

Sublime evening raga saga

MUSIC KARTIK SESHADRI

BMW Edge, Federation Square,
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Jessica Nicholas Reviewer

ONE of the most fascinating aspects of Indian classical music is the inherent paradox that lies at its heart. Practitioners of this sacred, incredibly disciplined artform spend a lifetime coming to grips with its technical demands — yet its performance is almost entirely improvised.

Kartik Seshadri takes this in-the-moment creativity to its limit, selecting the ragas he will perform only after he has arrived on stage. The master sitarist opened Thursday's recital with a late-evening raga,

Maru/Behag, his alap (solo introduction) establishing a mood of introspective contemplation. The exquisite sonorities of the sitar were revealed in passages where single-note lines gathered like raindrops to form a shimmering pool, while a halo of overtones radiated from the sitar's sympathetic strings.

The energy built as Seshadri introduced more pungent tones — suggesting the bluesy twang of a National guitar or the woody resonance of a firmly plucked double bass — before inviting tabla player Arup Chattopadhyay to join him for the raga's final movement.

There was an almost visceral quality to Chattopadhyay's most emphatic drum syllables, creating genuine excitement as the

pair surged in unison runs to a dramatic conclusion.

A beguiling South Indian raga *Simhendramadhyam* followed, Seshadri bending notes to produce an undulating effect that conjured up images of snake charmers and translucent fabrics fluttering in a hot desert breeze.

The final raga, *Mishra Piloo*, was performed in thumri (light classical) style. Seshadri articulated the melody — first with graceful simplicity, then elaborate ornamentation — while Chattopadhyay's rhythms became increasingly insistent. Finally, the two musicians engaged in a thrilling percussive duel, trading phrases with playful virtuosity, then galloping in tandem to an ecstatic finale.