

SUMMARY OF BHASHA: THE GLASGOW LANGUAGE FESTIVAL



"THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR A MAN, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND"

- Neil Armstrong

Bangladesh Association Glasgow (BAG) took a small step in establishing one of the key events in Bangladesh's history, in Scotland, UK recently.

On 21st February 1952 Bengalis took the unprecedented step to voice for the right to express in one's mother tongue. There are experiences and thoughts in one's own languages which can never be fully translated or understood by another. The incident in 1952 when 9 people died – was about upholding this technicolour aspect of our humanity. To ensure it doesn't become grey or beige. And the international community understood this by declaring the day as the International Mother Language day since 1999.

Glasgow leads Scotland's growing reputation for welcoming people from around the world. In some estimate there are over 106 languages spoken in Glasgow.

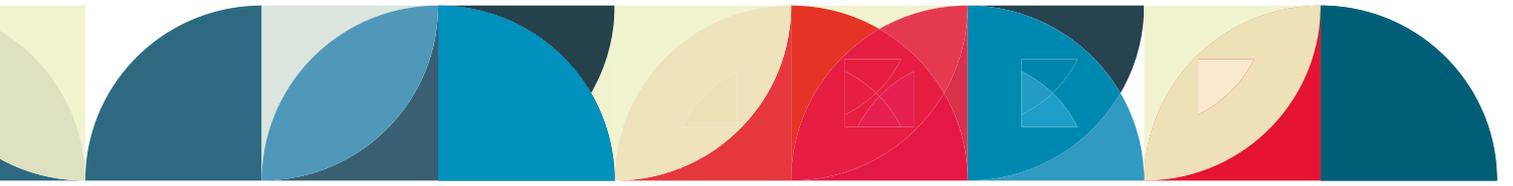
As an inheritor of the legacy of Language Movement of 1952, BAG felt there is a need for an annual event which will bring together different language speaking communities of the city through sharing their literature, poetry and their performances. The exchange of ideas will educate, inspire and create a more cohesive and enlightened society. Prof. Alison Phipps of Languages and Intercultural Studies Glasgow University, who is also the UNESCO Chair and an avid supporter of the festival, themed the event as "Our Gift to Glasgow" – meaning Bangladeshi community's gift to the city.

With this philosophy in the background, BHASHA-the Glasgow Language Festival was held on the premises of the iconic Mitchell Library of Glasgow on the 9th February 2019. The event is part of UNESCO's International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019.

Sponsored by the Big Lottery fund, the festival is partnered with UNSECO-RILA, Scotland's National Centre of Languages (SCILT), based in Strathclyde University Glasgow), the British Council of Bangladesh and GlasgowLife.

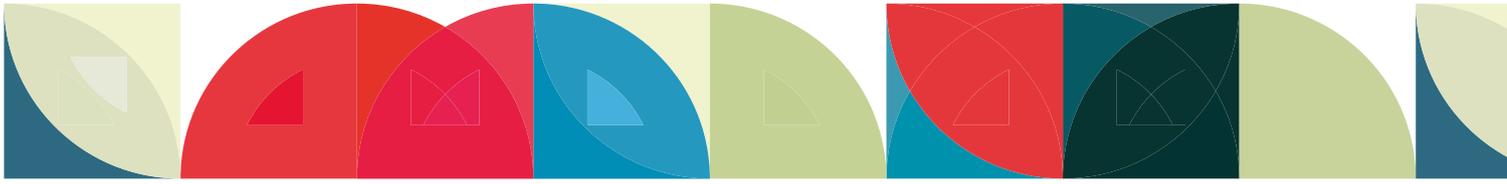
The event was supported and participated by Bilingualism Matters (based in University of Edinburgh), Maryhill Integration Network, The Scottish Poetry Library, Bangla Bidya Niketon (Bangla school), Confucius Society for Scotland's schools, the British Council of Scotland and the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS).





Kicking off at 11AM and running till 7PM, it was a day packed with academic events and performances related different elements of linguistics. The whole event was covered by British Sign Language-English interpreter, free and very much family oriented.





World authorities in the field of linguistics Prof. Antonella Sorace, Dr. Giovanna Fassetta and Ms. Angela de Britos shared the floor with Zimbabwean Artist Tawona Sithole, Gaelic poet Marcas Mac an Tuairneir, Chinese musicians and language teachers from Confucius society and children's poem in Russian.



Dr. Antonella Sorace

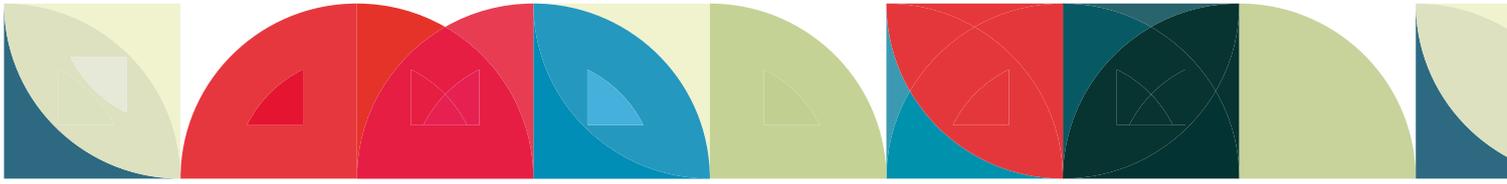


Dr. Giovanna Fassetta



Economist Dr. Hooshmand Badee a Canadian of Iranian descent spoke about the financial aspect/impact of languages in a globalised world. Followed by the voices of the displaced – poet Iyad Hayatleh from Palestine, Saffad Al Jbawi from Syria and Kurdish musicians Jana Ali and Me Jan Suleiman. Qendresa Bajrami of Macedonian and Albanian origin, now exiled in Sicily enthralled all with an ancient song 'Moj e Bukura More'.





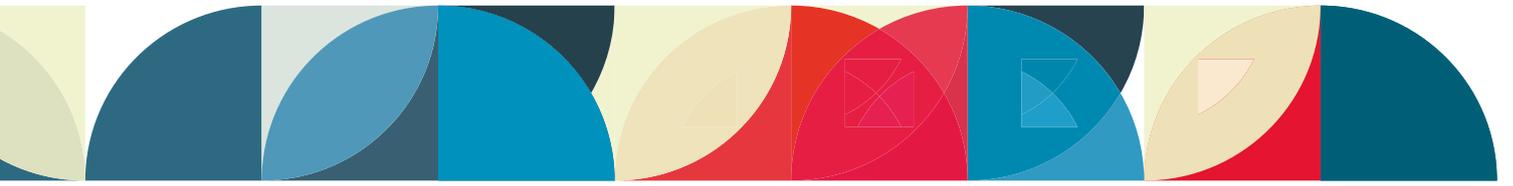
Students of Bangla Bidya Niketon created a wall-paper which was displayed in the festival area along with displays of books in different languages from the Mitchell Library and stalls of different participating organisations.



As an organisation, BAG has always championed the rights of the disabled. It went to great lengths in securing the participation of renowned and pioneering theatre director Jenny Sealey, MBE who herself is deaf. She was an awe inspiring presence in the festival and theatre enthusiasts attended her workshop. A video of her creation with disabled artists in Bangladesh “a Different Romeo and Juliet” was shown in the festival.



Jenny Sealey



Bangladesh Association Glasgow premiered their first ever short film "An Incident with Jackfruit" by BAG member and first-time director Zulkarin Jahangir. The story is based on award winning author Dr. Shahaduzzaman. It was preceded by it's preamble documentary "Home and Us" by BAG's creative team. Both were received with critical acclaim. BAG member Tahmina Akter earlier presented her paper on Bilingualism.

GS Nasiruddin reflects, "Bangladesh Association Glasgow played a major role not only by initiating this festival but also by organising and running such a high profile event throughout the day. This is a true example of collaboration of Bangladeshi's with wider communities in Glasgow with an aim to promote awareness about each other and build a cohesive society."

The day finished with the highlight of the day, BAG's drama KOBOR AFTER. A re-imagining of the landmark theatre KOBOR by Munier Choudhury – this was another production from BAG's creative team – written by Tareq Abdullah and directed by Farida Yeasmin with Art direction and Scenography by eminent thespian Sudip Chakroborthy of TheatrEX of Bangladesh.

BAG President Dr. Saif Khan summarised – "we never wanted this to be a song and dance festival. It's about celebration of languages of the world, which is more than words".

