First of all I want to explain that this workshop is a small flash on a few of the countless musical cultures in the world. Just as it would be impossible to explain all of western classical music in 15 minutes, we can not expect more than a superficial and anecdotal look about the cultures discussed here. My intention is, therefore, only to awaken your curiosity about other sources. I added, to make the presentation clearer, some pictures and transcriptions not available at the moment of the workshop. However, as the western scores are not especially suitable to describe the mood of these styles, I recommend you search for original recordings to appreciate them properly. Also keep in mind that the scores are written like a guitar score; it means that the actual sound is an octave lower than written.

OUTSIDE EUROPE

CLASSICAL MUSIC OF NORTH INDIA:

SCALE:
The scale degrees are called **Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni**, and without flat or sharp notes correspond to the **Ionian mode**, but without a determined pitch. For example, *Sa* can be any point between *Bb* and *D* (most common is *C#*.), *Re* will always be a 2nd above, *Ga* a 3rd, etc… The notes can be "**Komal**" (flat) "**Tivra**" (sharp) o "**Shuddha**" (natural). 1st and 5th do not support alterations.

OTHER FEATURES:
Unlike in Western music, bendings and portamentos are slow, long and irregular, as if they go not directly to the target note, but play with the tension of the movement before reaching it[1].
A striking feature is that ragas are associated with different times of day, or even of the year, having, for example, ragas for playing in the morning or in the monsoon season.

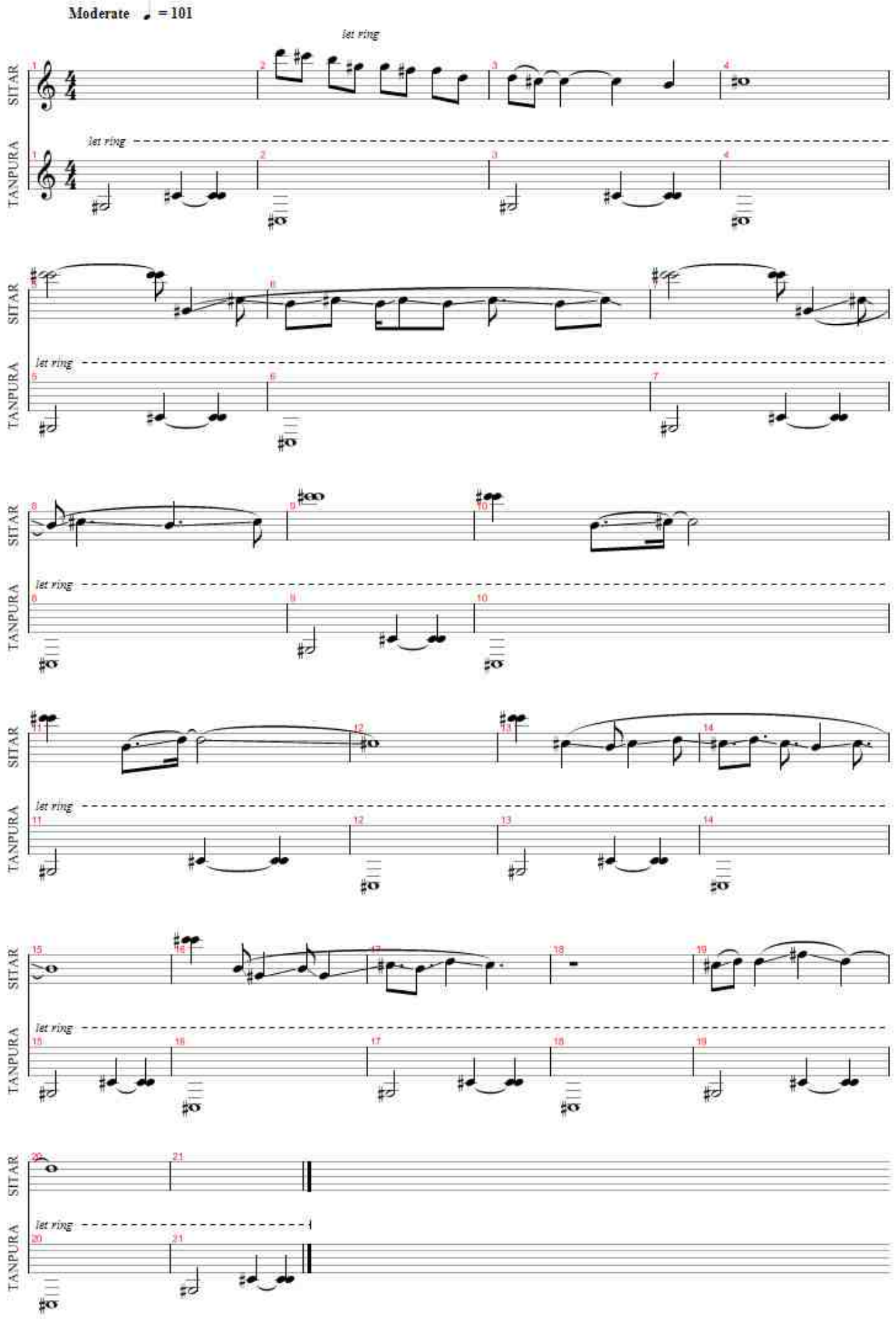
The parts of raga are **Alap**, **Jor**, **Gat** and **Jahla**.

> **ALAP**: No rhythm. It's a slow presentation of the notes of the raga.
> **JOR**: Rhythm appears, although there is no tablas or percussion accompanying. Phrases that will later be used in the development of raga begin to appear.
> **GAT**: Tablas are added and rhythm raises a constant crescendo, becoming gradually faster.
> **JHALA**: The climax of the raga. The faster and more virtuous part.

The **ragas**, besides having a certain scale, have notes strongly emphasized (**vadi**) less emphasized (**samvadi**), not emphasized nor de-emphasized (**anuvadi**), de-emphasized (**durbal**) and not-scale notes (**vivadi**). Ragas also have a way to ascend (**aroh**), and another to descend (**avaroh**), and certain rules (for example, to move between two notes you should always play another particular note), which makes them more complex than a scale, but without becoming a melody.
In the north it's considered that exist 32 scales (**tathas**), but in south they say there are 72; it is because in the north two "homonyms" scales are considered the same one, because they don't count two names for the same note as different sounds (i.e.. **Eb y D#** = **"Ga komal"** y **"Re tivra"**).

As an example, I have transcript a part of the raga "*Bairagi*", as played by **Anoushka Shankar.**

[1] This feature can also be found in Japanese music, among other.

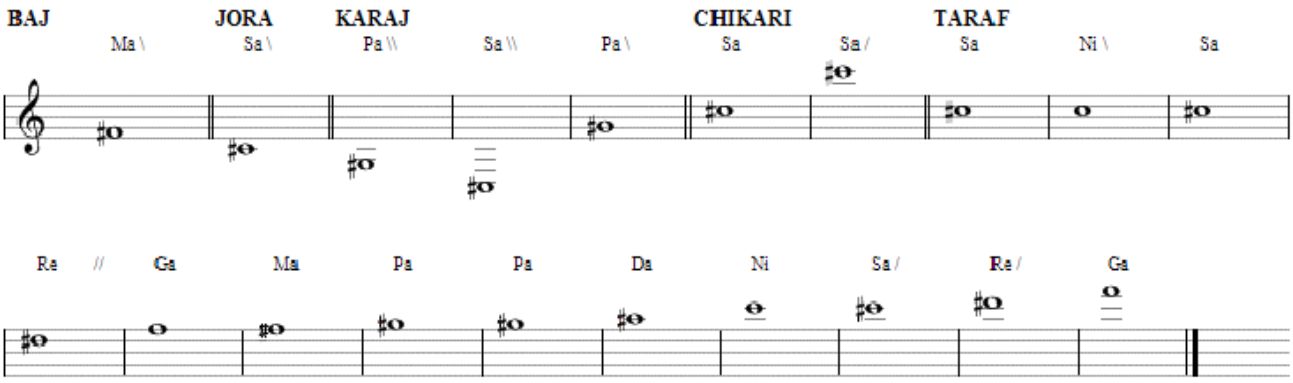

Moderate ♩ = 101
let ring
SITAR
TANPURA
let ring

SOME TYPICAL INSTRUMENTS

SITAR

The soundboard (**Tumba**) is made from a gourd, having sometimes a smaller second one behind the neck to amplify the sound. The neck is hollow, which helps with resonance, and makes the instrument very light despite its size. The frets are movable, and below them there's a space through which the sympathetic strings pass by. The bridges (**Jawari**) on which the strings lay, are curved, causing those strings vibrate in a particular way producing a kind of buzz. There are two bridges: the small for the sympathetic strings, and the largest for the rest.

GROUPS OF STRINGS AND THEIR TUNING



Baj: is the string in which melody is played. Covers approximately 2 octaves, and is the only one for which frets are used. Many bendings and vibrato are played on it, usually slow and irregular at the beginning of raga, and more rapid and direct as it grows in intensity. This string is press almost exclusively with the index finger of left hand, except when playing the highest note of a lick (whatever this note is), in which case it's pressed with the middle finger before start descending. It's not strange to hear up to two-step bends, especially by virtuoso players. To make it easier you can tune to a lower pitch, although it loses some of the sound shine.
Jora: provides a lower tonic note of raga.
Karaj: in these strings it's possible to play the drone, characteristic of raga, giving an harmonic basis upon which play the melody.
Taraf: when two strings are tuned to the same note, if one sounds, the other vibrates due to the common frequency; this effect is named "sympathetic vibration". It can be checked with the guitar (i.e.) playing the 6th string in 5th fret, and noting that 5th string vibrates by itself. Making use of this, there are instruments incorporating strings just to vibrate by sympathy, not being touched directly by the musician. These strings provide a greater volume and sustain to the notes of melody, as well a characteristic timbre.
Chikari: These strings are used to give a sense of speed, by emphasizing the rhythmic patterns interspersed with melodic notes. Them are always played together, and their high-pitched sound makes them audible between the sounds of the other.

FRETS TUNING

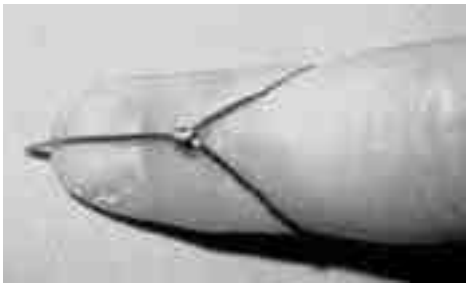
After tuning the strings, it's necessary to properly tune the frets according to the raga's scale. They are curved, made of brass or silver and tied up to the neck by wire, but there are also poor quality sitars tied with nylon, or even fixed. Sitar has 20 frets, which can cover approximately 2 octaves.

INTERPRETATION

After all this long process of tuning, the melody is played on only one string (**baj**), with one finger of each hand (occasionally two on the left). The remaining strings are either played open, or sound only by sympathy. It's a **Ravi Shankar**'s innovation to pass the right little finger's nail on the taraf before the raga, giving, besides an effect, a sample of the scale on which will play.

In the right hand it's used a kind of pick in the index finger, named Mizrab.

MIZRAB

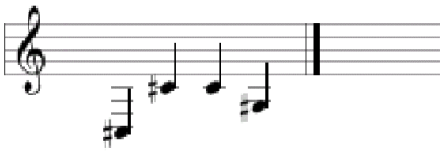


POSITION IN THE FINGER

A particular position is adopted to play sitar: on the floor, legs crossed, leaning to one side the instrument, and supported on the sole of the left foot.

TANPURA

If we consider sitar as the equivalent to guitar, we can say that tanpura is the bass. Its notes are used as a reference by the soloist to know where the tonal center of raga is. This instrument usually has 4 or 5 strings (rarely 6), and is tuned by the sitar player (or soloist who will play the raga). Its strings are always played open (it have no frets) to provide a kind of background (**drone**) to the melody. On the equivalence **Sa = C#** a fairly common tuning is **C# C# G# C#** for many of the most common ragas, although there are other tunings depending on the raga to be interpreted.



ELECTRIC TANPURA

Currently is usual the electric tanpura, which provides the same characteristic sound, but needing one less musician. It's an electric appliance in which we select the key and usually have few different drones.

TABLAS

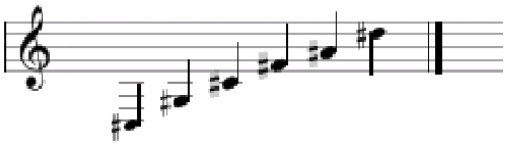
It's a percussion with actual pitch, that is tuned usually to the theme's tonic. For tuning it is used a group of leather straps tighten by moving cylindrical pieces of wood. The fine pitch is raised giving striking softly with a hammer in the rimhead. To play this instrument there are a lot of different beats for each hand, giving the signature sound the glissando with the wrist on the lower drum. This sound has some resemblance to the udu and tama, both from Africa.

The instruments mentioned above, and the music we refered to, have been influential in the psychedelic 60's in western countries, with **George Harrison** playing sitar in few **Beatles** songs and his solo career. He was also one of those responsible for the recognition of this instrument in the west, almost unknown until then. The first popular western song recorded featuring a sitar has been "*Norwegian Wood*" by **The Beatles**.

HOW TO USE THIS IN OUR MUSIC:

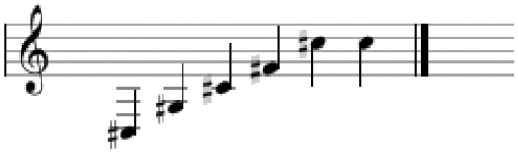
If you don't have a sitar, you can always use another instrument to play this style, or take some of its features into ours. I don't know if this are usual tunings, but to play that kind of music in guitar this two are quite comfortable:

① = D♯ ④ = C♯
② = A♯ ⑤ = G♯
③ = F♯ ⑥ = C♯



In this one it's possible to play melody in the 3 higher strings, and the drone in the 3 lower[2].

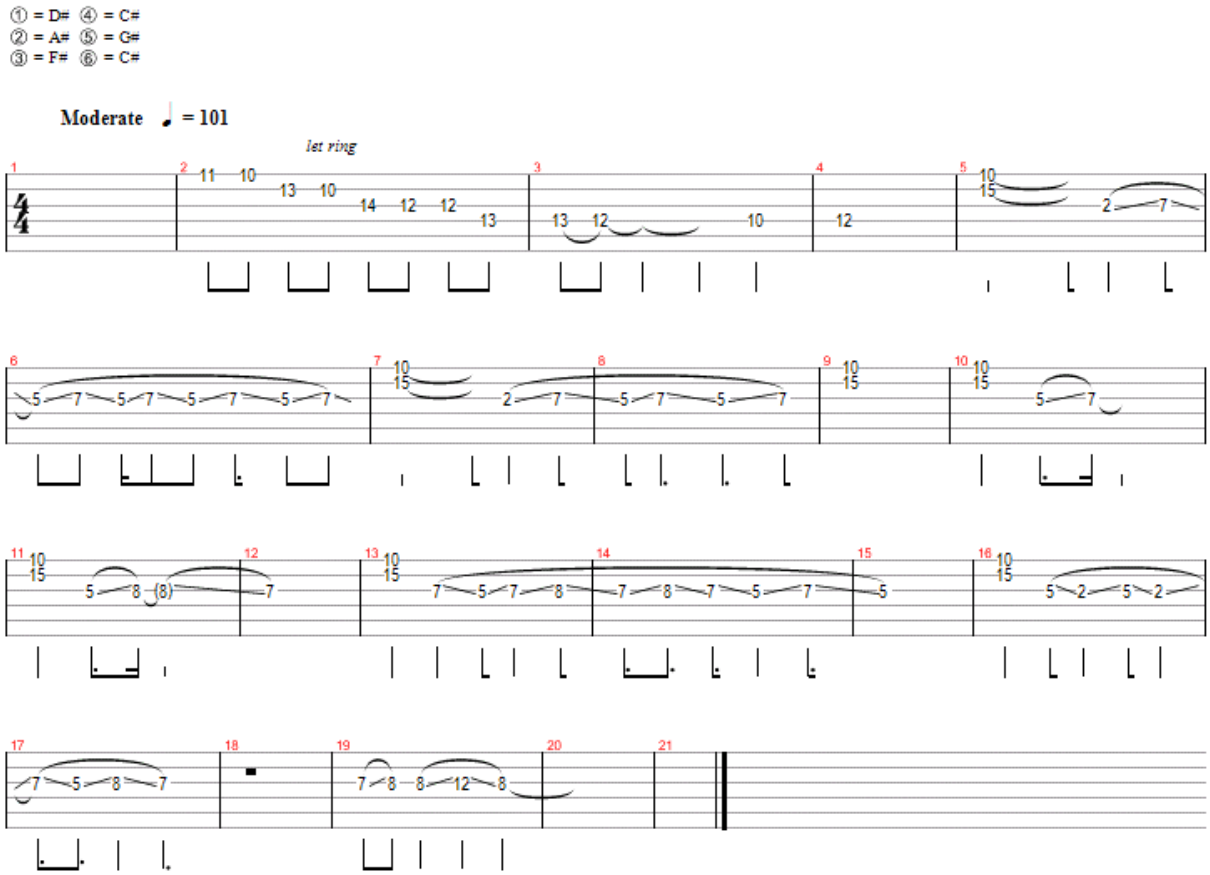
① = C♯ ④ = C♯
② = C♯ ⑤ = G♯
③ = F♯ ⑥ = C♯



In this one melody is played in the 3rd, drone on 4th, 5th and 6th, and 1st and 2nd can be used as "chikari".

[2] *Drop D* half step down.

This is a guitar adaptation I made of raga "*Bairagi*", as performed by **Anoushka Shankar**, on the first of previous tunings.



SOME MUSICIANS I RECOMEND:

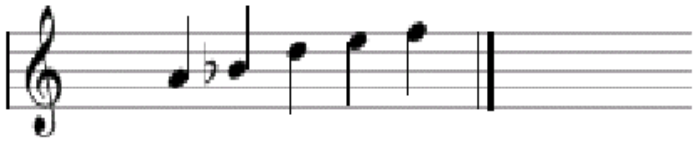
Ravi Shankar, Anoushka Shankar (sitar), Alla Rakha, Gyan Singh (tablas).

JAPAN

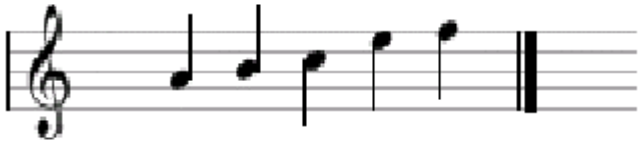
Japanese culture has historically combined times of strong Chinese influence[3] with long periods of isolation when polishing their own characteristics. This can be seen, among other things, in the ideograms writing[4], in various musical features, and even in construction of instruments.
In Japanese music, like in Japanese art in general, the baroque has been traditionally considered as a sign of decline, enhancing the value of simplicity over complexity. One of the feature of their music is that usually come from a contemplation, which "describe" with sounds. Typically, these issues have a name to clarify the remarks (i.e. "early fall's cloud"). It is usual to compose thinking more in "melodic cells" than notes itself, leading that at first listen it's difficult to difference one song to the other. As a comparison, in the west it's like we form complex sentences using the letters (musical notes), and they make it based on words with own meaning.

Two scales widely used in traditional Japanese music are **Kumoi** and **Hirajoshi**, both pentatonic, but very different from the major an minor pentatonic we use in west. The biggest difference is that they include half steps and major thirds jumps.

KUMOY



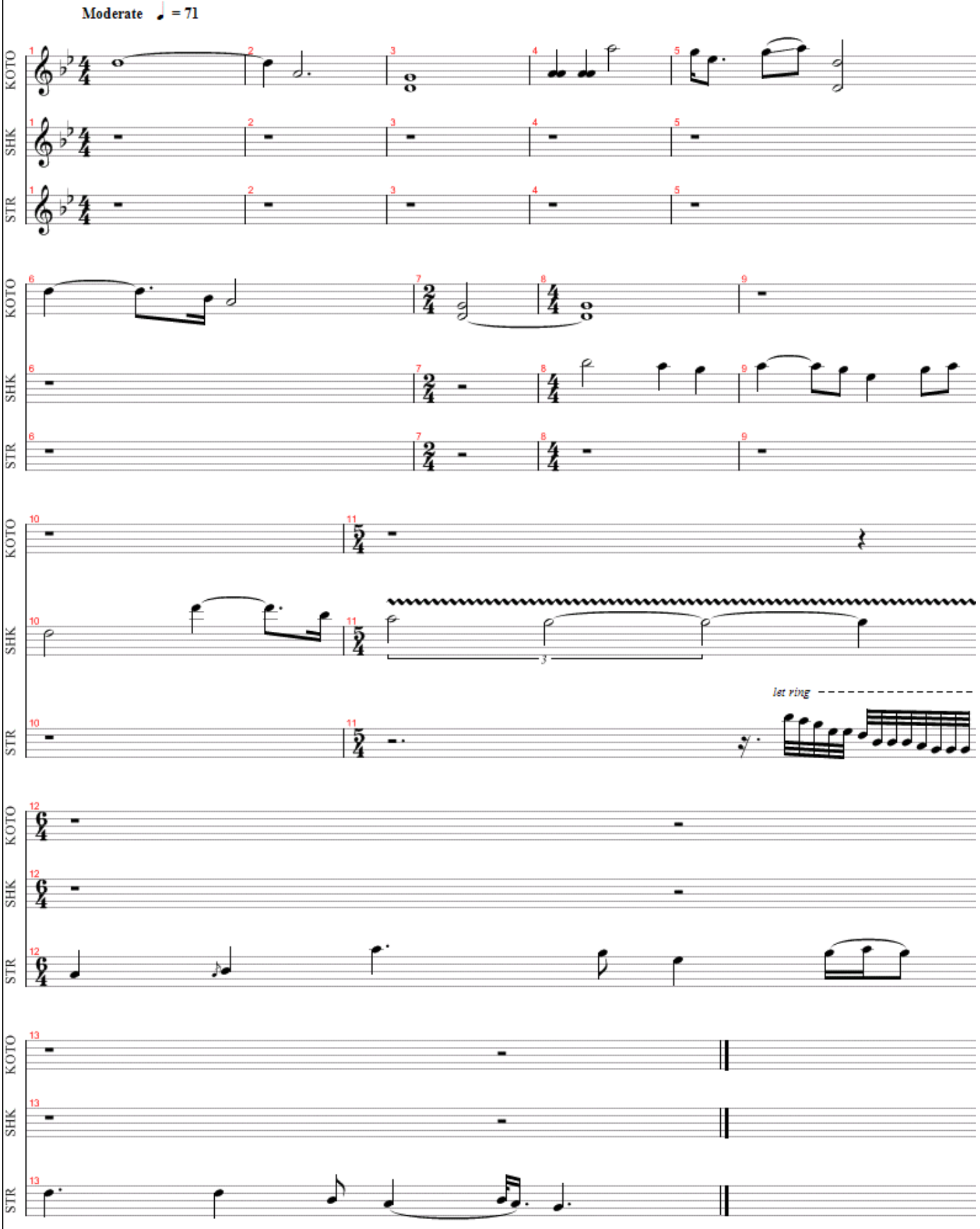
HIRAJOSHI



Beyond the use of this scales, to give an oriental taste to our melodies we should avoid excessive use of trills, or playing too many notes or too fast. Bends and vibrato should be played slowly and irregularly, because they consider that tension generated in this ways is bigger, as it's not resolved in an immediate and predictable way.

This is a transcription I made of the theme "*Rokudan*", played by Japanese and Indian musicians (including **Hozan Yamamoto**, **Susumu Miyashita**, **Ravi Shankar** and **Alla Rakha**).

[3] Japanese emperors even sent "cultural ambassadors" to educate themselves in China and "import" knowledge to Japan.
[4] Paradoxically, Chinese and Japanese people can understood each other by writing in their own languages, even when they don't belong to the same linguistic family.


Moderate ♩ = 71
KOTO
SHK
STR
let ring
3

SOME TYPICAL INSTRUMENTS

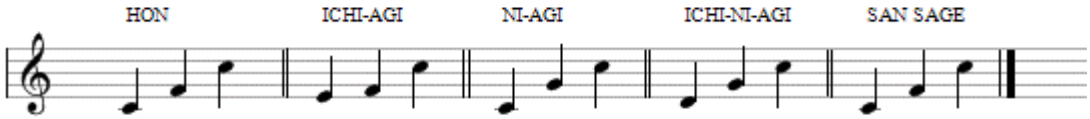
SHAKUHACHI FLUTE

It's a flute with five holes (one on the back), traditionally made of bamboo, but now also exists models of lower quality in PVC or wood. It's played upright, like the recorder, and its mouthpiece is just a slit at the end of the cane. There are various sizes, which vary the tuning, but keeping the relationship between holes, which gives pentatonic scales.
By varying the position and the amount of air blown it's possible to reach all intermediate notes, and even microtones, enabling to play portamentos and bendings, which are an important part of its technique. This flute is of Japanese origin, but descend from a variety of six holes from China.
Originally it was used, as well as musical instrument, as defense weapon by Buddhist monks of Fuke sect in their travels.

SANSHIN

It's a three-stringed instrument with a bamboo or lacquered ebonite neck, without frets, and a soundboard covered in snakeskin. Formerly the strings were made of silk, but today a synthetic material is used (after 2nd world war has been even sanshins made with cans and parachute's cloth for strings, called kankara-sanshin). It's played with a triangular plectrum made of buffalo's horn, but also with the nail of the index finger. From this descends the shamisen, known to be related to the geishas and court music.

Most common tunings are:



SHÔ

It's a small mouth organ made of bamboo, descendant of shen, a similar instrument originating from China. It has a nozzle for blowing and sucking, and 17 bamboo pipes with reds similar to the harmonica ones (not to forget that the harmonica is also of Chinese origin). Before playing, this instrument should be slightly warmed to the right temperature and humidity to be tuned; because of that, the players usually take with them a small electric heater in replacement of traditional cups with ember.
Its main function is to harmonize, being rarely used as a solo instrument. Chords from 5 to 7 notes are played in this for Gagaku court music. A peculiarity of this harmonization is that every note has "its" corresponding chord that is played every time the melody plays the note.

SOME MUSICIANS I RECOMEND:
Gorô Shamaguchi, Hozan Yamamoto, Aoki Reibo, Susumu Miyashita.

AFRICA

About diversity we can found in Africa, we have to think that this continent is the cradle of humanity, and which has more years of cultural development. Not only have many styles of music originated from there... music itself was invented in Africa[5].

When we talk about African culture it's common to think of "Black Africa", considering the north of the continent as Arabic or Mediterranean cultures. Personally, my favourite music is the current of central-west countries that combines features of typical rhythm intensity from south and of melodies from north[6]. The harmony is not too developed in comparison with western cultures, using mostly triadic chords and ostinatos in bass line.

It's often heard that the principal feature of African music are drums, but there is much music that lacks them. Although the most prestigious ones among the musicians are the percussionists (singer usually is the worst considered), there are many styles that enhance more guitar or kora, among other stringed instruments.
An important feature is polyrhythm. Somewhat difficult to determine is whether for someone who grew up with this music it is "polyrhythm" as we understand it (overlapping rhythms) or they perceive this as a unit, in the same way we perceive harmony as a whole and not as overlapping melodies. Something that can be "heard" with time and practice is a kind of "hidden rhythm" when musicians improvise in styles such as Mbalax from Senegal, for example. Imagine it this way... drummer marks the hi-hat with the basic pulse while playing arrangements with the rest the of drums; bass plays quavers, but not all of them; guitar plays triplets, linking some notes and subdividing others… the hi-hat gives a reference to each one, and you can see everything is in its place… but now we take away the hi-hat and keep on playing… is it a really obvious relationship in the rhythm or we understand this as a polyrhythm? Practice makes us listen to a metric that no one is playing directly but is implicit in the entire set.

BLUES:

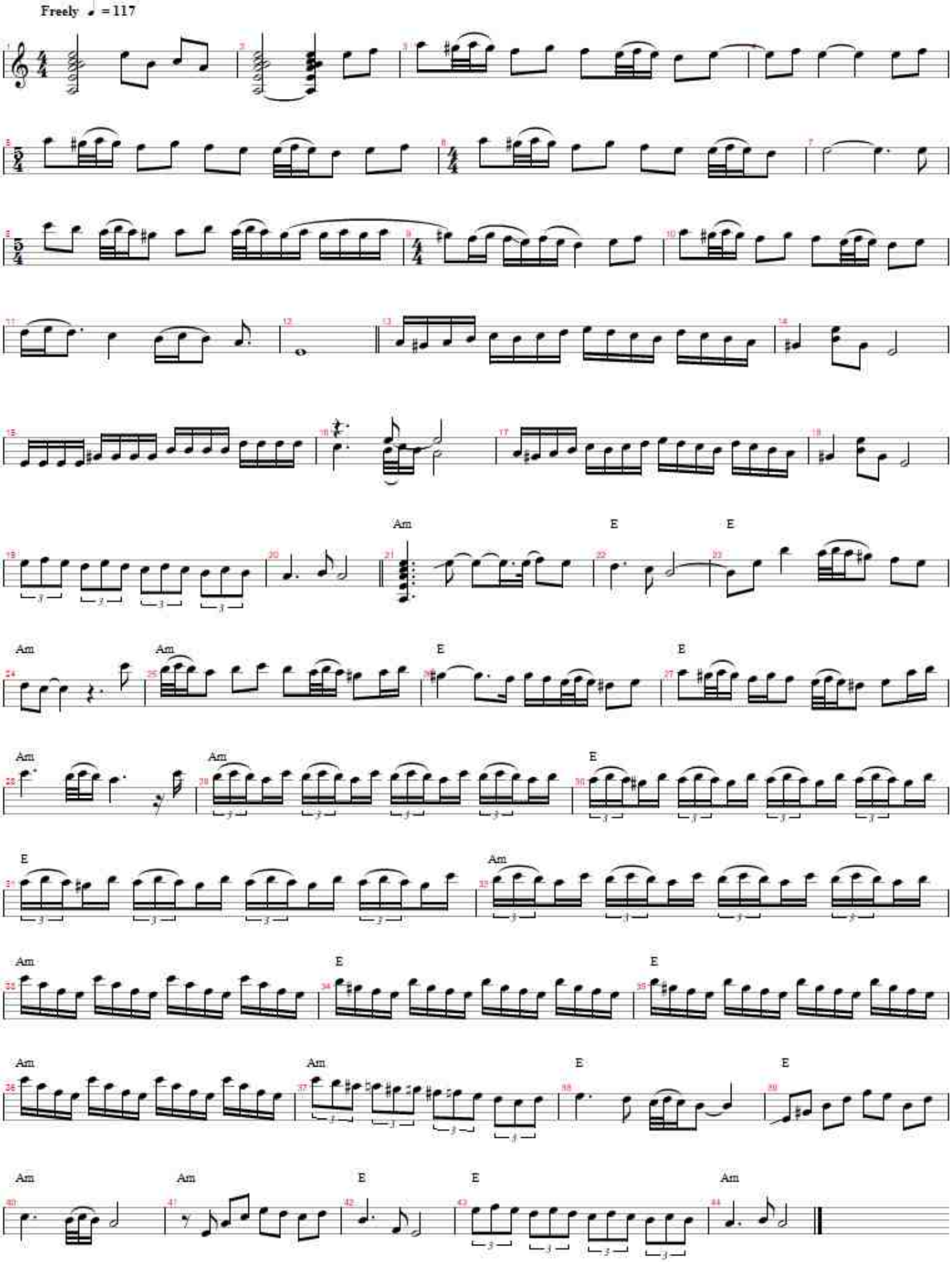
According to what **Ali Farka Touré** said after recording with **Ry Cooder**, what we call blues is nothing but African music, but with another name (they call it **Bautu**, **Tangani**, **Jabá**, **Jalli**, **Gerú**, **Dondó**...). He told it's the same tree, only that in Africa they have the roots and trunk, and the west have the branches and leaves...

RESPONSORIAL SINGING:

A typical form in black music is "responsorial singing", some kind of calling and answer melodies in which a soloist sings a phrase and the choir or other singer answers him. In western blues that's been adapted to singer-instrument call and answer, like typical guitar or piano licks between verses.

As an example of African music without percussion, but with "hot" rhythm and interesting melodies, I transcribed the introduction of **Djelimady Tounkara's** song "*Fanta Bourama"*. Like the vast majority of African music, it does not present relatively complex harmony (as compared to western).

[5] The same as philosophy, art, abstract thinking, technology… everything that makes us humans...
[6] Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Cape Verde... they don't use Arabic scales, but give great importance to the melody in addition to rhythm.


Freely ♩ = 117
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SOME TYPICAL INSTRUMENTS

KORA

It's a string instrument, similar to a harp in some ways. Usually has 21 strings, 11 to play with the left hand, and 10 for the right. Sometimes it has more strings. It's normally tuned to the key of the theme that will be played, using for that leather rings that move on the neck. Currently guitar type machine heads are used also (as in photo). The soundboard is made up of half a hollowed gourd covered with cowhide, which gives a deep sound. Strings were traditionally made of antelope leather, although today it would normally be of nylon (from fishing lines) or directly harp strings. Occasionally they are braided to make them thick for lower notes.
The melody is played with index or index and middle fingers, making an ostinato bass line with thumbs, and holding the instrument with remaining fingers caught by two short sticks protruding from soundboard on both sides of the neck.
This is the traditional instrument of gryots, troubadours of Mandingo ethnic group who are responsible for maintaining the traditions and history singing it and teaching father to son.

The kora player currently recognized as the biggest master is *Toumany Diabaté*. An example that shows the influence of Arab and Mediterranean cultures in this music is that having recorded two albums in collaboration with flamenco group Ketama, Ketama's fans says that it's flamenco with kora, and Diabate's fans say it's Mandingo music with guitars...

TAMA

It's a little percussion instrument, hourglass shaped, with leatherheads in both ends, connected by leather straps which are pressed between the left arm and armpit varying the tension of heads, and making possible to play portamentos and glissandos. It's also called "the talking drum", because most virtuoso players can imitate human voice whit this instrument. It's played with the fingers of the left hand and a drumstick in the right hand.

SOME MUSICIANS I RECOMEND:
Alí Farka Touré, Toumani Diabaté, Cesaria Evora, Tinariwen, Rokia Traoré, Kasumay, Toumany Diabaté, Djelimady Tounkara...

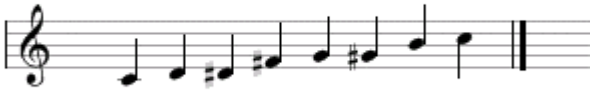
MEDITERRANEAN

FEATURES:

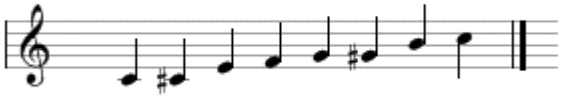
Around the Mediterranean, musical characteristics are similar regardless of the country concerned. North Africa, southern Europe, and the small part of Asia that borders this, present compound rhythms, scales with minor thirds jumps followed by chromaticism, melismatic singing (more than one note per syllable of lyric), trills as ornament, among other common features.
An important difference between south and north of Mediterranean is the presence of harmony in last one, probably under the influence of Europe music in general. In the countries of north Africa, as well as some others in Asia that have a strong Arab influence, the music is usually monophonic, playing in unison or in octaves the instruments with the vocal melody.

SCALES:

A scale that is very common in these different cultures is known as "**Minor Hungarian**", "**Hungarian Gypsy**" (curiously it's called "**Hungarian Gypsy**" both "**Minor Hungarian**" and "**Gypsy**" scales, though differing on the 7th), "**Double Harmonic**", "**Macam Macri**"[7]...



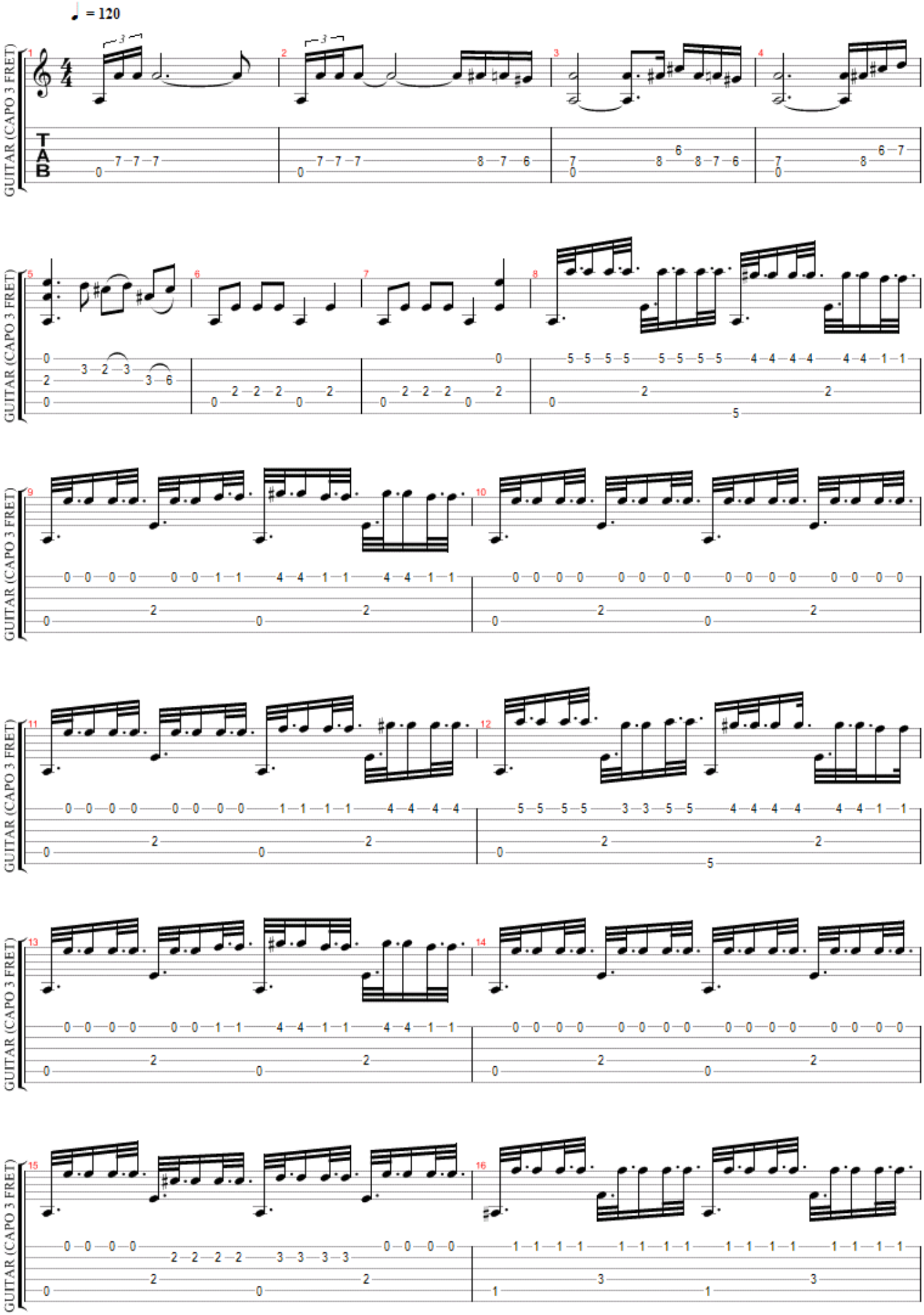
5th degree of this corresponds to the "**Neapolitan scale**", also known as "**Major Hungarian**", or "**Byzantine**".



In flamenco we can find the **Phrygian Mode,** but with both 3rd, major and minor, alternating according to harmonic progression. The difference with the 5th degree of harmonic minor scale is that it has 8 notes (as if it's the 5th degree of a minor scale with both 7th), but usually it's associate with **Phrygian Major 3rd**. One of the possibilities of this scale is the creation of diminished chords.

The theme "*Fantasía Árabe*" of great flamenco guitarist **Sabicas** is a good example of the link between different Mediterranean styles (don't forget the capo in 3rd fret):

[7] Actually "Macam" from North African music are not just scales, but it works in similar way than Hindu ragas.


♩ = 120
GUITAR (CAPO 3 FRET)
T
A
B

SOME TYPICAL INSTRUMENTS

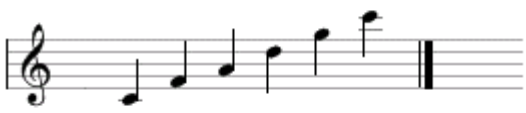
GUITAR

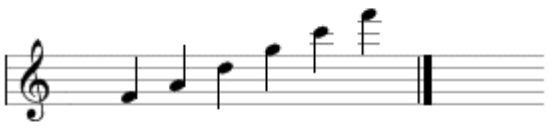
Used specially in southern Europe (talking about these styles), the guitar is an instrument from Spain. It's probably the most popular of all instruments in the world after the human voice (which is why I consider it unnecessary to make a description of it). In southern Spain, for flamenco it's used a variant of the classical guitar, called "flamenco guitar", although the differences are so small that many specialist consider it the same instrument (it's a little smaller, with the strings closer to neck, and a protection to strike the soundboard). Technique for playing flamenco is completely different from other styles, using either the thumb or the index and middle fingers of right hand for melodies, and adding the ring or ring and little fingers to strum and arpeggios. It's also part of the technique to strike on the soundboard with middle and ring fingers of right hand.

OUD

It's an instrument of Arabic origin used mostly in northern Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia). It has 5 double stringcourses (in some countries it has just 11 strings). It's a fretless instrument, which permits the use of slides and allows to play microtones required in the styles of this area. The strings are made with nylon, but formerly were of gut. It has been introduced into Europe through Spain, but has no direct relationship with the **Spanish Lute**, which is more related to the **Bandurria** (in Spanish both have the same name: **Laúd**).

There are several ways to tune the oud; the following are two of the most common:





GOBLET DRUM

It's a percussion instrument also called **darbuka**, **doumbek**, **derbake**, **toballe**, **tablah...** (not to be confused whit tablas from India), depending on the region. It's cup-shaped with single head. Formerly with clay manufactured body, and head made of fish-skin, now the most common materials are fibreglass, aluminium or wood for the body, and plastic for the head, which gives greater stability to the pitch in temperature or humidity changes. It's played with different parts of hand, fingers, fingertips, palms or hand's edges, which combined with striking in different parts of the head gives versatility and variety of sound that are exploited by virtuoso players. A special effect can be done by introducing a fist by rear aperture and move it while striking with the other hand. It's traditionally from north of Africa and Asia Minor, but is now is commonly seen in various European countries.

FLAMENCO CAJON

It's in fact an instrument from Peru (**Peruvian Cajon**) that due to intensive use in modern flamenco is usually associated with it. As happens with the guitar, the "**Flamenco Cajon**" presents a little deviation from the original: 3 or 4 metal strands similar to the snare drum's ones, for giving more resonance. Paco de Lucia, who was on a trip in Peru saw this instrument and deemed it appropriate for flamenco, which incorporated it in the late 70's. It's a wooden box in which the interpreter sits up and plays with her palms on its front. Some people say that the wide acceptance of this was because it's halfway between palms and heels stamp, both important in flamenco tradition.

SOME MUSICIANS I RECOMEND:
Sabicas, Paco de Lucía, Said Chraïbi, Hamza El Din.

European Acoustic Strings Workshop Innsbruck, Austria

Sebastián Griz, 20/05/2011

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