

Music Explorations Assessment Type 2 Folio – Original composition analysis

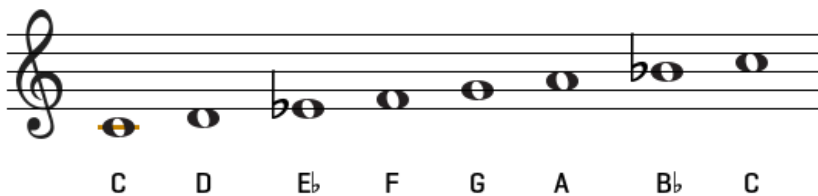
In AT1, I explored the Indian infused-rock of The Beatles circa 1966, researching and analysing the elements of *raga* music incorporated by the band to achieve the previously unheard sound. One of the main findings from this research was the application of sitar. In AT2, I decided to research the characteristics of sitar playing in order to replicate its sound on a guitar.

Guitar/Sitar modification (go to timestamp 3:15): To get closer to the desired droning sound, I used a 12 string guitar, of which is strung like a regular guitar but features 4 sets of octave pairs on the lowest four strings and 2 sets of unison strings on the highest two. To mimic the sound of the sitar's sympathetic strings, I retuned most strings to E, the sequence of the main 6 strings being: E2, E2, E3, E3, A3, E4. With every string tuned to E, apart from the B string tuned down to A, the drone created is rich and instantly has a unique and exotic sound. This lead B string, tuned to A, allows more slack to allow easier bends, slides and hammer-ons, which serves as a good emulation the of the main lead string found on a guitar. The two pieces feature the 5 sitar techniques I researched: legato, bending, drone, retuning and use of modes.

“Dorian Exploration” (4:22)

Rhythm: This exploration utilises the raga known as *kafi* (dorian mode), a common raga played on sitar, emphasising the 6th and 7th scale degree. In this way, dorian is very similar to the mixolydian mode, however has an overall minor tonality, with a minor 3rd rather than a major 3rd. Using a djembe to emulate a *tabla*-style beat, this piece is in the western time signature of 6/8, which may be thought of as a repeating 12 or 24 beat cycle in raga.

C dorian mode

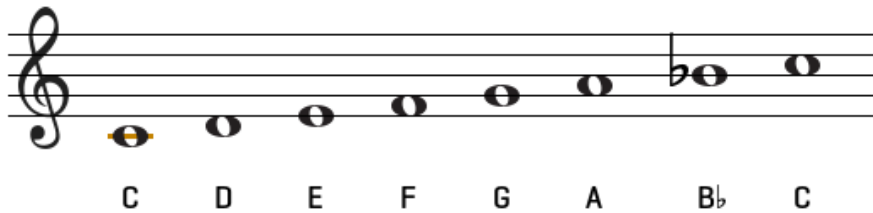


Melody + Harmony: The main melody of this piece revolves around a descending motif, which is inspired by the often linear direction raga melodies move in. This linear movement can be found all through sitar music, due to the construction of instrument's melodic strings. The melody is played high up the neck of the guitar, and involves several bends and hammer-ons. The commonality between the two pieces is the on the mode/raga, which involve emphasising the 6th and 7th scale degrees. The resonant droning can be heard throughout the piece, but sometimes the droning strings are strummed for emphasis, or rhythmic effect.

“Mixolydian Exploration” (6:24)

This piece, also uses the 5 sitar techniques I extrapolated from sitar playing. To contrast, this piece explores the application of the raga known as *khamaj* (mixolydian mode) in a 4 beat rhythmic pattern (4/4), supported by an emulated table-style beat played on a djembe.

C mixolydian mode



Melody + Harmony: This melody revolves around the tonic, with emphasis on the 6th and 7th scale degree, which indicate the mixolydian tonality. The techniques used in the melody consist of hammer-ons and slides. There are a few separate sections which expand on the original motif, adding in thirds or ascending to higher phrases.

Form + Rhythm: The piece begins with a slow, rubato introduction, outlining the main melodic motif of the piece. This is known as an *alap* in raga, and is designed to set the mood for the piece to come; context for what the audience will soon hear. Towards the piece’s end, the rhythm track concludes and the outro begins, slowing down to a tempo similar to the introduction (9:00). The outro especially emphasises the drone and outlines the piece’s most used scale degrees, ending with a full tone bend to the tonic, a very common technique found in sitar playing and raga.

Term	Explanation
raga	A sets of notes acting as a melodic framework for improvisation and composition, used by the musicians of classical Hindustani music. Ragas are comparable to western modes or scales, but do not directly align in terms of their application.
tabla	Indian hand drums, consisting of a bass and treble drum. The drums can be manipulated for a variety of tones that can create a complex rhythm section.
alap	A slow, rhythmically free introduction, intended to set the mood for the following raga.
kafi	A raga using notes paralleling the western mode dorian (minor scale with a raised 6th).
khamaj	A raga using notes paralleling the western mode mixolydian (major scale with a flat 7th).