

Sitar player lets music fill him

■ Taught by masters such as Ravi Shankar, Kartik Seshadri brings experience and passion to classical Indian sounds

By Nicole Hill
for the Emerald

Sitar player Kartik Seshadri's music has a tone that is difficult to put into words — a tone he said takes listeners away from all the sadness in the world.

The internationally acknowledged artist will perform North Indian classical music with tabla player Sanju Sahai tonight at 8 p.m. in Beall Concert Hall.

The sitar is a 13th-century Vedic instrument that produces what Seshadri called "tonal ideas."

"It is the deepest spiritual language," he said. "And people usually come away from the music feeling different."

Seshadri began performing full-length recitals at age 6 and later became a formal disciple of a highly esteemed guru, with whom he has traveled for performances at concert halls in India, Europe, the Near East, Japan and the United States. Seshadri was compelled to pick up the sitar at such a young age while listening to his father play, he said.

"I just remember feeling loved by it," he said.

In 1965, Seshadri became a disciple of guru Pandit Ravi Shankar, who has helped him find "taleem," or knowledge, of the pure roots of his music. Music in India is not taught by reading music or memorizing notes, Seshadri said; it's taught by going to a master and "letting the music fill you."

Mark Levy, the University's World Music Series coordinator, said the music is unique because when classical European music began branching off in the direction of symphonic harmony, Indian music remained focused on only melody and rhythm.



Courtesy photo

"It's just one melody at a time," Levy said.

Traditional Indian music is governed by "raga," or melodic concepts, improvised with emotional and rhythmic frameworks, Levy explained. And the sounds of tabla are what produce that rhythm.

Sahai, a descendant of the founder of the Benares style of tabla, has pursued his family's talents as a legendary drummer. In addition to performing with Seshadri in traditional styles, Sahai also brushes with Egyptian, Spanish, African, Irish and jazz influences.

Curious students sat cross-legged in front of Seshadri and Sahai in music classes earlier this week, letting their ears fill with sitar sounds and discussing classical Indian composition. Jeremy Wegner, a research assistant in the Institute of Neuroscience, popped his head into one of the classes for "a short rag session."

"They were just tearing it up," he said. "They just seemed so young to be masters."

Wegner said he plays Indian music locally in a band called Bindaas.

Seshadri and Sahai's four-day pre-concert visit was part of a new grant that will also sponsor a free lecture by the musicians today at 3 p.m. in the Knight Library. The World Music Series sponsors one non-Western event per term.

"You can get high through music," Seshadri said.

He said in the 1960s there seemed to be an explosion of interest in Indian music, but more of a superficial one. But now, he said, even listeners coming for their first performance seem to have a more serious regard for the music.

Tickets are \$8 for students and will be available at the door. After his concert in Eugene, Seshadri will travel to the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, where he will represent India as a featured performer.

Nicole Hill is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

VSA celebrates history with culture night

■ A series of skits and dances will present Vietnamese culture in modern and traditional ways

By Robin Weber
Oregon Daily Emerald

In past years, the Vietnamese Student Association's culture night included skits, an emcee and ethnic food. But for this year's showcase, the group opted to raise the bar.

"We're stepping it up a level with nontraditional movie posters and making our own video clips to introduce each part of the event," program co-coordinator Rob Yee said.

This year's VSA's culture night is titled "Doi Song Voi Ban Than," the Vietnamese phrase for "A Life with Close Friends."

The more elaborate setup corresponds with this year's movie theme, incorporating more technology into the former strictly traditional presentation. The skits are designed to reflect the Vietnamese culture, folklore and history in a

more modern-day setting.

The event brings an evening of food, friends and fun in the spirit of Vietnamese culture to the EMU Ballroom on Saturday. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., with a traditional Vietnamese dinner at 6 p.m.

Admission is free, but there is a suggested \$8 donation, and the event is open to anyone looking to learn more about the Vietnamese culture.

Also, instead of past year's cafeteria-style meal, this year brings the addition of a family-style shared meal, which will be served to each guest.

Yee and his team of more than 75 members from the VSA and Asian-Pacific American Student Union have been working 15-20 hours per week since January to make the evening come alive.

The evening's activities are aimed at VSA's longtime goal of community service and bringing a greater cultural awareness to the campus, Yee said. During the year, VSA members also participate in

food drives and Asian holiday celebrations in hopes of making a positive impact on the community and enhancing diversity of University activities.

"We want to teach people about our culture, to embrace our culture, to be aware of our culture and to add to the diversity of our campus," VSA co-director Phuc Nguyen said.

This culture is being expressed not only by skits and guest speakers, but dance as well — one modern and one traditional Lotus dance — complete with authentic costumes.

The first skit, Lac Lung Quan, is a myth about a hero who helps his village and defends the Vietnamese people, program co-coordinator Joany Wong said.

"The skits and dances tell about some history and some myth," Wong said. "The first skit sets the tone for the rest of the evening to see how the times and people have changed."

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Abortion

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clinic trained Phillips and other students in the group.

Now that University students are involved, the two schools will rotate their escorting duties, she said.

All Women's Health Services is the only place in Eugene where women can go for an abortion, Phillips said. Sacred Heart — a Catholic hospital — doesn't offer abortions.


Eugene Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Kitty Piercy said Oregon is one of few states that has never passed any legislation limiting abortion rights. But there is still a strong anti-abortion presence in Oregon. She added that, in the past, abortion clinics in Oregon have been victims of mailed bomb threats and an arson.

"There's a short distance between mild demonstrating and real danger," she said.

She said the escorts' presence is necessary because of the chance that a situation could escalate.

"Here, Students for Choice take it really seriously," she said. "They want to be there in support in case there is opposition. I very much appreciate what Students for Choice is doing to be part of the vigilance."

E-mail reporter Diane Huber at dianehuber@dailyemerald.com.



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