

Electroacoustic Composition 13

Electroacoustic Chakras (2011/13) (Electroacoustic)

Variable form multiple movement or fixed single movement for structured improvisation:
Version for vocals, bansuri, sarangi, tabla, interactive sound and fixed media.

Structured Vocal Improvisation and Text: Yashashwi Sharma

This is a large-scale, single source, variable form electroacoustic composition initially realised as an acousmatic work exclusively from the soundworld of a sitar in the composer's home studio and Liverpool Hope Recording Studios during 2011/12 (See *Acousmatic Chakras* Webpage).

This version of *Electroacoustic Chakras* (for voice, bansuri, sarangi and tabla) was performed and recorded in Jaipur, India during January 2013 and exists as a collection of ten Individual Movements in Micro Form and as a continual piece in its complete (and fixed) 58-minute Meta Form. Arranging and mixing the final version took the composer most of 2013.

The individual movements can 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 form:

Individual Movements: Flexible Micro Form ...

- I. Prologue – White Light – Introduction – Awakening 4'38"
- II. Chakra One – Balance and Earth 5'56"
- III. Chakra Two – Change and Water 7'22"
- IV. Chakra Three – Power and Energy 7'38"
- V. The Void – Ocean of Illusions 4'48"
- VI. Chakra Four – Love and Air 5'40"
- VII. Chakra Five – Communication and Inner Sound 4'36"
- VIII. Chakras Six and Seven – Inner Light, Sight and Enlightenment 7'30"
- IX. Epilogue – White Light – Conclusion 4'30"
- X. Emotion, Instinct and Humanity – Introduction 3'22"

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).

Electroacoustic Chakras Six and Seven: Version for Voice – Studio Recording

Following a successful realisation of the large-scale acousmatic version, *Chakras Six and Seven – Inner Light, Sight and Enlightenment* were adapted for live performance and structured vocal improvisation in close collaboration with vocalist Yashashwi Sharma during 2012. This was to gauge how well the concrete textures of *Acousmatic Chakras* could control the musical atmosphere and guide the structured improvisation.

Yashashwi displayed great patience in the studio whilst working with the composer during these recording sessions, the results of which (along with a successful live performance in November 2012) was enough evidence to prove that this project would work on the large-scale electroacoustic Macro Form.

Alternate recorded performances produced very similar results in the structure and distribution of textural activity, intensity and form, alongside the shape and pacing of dynamic and melodic contour and this is exactly what the composer was hoping to find: a clear collaborative result (a duet) between concrete sound and improvising musician.

Form: Interactive Sound and Reductive Neutral Space ...

The various sections of the parent work *Acousmatic Chakras* can be disassembled and presented as individual acousmatic character pieces. They are complete movements, but have been deliberately composed with short transitional 'bookends', which interact with and cohesively overlap the surrounding movements. As individual pieces, each section of the work can be triggered in real-time interaction and used to frame, guide and structure improvised performance.

This electroacoustic version includes additional passages of ambient sound and alternate (reduced) textures remixed and recomposed from each of the seven Chakras. These reductive EAS Mixes serve as atmospheric neutral space for some of the extended instrumental improvisations and as potential 'mobile' introductions, extensions, links and transitions within the pre-existing framework, to be triggered in real-time during live performances. This allows for moments of flexible improvisation from both sides of the mixing desk.

EAS Mixes: Reductive Concrete Atmospheres ...

Acousmatic composition is intended to feature sound as the primary focus, not as an ambient background, but electroacoustic textures need to be more collaborative with the live musicians (duet between musician and technology) and at times the concrete sounds must also play a subservient or supporting role (just like in any form of duet).

These *EAS Mixes* are stripped down (reduced) and recomposed versions of the *Acousmatic Chakras*, where most of the recognisable 'front-line' material has been removed to leave a collection of ambient atmospheres: fragments, loops and resonances. These concrete atmospheres can be used to interact with, encourage, and frame passages of structured improvisation within a live electroacoustic performance. They can also serve as sonic transitions (mobile links and connectives) between alternate arrangements of the flexible Macro Form.

In preparation for a full-scale live realisation, extracts of these *EAS Mixes* were fed into the recital hall acting as ambient sound during intermissions and stage preparations in the *Electroacoustic Flavours* concert 24th November 2011.

The composer noted how the backdrop of concrete ambience relaxed the atmosphere of the room during stage preparation and supported general chitchat from the audience during intervals. This was exactly the kind of neutral and non-invasive sense of ambient sonic space that he was hoping to achieve with these texturally reduced mixes:

EAS Mixes: Mobile Links and Transitions – Concrete Atmospheres

- I. Chakras EAS Mix 1a – Ambient Textures 1'52"
- II. Chakras EAS Mix 1b – Loop Textures 2'00"
- III. Chakras EAS Mix 2a – Incidental Sound 1'56"
- IV. Chakras EAS Mix 2b – Ambient Static 1'56"
- V. Chakras EAS Mix 2c – Background 1'26"
- VI. Chakras EAS Mix 3 – Fire 2'30"
- VII. Chakras EAS Mix 4 – Resonance 2'38"
- VIII. Chakras EAS Mix 5 – Rhythm 4'02"

Electroacoustic Chakras can be performed and mixed as a continuous entity or broken into smaller sections and sub-mixes dependant upon the requirements of the concert programme. The individual movements can also be displaced chronologically and rearranged in Micro, Meso and Macro Forms resulting in a plethora of variables and the potential for flexible and interactive form during realisation and performance.

Chronology of Realisation: Version for voice, bansuri, sarangi and tabla ...

Electroacoustic Flavours 2012

23rd November 2012

Electroacoustic Chakras [version for voice] 6&7 – White Light, Inner sight and Enlightenment: With structured vocal improvisation and text by Yashashwi Sharma (2012)

The sixth and seventh movements from *Acousmatic Chakras* (which had always naturally fused into a single continuous movement) were presented in duet with a structured vocal improvisation from Yashashwi Sharma. This performance (along with the earlier studio sessions) marked the first step to realising the ultimate form of this work as an electroacoustic vehicle for improvising Indian classical musicians.

The structured vocal improvisation introduces the pre-composed concrete media and combines symbiotically with the resonant characteristics of the piece. The text chosen by Yashashwi conveys prayers in Pali and Sanskrit. Individual words are chanted to enhance their meaning and collective importance, and blended with strong vibrato, throat and overtone singing, showing the versatile instrumental capacity of the voice.

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

Electroacoustic Chakras Live (2011/13) 58'32"

Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur Saturday 5th January 2013

Version for voice, bansuri, sarangi, tabla, interactive sound and fixed concrete media

The premiere performance of the complete *Electroacoustic Chakras* in continual Meta Form including pre-rehearsed extensions of the pieces using extracts from the collection of reductive *EAS Mixes* during passages of improvisation was performed in a free concert at the Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India on 5th January 2013.

The composer would like to thank the wonderful musicians involved in this version of *Electroacoustic Chakras*:

The Musicians:

Voice, Text and Structured Cues: Yashashwi Sharma (MA)

Bansuri (and other flutes): Muhammad Rais

Sarangi: Amruddin Khan

Tabla: Dhananjay Sahay

Interactive Sound (for live realisation in Jawahar Kala Kendra): John Pearson (MA)

Electroacoustic Chakras Studio Recordings: Jaipur, India

The well-rehearsed (and now premiered) work was then taken into a recording studio in Jaipur on Monday 7th January 2013, where alternate recorded performances were realised. Arranging the resulting recordings into the final form took the composer most of 2013.

This version of *Electroacoustic Chakras* has been mixed to ten Individual Movements in Micro Form and fused into a single movement in a Continual Macro Form (58'32"). The complete form also includes alternate versions of the *Prologue* scattered throughout the sonic journey.

There are also alternate mixes of *The Prologue* and *Chakra Five* (without vocals) and an abridged version of *Chakra Three* available.

Acknowledgement:

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

Further thanks go to John Pearson (MA) for providing technical and creative support during the trip to Jaipur, India, a helpful ear during the recording session in the studio, triggering the interactive sounds during live performance whilst the composer diffused the project as a whole and for helping to arrange media, administration and the exchange of recordings.

Special thanks go to vocalist Yashashwi Sharma (MA) for researching and realising the vocal techniques and for taking the time and care to structure and prepare the text (from which the instrumental improvisation took further cues) used in this version of *Electroacoustic Chakras*. Yashashwi was instrumental in helping to coordinate and direct the musicians from across continents prior to the composer's arrival in Jaipur.

The structure of the text throughout this version of the electroacoustic Macro Form was empathetic and sympathetic to the dynamic contours and pitch motion (or should one say static pitch motion) of the concrete form and proved fundamental in helping to maintain the structural integrity and atmosphere of the original *Acousmatic Chakras*. Yashashwi's influence over this collaborative project and the success of its results should not be understated.

Final (and personal) thanks go to Yashashwi and her family for making the composer feel so welcome on his arrival in what was a surprisingly cold winter in Jaipur shortly after New Year 2013 ... Thank You ...

Diffusion:

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

Contact:

For further information and resources contact the composer at: contact@ianpercy.me.uk