

Wednesdays@7 presents  
**An Evening of Indian Classical Music**

with World Renowned Sitar Virtuoso  
**Pandit Kartik Seshadri**

A Tribute to Seshadri's Mentor Pandit Ravi Shankar's 100th Birthday

accompanied on Tabla by  
**Shri Nitin Mitta**

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 - 7:00 p.m.  
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Mr. Seshadri will announce the selections  
for the evening from the stage.

## INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC by Kartik Seshadri

Indian classical music known as *Raga Sangeeth*, is an improvised art form based on the concepts of *Raga* and *Tala*. The historical origins of this spiritual musical tradition date back to the sacred Hindu scriptures known as *Veda(s)*, which were the early precursors to the system of music that developed gradually. *Raga(s)* are the tonal idiom for improvisation and these precise melodic forms while essentially modal in structure, acquire their distinct musical identities from a complex range of factors: the Indian tonal system of perceiving the octave as 22 microtonal divisions (*Sruti*); the subtle nuances, inflections, and ornamentations associated with each *Raga*; and the particular emphasis of certain notes (*Vadi, Samavadi*) within the specific ascending and descending (*Arohana and Avarohana*) movement of each *Raga*. While all *Raga(s)* are specific to the time of the day (morning, evening or night) some *Raga(s)* are performed only during certain seasons, festivals or special occasions. The melodic and rhythmic aspect of our tradition is completely consistent with our aesthetic and philosophical idea that each *Raga* expresses a single dominant mood (*Rasa*). The nine *Rasa(s)* associated with our music are: *Shringara* (sensuous or erotic), *Hasya* (humorous), *Karuna* (pathos), *Rudra* (anger), *Veera* (heroic), *Bhayanaka* (fearful), *Vibhatsa* (disgust), *Adbhuta* (wonderment) and *Shanta* (tranquility).

The second aspect of improvisation in Indian classical music pertains to the concept of rhythm known as *Tala*. A *Tala* is conceptualized in cycles of beats ranging anywhere from a three beat cycle to a 108 beat cycle. There are other complex cycles in fractional beats such as 4 1/2, 6 1/2, 11 1/2 to mention a few, that make for complicated improvisations. An accomplished musician of Indian classical music has to develop complete mastery and facility over both *Raga* and *Tala* to acquire the total freedom of improvisation within the complex constraints that *Raga* and *Tala* impose on the performer. Indian classical music is predominantly steeped in melody and rhythm as opposed to the ideas of contrast manifested in harmony, counterpoint and modulation which shape traditions such as European art music or Jazz. The challenge of our music lies in the musician's ability to shape and develop an entire musical edifice of a *Raga* and to express its fullest depth and excitement. This is acquired through many years of *Talim* (training) with a master musician (*Guru*).

A typical performance of instrumental Indian classical music begins with *Alap, Jor* and *Jhala* rendered on the solo instrument such as *Sitar, Sarod*, etc. While the *Alap* is a slow, spiritual, non-metric rendition of the *Raga*, the following sections *Jor* and *Jhala* are somewhat free and bound to a more defined pulse. The *Gat* (theme) follows the previous sections and it is in this section that the concept of *Tala* is introduced and the accompanying percussion instrument (such as *Tabla* or *Pakhawaj*) joins the main instrument.

**Sitar:** the *Sitar* is one of the most popular stringed instruments of northern and eastern India and has gained much attention in the West during the last few decades. The instrument usually consists of 20 strings of which seven strings constitute as the main playing strings. There are 13 sympathetic strings that respond in sympathy to the main strings. The instrument also has a track of twenty metal frets that are movable and can be tuned to the specific tonality of each *raga*. The main facet of the instrument is that the strings can be pulled or stretched over the metal frets to obtain gliding and melismatic effects much in keeping with the ideal of Indian music to emulate the human voice.

**Tabla:** The *Tabla* is a two piece drum referred to as *Tabla* for the right-handed drum and *Bayan* for the left-handed drum. The *Tabla* (right-hand) is a pitch specific drum tuned to the main tonic note of the performer. The *Bayan* is a bass drum that can produce a variety of sounds by exerting pressure on the skin of the instrument. The instrument is tuned with a metal hammer.

**Tambura:** This background instrument also referred to as *Tanpura* is used to lend a drone or continuo effect for the performer and listener alike. The instrument usually consists of 4 to 5 strings and is tuned to the main notes of the *Raga*.



## PANDIT KARTIK SESHADRI

Pandit Kartik Seshadri is a world-renowned force in the field of Indian Classical Music. As a sitarist, he attracted widespread attention when he began performing full-length solos at the age of 6 in India. The sitar maestro is now hailed as an “amazingly accomplished” musical powerhouse noted for his music’s “expressive beauty, rich tonal sensibility, and rhythmic intricacy,” praised the *Washington Post* while the *Times of India* (2011) noted that Seshadri’s concert was “a show stopper that transported the audience to soak soul deep in his mesmerizing performance.” The prestigious *Songlines Magazine* (UK) has in its March 2012 issue declared his latest album *Sublime Ragas* as one of the “Top Ten of the World’s” CD’s (as with his 2004 *Raga:Rasa* album) further citing him as one of the “world’s greatest sitarist players.”

A multifarious confluence of musical influences steeped in the Maihar gharana’s dhrupad & beenkar styles, Seshadri began his initial training with Shri Shankar Rao of the Vishnupur Gharana and further trained and toured worldwide with his acclaimed guru Pandit Ravi Shankar. In 2005 and 2010, Seshadri collaborated with composer Philip Glass and the Brazilian instrumental group UAKTI on the critically acclaimed Orion project. Seshadri performs extensively in his homeland and around the world, including the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, Australia, Mexico and the Middle East. He has played at prestigious venues and events ranging from Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, the Melbourne International Arts Festival in Australia, the Brighton Festival in UK, the Ravinia Festival, the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City to the Dover Lane, ITC, Sawai Gandharva Samaroh and Saptak Sammelans in India to name but a few. Seshadri has received numerous awards and accolades for his contributions to the world including his June 2011 nomination as the Artist of the Month” by the prestigious Sangeeth Research Academy (SRA) in Kolkata and his 2014 honorary award from the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) for his “incredible contributions, vision, leadership and expertise in the creative field...and as a true pioneer” of music and art.

Seshadri is also a distinguished composer and educator of Indian Classical Music. While his Quartet for a Raga was premiered under the auspices of the Contemporary Music Forum in Washington D.C., his latest “Concerto #1 for Sitar and Chamber Orchestra” received its 2010 world premier in San Diego. As an educator Seshadri heads one of the largest programs of Indian Classical Music in the USA at the University of California San Diego. He has been invited as a distinguished guest faculty member at various conservatories, universities and academies around the world: The Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada, Stanford University, the Yehudi Menuhin School of Music in Bath, U.K., and the Sangeeth Research Academy (SRA) in Kolkata, India. In 2009 Seshadri launched Raga : Rasa, Kartik Seshadri’s Center for Indian Classical music and improvisation.



## SHRI NITIN MITTA

Nitin Mitta is a dynamic tabla soloist and a highly sought after accompanist, who has performed with some of India’s most celebrated musicians such as Pandit Jasraj, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pandit Rajan and Sajan Mishra, Ustad Shahid Parvez and Pandit Kartik Seshadri, to name a few.

Nitin’s Gurus’ Pt. G.Satyanarayana and Pt. Arvind Mulgaonkar, are disciples of Ustad Amir Husain Khan, the Legendary doyen of the Farrukhabad Gharana of Tabla. Nitin has also made a mark as a versatile collaborator in other spheres when he joined forces with Grammy nominated pianist Vijay Iyer and electric guitarist R. Prasanna to produce a studio album titled Tirtha. Nitin’s tabla playing is featured on the soundtrack of the 2008 Oscar winning short film documentary Smile Pinki.

Nitin has also recorded and toured extensively with the two time Juno Award (Canadian Grammy) winner, singer, Kiran Ahulwalia.

Nitin imparts tabla training to Tabla enthusiasts all around the world and is a teaching associate at the Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.