



| Theatre

Audio-Drama group Mad Balikas usher in debut offline performance on Poila Baisakh

Unmadinir Kathakata will be performed on April 14 at Tapan Theatre Conference Room.



Subhadrika Sen



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Kolkata audio-drama group Mad Balikas is doing wonders in spreading the art-form around. Harnessing the power of social media through their YouTube channel, they have to their credit more than 20 original plays in this format. As the group ventures out to their debut offline performance on Poila Baisakh, Indulge speaks to core member and General Secretary Paramita Banerjee about the inception of the group and its upcoming performance.

Excerpts:

Q *How was Mad Balikas formed?*

A It all started with Trina Chakraborty, a teacher by profession and singer by passion. It was the lockdown era, when Trina took a stab at gathering her old schoolmates in one platform, rejuvenating the good old girls' school days of creativity. She formed a whatsapp group, which gradually evolved into Mad Balikas, the all women group. What we started long back as school-girls through the so-called 'extra curriculum', now took a more focused turn by exploring the countless creative nooks in music, audio-play, literature and beyond. We have released more than 20 original audio dramas on our Youtube channel over the last three years, addressing different aspects of social issues, mostly in the space of gender and equality, backed by extensive research and historical introspection through a multidisciplinary approach.

Q *Why the format of audio-drama?*

A Audio-drama has a different fan base. Being the 80's kids, possibly we are the last of us who grew up with Bangla radio programs like audio-drama, audio-story before the era of visual entertainment jumped in. But we all know, amidst the massive

the era of visual entertainment jumped in. But we all know, amidst the massive popularity of TV media, what a strong foothold FM radio channels have made in the entertainment industry. So inspiration was never a problem. During lockdown, we started ideating on creative group activity, and voila! The choice of audio-drama was unanimous. We were amazed at the amount of love and interest our audio-dramas received from our friends and followers

Q *In today's world where everything is visual and attention span is less, how do you keep the audience's attention through audio drama?*

A Like the world loves to balance between contrasts, along with viewers there are listeners out there who love to invest into playlists of audio stories, audio plays, podcasts while doing their chores, driving cars, and other jobs that won't allow looking elsewhere. So our mantra is to focus on the content and keep our delivery clean. Listeners always appreciate good work.

Q *Tell us about your latest performance, Unmadinir Kathakata*

A With our first offline event on Poila Boishakh, 14th April 2024, at Tapan Theatre Conference room, we intend to celebrate “Bangla noboborsho” with songs and tale of a fictional history of women in Bengal in the light and shades of ancient riddles, rhymes and paradoxes. We dared to dive into this gold mine of undocumented history and community intelligence so as to connect the missing dots from the past.

Q *How long does it take to create a production?*

A It takes one to three months, depending on the length of the drama and number of recordings. For on-stage performances deliveries are much quicker. Youtube releases need rigorous editing with background music and sound effects, which takes its own sweet time. So patience is the key here.

Q *What is your roadmap for 2024?*

A Besides what we are releasing on our Youtube channel and Facebook page, we want to connect with our listeners more through offline performances. Of course, we'll dig deeper in our core area of passion, the cultural history of the East. This year we have just started with our original crime thriller series, where Inspector Manjira Khatun and her assistant Jhuma Das got to celebrate English and Bengali New Year

with new mysteries. We would love to see how they fare in the rest of the year,
against those dangerous plans and plots we have for them!