

Music Composition: Lagu J-Mahmad Folk Dance for Jazz Ensemble

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Abstract

This article is about a music composition name “Lagu J-Mahmad Folk Dance.” The song composed for Jazz Ensemble. It has 4 musical part that include, part A-B-A-C-A which has been play in 6 minutes long. The composer using the melodic ideas, Motif ideas and rhythmic ideas from the southern of Thailand folk song name “Lagu J-Mahmad” to composed. The Lagu J-hahmad song is kind of the popular Rong-Ngeng Tan Yong folk song which develop from old Rong-Ngeng folk song. It has unique beautiful melodies and native dance rhythmic. The Lagu J-hahmad always play for singing and dancing. The lyric of song used native language that talk about native stories, social stories, epigram, courtship, and some part of native lullaby. This music composition combines jazz ensemble with a solo and rhythmic group of the southern of Thailand musical instruments. intertwining between eastern and western tones. The main idea is 1). Development Lagu J-Mahmad melodies, motifs and rhythmic. 2). Use the stories in Lagu J-Mahmad to compose, such as the introduction of song is like lullaby song but sound so jazzy and making the new sweet melody from Lagu J-Mahmad melodic idea for describe a courtship situation in song. 3). Use modern jazz harmony, quartal harmony and 12 tone. 4). Orchestration song on Duke Ellington style. 5). Use Latin music style make a carnival atmosphere for the song.

Keywords: Rong-Ngeng, J-Mahmad, Composition

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Introduction

In the southern region of Thailand, a diverse array of traditional performances exists, including Nora, Nang Talung, Rong-Ngeng, and Dikhe Hulo. Each of these performances boasts unique characteristics. While one of them has been officially recognized as intangible cultural heritage, another is facing the threat of extinction due to a lack of preservation efforts.

Rong-Ngeng can be considered as a traditional Thai folk performing art that exhibits a synthesis of Western cultural elements and is commonly practiced in the Malay Peninsula region. Rong-Ngeng involves a dance performance characterized by the coordinated movement of male and female dancers, accentuating footwork as a primary element. This style combines Western-like movements with traditional Asian hand gestures, creating a unique blend of choreography. The musical composition draws its origins from a fusion of European folk songs and traditional Malay folk songs.

There are two distinct types of Rong-Ngeng performances. The first type is a region-specific folk performance originating in the bordering provinces of the southern region. It is a performance that originates from within the royal palace. The second type is a traditional wedding ceremony in the western coastal areas of the southern of Thailand region, such as Krabi, Phang Nga, and Phuket. It goes by different names, such as Loh Ngeng, Pleng Tan - Yong, Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong, and Rong-Ngeng Chao Le.

Rong-Ngeng in each locality, despite having varying forms, shares a common foundational performance style influenced by Western cultures. Studying the performance patterns of Rong-Ngeng reveals the societal conditions, values, beliefs, and diverse perspectives of each region. These reflections encapsulate the wisdom inherent in the Southern of Thailand, extending beyond the mere aesthetic beauty of the southern people, fostering a sense of regional pride.

Currently, Rong-Ngeng is not receiving the same level of popularity as in the past. This has led to adaptations in its characteristics and performance framework to align with societal needs, in order to sustain the livelihoods of artists dedicated to preserving traditional folk performances. Additionally, the scarcity of skilled folk artists, often elderly, has resulted in a lack of successful transmission. As a consequence, the traditional art form of Rong-Ngeng may be at risk of fading away. Therefore, there is a possibility that various insights related to the Rong-Ngeng performance style could be lost before the diverse knowledge about this form of expression disappears.

The lyrics and melodies of Rong-Ngeng from the eastern and western coasts originally employed the Malay language. The composition of Rong-Ngeng melodies was influenced by the Malay language, which has been vital for communication, trade, and religious propagation in the Malay Peninsula since ancient times. The poetic form utilized in the lyrics was in the style of Pantun verses. Subsequently, it evolved into applied Rong-Ngeng, locally referred to as Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong. This involved adapting the complex Malay lyrics into the southern dialect to enhance comprehension and enjoyment in dance. However, the content still retained elements of metaphor, allegory, and moral instruction, in the form of comparisons and proverbs, particularly in the context of gender relations within the narrative of the performance.

The music of Rong-Ngeng originates from a region that holds significance in maritime trade, leading to interactions among diverse ethnic groups from different nations such as China, India, Java, Malaya, Arabia, Spain, Portugal, and Holland. As a result, the musical instruments of Rong-Ngeng incorporated Western instruments like the violin, alongside indigenous instruments such as ramanalek, ramana, yai, and khong. This fusion created the musical ensemble of Western-coastal Rong-Ngeng. On the other hand, during the era of Khun Jaruwisadsueksa, the ruler of Pattani, the court revitalized the art and introduced international musical instruments like mandolin, accordion, and malacas. The melodies of Rong-Ngeng are believed to have been influenced by Western countries.

Each Rong-Ngeng troupe consists of 10 to 20 performers. The performers of the Pattani Royal Rong-Ngeng, restored by Khun Jaruwisadsueksa, primarily include civil servants from Pattani Province, especially teachers. Additionally, personnel from government agencies and students from schools in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat also participate. The performers of the Rong-Ngeng Chao Le group are members of the Chao Le ethnic group, engaged in fishing as their livelihood in the Sangka U village, Ko Lanta District. On the other hand, the Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong performers are predominantly local Muslims or people from the region. They are mostly engaged in fishing, farming, and have established communities along the coastal areas of La-ngu District, Satun Province.

The dance postures of Rong-Ngeng are studied by analyzing the following points:

1. Dance postures within the same Rong-Ngeng performance, such as the songs "Lagu Du Wa," "Jintasayang," and traditional songs like "Maow Inang," "Ayam Didi" and "Burong Pute."
2. Primary dance postures in different Rong-Ngeng performances, including:
 - a. Pattani Royal Rong-Ngeng, featuring "La Nang," "Poo Jo Pasang," and "Bu Hnga Ram Pai"
 - b. Chao Le Rong-Ngeng, including "Spa Itu," "Prawu R J," "Ga Yo Sa Pan," and "Ta Be It J"
 - c. Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong, encompassing "La Hupari Haad Yao," "La Husina Dong," "La Hupari J-Mahmad," and "La Hupari Phuket"
3. The main dance postures popularly used in Pattani Royal Rong-Ngeng, emphasizing foot movement more than hand gestures. Chao Le Rong-Ngeng and Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong emphasize similar hand gestures and foot movements, showcasing expressive facial expressions. The essential element common to all three styles is the footwork rhythm used in dancing, which involves alternating foot taps, foot movements, stepping, foot shifting, and kicking.
4. The characteristic movement style of the Pattani Royal Tan-Yong dance involves a partnered male-female dance, featuring alternating and dynamic movements that convey interactions between the genders. The male side showcases the suitor's patterns, while the female side evades the advances. Meanwhile, Chao Le Rong-Ngeng and Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong involve team dances with simple formations and minimal movement, not focusing on synchronized partner movements.

Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong songs have evolved from the practice of singing Rong-Ngeng. The meaning of the majority of these songs focuses on themes of love. The song structure bears resemblance to Rong-Ngeng, yet it differentiates itself through the spontaneous and emotionally driven lyrics of the singer. These songs typically begin with the word "Tan-Yong."

The Tan-Yong group of the Forest Conservation Association originally engaged in playful performances for enjoyment within the local community or festive occasions. It was not initially established as a formal group. Later, Mr. San Chamnina, who had relocated from Ko Yao, initiated the formation and instruction of Rong-Ngeng performances in the Pa Kloak village. The performers' attire typically includes the traditional dress of Thai Muslim women, which consists of a tubular cloth head covering (Pha Pa Te), a long-sleeved blouse (Yaa Yaa), and often a light, transparent, colorful fabric draped over the head. Accessories such as necklaces and earrings are commonly worn, and their hair is gathered and adorned with ornaments. In the past, Tan-Yong songs were performed during various festivals and significant events. Nowadays, they are often performed during joyous occasions or auspicious ceremonies, such as weddings, ordinations, and village festivals.

The performance most susceptible to vanishing is the "Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong." In response, I have taken the distinctive musical elements of the "Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong" and undertaken further development to align with contemporary sensibilities. It is in light of these circumstances that this research endeavor has been initiated.

As previously mentioned, the "Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong" performance is facing the risk of disappearing due to the lack of proper transmission and preservation efforts. This critical concern prompted me to embark on an experimental endeavor aimed at creatively revitalizing the traditional songs of "Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong" while retaining their core essence.

In line with this objective, I undertook the task of reimagining and redeveloping the traditional "Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong" song, known as "J-Mahmad," into a contemporary Jazz ensemble composition. This transformation was carried out with the intent of not only safeguarding the original spirit of the songs but also introducing them to a new audience through the creation of a Jazz ensemble piece titled "Lagu J-Mahmad folk dance."

Objective

1. Create the song for jazz ensemble.

Methodology

1. Data collection: Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong, faith, Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong music, Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong dance, Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong costume, ritual.
2. Analyze Data
3. Construct the total structure and form of all pieces
4. Compose
5. Orchestrate
6. Present the song
7. Publish the music analysis and present it as an academic work

Creative Concept

Based on field data, it was determined that the term "J-Mahmad" lacks a specific meaning and is likely a personal name. Whether it belongs to a female or male individual remains uncertain. This ambiguity served as the catalyst for the innovative concept of composing a courtship song featuring the name J-Mahmad

The first new approach involves crafting a song for a jazz ensemble or big band. The second approach centers around creating an introduction that captures the ambiance of a pub or bar, accentuating the development of a fresh melody inspired by the original song. This will incorporate Duke Ellington's arranging techniques to establish the desired atmosphere. I retain the original melody and song structure due to their captivating attributes. Employ a Latin music style to infuse the song with a lively and enjoyable atmosphere. The song includes vocal elements. The lyrics delve into the courting techniques observed in contemporary society.

The Original J-Mahmad Song

Through the process of collecting field data and conducting song analysis, it has come to light that the original rendition of J-Mahmad encompasses several essential elements. Notably, the original version incorporates vocal singing, with the song's lyrics revolving around the theme of courtship. Additionally, the song features distinct melodies and a unique structural arrangement.

The musical arrangement adopts a simpler approach, placing emphasis on vocal renditions accompanied by uncomplicated musical accompaniment. The vocal delivery combines elements of the Southern Thai dialect with Islamic influences.

The performances predominantly take place during annual community events or celebratory gatherings. Historically, these performances served as a platform for young individuals to convene and partake in dance, thereby fostering social connections. As a result, the songs' themes often centered around lullabies, moral teachings, or courtship ballads from bygone eras.

In contemporary times, observable parallels between Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong performances and traditional dance troupes exist. These involve meticulously choreographed dances performed by elegantly adorned women, often requiring a fee for participation. The dancers don minimalistic attire, enhancing their appearances to captivate the audience.

The original song's melody, J-Mahmad, is divided into three verses. I've arranged the verses as ACB. This is how the J-Mahmad melody. Referring to the notes, in Figure 1, the blue box represents melody A, the orange box represents melody B, and the yellow box represents melody C.

♩ = 100

Melody A

Melody B

7

Melody C

12

Figure 1: The Original J-Mahmad Melodies.

Music Introduction Part

Approach to Creating the Introduction. Drawing upon the findings from the music analysis, it becomes apparent that the primary note within melody A transitions from F to C and eventually resolves at G.

Introduction

F → C → G

♩ = 64 (SWING)

4

8

Figure 2: Music Introduction (1).

Leveraging this concept, I devised an introduction that incorporated elements inspired by the song 'Cherry Pink.' This particular song evokes sensual imagery and effectively conveys the ambiance of a nightclub setting. Importantly, the central note progression still follows the path from F to C and then to G.

Regarding the section derived from melody B, there are three distinct motives present. The first motive is illustrated within a green box and involves a sequence of notes moving from D to E to F. The second motive consists of the notes D, B, and C, while the final motive features the progression B, A, and G.

To infuse a more alluring quality, I opted to modify these motives. In the case of the first motive, I transposed the D note to Dd and subsequently elevated it by a half step to D. For the second motive, I replaced the D note with Ab to introduce a subtle bluesy undertone.

Incorporating these altered motives, I also introduced Db and Ab notes to craft the introduction. This culmination effectively weaves the updated melody, thus transporting the song's essence into the present, enhancing its club-like atmosphere. It's notable that, as exemplified in the provided audio clip, the song gains momentum as it unfolds, amplifying its liveliness, particularly when patrons are engaged.

Melody B

Figure 3: Music Introduction (2).

Lyric Idea

This composition includes a vocal segment. The lyrics of this song comprise three verses, all centered around the theme of courtship. The initial verse of the song delves into the early stages of courtship among Thai young men. This involves leveraging social media platforms, where it's common to inquire about the girl's Instagram username. A commitment is often made to consistently like and heart all of her posts. Moving to the second verse, the focus shifts to inviting the person to watch a movie together and discussing their movie preferences. However, in contemporary society, Thai young men have shifted away from inviting girls to cinemas. Instead, they frequently opt for inviting them to binge-watch TV series at home. Additionally, the use of pet cats as a persuasive tactic to entice girls to their place has become quite prevalent. As the relationship advances, the courtship process evolves to include invitations to dine out and partake in various outings. The third verse delves into the idea of inviting the person to explore different provinces within Thailand as a means of strengthening the relationship.

Conclusion

Due to the precarious situation faced by Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong, which is at risk of fading away due to insufficient transmission, my interest was piqued. With this concern in mind, I embarked on an experimental endeavor aimed at creatively rejuvenating Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong songs. The goal was to present these traditional compositions in a fresh format while upholding their core essence. Specifically, I took on the task of reimagining the Rong-Ngeng Tan-Yong song "J-Mahmad" and transforming it into a jazz ensemble piece titled "Lagu J-Mahmad Folk Dance." This undertaking was driven by the intention to not only revitalize the art form but also honor its cultural heritage.

Based on the conducted audience testing, feedback from the listeners revealed that the song featured a memorable and catchy melody. The lyrical content of the song was noted to be contemporary and aligned with the current era, while still retaining the essence of traditional folk music. This dual essence was well-received, as it allowed the younger generation to witness a successful example of evolving traditional music. Moreover, it served as a means of preserving folk songs by adapting them to be relevant in the modern context. This endeavor not only showcased the development of folk music, but also contributed to the conservation of traditional songs in a manner that is increasingly relevant to the present time.

References

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