

The Little Book about *Ataraxia* 2

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in my music — and especially in *Ataraxia 2*.

Ataraxia 2 is an album of ever-changing sound sculptures. Each piece was created by recording loops of varying lengths and allowing them to unfold over the course of twenty minutes. The result is a series of slow, shifting structures - six sound sculptures, each exploring a distinct theme. In this book, I describe these themes and offer some gentle suggestions for how to listen.

In ancient Greece, *ataraxia* described a state of serene calmness - a soul untroubled by disturbance. Some philosophical schools believed such peace could be reached by suspending judgment altogether. The word beautifully captures what I hope this music might invite you to experience.

I'm not an expert in philosophy or meditation. But in this little book, I wish to share my own experiences with deep listening - receiving sound without expectation, without resistance - and perhaps, in doing so, finding oneself in that quiet state the ancients called *ataraxia*.

Enjoy.

About Focused Listening

I firmly believe that focused listening can do something good for you. Simply sitting or lying down with the sole purpose of listening is, in itself, the first and most important step.

In our time, music is often created with specific functions in mind - dance music, film scores, lounge music, and so on. But beyond these roles, music is also frequently treated as a kind of convenience. Where silence might once have felt natural, music is now inserted as background, just to keep us from feeling uneasy. In a way, this does music a disservice.

I don't mean that all music is suited for focused listening - far from it - but in almost every genre, there are pieces that deserve your full attention. Giving that attention is a deeply rewarding experience. It creates a connection: to the sounds, to yourself, and to the world around you. A sense of heightened presence - openness to sensory perception - is often the lasting gift of immersing yourself in a world of sound.

Ataraxia 2 was created with focused listening in mind. To help you enter this experience - especially if it is new to you - I've included some suggestions below, which you are welcome to follow. Each track comes with specific guidance addressing two approaches to deep listening: an analytical, detailed

approach, and a more holistic, sensory one. These, however, are not the only ways to experience Ataraxia 2 - you are warmly encouraged to listen in whatever way feels right to you, even more relaxed or less focused. How long you wish to spend with each track is, of course, entirely up to you.

Along with the suggestions you'll find a short description of each of the six tracks: their themes, instruments, and more.

It is my sincere hope that engaging with *Ataraxia 2* will open new pathways of listening - not just to this music, but to the countless works created by other composers. Perhaps revisiting a favorite album will feel like hearing it for the very first time. Or perhaps you will find yourself deeply attuned to the rain on the roof, the wind rustling through the trees, or even the hum of city traffic.

General information about the music



The music was recorded using a Boss RC-600 loop station. This device allows you to record and play six different loops simultaneously. By creating loops of varying lengths, the patterns naturally fall out of sync with one another, forming a landscape that is both ever-changing and yet held together in a minimalist sphere by the repeated content.

In the first three tracks, the loops are approximately 19, 23, 29, 31, 37, and 41 seconds long - which means the entire pattern would only fully repeat after roughly 18 years (!). In the last three tracks, the time horizon is even longer: those loops measure around 31, 37, 41, 43, 47, and 53 seconds.

What you hear on the album is roughly the first twenty minutes of each looping process, gently faded out at the end. Some tracks begin with all six loops playing in synchrony, while others are built gradually – starting with just two loops and unfolding from there.

The six different loops are placed in the sound-space,

created by your headphones, using the Neuzeit Quasar. This remarkable Eurorack-module can make the sound appear to come from a corner, from behind you or from varying distances. It can also make the sound spin around your head or move from far to near in different speeds, creating a sense of motion and space that brings the loops to life.

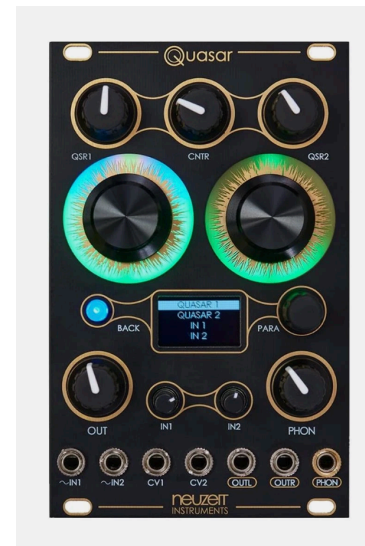




Photo by Breno Machado on Unsplash

Track 1 - “*God of All Nature*”

“*God of All Nature*” is a vocal-only track. It takes the form of an incantation built from homemade syllables. The melodic motifs are inspired by Georgian folk music and rooted in the D Phrygian mode, with occasional detours. All vocal recordings have been modulated to some degree - processed through effects, pitch-shifted, or reversed.

In this track a spoken poem appears: “*god of all nature*” (lowercase!), by Danish poet Gustaf Munch-Petersen (1912–1938).

No instruments were involved in this track, but I worked live with the Roland VT-3 Voice Transformer while recording the six loops.

Suggestions:

- 1) Try to feel the overall mood of this track. Do any images come to you as you listen?
- 2) Listen for the two reversed loops with a radio-like sound quality. Where are they placed in the stereo field - and do they ever appear simultaneously?
- 3) Notice how the overtones shift as the vowels in the bass gradually change.
- 4) I haven’t used auto-tune, but listen for the moments when the vocal harmonies form strikingly clear chords nonetheless.



Photo by Jean Woloszczyk on Unsplash

Track 2 - “Urban Echoes”

“Urban Echoes” is for those who may miss a steady beat in the other five tracks. It’s a somewhat chaotic piece, where sounds from many different sources try to intertwine with the pulsating ground rhythm. Think of it as a city at night - crowded with people pushing their own agendas, weaving through, crossing paths, and avoiding one another in the streets.

The foundation beat was created on the Novation Circuit Rhythm. The other sounds come from the Haken Continuumini, the Soma RoAT, the Yamaha Reface CS, and

the Wing Pinger from Meng Qi. Most prominently: an old Walkman playing a worn-out club music cassette.

Suggestions:

- 1) Start by taking in the frantic energy of this piece. See if you can adopt a meditative mindset in the middle of the commotion.
- 2) Listen for the reversed sounds. Some of them are quite distinct, while others are more hidden in the texture.
- 3) What images or feelings does the old cassette sample evoke?
- 4) See if you can ignore the ground beat and listen only to the other sounds. Is it even possible?



Photo by Zac Durant on Unsplash

Track 3 - “Breathing”

“Breathing” is, I guess, the closest I get to making New Age music. It unfolds a vast landscape of slow-moving sounds, inviting deep breathing and relaxation. The sonic elements shift like enormous tectonic plates drifting through a spacious, shimmering atmosphere - evoking the wonder of a starry night. From a technical standpoint, the music is based in the F Mixolydian mode.

All sounds come from a single instrument: the Korg Wavestate, which is very well-crafted for evolving structures - sounds that seem alive!

Suggestions:

- 1) Imagine the sound gently entering through your skin, not your ears - as though your whole body were listening.
- 2) Notice how the sounds breathe in space - some feel near, others distant, some are moving slowly around, overlapping each other from their corners of the stereo and spatial field.
- 3) Listen to the surroundings from one occurrence to the next of the soft Asian-sounding five-note motif that appears different places in the sound-space.
- 4) Try to breathe with the music’s density - superficially when the music is airy and sparse, and deeply when it is broad and complex.



Photo by Matt Seymour on Unsplash

Track 4 - “Dots in Motion”

“Dots in Motion” is a very pointillistic track. Think of a painting by Seurat or van Gogh, where countless dots work together to create a unified whole. The dots in their paintings vary in color, density, and texture, yet they come together in a shared flow. That’s a bit like this musical piece, only here, the dots are somewhat larger and more spaced apart. In this way, the dots rarely form “pictures” - but occasionally, they gather into clusters coming from different places in the sound-space.

The instruments you hear are the Yamaha Reface CS and the Suzuki Waraku.

Suggestions:

- 1) Listen intensely and try to fall in love with one of the dots. Notice its reappearances - does it always come from the same direction?
- 2) While still keeping an ear on your favorite dot, find another distinctive one and follow how the two dots may come closer together as time passes. (If they don’t, it’s because they belong to the same loop.)
- 3) Listen specifically for clusters of dots and notice how different clusters appear throughout the piece.
- 4) Do you have a synaesthetic mind? Then just go with the flow of the music and try to assign colors to all the dots and clusters as they appear.



Photo by ASBA Drums on Unsplash

Track 5 - “Crossings”

“Crossings” is a nightmare - at least if you’re used to mainstream music! Of the six loops, only two are in sync, so what you hear is a fairly chaotic layering of rhythms and pulses played on different instruments. It’s a bit like listening to six musicians performing simultaneously, each at their own pace. In musical terms, this kind of overlapping rhythm is called a polyrhythmic texture.

Each loop features a different instrument: the Soma Lyra, the Soma Enner, the Soma RoAT (Rumble of Ancient Times), the DrumKid from Matt Bradshaw, the Novation

Circuit Rhythm, and the Moog DFAM (Drummer From Another Mother).

Suggestions:

- 1) Try to keep track of the beat of one of the loops, including when it isn’t playing. This can be quite difficult!
- 2) Listen carefully to discover where each instrument appears in the spatial field. Which ones are precisely placed and which ones move around?
- 3) Notice the distances in this track and the size of the spatial field. Some sounds are close, some far away, and one is moving towards and away from you.
- 4) How do the pauses influence your emotions? Do they create tension, relief, anticipation, or something else?



Photo by Stephan Widua on Unsplash

Track 6 - “Mysteries”

“Mysteries” consists of chords and small melodic motifs that all share the same scale: E Lydian b7, with a single occurrence of a high G emerging as an overtone within another sound. Lydian b7, also known as the Indian Vashaspati scale, is one of my favorite scales. It evokes a mood of transcendence, a sense of openness between worlds, and a profound shift in states of being.

Many instruments contributed to this track: the Haken Continuumini, the Sequential Prophet X, the Yamaha Reface CP, the Suzuki Waraku, and the Yamaha Reface YC.

Suggestions:

- 1) Close your eyes and follow the flow of the music. What images present themselves to you?
- 2) Follow the sound of the plucked strings playing a short five-tone motif. Notice what comes immediately after each occurrence.
- 3) Try to focus only on the drum sounds - how many different sounds can you identify?
- 4) Listen for the one high note that falls outside the basic scale. Can you find it?

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