also adapted classics like Devdas and Seshher Kobita amongst the 28 audio performances released so far.

After garnering appreciation for their first original Jotheshito Shibramiyo, they are looking forward to curate a historic fiction series named Drohokaal. Mad Baalikas will also be starting work on a Women's Day special series and a production which tells the tales of freedom fighters Binay-Badal-Dinesh from a different perspective.