

Marc Sabat

Light Ground

*an 11-limit modulation
for 2 tanpuras in changing scordature
or 2 harpsichords in just intonation*

PLAINSOUND MUSIC EDITION

Light Ground (2014/15)

*an 11-limit modulation for 2 tanpuras in changing scordature
or 2 harpsichords in just intonation*

*inspired by work with Catherine Christer Hennix and Marcus Pal
commissioned by Mareike Lee for Ivo and Kuno*

This piece references a line of work exploring the possibilities of just intonation which has evolved out of the teaching of Pandit Pran Nath, also manifested in numerous compositions by La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Catherine Christer Hennix as well as various younger musicians.

In Berlin, I came to know the tamburas of Pandit Pran Nath in Catherine Christer Hennix's studio whilst assisting Marcus Pal in making recordings of her ongoing composition for these two instruments tuned pa-sa-sa-SA and played at once. Astounded by the rich variety of spectral interactions of the instruments, which are normally heard in an accompanying role while producing the harmonic drone in Indian music, I was inspired to create a new piece for this wonderful instrumentation.

Over a number of years, in conversations with my colleague and friend Jeremy Woodruff we would discuss the possibility of composing harmonic "modulations" of the traditionally fixed drone in Indian music. Might it be possible, we wondered, to make harmonic changes (movements between gamuts of tones based on different fundamentals) in a way which might also enable the development of new Indian raga forms? Could this also be heard from other listening perspectives as an interesting music form?

I began to consider the most commonly used consonant tambura tunings (sa-ma, sa-pa, sa-ni). I found a way of harmonically relating two very distant patterns a quarter-tone apart by considering just intonation ratios from a common subaudio fundamental (2 Hz). The composition is a gradual transformation between these two drones.

I imagine several possible realisations of this piece: as a recording played over multiple loudspeakers distributed in a large space, or in a network of connected rooms. Each bar of the music, and each of the two tamburas in changing scordature, is recorded independently, cycling its repeating pattern for a long time. These are then edited into a sequence of gradually changing harmonies. In a larger setting each pair of loudspeakers might reproduce a slow loop through the score, offset from the next pair by one or more bars. In this manner, the entire piece – one "dissonant" harmony beating at 120 bpm – may be always sounding all at once, and by walking past the loudspeakers, one may play/hear *through* the piece as a modulation between two consonant drone tunings, running the harmonic changes forwards or backwards in time.

Alternately, a live version performed by 4 tanpurists and 22 instruments distributed in a space is possible, or a faster version for two harpsichords retuned as indicated in the score.

Berlin, November 2014/August 2015

Light Ground

*an 11-limit modulation
for two deep tanpuras in changing scordature
or for two harpsichords*

Moderé, un peu inégal

Marc Sabat

plucking in the ordinary direction (pa-sa-sa-SA)

Hz : 128

each bar = ca. 1'

simile, ad lib.

64

96

112

Tanpura (I)

-38

-36 + indicates a change of pitch

A +31

Difference Tones

Hz : 64

64

32

48

32

16

Tanpura (II)

plucking in the reverse direction (SA-sa-sa-pa)

Hz : 128

each bar = ca. 1'

simile, ad lib.

64

96

112

+ indicates a change of pitch

A +31

Harpsichord (I)

stems down = lower manual
stems up = upper manual

each bar = ca. 1'

simile, ad lib.

-38

-38

-36

A +31

+ indicates a change of pitch

Harpsichord (II)

stems down = lower manual
stems up = upper manual

each bar = ca. 1'

simile, ad lib.

-38

-38

-36

A +31

+ indicates a change of pitch

T I

+14 +

88

+16 +

132

+16 +

66

+110

DT

64

48

40

32

24

16

68

48

36

24

16

62

46

36

24

18

68

46

36

24

18

68

46

36

24

18

SA

subaudio Hz : 8

8

4

8

4

2

14

8

4

2

14

8

4

2

T II

110

H I

F +14

C +16

C +16

A +0

H II

A +0

+110

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each with five staves. The parts are:

- T I:** Trombone I
- DT:** Double Bass (Tenor)
- SA:** Double Bass (Bass)
- T II:** Trombone II
- H I:** Horn I
- H II:** Horn II

Key performance markings include:

- DT:** Fingerings (e.g., 66/44/22, 62/36/40/30/18, 66/44/36/20, 66/44/22, 66/44/22) and breath marks (v, ^).
- T II:** Breath marks (+) and rhythmic shifts (+16).
- H I:** Breath marks (+).
- H II:** Breath marks (+) and rhythmic shifts (C+16, F+14).

The score includes numerous repeat signs and dynamic markings, indicating a complex and rhythmic composition.

T I

DT

SA

T II

H I

H II

62 68
40 36
30
20 18

48 62 68
46 36 40
30
16 20

64 68
48 40
32 24
20 16

64
48
32
24
16

14
8
4
2

8
4

8

continue on to next bar without pause

T I

DT

T II

H I

H II

64
32

64

continue on to next bar without pause

T I

T II

H I

H II

continue without pause

continue without pause

T I

T II

H I

H II

The first system of music consists of four staves. The top staff (T I) begins with a series of rests and repeat signs, followed by a melodic line with an accent. The second staff (T II) contains a continuous melodic line with accents. The third staff (H I) has rests and repeat signs, ending with a few notes. The bottom staff (H II) features a melodic line with accents.

T I

T II

H I

H II

The second system of music continues the four-staff arrangement. The top staff (T I) has a melodic line with accents. The second staff (T II) has rests and repeat signs. The third staff (H I) has a melodic line with accents. The bottom staff (H II) has rests and repeat signs.

T I

T II

H I

H II

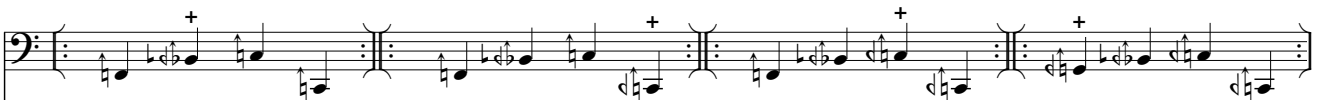
The third system of music continues the four-staff arrangement. The top staff (T I) has a melodic line with accents. The second staff (T II) has a melodic line with accents. The third staff (H I) has a melodic line with accents. The bottom staff (H II) has a melodic line with accents.

T I 

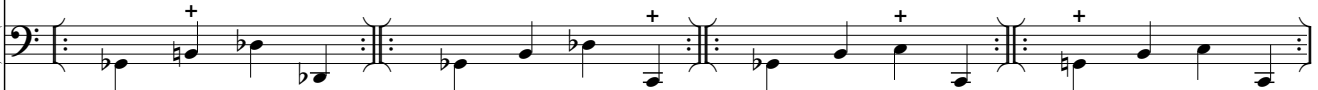
 T II 


 H I 


 H II 


T I 


 T II 


 H I 

 H II 

T I 

 T II 

 H I 

 H II 

return to beginning

return to beginning

return to beginning

return to beginning