

'Gujaratiness'

Reviving an interest in Gujarati literature and music

By ARCHANA ADALJA

Sometime suddenly a song comes floating on air and fills the entire existence with an expansive joy! And if, instead of one such stray song, one gets a bouquet of songs? That is what Gujaratis thirst for some quality Gujarati poems experienced listening to one after the other creative compositions of Gujarati poems and songs offered by the "Swarkaar Sammelan", a music festival of composers, organized by Bhavan's Cultural Center Andheri (BCCA) and Bhavan's Kala Kendra, Chowpaty August 7th through 10th.

BCCA has been a cultural institute of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which has 170 centers in India and around the world. BCCA has been actively holding art and culture festivals for more than fifteen years and is one of the most culturally enhanced centers. Today, BCCA organizes 200 programs a year, collaborating with Bhavan's Chowpaty Kala Kendra, and these coming from the suburb of the crowded city of Mumbai, which, unlike Calcutta, is far from the title of a cultural city.

This year's four-day "sugam sangeet" or light classical music festival on the digital platform paid tribute to the composers, as do all "Swarkaar Sammelan"s organized by BCCA. The digital format, idea of Deepak Shah, a raga-pianist, who is a member of the "sammelan" team, made the festival easily available, free of cost, on BCCA's YouTube channel, to thousands of overseas Indians who enjoyed the festival while it was on in spite of time differences and provided heartening and appreciative feedback, sitting in their homes in different cities in the U.S., in the United Kingdom, in Germany, in Australia and in many other countries.

The four-day music festival has been a regular annual event, providing a much needed platform to the upcoming composers to display their art, many of whom have gone on to have successful careers after their talents were discovered on the festival. Named "Swarkaar Sammelan", the festival consists of Gujarati poems, songs, ghazals, and more.

The idea of the music festival turned talent show began with the idea of doing something for Gujarati culture and providing a much needed platform to the composers in Gujarati. Noted composer and singer Padmashree Purushottam Upadhyay who has become an institute in himself for singers, mentioned in his opening remarks, "Singers get acclaimed but no one remembers the composers. So we thought about a convention for them. It has been our philosophy and our aim to provide an opportunity and a platform to the new composers and singers in Gujarati", he said. The festival participation has been open to all composers and all singers speaking any language, as long as the compositions are Gujarati. "Any words which do not hurt any sentiments and are not crude, can be composed by the composer," said Priti Shah, Emcee, Concept Writer, Director and Editor, to News India Times.

A notable aspect of the festival is that the participating compositions are all created for already existing lyrics and poems, which is a harder endeavor than first creating musical notes and then creating lyrics. Gujarati poetry, especially the new one, is

જન્મભૂમિ પત્રો
જન્મભૂમિ - પ્રવાસી - ફુલછાબ - કચ્છમિત્ર
ના સહયોગથી

ભવન કલા કેન્દ્ર, ચોપાટી અને ભવન્સ કલ્ચરલ સેન્ટર, અંધેરી આયોજીત

૬૬ સુગમ સંગીત સ્વરકાર સંમેલન ૨૦૨૧
મુંબઈ, અમેરિકા અને ગુજરાતનાં ૧૨ શહેરોમાંથી ૩૨ સ્વરકારો
૪૫ ગીતકાર, ૪૦ ગાયકો અને ૬૦ ગીતોનો ચાર દિવસીય
સુગમ સંગીત મહામહોત્સવ
શનિ, રવિ, સોમ અને મંગળ
તા. ૭-૮-૯-૧૦ ઓગસ્ટ, રાત્રે: ૮.૩૦ કલાકે
ભવન્સ કલ્ચરલ સેન્ટર, અંધેરી ની
You Tube Channel પર LIVE
સંચાલન : સંજય પંડયા - મુકેશ જોષી
સંયોજક : નિરંજન મહેતા - લલિત શાહ
સંકલન : હિતેન આનંદપરા, દીપક શાહ
Editing & Video Inserts : પ્રીતિ શાહ

સુગમ સંગીત સ્વરકાર સંમેલનમાં સામેલ થયેલાં સ્વરકારો

જન્મભૂમિ પત્રો
જન્મભૂમિ - પ્રવાસી - ફુલછાબ - કચ્છમિત્ર
ના સહયોગથી

ભવન કલા કેન્દ્ર, ચોપાટી અને ભવન્સ કલ્ચરલ સેન્ટર, અંધેરી આયોજીત

૬૬ સુગમ સંગીત સ્વરકાર સંમેલન ૨૦૨૧
મુંબઈ, અમેરિકા અને ગુજરાતનાં ૧૨ શહેરોમાંથી ૩૨ સ્વરકારો
૪૫ ગીતકાર, ૪૦ ગાયકો અને ૬૦ ગીતોનો ચાર દિવસીય
સુગમ સંગીત મહામહોત્સવ
શનિ, રવિ, સોમ અને મંગળ
તા. ૭-૮-૯-૧૦ ઓગસ્ટ, રાત્રે: ૮.૩૦ કલાકે
ભવન્સ કલ્ચરલ સેન્ટર, અંધેરી ની
You Tube Channel પર LIVE
સંચાલન : સંજય પંડયા - મુકેશ જોષી
સંયોજક : નિરંજન મહેતા - લલિત શાહ
સંકલન : હિતેન આનંદપરા, દીપક શાહ
Editing & Video Inserts : પ્રીતિ શાહ

જન્મભૂમિ પત્રો
જન્મભૂમિ - પ્રવાસી - ફુલછાબ - કચ્છમિત્ર
ના સહયોગથી

ભવન કલા કેન્દ્ર, ચોપાટી અને ભવન્સ કલ્ચરલ સેન્ટર, અંધેરી આયોજીત

૬૬ સુગમ સંગીત સ્વરકાર સંમેલન ૨૦૨૧
મુંબઈ, અમેરિકા અને ગુજરાતનાં ૧૨ શહેરોમાંથી ૩૨ સ્વરકારો
૪૫ ગીતકાર, ૪૦ ગાયકો અને ૬૦ ગીતોનો ચાર દિવસીય
સુગમ સંગીત મહામહોત્સવ
શનિ, રવિ, સોમ અને મંગળ
તા. ૭-૮-૯-૧૦ ઓગસ્ટ, રાત્રે: ૮.૩૦ કલાકે
ભવન્સ કલ્ચરલ સેન્ટર, અંધેરી ની
You Tube Channel પર LIVE
સંચાલન : સંજય પંડયા - મુકેશ જોષી
સંયોજક : નિરંજન મહેતા - લલિત શાહ
સંકલન : હિતેન આનંદપરા, દીપક શાહ
Editing & Video Inserts : પ્રીતિ શાહ

Composers of the music festival.

experimental in form and does not always become singable. The "sammelan" is doing what Producers' Guild and Indian National Theater did in the seventies for drama, both of which organized inter-collegiate drama competitions and brought to the world of stage many new talents, and many new writers. Composers await the announcement of dates for the "sammelan", now that six festivals have been held. The member music dignitaries are so well-known that artists flock to perform in front of them.

Like last year, this year's festival presented fifty poems and songs of forty six poets. Thirty two composers participated in the four-day festival. The joy it brings is not just through the songs. It becomes a triple treat of a good and expressive poem, beautifully sung by the singer, and, dexterously composed by the composers. The festival also served two purposes for Gujarati literature, presenting some beautiful and impressive poems and works of Gujarati literature, and in a fresh music composition. And thus, one could hear poems of master poets Suresh Dalal, Harindra Dave, Madhav Ramanuj, Krishnalal Shreedharani, Mareez, Ramesh Parekh, Jalan Matari, and others. And one could also hear works of latter day Gujarati poets including Dhruv Bhatt, Ramesh Jani, Chandrakant Shah, Muktanand Swami, Pururaj Joshi, Nandita Thakore

and many others. The composers, the main feature of the festival, ranged from noted composer Padmashree Purushottam Upadhyay, Asit Desai, and Gaurang Vyas to Suresh Joshi, Shradha Shreedharani, Prahar Vora, Yash Antani, Nayan Pancholi, Sugam Vora, Snehal Mazumdaar, and many others. The singers' list included more than forty two young and old, male and female singers.

Founder of BCCA and one of the organizers of the festival Niranjan Mehta spoke of great response to the online festival. "We worry sometimes what will happen to Gujarati language which has such a rich heritage of songs, plays, poems. We wonder what would be its future," said Mehta. But the response to the Composers' Convention since 2006 has been tremendous, according to him. "I feel we don't need to worry about the future of Gujarati language looking at the interest even the younger generation is taking in Gujarati literature and culture," he said. Last year's digital festival, born out of necessity due to Covid restrictions, was watched by close to one thousand people. "This year was different," said Priti Shah. "It is bigger than last year's online festival. Last year we were novices and were not very sure about how it would be received," she said.

Bhavan's College, Andheri, has a great expanse of grounds, spread over more than forty eight acres

of land, in the midst of the crowded city, sprawling with rose gardens, a temple of Shiva, a natural lake, a natural hill, and much more, along with a library, Arts and Humanities college, engineering college, science college, canteen, a bookstore, hostels, auditoriums, and more. A number of features have been added over the years. The cultural center's expansion concept was born in 2003, with the then Andheri Bhavan's Chairman, Dr. M.L. Shrikant's idea of creating a multi-lingual and multi-dimensional culture center on the campus. His vision was to provide a "modern bridge" to all arts in all forms, past, present and future, within Mumbai's suburbs. Lalit Shah of Copwood, joined in voluntarily along with others like Niranjan Mehta and the music maestro Purushottam Upadhyaya. Lalit Verma, and Shri Anil Kavish, completed the founding team, all of whom were volunteers. Lalit Shah today holds the office of Cultural Activities.

Lalit Shah's plan for the already existing Cultural Center's enhancement involved preparing the campus grounds for cultural activities. The natural lake behind the college buildings was cleaned and has become a beautiful spot. The rough patches of flower beds around the temple have been now turned into Bhavan's Nature and Adventure Center.

-CONTINUED ON PAGE 6