

Levitation Practice in the High-Order Modal Stasis of Sema

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Dedicated to the life, teachings, and spirit of
Sri Faquir Pandit Pran Nath (1918-1996)

Meditations on impermanence, non-attachment, equanimity, and continuous body of clarity and not-knowing, transient individual dreams of self and selflessness, sonic/physical exploration of zero/no-time void.

An offering to God and the absence of divinity.

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Background:

In Sufism, there is a practice known as Sema, derived from the Arabic root, *to listen*. It is often associated with dance, primarily of the Mevlevi Order of whirling dervishes in Turkey. Sema, however, refers broadly to any practice that invokes dhikir, the remembrance of God, through a form of heart-listening, often affording the practitioner sustained spiritual intoxication and intimate union during the duration of the practice.

The means to reach this state are primarily driven through dance, sound and prayer.

We will be clearing our own path into this state using the practice of Sema, as we as we make a collective high-practice offering to the divine, and remember the life of Guruji Pran Nath.

Collective Aspects:

Throughout this piece, you are encouraged to seek a personal journey.

This practice of collectivity is unfortunately too often rare to access -- powerful occurrences in this sense are lost through translation, social subconsciousness, analysis, worry, fear.

In order to evoke the state for both yourself and for those listening, it is vital to access the channel to your own heart, relying heavily on your intuition and feeling.

While there is a set of instrumentation and a suggestion of musical direction, the goal of our sound is to create a uniform body, one that, exactly as our own, possesses both dynamic autonomy and involuntary actions, and comes from both the tar and bliss that live inside each of us.

With this in mind, you are free to give any sound that represents how/what your body/mind is feeling/communicating to you in that deep place.

As a body-sound, we will embody collectively a warm, dynamic drone, one that has both continuity and grounding, as well as fluctuations and movements.

A great example is found on the Washington Coast, at the places where rivers meet the ocean. As the river emits a never-ending drone, the ocean has a sonic quality of unending, slow, careful breaths... in and out.

Throughout the piece, meditate on where and how you can find stillness in your sound, how you can deepen your sound to connect with the sensations of your physical body, how you can give patience to yourself by taking all the time you need with each note, even if it remains the same for the entire duration.

Let this meditation take you deep within yourself, allowing your eyes to see from behind your eyes, your mind to see from your heart, allowing your physical sensations and bodily awareness to heighten as you deepen your stillness.

How might it feel for the mind to enter a deep place of samadhi, where thoughts slow to the pace of no-time, and body sinks deep into that sweet space of pure balance and voidness?

Allow the sound to carry you.

Individual Parts (Suggested):

Harmonium - Russell

Notes fixed on Root and 5th.

Extra keys that you may play will have tape on them.

If you play these notes, consider holding them for longer durations rather than making short, fast changes. How does that feel?

Your body is also an instrument.

As you play, you may also use your voice to drone along with us on the root note, fifth, or octave, or any overtones you hear from the Tamboura.

Perhaps you are called to recite words of poetry, or briefly hum a tune that your grandmother would sing to you.

What kind of discoveries will you make?

You and Tae hold this space as the roots to this collective.

What does it feel like to be roots giving sound?

Shruti Box - Tae

Notes fixed on Root and 5th.

Extra valves you may open will have tape on them.

The shruti box is a delicate instrument. How can your shapes and structures be both sensitive and grounding?

Your voice is the embodiment of your body-instrument.

You may feel called to bring your voice into our collective body, giving structure, foundation and nutrients to this being. Try starting with the root note, maybe the octave, maybe the fifth? What else can you explore that feels grounding?

What sounds are you feeling called to make, and how does it feel to make/resist them?

You and Russell hold the space as the roots to this collective.

What does it feel like to be roots giving sound?

Tambura - Keena

The tambura is one of the most powerful instruments in Indian Classical music, containing almost all of the notes one might need.

A well-tuned tambura can resonate the entire harmonic series above and below what is heard. Your grounding and guidance through playing this instrument forms the foundation upon which everything else is built from.

Let each note resonate through various parts of your body.

If you lose sensation in your fingers, perhaps that sensation will return, or perhaps not.

PA-sa-sa-SA

As your space and time grow to feel the texture of nothingness, you may feel called to use your voice.

What sounds come from deep within you?

Do they drone with the tamboura, with the collective, with the birds, the wings of the gray jays, the heart?

What feelings are being translated from that special place?

Voice - Jocelyn

We will be singing in a custom mode.

You are free to use and modulate any note within the mode, or outside the mode.

With C as our root (as it will be in the performance), the mode looks like this:

C D Eb F G Ab Bb(kind of) C

1st - 2nd - Flat 3rd - 4th - 5th - Flat 6th - Septimal Minor 7th

Modulations/Movement that I find sound particularly special are:

Adding Flat 2nd - Sharp 4th - Natural 7th to the mode.

5th/Flat 7th/5th/Sharp 4th, and variations on this.

At times, I may find myself following the patterns you are creating.

And maybe at times you may find yourself following the patterns I am creating.

Perhaps we are forming harmonies within these notes.

Sometimes you may find yourself listening and our voices are working together.

And sometimes the notes are only coming from/existing deep within you.

How does it feel for the body to be a vessel for your own internal reverberance?

Viola - Noel

A continuous drone of intervals, letting your intuition inform you as to what intervals you might form.

You may form any of these intervals, or find yourself creating your own.

1st - Flat 2nd - 2nd - Flat 3rd - 4th - Wide 4th - 5th - Flat 6th - Septimal 7th
 $1/1 - 10/9 - 16/15 - 6/5 - 4/3 - 7/5 - 3/2 - 8/5 - 7/4 - 2/1$

You may also play the inversions of these notes.

Perhaps these strings, rotating, carving a hole through the body, a hole through time, maintain a continuous drone, or maybe they join the accompaniment of voices?

Where is your body, your heart, your void-mind in this journey?

What tones/shapes/textures communicate what you cannot say?

What feelings coming from within you are forming sound?

Perhaps you feel called to add your voice to become a part of the body-drone.

How does that feel?

$10/9, 16/15, 7/5, 8/5, 7/4$

Suggested Structure:

One potential option for our performance, due to the fact that we are, in this case, restricted by both time and space, is to have a loose structure to our piece, in order that we don't get carried too far away from Earth :)

Below is an idea.

Approx total duration of the piece can be between 20 mins and 4 hours.

Our collective decides this intuitively within the piece.

When the harmonium and shruti fade, the piece is nearing its end.

Introduction:

Tamboura

(this section could last a long time)

Voices join in their own time

(once you have begun to really feel the tamboura throughout your entire body)

(this section could also last a long time)

Viola joins

Middle:

Harmonium and shruti join together

Vocal soloists begin to deepen their connectivity, elasticity and dynamics

Collective deepens dynamics, sinking deeper into individual states of samadhi, harmonium and shruti explore new notes, or deepen the ones resounding

(this also could last a very long time)

Harmonium and shruti return to fixed notes

Ending:

Harmonium and shruti slowly fade

Viola fades

Collective voices and tamboura only

Vocal soloists and tamboura only

Tamboura only

Thank you all so much for being a part of this.
It will be so very special to share this experience with each of you.