

To the Capital City Minstrels goes the credit of being the face of Western classical choral singing in the city, although its repertoire, says president Giti Chandra, ranges from jazz and blues to pop and Broadway, and from gospel and spirituals to Hindi film songs, vernacular carols and opera. Founded 12 years ago by Zohra Shaw, CCM's members come from across the world and all walks of life. The quality and difficulty level of the music CCM performs remains dauntingly high. The Minstrels' annual calendar has three seasons: the spring performances scheduled for late April/early May, often focussed around Easter. The Fall season, which used to be a period to relax, show off the repertoire of light music and pop, jazz and Broadway, has for the last three years been committed to an annual Peace Concert at the India Habitat Centre on Gandhi Jayanti. The winter season is the busiest, filled with the joy and harmony of Christmas. Classical sacred music as well as the much-loved carols fill halls across the city to the delight of Delhi's music lovers. The highlight this winter season was a concert of Mozart's music at the Bahai auditorium on December 5 to commemorate his 250th birth anniversary—with Sharmila Livingston conducting.

The honour for exclusively pioneering sacred Christian music goes to the Delhi Christian Chorus. Boasting some of Delhi's finest voices, its concerts under Royall McLaren at Easter and Christmas are eagerly anticipated and well attended.

Lately, the Neemrana Music Foundation, founded in 2001 by Francis Wacziarg and Suman Dubey, has been active. Set up to promote Western classical music in India and Indian classical music abroad, TNMF has produced two operas in Delhi and Mumbai. *The Fakir of Benares* (2002) and *The Pearl Fishers* (2005) were both performed by Delhi musicians and singers in conjunction with French musicians and singers.

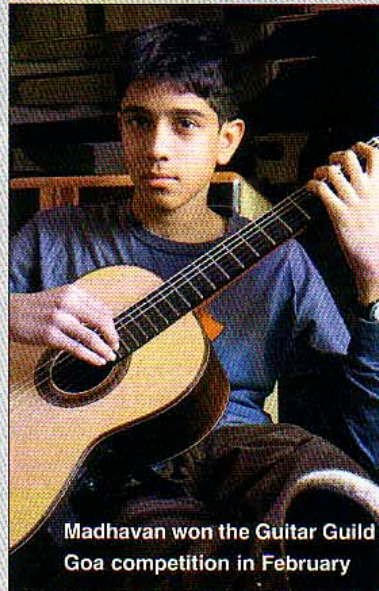
Displaying immense potential are Artistes Unlimited—an initiative by young artistes started in 2003 with Annette Philips as conductor in a quest to create a sound they can call their own. Three years and over 40

## Next Fret MADHAVAN

**A**t an age when most teenagers just about pick up their guitars and drive neighbours crazy with the din, Madhavan Somanathan is a concert-level classical guitarist. He first came to notice when he won the Guitar Guild Goa's competition in February 2006. "That's the only competition I've won," he says modestly, but then he's taken part only in one other, in Oberlin, Ohio.

Madhavan started out playing the guitar in America at the age of seven (he's 15 now), training in the Suzuki guitar method. Why the guitar? "I liked the sound of it, and since my parents were going to be moving

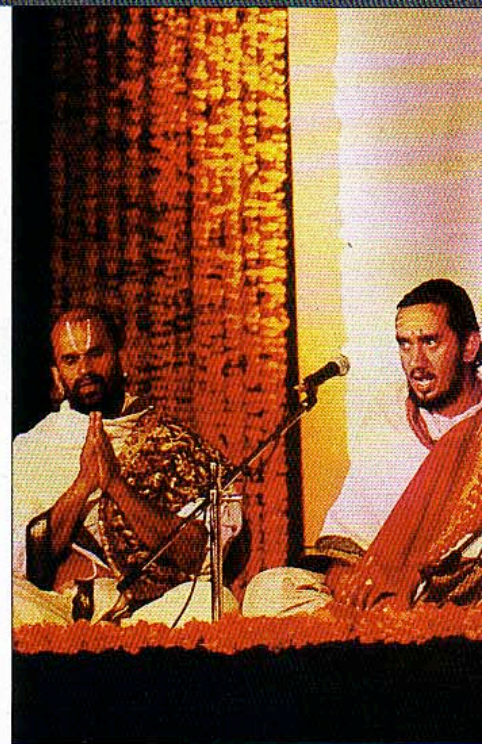
RAJESH THAKUR



Madhavan won the Guitar Guild Goa competition in February

around the world, it made sense to have an instrument that I could carry around. It's one of the few instruments in which you have total control over the sound," he says.

In the US, he's trained with Mary Lou Roberts, and more recently with Jason Vieaux, a professional classical guitarist. He's also trained for a few weeks with Roger Zimmerman, a well known guitarist, in Germany. Now he's back at the Delhi School of Music. So when's he playing next? "I might be playing a few duets with Roger Zimmerman, when he comes to perform in February," he says. Keep a look out for that. {Akshai Jain}



K Malola Kannan and his troupe

concerts later, over 200 artists in the age group of 10-44 years have shared their dream, from across Delhi schools, colleges and institutions. Their USP is mainly the experimentation with different genres of music; their repertoire includes extensive work with Indian and Western classical music, Sufi, fusion, jazz, gospel, funk, soul, R&B, Broadway and progressive light rock.

Annually, the New Delhi YMCA sponsors the festival choirs in winter, presenting among others, its own choir under the baton of George Pullinkala. George is better known today for his Broadway musicals offerings through his Delhi Music Theatre—*Evita*, *Joseph and His Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *Godspell*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, etc.

All this opportunity has led to the specialisation of musical tastes and preferences in the city. The number of those who are articulate in verbalising what they like and don't like, who can recognise good music when they hear it, and are more and more discriminating with sound quality is increasing. One now has choices on any given night of the calendar. {Maxwell Pereira}

**Contacts** Delhi Music Society (26115331), Performers Collective (41435428, <http://performerscollective.edu.in>), Gurgaon School of Music (95124-4045173), Manoranjika School of Music (24649928, [www.manoranjika.com](http://www.manoranjika.com)), Capital City Minstrels ([www.capitalcityminstrels.com](http://www.capitalcityminstrels.com)), Indian Council for Cultural Relations ([www.iccrindia.org](http://www.iccrindia.org))