

amazon echo show 5

Exciting prices, limited offer.

₹ 8,999 ₹ 5,499*



Buy Now

*T&C Apply

AMAZON GREAT INDIAN FESTIVAL 13th - 17th OCT

ENTERTAINMENT > MUSIC

MUSIC

The more the merrier



Reaching out: A performance of Capital City Minstrels in progress

ANURADHA VELLAT

amazon echo dot ₹ 4,499 ₹ 2,449*

Buy Now

*T&C Apply

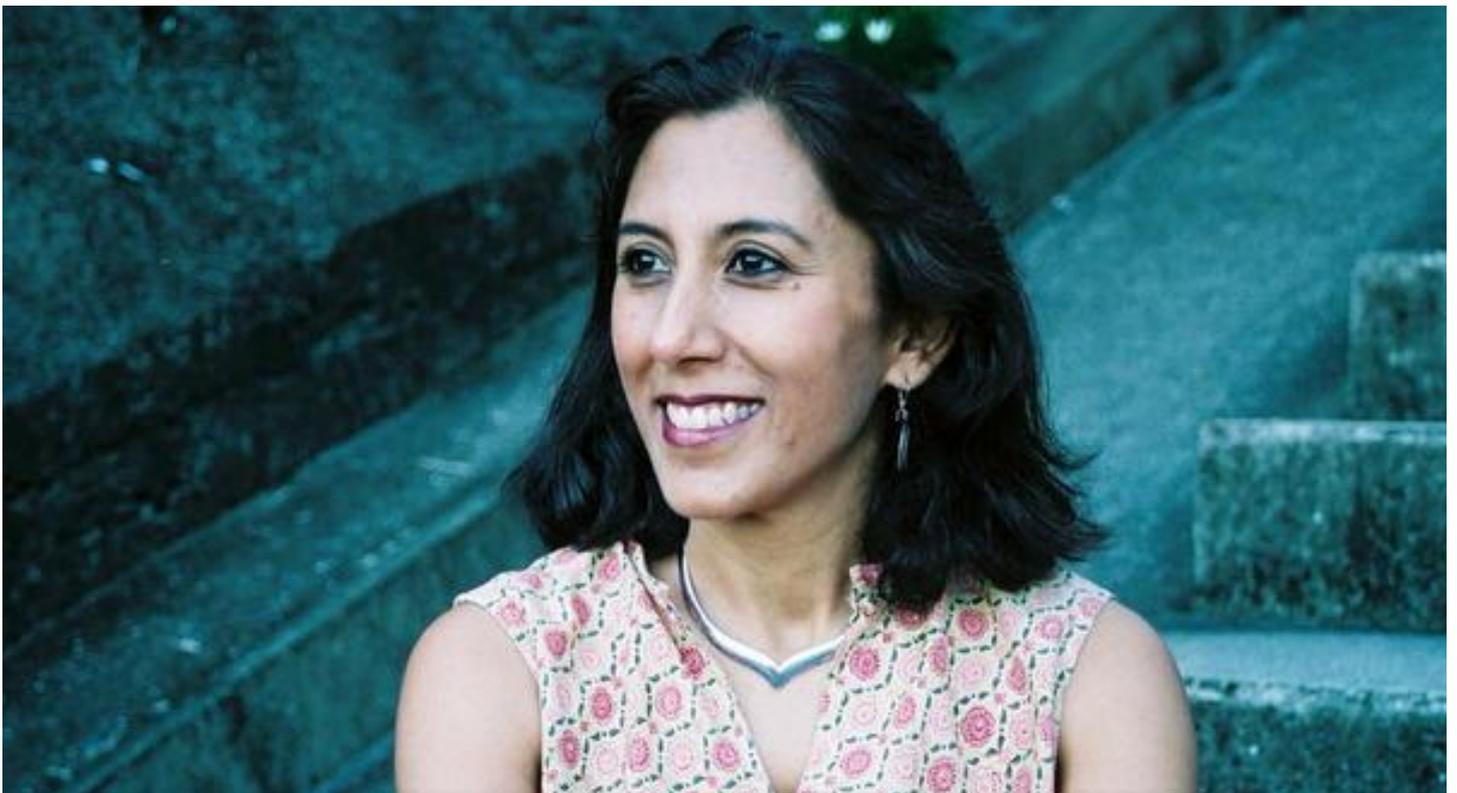
AMAZON GREAT INDIAN FESTIVAL 13th - 17th OCT



Tracing Delhi's choir culture with Sharmila Banerjee Livingston

As much as we suffer at the hands of bad air-quality, Delhi's winters and the corresponding festive season have made many of us step out in search of that common cheer. Amidst the lingering fog, the bright hues of baubles and the numerous cups of warm cocoa, Christmas comes and goes every year, reminiscent of that slow winter at our windows. Relishing this tryst with wines, and dew air, one stumbles upon neatly lined singers rendering cult songs in unison, conducted by an equally classic musician.

Almost twenty-five years ago, Zohra Shaw, a musician, began with a choir – the Capital City Minstrels – that was to take Delhi by storm 25 years later.



Sharmila Banerjee Livingston

Delhi's choir culture has a long-drawn history, perhaps something Shaw related to the most. When she began, the only other well-known choir in the city was the Delhi Christian Chorus, conducted by an American, Dick Smythe. As it turns out, Shaw herself was a pianist with DCC for some time. But, when she did decide to begin CCM, it was only a handful of singers, expatriates and a few other Indians. Today, we wait for CCM concerts all year long. The choir comprises a cross-section of ages, professions, nationalities, and a plethora of musical experiences. At two recent concerts in Delhi, conducted by the very talented Sharmila Banerjee Livingston, CCM was everything worth the wait. She has composed and directed several musicals, with casts ranging from 350 – 1000 members. "In the earlier years, Zohra trained CCM with a classical rigour to do serious bodies of musical works by renowned composers. We did Masses by Schubert, works by Vivaldi, Bach, Faure to name a few. Over the years our repertoire has expanded to include audiences whose interests go beyond the traditional choral fare," says Sharmila.

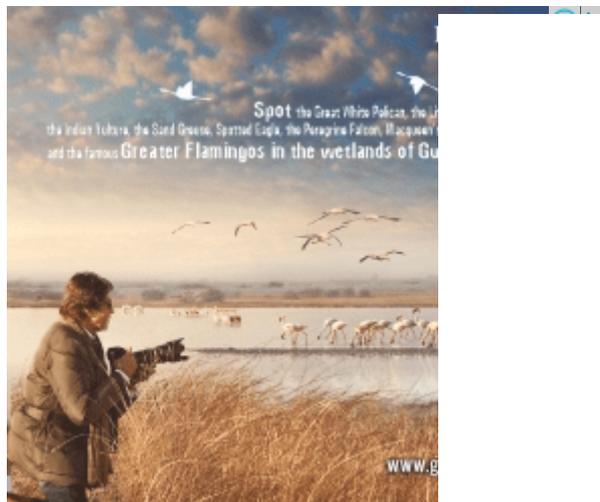
Through the years, CCM has performed at Embassies, prominent concert halls, auditoriums, cathedrals and historic monuments. "A choral experience is so different from a soloist or a small ensemble, and CCM has found itself a niche for expressing choral music to a city where the analogy of a desire and need for harmony is so fitting," adds Sharmila. CCM has seen conductors of different nationalities as well. The choir has seen some accomplished musicians as well as some who are not musically literate but have a voice and simply enjoy the realm of music. "Over the years, CCM has had a wide repertoire of music ranging from early classical choral music to opera, ballads, folk songs, Broadway, rock, pop, jazz and even choral arrangements for Indian music," she says.

Sharmila herself grew up in a family and was exposed to western music since birth, by her mother who played the piano. Interestingly, her mother was also a contemporary of Zohra Shaw at the Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow. "My mother would sing famous classical melodies to us as lullabies, and scoured the newspapers for every opportunity to expose my brother and myself to every opportunity of music and culture that came into our city. These were rare in those days, but we managed to see travelling troupes of the Russian Ballet, international orchestras, soloists or small ensembles. She got us a beautiful German acoustic piano from an expat who was leaving town. It became a family treasure as many musicians who visited exposed us to magic that was possible on those black and white keys. She eventually found us a Canadian piano teacher who gave us our first formal music lessons, with small recitals at home for interested family and friends," reminisces Sharmila.

to my contemporaries in the music programme in the US. This was in the sixties to eighties where western music was a barren land in Delhi – other than a few shining stars in the likes of Harold Joseph, Jose Palamkote, Johnny Raphael,” adds Sharmila. She procured a degree at Wheaton College, Illinois where she explored the subject in greater depths.

CCM’s recent concerts were themed ‘Peace,’ inspired by the ‘Prince of Peace’. “It is a much needed and desired theme in an increasingly fractured, fragmented society. Our winter concerts traditionally have a Christmas repertoire. I had intentionally chosen women composers since this is not usual, but being a woman conductor, I had wanted to explore this area,” says Sharmila.

As a culture, Sharmila says that choirs have come up tremendously in India. Many youngsters have taken to the form, with a very keen interest. “Music in all aspects, as well as choirs, is growing in our city. There seems to be an interest – hopefully, not only for a college portfolio of various activities done – but rather a love for the medium itself,” she says. “We need many more trained musicians who have the interest and discipline to grow to international standards. We have a lot to learn and a long way to go– but we’re definitely headed in a direction where we can increase and improve,” adds Sharmila.


[Comments](#)

More In

Music

Oil Prices Are Fluctuating Again, Perfect Time T...

Finq.com | Sponsored