

Raga Keeravani

The Harmonic Minor Raga

Raga Keeravani is a seven note, melakarta raga (parent raga), which is equivalent to the western harmonic minor scale. The raga places emphasis on the tonic and fifth. Below are lines sung to me by Sreyas Narayanun that outline raga keeravani. Notice how groupings of four, five and sixth 16th notes appear throughout his melodies and how the development of the raga starts in the lower register, gradually makes it way up to the higher register, before concluding back at starting tonic (middle C).



The image shows four staves of musical notation for Raga Keeravani, measures 19 through 28. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together in groups of four or six. Phrasing is indicated by curved lines (arcs) above the notes. Measure 19 starts with a half note G4, followed by eighth notes. Measure 22 has a half note G4. Measure 25 has a half note G4. Measure 28 ends with a double bar line. The overall style is characteristic of Indian classical music transcribed for Western instruments.

Exercises:

1) Outline a scale or mode freely. Start at the tonic. Create melodies that explore the fifth below the tonic then return to the tonic. Gradually move up through the scale, creating melodies that highlight the second, third, fourth, etc until reaching the higher tonic. From there explore melodies that push to the fifth above this higher tonic. Once these notes have been outlined, work back down the scale or mode until reaching the starting tonic and conclude this melodic development. Explore doing this for one minute, two minutes, three minutes, five, 10, 15 and so on.

2) Explore phrases that include groupings of four, five and six notes. Use 16th notes. Create lines that break apart typical phrases structures. For example in 4/4 time, play phrases of 5,5, and 6 16th notes. Some ideas are below.

1 bar phrases in 4/4 time using 16th note groupings:

- 5,5,6
- 6,5,5
- 5,6,5
- 4,6,6
- 6,4,6

2 bar phrases in 4/4 time using 16th note groupings:

- 5,5,5,5,6,6
- 5,6,5,6,5,5
- 5,6,5,5,5,6
- 4,6,6,4,6,6
- 4,6,6,6,4,6
- 6,6,4,6,4,6