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Ustad Rashid Khan takes the spirit of raga Puriya to sublime heights

DNA / Priya Adhyaru-Majithia / Saturday, January 8, 2011 18:22 IST

"I hope to perform to the best of my abilities," was what city-based Mewati gharana vocalist, Vikas Parikh, son of grand vocalist Krishkant Parikh and disciple of renowned vocalist Pt. Jasraj began with on Saptak's Day 6 programme.

Parikh, who has been performing on stage since he was 8 years of age, dedicated his day's performance in the memory of late Nandan Mehta and Krishkantji, two idols whom Parikh revere as his 'God'. And if the presentation of raag Jog and Bageshri were any samples of Parikh's offering to the 'Gods', the heavens must have been mightily pleased with the artiste's mellifluous offerings.

The ongoing 13 day Saptak music festival's Day 7 had two sessions of vocal recital — one of solo tabla recital and sitar *vadaan*.

Late Nandan Mehta's disciple and nephew, Nihar Mehta performed a rare ancient Banaras gharana taal — Shankara — in his solo performance in the second session on Friday — as a special tribute to Mehta.

However, the show stopper was the heart-stirring recital by sitarist Kartik Sheshadri, who was accompanied by Satyajit Talwalkar on the tabla. Sheshadri's ethereal notes at the beginning of his performance followed by a leisurely alap transported audience into a blissful plane enabling audience to soak soul deep in his mesmerising performance. Not a whisper was heard in the jam-packed hall all throughout the recital. Sheshadri, who has been performing since the tender age of six in the country, is at present heading one of the largest programmes of Indian Classical Music in the US at the University of California, San Diego.

And finally, all that was needed for the audience to ascend sublime heights of rhapsody came in the form of the melodious notes of raag Puriya delivered in the cultured voice of Ustad Rashid Khan, the great grandson of Gharana founder Ustad Inayat Hussain Khan, and of Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana, in the concluding session.

Khan, known for his delicate fusion of emotional overtones in his melodic recitals, is also popular for his full throated voice. A recipient of Padma Shri, and Sangeet Natak Akademi awards, Khan has a distinct personalised style of the slow elaboration in his vilambit khayals and is a master of the tarana.

"Playing with Khan in memory of late tabla icon Nandan Mehta is an honouring experience," said Shubhankar Banerjee, a tabla artist who accompanied Khan for the Saptak concert.

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