



BREATHING UNDER WATER

Anoushka Shankar (2007)



POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Indian Classical influence
- Western pop/rock influence
- Contrasting combinations fused together.

'BURN', 'BREATHING UNDER WATER' AND 'EASY'

TEXTURE:

- 3 textural elements in Indian Classical music seen in 3 pieces: Melody, rhythm, drone. Latter not in Breathing under Water. Predominantly homophonic.
- Burn: Tonic pedal, polyphonic, contrapuntal, dialogue, homophonic.
- Breathing under water: Homorhythm, polyphonic dialogue, descant.
- Easy: Complex textures, dialogue

CONTEXT:

- Daughter of famous sitar player Ravi Shankar. Brought up in London, Delhi and California.
- Started giving concerts in sitar and tampura at young age.
- Breathing Under Water: 2nd original Classical Indian/Western fusion album
- Main collaborator was Utkarsha (Karsh) Kale, an Indian musician and composer and co-founder of Tabla Beat Science. as well as guest artists.
- Album grew out of improvisation sessions.

SONORITY:

- Indian instruments/voices: Sitar, tabla, sarangi, vocals, percussion, bansuri, veena, sarod
- Western instruments/voices: String orchestra, solo cello, programmed/sampled drum patterns, piano, pop/R&B style vocals, bass guitar, guitar, keyboard 'pad' sounds.
- Indian melodic instruments have solo roles, or are in dialogue with vocals.
- Indian percussion is integrated into overall rhythmic texture.
- Western rhythm section instruments not used prominently on the set tracks.

MELODY

- Complex and ornate sitar lines, raga ornamental figures
- Western vocal style.
- Burn: Opening sitar solo like improvised alap section of a Classical raga. Begins in lower register (mandra saphak), and explores the notes of the scale, passage of thirds, rising sixth figure, slides, trills and grace notes. Lead vocals sung by NY singer Noa Lembersky. Verse features a descending sequential idea. Syncopated string idea developed into 1-bar countermelody in final chorus.
- Breathing under water: The sitar line is a melodic paraphrase of 'Sea Dreamer' by Sting, very ornamented with slides, shakes, mordents, trills. Stepwise movement, repeated anacrusic phrases. Mainly stepwise vocal line with occasional ornaments.
- Easy: Ornate sitar lines with relaxed vocal style. Sitar opens with a four-bar descending melody, repeated with slight variations. Restricted vocal range with major 2nds, pentatonic shapes, minor 3rds. Middle 8 vocal line descends with 8ve range phrases.

RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- Western rhythmic style. 4/4 metre.
- Burn: Triplets, syncopations, strong rhythmic drive set up in drums and manjira (snare backbeat) in verse, demisemiquaver hi-hat in chorus, syncopation and counterpoint in chorus, anticipations and lombardic rhythms.
- Breathing under water: Rhythmically flexible sitar line, triplets and quintuplets, anacrusic, semibreve and minim accompaniments.
- Easy: Syncopation, flexible, complex sitar line.

STRUCTURE:

- Was brought up with 'open-ended' structures of Indian Classical music, but embraces Western song structures: eg. verse/chorus, bridge, instrumental, intro and coda.
- Repeated chord sequences.

HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Asian-inflected form of non-functional tonality, modally inflected in choice of chords and progressions.
- Burn: Most closely resembles C# minor, with strong bass line anchoring key. Coda moves through A minor and F major chords to finish on an open D5 chord. Added notes, extension chords, 4 note chords, static harmony effect, unconventionally prepared and resolved dissonances, raga-like effect with all notes heard against drone, strong feeling of imperfect cadences but not in Western classical sense.
- Breathing under water: Mostly in D \flat major, tertiary modulation D \flat to Lydian-inflected A major., added notes, slash chords, maj 7th chords, diminished chords. repeated IVm-I progressions in the closing bars.
- Easy: Transposed Mixolydian mode on Db or Indian equivalent: Rag Khamaj. Harmony avoids primary chord progressions and cadences. Song is dominated by a three-chord progression: sus2/B \flat -C, sus2-D, sus4, inversions, flattened leading note chord (\flat VII) acts as a substitute dominant. Dissonant sus4 chords with 3rds at the same times. The song ends on an unresolved D \flat sus4 chord.