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Thai Music Composition: Rongngeng Andaman

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Abstract

The research on The Creation of Thai Music: The Rong Ngeng Andaman Song has the following objectives: 1) to study the principles of composition for the new piece of music, and 2) to the piece a Rong Ngeng Andaman. This research project using Thai musical arrangement principles. The research methodology conducting by interviews and surveys with the experts person that will inform the creation of the Rong Ngeng Andaman. The creation of the Rong Ngeng song is a fusion of Thai and Chinese musical instruments. The composer applies Thai music composition principles, focusing on structure, rhythm, and folk style. The composition primarily uses the rhythms of Joget and Inang. The Saw Duang (Thai fiddle) plays the main melody in five introductory sections (Intro 1 to Intro 5) using a special Western technique known as vibrato. The Guzheng plays the main melody in the Hokkien Chinese section, while the Erhu performs the main melody in the Peranakan section, each instrument playing style.

Keyword: Rong Ngeng, Andaman, Thai Music Composition

1. Introduction

Southern Thailand is an ancient settlement area that has been passed down through many generations, bordered by the Andaman Sea on one side and the Gulf of Thailand on the other. This unique geography has given rise to the distinctive way of life and cultural diversity of the region. Southern Thailand is also home to World Heritage sites that reflect religious beliefs, including Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, resulting in a blend of cultures that endures to this day. The population of southern Thailand includes Thai Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Thai-Chinese, as well as groups living along the coastlines of the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, known as the Chao Lay or sea people. (Wangcharoen, Yukolthornwong, 2017: p. 34)

In Thailand, the *Chao Lay* (sea people) consist of three main ethnic groups: the Moken, Moklen, and Urak Lawoi. In addition to Thailand, Chao Lay communities can also be found in other countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Foreign scholars conducting fieldwork in colonial regions have found that the Chao Lay have lived from the Mergui Archipelago in Myanmar down to southern Thailand for over 200 years. However, due to their nomadic lifestyle and lack of permanent settlements, they have led a free and mobile existence,

moving across various islands. (Narumol Arunoatai,Nucharee Wongsamut,Pladej Na Pombejra,Kingkaew Buapetch,Usa Kotrasripetch, 2015: p. 2)

Southern Thailand's folk music reflects the region's ethnic diversity and cultural connections. In the past, southern Thai communities traded and established relationships with India, China, Java-Malay regions, and central Thailand, exchanging goods and cultures. In rural areas where development has been minimal, folk music retains its simplicity, made from locally sourced materials and preserving its original character with very little change. Traditional folk music may have originated from the Mani (Sakai) people, who used percussion instruments made from bamboo of various lengths. Some bamboo pieces were cut short, others long, with either straight or angled openings, and occasionally wrapped in leaves or plant sheaths, serving as accompaniment for singing and dancing. Over time, these instruments gradually evolved into forms of horns and clappers, which have been passed down through generations. (Pornpawee Yenlamom, 2020: p. 17)

Rong Ngeng is a traditional dance of the Malay ethnic group, characterized by the graceful movements of the hands, feet, body, and attire of the performers, all harmoniously blended with melodious music. This performance reflects a fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, influenced by the Portuguese who once came to the Malacca region. The paired dance style, in which men and women hold arms and spin together to the rhythm of the music, became a model that spread to Malay and surrounding communities, evolving into the unique Rong Ngeng dance. In southern Thailand, there are three main styles of Rong Ngeng: Rong Ngeng Ratchasamut, popular in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat; Rong Ngeng Chao Lay, performed by the Urak Lawoi sea people and on islands along the Andaman coast; and Rong Ngeng Tanyong, found in Phuket, Satun, Trang, Phang Nga, Krabi, and Ranong. Each style has unique characteristics shaped by the context and culture of its area and has been passed down from generation to generation to the present day. (Sukanya Piukham,Year of Publication Not Specified: p. 4)

Composing a song is the process of arranging a melody in a new way by stretching or shortening the existing melody, while preserving the original musical phrase and style. Alternatively, a song can be composed from inspiration, imagination, or the composer's objectives, in accordance with the genre of the song. Furthermore, a composer can create a song that is innovative and unique according to their intentions. (Pramot Teangtrong : 2024 p.93)

The researcher is interested in creating Rong Ngeng Andaman music inspired by the concept of cultural tourism, incorporating the lifestyle of the Chao Lay and the essence of Rong Ngeng Chao Lay music. This creative process utilizes Joget and Inang rhythms and applies Thai music theory structures to compose this piece.

Research Objective

1. To study the forms of southern folk performances in Phuket
2. To present a creative work in Rong Ngeng Andaman music
3. To conserve and promote the Rong Ngeng folk culture of southern Phuket

Acknowledge

1. One Thai Rong Ngeng Andaman song
2. Contribution to the conservation and promotion of southern Phuket's Rong Ngeng folk culture

Data Place

1. Phuket Municipality Kindergarten 454/2 Phuket Road, Talad Yai Subdistrict, Muang District, Phuket Province 83000
2. Srinakharinwirot University Demonstration School (Primary Section) 174 Sukhumvit Road 23, Khlong Toei Nuea Subdistrict, Watthana District, Bangkok 10110
3. Suansunandha Rajabhat University 1 Uthong Road, Dusit Subdistrict, Dusit District, Bangkok 10300

Research tools

Interviews are a method of field data collection, using the following two techniques

1. Formal interviews
2. Informal interviews

2. Research Methods

In the research study on the creation of Thai music: The song Rong Ngeang Andaman, the data collection process is divided as follows

1. The researcher studies literature and related research on the composition of Thai music
2. The researcher organizes the information obtained from the literature and research related to Rong Ngeang music to create a Thai song
3. The researcher uses the information to create the Thai song: Rong Ngeang Andaman
4. The song Rong Ngeang Andaman is presented in a contemporary format

3. Result

Through the study of music composition styles and Thai music theory, the researcher was inspired to create a song to promote tourism and adapted this concept to compose the song Rong Ngeang Andaman. From the research on the creation of Thai music: Rong Ngeang Andaman, the researcher analyzed and summarized the theory and guidelines for composition according to Thai music as follows Theory of Thai Music Composition

Melody and Rhythm of Na Thap Boontham Tramote (1997: 1) mentioned in his book Thai Music Theory that studying Thai music in an academic context (music theory) is an essential part of music education that cannot be overlooked. However, at the same time, learning Thai music in practice, where students are able to perform music, does not necessarily

mean that they truly understand music. Therefore, students of music must study both the practical and theoretical aspects simultaneously to achieve a true understanding.

Principles and Methods of Thai Music Composition by Professor Phichit Chaiseree

The tools for composing Thai music can be divided into four types

1. Kro (a type of rhythmic pattern or technique)
2. Krasuan Chaiwa (rhythmic instruments or tools)
3. Tone/Intonation
4. The Charm of Sound

Based on the details of the composition style of the song Rong Ngeang, the researcher analyzed and synthesized the structure of the piece as follows: It is in the key of C Major, with a time signature of 4/4 (Common Time). The composition consists of a total of 376 bars, with an approximate length of 12.46 minutes.

The research study on The Creation of Thai Music: Rong Ngeang Andaman is a creative research study that follows a systematic process consisting of 3 main steps 1) Study information related to Thai music theory and composition techniques. 2) Collect data on the creative process and dissemination methods. 3) Create the song using both Thai and Chinese musical instruments. 4) Arrange the music notation based on Thai music composition styles. 5) Record the music notation. 6) Record the sound of the instruments. 7) Publish the work on online platforms, such as YouTube.

The composition "Rong Ngeng Andaman" is a type of Kred music, divided into three main sections. It includes a section called "Chao Le" (Sea Gypsies), which is further subdivided into five melodies. Each melody conveys the cultural essence of the Rong Ngeng folk tradition from Phuket, while describing the atmosphere and lifestyle of the Chao Ley community, who primarily engage in fishing. This section is the core of the song and is longer than the other sections.

Example Main Theme “Rong Ngeang Andaman”

Movement Chao Lay

----	ร ร - ช	----	ล ท ค ี ท	ร ี - ร ี ม ี	ร ี ค ี ท ล	-- ช ฟ	ช ม ฟ ร
-- ค ี ท	ช ล ท ค ี	ม ี -- ร ี	ม ี ค ี ร ี ท	-- ล ช	ร ฟ ช ล	-- ค ี ท	ค ี ล ท ช
----	ร ม ฟ ช	----	ล ฟ ม ร	-- ค ท	ล ท ค ร	- ท ี ช ท	ค ร ท ค
----	ช ล ท ค ี	----	ร ี ม ี ฟ ี ม ี	ช ี - ฟ ล ี	ช ี ฟ ี ม ี ร ี	-- ค ี ท	ฟ ี ม ี ร ี ค ี
----	ช ล ท ค ี	----	ร ี ม ี ฟ ี ม ี	----	ช ี ฟ ี ม ี ร ี	----	ช ล ท ค ี

Movement Hokkien Chinese

--- ค	-- ร ค	- ล ช ค	ร ค ล ช	--- ช	ล ช ม ร	- ม ร ค	ร ค ล ค
--- ช	-- ล ค	- ร ค ล	ค ช ฟ ม	--- ร	ม ช ล ช	- ล ช ค	ร ค ล ค
--- ม	-- ช ม	ร ค - ค	-- ร ล	ค ช - ช	-- ค ล	ช ม ช ร	---
--- ร	-- ม ช	-- ล ช	ล ฟ ช ม	-- ร ม	ช ล ค ช	- ล ช ค	ร ค ล ค

Return

The "Hokkien Chinese Section" is a melody created by the researcher to showcase cultural and ethnic diversity. This section blends the local traditions of Phuket with the culture of the Hokkien Chinese people. It incorporates the Chinese instruments Gu Zheng and Erhu, which are played in harmony with Thai music, symbolizing the harmonious relationship between the Chinese community and the local people of Phuket.

Movement Peranakan

----	----	- ช - ล	- ท - ค	- ร ค ท	- ค --	ช ค ร ม	- พ ร ม
----	----	ช - ช ช	- พ ช ล	-- ช พ	ม พ --	ท - ล ท	- ค - ร
----	----	ช - พ ม	- ร ม ค	-- ร ค	ท ล --	ท ล ช ล	ท ค ล ท
----	----	- ล - ท	- ค - ร	-- ม พ	-- ม ร	- ค - ท	- ล ท ช

Return

The "Peranakan Section" consists of five sub-melodies created by the researcher to present melodies that reflect the cultural fusion between the Chinese and Malay ethnicities. In this section, the researcher incorporates the Erhu a string instrument similar to a fiddle to convey the Chinese heritage, while also using the nanthap Inang Joget, a rhythmic pattern from Phuket's Rong Ngeng folk music, to represent the Malay identity. This blend showcases the harmonious fusion of Chinese and Malay cultures.

Conclusion

The study of the Rong Ngeng of the Chao Ley community revealed that it is an oral tradition, passed down verbally without written records. The performance of Phuket's traditional Rong Ngeng inspired the creation of the "Rong Ngeng Andaman" composition, which the researcher composed by blending Thai music with Chinese instruments and incorporating the rhythms or nanthap Joget and Inang to ensure the completeness of the song and convey the cultures of Thai, Chinese, and Peranakan. The composition, titled "Rong Ngeng Andaman," consists of the Chao Ley Section, the first and longest section, with a total of 232 bars, divided into 5 sub-melodies: Sub-melody 1 has 40 bars, Sub-melody 2 has 64 bars, Sub-melody 3 has 32 bars, Sub-melody 4 has 80 bars, and Sub-melody 5 has 16 bars, using the rhythms of nanthap Inang and Joget from Sub-melody 2 to the end of Sub-melody 5.

The Hokkien Chinese section is the shortest, so it is played twice, returning to the beginning after the first round, with a total of 32 bars.

The Peranakan section consists of a total of 112 bars, divided into 5 sub-melodies: Sub-melody 1 is 32 bars long, played in reverse once; Sub-melody 2 is 32 bars long, played in reverse once; Sub-melody 3 is 16 bars long, played in reverse once; Sub-melody 4 is 16 bars long, played in reverse once, with the rhythms of nanthap Inang and Joget used throughout the entire section.

Suggestion

1. Creative compositions of folk music beyond Rong Ngeang have been developed to ensure the continuation of other cultures.
2. Western musical instruments have been adapted and incorporated to suit the modern era of the 21st century.
3. The lyrics and melody of the song have been translated into English to be shared and promoted through various media, allowing international tourists to learn about and access this information more easily.

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