



Book Launch & Concert
**'Applying
South Indian
Karnatic rhythm to
western music'**

by R. Reina

27th of March, 18.00

Conservatorium van Amsterdam
Amsterdam Blue Note



Welcome

The Conservatorium van Amsterdam offers a programme to familiarise interested students with the rhythmic system of South-Indian music. In the past seventeen years, this programme has attracted a lot of students, not only by the sheer prospect of achieving a level of intimacy with this intricate rhythmical language, but also by the relevance of a thorough training in this language for contemporary composition and improvisation, as well as for the performance of new music..

Rafael Reina is the instigator, principal teacher, and tireless promoter of this programme. Together with his colleagues Jos Zwaanenburg and David de Marez Oyens he has developed it into a unique aspect of the conservatoire curriculum, a welcome adjunct to the traditional solfege programme, enabling students to perform complex rhythmical structures both accurately and musically.

In 2008, Rafael came to me with a proposal for a doctoral research project focusing on the integration of Karnatic rhythm in western professional music education. His aim was to present a well considered, critically tested, and exportable model for this integration. He successfully applied for a 'promotion voucher': an arrangement offered by the Amsterdam School of the Arts whereby faculty members are exempted from teaching duties, or are given additional hours, to enable them to pursue a doctorate at a university. In 2009, he could begin as a PhD candidate at Brunel University in London, under the supervision of Professor Peter Wiegold.

And so began the genesis of the book whose publication we now celebrate.

It was a massive thesis first, which took Rafael only four years to write – while he was teaching on a reduced schedule in Amsterdam and receiving academic training in London. After it had earned him the doctorate in 2013, it had to be revised for publication – a very demanding process.

While teachers with scholarly aspirations can benefit from the opportunities the school offers them, the completion of their projects is dependent, first and foremost, on their own will power, stamina, and industry.

The publication of *Applying Karnatic Rhythmical Techniques to Western Music* by a publisher of the stature of Ashgate is a landmark in the history of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam that will inspire practical research in music and show it the way to international audiences.

Michiel Schuijjer
Lector, Conservatorium van Amsterdam

Programme

- Welcoming words by Sven Arne Tepl, Director of the Classical Department.
- Short presentation by Heidi Bishop, Head of the Publishing department of Ashgate Publishers Ltd.
- Short presentation by Rafael Reina, author of the book and co-ordinator of the programme 'Contemporary music through non-western techniques' and the masters specialisation 'Karnatic rhythm in Western music' at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam.
- Concert with a selection of pieces written by the author and advanced students of the programme and performed as well by (former) students of the programme. Reception in the foyer.

The research that took place between 2010-2013 has been made possible with financial support of the AHK (Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten) and Conservatorium van Amsterdam.

About the Book

Most classical musicians, whether in orchestral or ensemble situations, will have to face a piece by composers such as Ligeti, Messiaen, Varèse or Xenakis, while improvisers face music influenced by Dave Holland, Steve Coleman, Aka Moon, Weather Report, Irakere or elements from the Balkans, India, Africa or Cuba. Rafael Reina argues that today's music demands a new approach to rhythmical training, a training that will provide musicians with the necessary tools to face, with accuracy, more varied and complex rhythmical concepts, while keeping the emotional content. Reina uses the architecture of the South Indian Karnatic rhythmical system to enhance and radically change the teaching of rhythmical solfege at a higher education level and demonstrates how this learning can influence the creation and interpretation of complex contemporary classical and jazz music. The book is designed for classical and jazz performers as well as creators, be they composers or improvisers, and is a clear and complete guide that will enable students to use these techniques and their methodology to greatly improve their rhythmical skills and/or creative palette.

He has developed these ideas into a book that aims to:

- Systematise those rhythmical karnatic devices which can be considered sufficiently universal to be integrated with western classical and jazz aesthetics, so there is finally a comprehensive and complete text providing access to many rhythmical elements used in karnatic music;
- Provide a methodology for how these devices can be practiced and taught within a western framework, in order to enhance enormously the current western solfege rhythmical system;
- Explain how these techniques can be used as a source of ideas for composers and improvisers to create new music;
- Demonstrate every step of every technique with the aid of recordings specially made for this purpose;
- Analyse sections of pieces of existing contemporary repertoire (both classical and jazz) where karnatic techniques can be used to perform passages with more accuracy and understanding or where parallels with karnatic concepts can be established.
- Analysis and audio recording of written and improvised pieces created by three composition students.

· Reviews: *'This important study provides a comprehensive view of one of the richest rhythmic traditions in the world. Built on sustained experiential learning, Karnatic rhythm provides an almost scientific investigation of rhythmic possibility, something which, through dedication and long study, Rafael Reina is especially able to convey and invoke. His is a study from a Western musician, and the double benefit of this book is that he is then able to demonstrate the efficacy and inspiration that a Karnatic approach to rhythm and rhythmic structure can bring to Western music, showing both how it can enhance performance and learning techniques, and also be a source for the composer of intriguing and reframing compositional devices.'*

Peter Wiegold, Brunel University, UK

About the Author

Rafael Reina was born in the former Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea and until the age of 13 was exposed only to African music, flamenco, Stravinsky and Béla-Bartók. He went on to study jazz, West African, flamenco and Berber music, and graduated 'Summa cum Laude' in composition from Berklee College of Music (USA). Reina's extensive oeuvre includes three contemporary operas and ensemble pieces performed world-wide. He also co-founded two ensembles with non-western influences ('Interval Chamber Amsterdam' and 'Axyz Ensemble'). After moving to Amsterdam, Reina studied Karnatic music in South India, which led to the creation of the programme 'Contemporary Music Through Non-Western Techniques' at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, a PhD thesis at Brunel University (UK) and ultimately this book.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Jahnvi Jayaprakash, my main teacher between 1993-2002, for her knowledge, for accepting me as part of her family, for willing to go the extra mile in every demand I made and for respecting what I wanted to do with karnatic music. Meeting her changed my life and the life of many others.

Concert

1) Tijmen van Tol - Dutch Girls in American Culture (2014)

Yat Ho Tsang : Flute

Camille Verhaak: Clarinet

Federico Pascucci: Alto sax

Evgenii Bondarev: Trumpet

Daniel Yiau: Bass clarinet

Taichi Sato: Trombone

Antonio Carrasco Alvarez: Piano

Sven Hoscheit: Vibraphone

Noé Rodrigo Gisbert: Marimba

Jan Kadereit: Drums

Felix Barth: Bass

Conducted by: Jos Zwaanenburg

“An engagement in Eros’ mighty game of love”. With this evocative description, the composer tries to summarise what his own composition conjures up in him. The piece has clear late-Zappa resonances and it is articulated around the subdivision of the beat in 5 and 7, trying to create grooves that are born and die out, melodies that are sketched but get continuously interrupted, and in which all instruments have the role of creating ‘groovy’ lines in a polyrhythmical texture. The whole piece is set to a Tala of 10 beats, meeting point of all the diversity of rhythms and phrases”.

2) Rafael Reina - Liturgy of Darkness 5 (1996)

Sarah Jeffery: Recorder

“This composition is structured around two main elements: a cycle of 35 beats, using all sort of combinations of numbers 5 and 7, creates the rhythmical framework; a karnatic modulatory technique called Grahahhedam (by which 98 tones in an octave can be generated) is the main melodic motor, using again 7 different modulations with 5 ragas.

The cycle gets gradually de-constructed in each of its seven parts, departing from its original regularity, by using meter changes although the number 35 remains as a constant factor.

The piece explores a wide range of extended techniques, standing out singing and playing simultaneously”.

3) Jelle Verstraten - Dharma (2014)

Evgeny Novikov: Soprano sax

Stefan de Wijs: Alto sax

Michal Grycko: Tenor sax

Juan Manuel Dominguez: Baritone sax

Jelle Verstraten: Live electronics

"The exact translation of the word Dharma is hard to define. Most commonly it is translated as 'the right way of living' or 'the path of righteousness'. With this piece, I don't mean to lecture about morality or religious merit. It comes from a very personal approach to finding answers to life's questions in sound and music. In music, as it is in life, you need to take time and let yourself be submerged by the world that surrounds you and the path to understanding will become clearer.

The structure of the piece is based on a cycle of 12 beats. Yati phrases in different subdivisions of the beat, such as chatusra (4), khanda (5) and tisra (6) as well as the intricate and far-reaching concept called combinations anuloma pratiloma make up the main rhythmical techniques used in the piece. The melodic material is based on a bhasanga raga (an elaborate type of raga construction in karnatic music that is highly microtonal). An electronic drone based on the main srutis (pitches) of the raga provides the fundament for the musicians, in a way resembling the role of the tamboura in Indian classical music.

4) Rafael Reina - The Alchemist's Wisdom (2008)

Marc Aixa: Percussion

Ere Lievonen: Piano

"In this composition I explored all the cyclic possibilities of the number 27 (result of multiplying 3x3x3, the 'holy' number in karnatic music) by using different tala permutations. There is also a continuous exploration of polypulses and polyrhythms, but somehow hidden in subtle ways. The piano and percussion meet and depart from one another throughout the whole piece.

The name came to me whilst reading Carl Jung, when I got to know how much time he had devoted to studying Alchemy and how he discovered that Alchemy was ultimately a metaphor that some wise people of the time used to hide 'real, ancient knowledge' against the inquisitive and ignorant catholic church.

In a way, I feel that this 'real, ancient knowledge' has a parallel with the knowledge and new paths that karnatic music, and rhythm in particular, can provide to western music"

5) F. Murat Yatmaz - Metallicum Shot (2014)

Christopher Klassen: Voice

Jos Zwaanenburg: Flute/electronics

Dodo Kis: EWI

Daniel Mester: Sax

Sangwon Lee: Keyboards

Ryoko Imai: Percussion

Murat Yatmaz: Electric Bass

Efraim Schulz-Wackerbarth: Drums

“The piece was set to a Shadanga Tala of 6/4 + 3/16. The inspiration for this piece came from the current ‘wannabe dictator’ president of Turkey, and how he makes most of my generation feel. In this piece a variety of Karnatic rhythmical techniques have been used, primarily combination anuloma-pratiloma, tirmana mukthays, yati phrases and jathi bheda. The piece has been re-arranged for the ensemble ‘Trazzionic’, with lyrics written by Simon W. Anserine”.

