

For music lovers

EVENT The Gharana Music Festival, from March 23, will showcase eminent artists.

Up until some fifty years ago, the Agra Gharana was clearly distinguishable from the Gwalior, and a connoisseur could say, "That particular phrase is adapted from the Jaipur Atrauli gharana though the singer belongs to the Kirana gharana."

Such fine distinctions are getting somewhat blurred today. So it is of special interest to music lovers in Chennai to be able to hear three concerts by eminent artists whose styles and gharana traditions can be unmistakably identified in their performance. This year, the Prakriti Foundation's Gharana Music Festival (March 23, 24 and 25, Museum Theatre, 7 p.m.) presents Ustad Irshad Khan (sitar), Pandit Krishna Ram Choudhary (shehnai) and Vidushi Shanno Khurana (vocal).

Old-timers will remember the brilliant duo recitals on sitar and surbahar performed by the brothers Vilayat Khan and Imrat Khan. As the son of the same Imrat Khan, Irshad Khan inherits the treasures of the Ettawa gharana, whose ancestor Sahabdad Khan crafted

the surbahar with its mighty bass notes. A child prodigy himself, Irshad Khan became adept at handling both instruments. He is known for evoking the poignancy of the gaya-ki ang (vocal style) shaped by uncle Vilayat Khan.

With father Buddha Lal Choudhary for his first guru, Pandit Krishna Ram Choudhary began performing at age 12 and developed phenomenal skills in playing the shehnai. The shehnai is believed to be the instrument closest to the human voice and it is therefore no wonder that Pandit Krishna Ram Choudhary makes it sing with rigorous training under eminent vocalists Bade Ramdasji and Pandit Mahadev Prasad Mishra of Banares.

Groomed in the Rampur Sahaswan gharana by Ustad Mushtaq Husain Khan and honed by musicologist Thakur Indev Singh, Vidushi Shanno Khurana has held her own against changing trends for the past 53 years. Her voice maintains the power and resonance of the mikeless era, particularly in the vilambit mode.