

## **Electroacoustic Composition 10**

### **Acousmatic Chakras** (2011/12) (Acousmatic) 34'00"

Variable form multiple movement or fixed single movement for multiple stereo  
loudspeaker surround sound analogue diffusion

This is a large-scale, single source, variable form, acousmatic composition realised exclusively from the soundworld of a sitar in the composer's home studio and Liverpool Hope Recording Studios during 2011/12 and conceived for a variety of performance scenarios.

*Acousmatic Chakras* exists as a collection of nine Individual Movements in Micro Form, as Sub-Group mixes in Meso Form: Prologue – Chakras 1-3 – Void – Chakras 4-7 – Epilogue, and as a continual piece (with concrete pauses) in its complete (and fixed) 34-minute Meta Form. The individual movements can also be rearranged chronologically and displaced in juxtaposition or overlapped to create alternate transitions between the movements of the new arrangement, therefore presenting a plethora of options for a multi-variable concrete form (See *Acousmatic Chakras* Complete Meta Form PDF).

### **Context and Concept:**

The initial concept and idea for this piece came from attending Indian Classical Music concerts (which the composer very much enjoys) in both Carnatic and Hindustani styles. Although the composer has always had a passion for tonally (or modally) static music, as synonymous with many forms of Folk and Rock songwriting and the post-1976 music of Arvo Pärt, he would often find himself wishing that the static drone would move in sympathy with, and around, the exciting gestures and dynamic contours of the virtuosic musicians, and so he decided to compose a changing resonance (an alternate drone); an acousmatic soundworld of resonant heterodyning frequencies, harmonic overtones (and undertones), dynamic contours, multiple rhythms, varying textures and timbral diversity:

A potential framework for structured improvisation by musicians trained in the Classical Carnatic and/or Hindustani styles ...

Heterodyning frequencies can be calculated in difference and combination tones of two or more notes (providing the sum or division of all frequencies/pitches is equal to the target frequency/pitch) and are a way of exploring changing linear drones or even vertical multi-frequency resonances that remain directly relative, sympathetic and empathetic to a single pitch frequency (the drone). Therefore this concept does not alter the fundamental structure and authenticity of Classical Indian Structured Improvisation and the reference to, and often omnipresence of, a single drone frequency (home tone).

The composer immediately noted parallels with how one might also use this research to inform a contemporary composition for 'just intonation' harpsichord and 'period' ensemble in order to retain an air of antique authenticity within the resultant soundworld.

### **Narrative and Form:**

Chakra is a Sanskrit word, meaning circle, cycle and/or wheel. In this context it refers to the cyclic nature of life-energy. Chakras are connected energy centres, which channel life-energy (white light) or 'Chi' through the body. The seven main chakras are situated in the head and torso. Each is associated with a different area of spirituality, health and emotional wellbeing. Each is distinguished by its own colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet and each associated with a different element, sense and/or emotion.

The various sections of the work (all relative to a specific chakra and its element/emotion) can be disassembled and presented as short, individual, acousmatic character pieces. They are complete self-contained movements, but have been deliberately composed with transitional 'bookends', which interact with and cohesively overlap the surrounding movements, therefore creating a continuous single Meta Form.

Three concrete interludes: *Prologue*, *The Void* and *Epilogue* complete the 34-minute near continuous form ...

As individual movements each section of the work can be triggered in real-time interaction and used to frame, guide and structure improvised performance by Indian classical musicians. In this electroacoustic scenario the structured improvisation and part-composed live performance is embellished by changing resonances of heterodyning frequencies, exploring the possibilities of drones in linear and vertical harmonic motion supporting modally static improvisation (See *Electroacoustic Chakras* Webpage).

## Elements of Synopsis:

### **Prologue – White Light – Introduction** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 3'16"

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

This short introductory movement was composed specifically for the *Acousmatic Journeys* concert at the *Cornerstone Arts Festival 2011*. The *Prologue* shapes a fairly gentle opening to the piece, within a soundworld of loops, varied repetition, ambient textures, subtle resonances and complimentary timbres. The collection of sounds used can be heard in various guises within each of the seven *Acousmatic Chakras*. These sounds represent the life-energy (white light/chi) that resonates through, and is channelled by, the Chakras (See *Acousmatic Chakras – White Light Pool of Sounds*).

### **Chakra One – Balance and Earth** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 3'50"

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

The opening of *Chakra One* offers an immediate dynamic contrast to the ambient introduction of the *Prologue* with increased textural activity and timbral diversity. The form is delineated through individual (and often aggressive) resonant composite sounds providing sonic landmarks and moments of dynamic intensity, whilst a recurring rhythmic loop carries the momentum during passages of dynamic decay ...

### **Chakra Two – Change and Water** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 6'06"

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

*Chakra Two* is the longest movement in this collection and focuses upon the more acoustically recognisable and idiomatic sounds of the sitar (often quite heavily processed). Although the form is continual, the legible musical phrasing from the processed sitars instils a clear sense of momentum, goal and structure. The movement closes in a mini coda of percussive rhythms and multi-timbres in quite stark contrast to the earlier recognisable soundworld of sitars ...

### **Chakra Three – Fire and Energy** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 3'44"

The Power of the Sun

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

Because *Chakra Two* focuses primarily upon the idiomatic sounds of the sitars, *Chakra Three* focuses more upon elements of extra-musical and processed sound, seeking to find a balance between the sonic extremes. *Chakra Three* explores microtonal drones and heterodyning frequencies outlining a dynamic crescendo with a large variety of timbres for the first half of the movement and then transits into an almost monochromatic, but multi-layered soundworld reminiscent of burning embers on a crackling fire for the latter half ...

### **The Void – Oceans of Illusions** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 4'02"

The Principle of Mastery

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

This relatively short sonic interlude was composed (primarily from processed versions of the *White Light Pool of Sounds*) shortly after the main body of the work to offer a period of static neutral space in between the two emotionally charged central movements in the Meta Form, and to generally balance the dynamic contour and textural pacing of the collection as a whole, it effectively divides the *Acousmatic Chakras* in half ...

### **Chakra Four – Love and Air** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 2'58"

Passion and Breath

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

*Chakra Four* is the shortest movement in this collection and deals with recognisable real-world sounds in two almost performable lines: One with rhythm and extra-musical clicks and gestures and the other with fairly conventional sitar sound.

Real-world sounds are embellished with a processed soundworld above a ground-canvas of resonating heterodyning frequencies and drones resulting in a **trio** texture serving as a musical analogy for balancing the mind, body and spirit. The stunted decay of the sitar attacks heightens an almost claustrophobic anxiety, enhanced by the practically raw acoustic recordings of fingernails tapping nervously on the body of the sitar ...

### **Chakra Five – Communication and Inner Sound** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 4'28"

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

Creeping in patiently from an extended near silence, the introduction of *Chakra Five* features unusual and contorted (almost sardonic) bass composite sounds placed in sequenced canon and digitally delayed counterpoint, which continues the general feeling of anxiety, restlessness and claustrophobia from *Chakra Four*. The bass events literally sound as if they are melting away, further disorientating the perception (and reception) of the sonic journey for the listener.

Although composed around bass composite sounds, this movement purposely avoids the continuous ground-canvas of changing resonances and drones synonymous with most of the Meta Form. A closing coda of percussive gestures, varied repetition, subliminal breath and relaxing waves of breathing and structured rhythms help to alleviate and resolve the earlier sense of claustrophobia and anxiety ...

## **Chakras Six and Seven** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 4'22"

Inner Light, Sight and Enlightenment

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

*Chakras Six* and *Seven* recreate the resonant harmonic series of two microtonal fundamentals framed within a developing textural drone of heterodyning frequencies: Combination and Difference Tones.

*Chakra Six* was originally composed upon resonances from the microtonal harmonic series and *Chakra Seven* using drones of heterodyning frequencies, the two soundscapes merged together and naturally overlapped (almost from the moment of inception) into a single cohesive and homogeneous soundworld wrapped within patient dynamic pacing and fluid dynamic envelopes, and so the two Chakras have literally been subsumed together as one for eternal symbiosis in this piece: Inner Light, Sight and Enlightenment ...

Honour to the Blessed One, the Exalted One; the fully Enlightened One:  
The light of the three worlds, the Buddha...

## **Epilogue – White Light – Conclusion** (Acousmatic) (2011/12) 3'00"

Single movement for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion

This short movement is a rearranged, remixed and reworked version of the *Prologue*, but with a completely recomposed conclusion realised in empathy to its place at the end of an extended form: The finale, or closing statement ...

The piece is used to encapsulate the Meta Form for *Acousmatic Chakras* and offer a subtle closing reminiscence of the initial sonic statements, reminding the listener of the sonic journey through which they have just travelled.

The *Epilogue* uses the same collection of source sounds as the *Prologue*, but some have been processed specifically for this movement adding individuality to the sound palette and the resultant soundworld. The movement (and the acousmatic Meta Form) closes in a relaxing soundscape of complimentary timbres, textural loops of varied repetition, subtle resonances and dynamic decay as the piece drifts away into the silent ether ...

## **White Light – Chi: Pool of Sounds**

*White Light* is a set of specific sounds used (in various guises) within each section and movement of the *Acousmatic Chakras* Meta Form, they were conceived as a balanced 'mini-palette' of source sounds in order to instil a sense of cohesion and development between the soundworlds of the three sonic interludes.

**Diffusion:**

The concrete audio has been mixed for multiple stereo loudspeaker analogue diffusion (surround sound), with additional summated (central) mono and sub-bass (LFE) files.

**Acknowledgement:**

Thanks go to Internationally renowned sitarist Roopa Panesar for recording the primary sound material from which this piece was composed.

**Contact:**

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