



UNESCO CREATIVE CITY- CHENNAI- CREATIVE CITY OF MUSIC (2017)

The Indian state of Tamil Nadu is widely known for its grandiose temple towns and rich heritage. Adding to the state's distinction of being one of the best destinations for pilgrimage and heritage sites in India, Tamil Nadu got its capital city Chennai recognized as a UNESCO Creative City in music. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has included the metropolitan city, Chennai, in its list of Creative Cities Network for its contributions to music in the year 2017.



In addition to Chennai, Varanasi and Jaipur are two other Indian cities among the UNESCO Creative Cities. UNESCO recognized Varanasi and Jaipur as creative cities for their contributions to music and folk art respectively.

Chennai is the epicenter of Carnatic music, one of the two key subgenres of Indian classical music. The other is Hindustani classical music popular across North India. The city has patronized and promoted many legends of Carnatic Music. Chennai's inclusion in the UNESCO's Creative Cities Network is a fitting tribute to the city's immense contribution to music. The cultural capital of South India and the Carnatic



music capital of the nation, Chennai has witnessed and contributed to the evolution of music for ages.

Carnatic Music and Chennai

Carnatic Music or *Karnataka Sangam* is a system of music commonly associated with South India, including the modern Indian states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It is one of two main subgenres of Indian classical music that evolved from ancient traditions, particularly the Samaveda.

Carnatic music is usually performed by a small ensemble of musicians, consisting of a principal performer (usually a vocalist), a melodic accompaniment (usually a violin), a rhythm accompaniment (usually a *mridangam*), and a *tambura*, which acts as a drone throughout the performance. Other typical instruments used in performances may include the *ghatam*, *kanjira*, *morsing*, *venu* flute, *veena*, and *chitraveena*. The greatest concentration of Carnatic musicians is to be found in the city of Chennai, as during the late 19th century, the city of Chennai (then known as Madras) emerged as the locus for Carnatic music. Various Carnatic music festivals are held throughout India and abroad, including the Madras Music Season, which has been considered to be one of the world's largest cultural events.

Cultural gateway of Southern India, Madras or Chennai is commended for a 6,000 years old musical tradition. Music has been passed down through generations with the *Gurukulam* system, consisting of music teachers hosting students in their home to transfer music knowledge and practice as a way of life. In recent years, the *Gurukulam* system has been progressively institutionalised into academies involving young people from early age, notably to learn the manufacturing of traditional music instruments.

The Chennai government has put in a lot of efforts, to strengthen international recognition and outreach of the local artists and music events, including the Music Season through the “Enchanting Tamil Nadu” campaign. In 2016, the Chennai International Centre was established to further promote culture for socio-economic change. The city also offers various awards, scholarships and grants to encourage and facilitate the development and emergence of world-class artists through international exchange and mobility.

Added Value: As a Creative City of Music, Chennai envisages:

- setting a joint project within all public schools to further encourage young people to engage in culture as a tool for identity-building;
- creating a space for cultural professionals to interact with urban designers in order to successfully embed culture in urban planning;
- organising a cultural roadshow throughout the city with musicians and students reflecting on the Chennai urban challenges and opportunities;
- setting up national and international events in collaboration with other Creative Cities, to learn and share practices, methodologies and experiences;
- developing international music and dance festivals with other Creative Cities highlighting cultural diversity and dialogue; and encouraging communities of disadvantaged areas of the city to engage in new avenues and professional opportunities in the field of music.



Chennai Dance and Music Festival

Known for Carnatic music—an Indian classical vocal music subgenre—Chennai organises a two-month Music Season, touted to be among the largest music festival in the world, with audiences and artists coming across India to participate in 1,500 performances spread all over the city's public spaces. Chennai's music scene is closely linked with the creation of social cohesion in urban life. The Chennai Sangamam event has been set to regenerate ancient villages and engage artists from rural zones, and the Urur-Olcott Kuppam Margazhi festival focuses on using music as a tool for unity bridging different communities and cultures.

And one of the biggest annual events in Tamil Nadu, the Dance and Music Festival is celebrated across Chennai throughout the *Margazhi* month of the Tamil calendar. The *Margazhi* month spans from mid-December to mid-January. It showcases the cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu to a broader audience from all over India and abroad.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 and aims to foster international cooperation to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development, social inclusion and cultural vibrancy. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network has incorporated 180 cities from 72 countries and covers seven creative fields: music, film, literature, design, gastronomy, media arts, crafts and folk art.

The Creative Cities Network is a privileged partner of UNESCO, not only as a platform for reflection on the role of creativity as a lever for sustainable development, but also as a breeding ground of action and innovation, notably for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The cities in the network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level and aims at distribution and dissemination of cultural activities to restore the dying heritage across the world.

LUMINARIES IN THE MUSICAL CITY



Carnatic music grew and thrived around Chennai, with musicians and composers from across Tamil Nadu taking this genre of Indian Classical Music to global heights. M.S. Subbulakshmi, Arunachala Kavi, Syama Sastri, Tyagaraja, and M. Balamuralikrishna are some of the few luminaries in the realm of Carnatic music. Illairaja, Sirkazhi G. Sivachidambaram and Oscar-winning A. R. Rahman are contemporary face of Chennai in music.

ACTIVITY TO DO...

1. For centuries India has preserved a rich tradition of music. With Varanasi and Chennai being UNESCO Creative Music City, write a short note about the history of Music in India.

2. Can you name some of the music festivals held across India?

3. In the box given below, draw any two musical instrument of your choice.



4. Can you think of any other cities which could be given the title of creative city and why?

REFERENCES

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