

The Role of Traditional Music in Vietnamese People's Life

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The main function of music is entertainment; however, what Vietnamese traditional music offers is beyond that function. It enters different aspects of Vietnamese people's life and creates a distinctive cultural space.

In Vietnam, there are two types traditional music, including *folk music* and *professional traditional music*. Accordingly, folk tunes can be considered as music of the peasants and everyone can play and sing it. These tunes mainly reflects working life, praises natural beauty, love and even war. Professional traditional music, before early years of the 20th century often attached to the upper class in the society; however, it currently becomes popular and enters lives of all people in the society.

In the life of Vietnamese people, traditional music is affected by and closely related to religion, cultural ideology, folk culture, traditional customs and residential community. The 20th century saw a lot of ups and downs in Vietnamese peoples' life; therefore, there has been a big change in Vietnamese traditional music. And there is a time when it is subjected to a serious threat. As a result, it is imperative that traditional music is conserved, maintained and developed.

“THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN

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VIETNAMESE PEOPLE'S LIFE"

Early years of the 20th century saw the flow of Western music into Vietnam and gave birth to a new genre of music in the name of Vietnamese Modern Music. Last years of the 20th century saw the flow international music into Vietnam as Vietnam became opener to the world. It is a fact that both Vietnamese Modern Music and international music have special attraction. Therefore, only in short period of time, there have been abrupt changes in several stable values on musical appreciation taste of Vietnamese people which were established for thousands of years.

Can Vietnamese modern music and international music threaten and take over the place of traditional music?

The answer is absolutely No. Because if music is considered as a city, modern music and international music is like a new house and traditional music is like old streets in which folk music is like a pagoda. As time goes by, Modern Musical Era and international music can be traditionalized, but the reverse process is impossible.

September 1927 by the French to communicate Western music into Vietnam, musical life began to change, especially in big cities. The youth and intellectuals were among the first people who listened to modern songs and indifferent to traditional music; they even considered traditional music as obsolete.

However, there was a portion of residents continued listening to traditional music and even loyal to this type of music.

There was a certain innovation in traditional music, mainly found in composing lyrics for folk tunes or Western lyric in Vietnamese tune.

Traditional music in Vietnam developed with following genres:

- *Folk music* with folk tunes and folk musicals and vocals.
- *Theater music*: *Tuong, Cheo, Cai luong, Ca Hue, Bai Choi* singing...
- *Classical music* and music of the amateur.
- *Religious music* including melodies used in Church or music of Buddhism.

After 1945, with the demand of innovation for survival and

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development, traditional music has gone beyond the old music thinking and affected by Western music through musical notation system and development of the work structure, improvement of musical instruments and addition of musical instruments in orchestra.

From 1990s, Vietnam has started to integrate into the world, international music has had a chance to be introduced in different ways. This is a very big challenge to the traditional music of Vietnam, since young people are future owners of the country. They tend to turn their back on traditional music.

There is a question: So is traditional music actually lost its position in the heart of young people?

The answer is No! Because, unlike international music that is just entertaining, and may lose the cultural identity at the end of integration, traditional music, passing throughout the history of Vietnam, crystallized from the culture of the nation, showing cultural identity, containing the love and spiritual beliefs of Vietnamese people of many generations. To get a position in the heart of young people, traditional music has changed itself, while forming new creative approaches, like the creative methods of traditional music bands, teams and clubs at present...

With the purpose of passing old versions to move toward orchestral works, or modern music works, while passing the small performance space to move to the professional stage, instruments have been improved in both music instrument structure and performance technique.

THE ROLE OF FOLK MUSIC IN THE LIFE OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

With 54 ethnic groups spread across different regions of Vietnam, from the majority groups living in the lowland areas to the smaller ethnic groups residing in remote mountainous regions, there is a rich musical life. Each group possesses a vast repertoire of songs and folk melodies that accompany their daily activities. Music not only serves as entertainment but also plays a vital role in ceremonies, customs, and cultural traditions, reflecting the spirit and identity of each ethnic community.

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Each folk music genre of Vietnam has hundreds of different tunes, meeting the demand for entertainment of families, villages festivals. Currently, Vietnam has about 8,000 festivals held a year. The performance spaces of festivals include spring festivals, village festivals, performance stages, in tourist activities.

One of the most famous festivals is Lim Festival in Bac Ninh Province, where men and women sing love songs without background music (antiphonal songs) called *Quan ho*, one of the typical folk music genres of the Red River delta region in the North of Vietnam. Traditional *Quan ho* exists in 67 villages in Kinh Bac region, a folk culture activity with strict regulations, requiring *lien anh* (male singer) and *lien chi* (female singer) to understand and follow the rule. The special feature of traditional *Quan ho* is that it has no audience, singers are also audiences.

Folk music, with its function of serving the life of working class, is most clearly shown through hundreds of *Ho*, *Vi* and *Ly* songs. The *Ho*, *Vi* and *Ly* songs mention the daily jobs such as boating, fishing, to farm work such as plowing, planting, harvesting rice, planting trees, raising silk worms, animals and plants, the love to nature, love between men and women, love of couples, reflecting the dream of people, criticizing bad habits...

Folk music also adheres to the religious life. One of the things to be mentioned is the *Hat van*, a form of traditional religion of Vietnam, with sacred music, refined lyrics, and performance space depending on each form.

Northern Mountain Region has hundreds of folk tunes with unique performance spaces such as *cho tinh* (love market), festivals in *Tet Nguyen Dan* (Vietnam new year festival) or spring, in wedding engagement, wedding parties, new house celebration, new Harvest Festival etc.

The form of traditional music stage such as *Cheo*, *Tuong*, *Cai Luong*, *Ca Hue*, *Bai Choi* shared the same special feature: the interaction between audiences and performers. It was as close as if there was no gap between them. That space was closely associated with the life of normal workers. Audiences may clap their hands

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whenever they want to, complimenting the artists on their performance, even they can ask the artists to sing the song they require. In turn, the artists can joke audiences in the stage. It is this feature of traditional music that attract the public to it thanks to its inherent closeness.

Currently, with the strong development of many new entertainment music genres for audiences, especially young audiences, traditional Vietnamese music is gradually losing its stages and performance environments. It faces certain difficulties in preserving, maintaining, and developing core traditional values. In light of this situation, traditional Vietnamese art in general and traditional music in particular are being invested in for preservation and development by the Vietnamese government through various means, such as organizing traditional music performance festivals and competitions involving artists and musicians from theaters, dance troupes, and professional music training institutions, awarding valuable prizes to artists who achieve high results; organizing large national artistic programs that widely feature traditional music and art; reducing tuition fees for students pursuing traditional music studies in national music training institutions; maintaining activities with state support for traditional theaters and performing arts troupes; ensuring that traditional music is always a top choice in important artistic programs and international diplomatic events to promote the image of the Vietnamese people, history, and culture...

Traditional music is not only for entertainment but also history, culture, the people and national distinctiveness; therefore, appreciation of traditional music means appreciation of a culture, which is a basis for creating a humane life in the future.

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