



The Capital City Minstrels in Christmas finery

PARTHA PAUL

## Western Classical

**T**wenty years ago, there were only two voices trained in Western classical music in Delhi—Seetu Singh and Sharmila Livingston (nee Bannerji). And there was only one city chorus named ‘The Delhi Christian Chorus’ conducted by Rev Richard Smythe.

Today the scene has changed dramatically: the city now offers choices—Capital City Minstrels, Neemrana Chorus, Choraliers, Artists Unlimited, the Naga and the Mizo choirs and several smaller ones. The audience at most concerts is no longer primarily expat. Indians are working hard to get

to concerts, shows, recitals, and musicals. Although hugely limited so far, one sees potential for internationally famous artists to tour India in the days ahead. The audience is growing.

Promoters, though, are few—perhaps because of limited know-how, infrastructure or funds, to develop and take classical music to greater heights in Delhi. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations is doing its bit by inviting foreign artists, chamber and symphony orchestras, dance groups, etc. The Delhi School of Music and Delhi Symphony Orchestra are making their own contribution in a limited way—their perfor-

mances are few with little publicity.

On the instrumental side, the Delhi Symphony Orchestra is one of the oldest. Often numbering as much as 75 strong, it has performed some of the most demanding scores over the years. Its conductors, for several years, have come from around the world, each bringing his or her own sensibilities to the music. Members of the orchestra range from trained students to highly qualified performers and music professionals. The Delhi Symphony Society also hosts many musicians, choirs and ensemble groups from India and the rest of the world, enabling them to perform in Delhi. Gautam Kaul, the honorary secretary, has managed the orchestra almost single-handedly for years.