

## **HẢI-LINH and his Music**

By Nguyễn, Xuân-Thảo

Hailinhquehuong.net

Francis Hải Linh (1920-1988) was a Vietnamese composer and conductor. He was born in Ninh Binh, a province in the Northern part of Vietnam. He studied music composition in Paris (at the Cesar Franck School of Music and at the Institut Gregorien de Paris <sup>1</sup>) from 1950-1955. After his study, he came back to South Vietnam, which at the time was ruled by the Vietnamese nationalists. North Vietnam, on the other hand, was ruled by the Vietnamese communists according to the Geneva Conference, held in 1954 by the Vietnamese communists and French representatives, after the defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu, “bringing to an end the French rule of Indochina”<sup>2</sup>. He lived most of his life in Saigon (renamed Hochiminh City after the takeover of the South by the Vietnamese communists), except for about 9 years (1961-1970) spent in the USA, during which he made some research on music education at the University of Ohio. He also spent his last years (05-08-1986 to 01-06-1988 in the USA (New Orleans, LA) thanks to the USA ODP (Orderly Departure Program)<sup>3</sup>.

He composed more than 120 works, most of which are vocal. Half of his works are religious. Some of them were composed before his studying in France, and are still frequently sung in Vietnamese Catholic congregations in Vietnam as well as abroad. The most popular of them is

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Van Chi, *Catholic Choral Music in Vietnam 1945-1975* (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2002), 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (California: Thunder Bay Press, 2001), 551.

“*Hang Belem*” [Bethlehem Manger], a Christmas song composed in 1945. Through his musical works from different periods, Hai-Linh appeared as a composer who had a clear idea about what he had to compose. He tried to achieve his goal better and better thanks to his study, research, and experiences. That is what makes his works very welcomed throughout the country, and makes him “a great and famous composer of Catholic and secular choral music in Vietnam.”<sup>4</sup>

As described by Roger Kamien, the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is “an age of musical diversity.” He explains, “the stylistic diversity in the works of Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Weber, Bela Bartok, Charles Ives, George Gershwin, and Aaron Coplan [...] is a continuation and intensification of the diversity we’ve seen in romantic music.”<sup>5</sup> One of the dominant factors that characterizes this period is the great variety of inspirational sources, such as folk and popular music, non-Western music of Asia and Africa, and even European art music from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century, focusing more on tone color, dissonance, new chord structures, scales other than major and minor ones, a new sense of tonality, or even atonality, and new ways of organizing rhythm, ...<sup>6</sup>

The music of Hai-Linh seems to echo the folk-based music of Claude Debussy, Bela Bartok, Igor Stravinsky, or even Charles Ives rather than follow the contemporary tendencies of integral serialism like Messiaen, Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, or Luigi Nono; much less the experimental music which included “chance in composition and choice in performance,”<sup>7</sup> such as the compositional style of John Cage, Dick Higgins, Lejaren Hiller, Stockhausen, or the minimalistic music of Terry Riley, or the concrete music, electronic music with its liberation of sound, rhythm and form, characteristic of other recent composers.<sup>8</sup> Among his contemporary composers, Hai-Linh stands out like a stranger.

Why? Because his concern differs greatly from most of them. Hai-Linh’s greatest concern was to find ways to “polyphonize” (term used by Hai-Linh for ‘da-dieu-hoa’) Vietnamese monophonic vocal music while focusing on folk materials in order to preserve his national musical

---

<sup>3</sup> Hai-Linh, Xuan-Thao, Nam-Hai and Thien-Lan, *Chuong Trinh Huan Luyen Ca Truong II* [Choral Conducting Textbook II] (Texas: Nhom Que Huong [Homeland Group], 2003), ix-xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Van Chi, *Op.cit.* 84

<sup>5</sup> Roger Kamien, *Music: An Appreciation* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1996), 435

<sup>6</sup> Roger Kamien, *Op. Cit.*, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Stephan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999), 281.

characteristics. In fact, until 1945, most Vietnamese music was monophonic or heterophonic. The reason is partly due to the fact that Vietnamese is a tonal language which has six tones with five possible different tone accents or markers on each monosyllabic word whose meaning changes according to the tone. For example,

1. *Dấu ngang*: plain mid/high tone [no marker: *ma* meaning *phantom* ];
2. *Dấu huyền*: plain low tone [ ` : *mà*, meaning *but, and, which...*];
3. *Dấu ngã*: mid-high tone [ ~ : *mã*, meaning *horse, or appearance*];
4. *Dấu hỏi*: low-high tone [ ? : *mả*, meaning *grave, tomb* ];
5. *Dấu sắc*: glottal high tone [ ‘ : *má*, meaning *mother or cheek*];
6. *Dấu nặng*: glottal low tone [ . : *mạ*, meaning *young rice plant, or to plate* ]<sup>9</sup>

Transcript 1

That is why, if they want to preserve the meaning of the lyrics when they sing in many voices, all the voices should always have a similar melodic line, something which is not a common practice in Western classical tonal harmony in which contrary motion is favored or called for.

Furthermore, all Vietnamese folk songs are pentatonic. Hai-Linh completely agreed with Bela Bartok’s belief that folk music provided “the ideal starting point for a musical renaissance.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, although Vietnamese instrumental court music and chamber music may be influenced mostly by the Chinese, the folk songs, based on Vietnamese language, have not been overly affected by cultural exchanges with foreigners. “Thus, folk songs faithfully preserve forms and musical thoughts that are originally Vietnamese.”<sup>11</sup> Another reason for his focusing on pentatonic

<sup>8</sup> Roger Kamien, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Tran Van Khe, *La Musique Vietnamiennne traditionnelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 279-280

<sup>10</sup> Roger Kamien, *op.cit.*,437.

<sup>11</sup> Nguyen, T. Phong. “Vietnam.” In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, ed. Terry E. Miller and Sean Williams, 4: Southeast Asia (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988), 479. See also Nguyen, Xuan-Thao, “Hat Quan Ho: A Vietnamese Folk Tradition.” (Folk Music Tradition Report. RU- MUHL 366 World Music). Chicago, 2002, p.6.

folksongs is that Vietnamese tonal language appears to be best sung in pentatonic scales, as shown in folksongs, due to the larger-than-semitone interval between the different tones.<sup>12</sup> As it may be seen on Transcript 1, the intervallic distance between the the six tones and their inflections, if any, in the Vietnamese language, is from unisson, to major second, minor third, major third, perfect 4<sup>th</sup> ... So, if one aims to saveguard the genius of national language and the folk-based characteristics of traditional music by composing in Vietnamese pentatonic scales, another difficulty is to find a way to be able to harmonize these pentatonic scales. Hai-Linh tried to solve both of these problems simultaneously, namely ‘polyphonizing’ Vietnamese vocal music while preserving the spirit of the language as well as the character of folk songs.

How did he? We will try to discover his ways of resolving these problems by analyzing two of his vocal works: *Nhac Viet* (Music of Vietnam), a secular choral work, and *Truong Ca Ave Maria* (Cantata Ave Maria), a religious choral work.

## **FROM VIETNAMESE FOLK-BASED MATERIALS**

### **Folk pentatonic scales and modes**

The title of the piece *Nhac Viet* (Music of Vietnam) shows his intention to present the folk music of Vietnam. In the vocal introduction (mm.19-48), he states that “Vietnamese music is expressed through a pentatonic scale that is set to the five tone accents of the Vietnamese language.” He adds that “Through its different colors and nuances, it is able to depict the feelings, sentiments and lives of Vietnamese people.” (See the complete translation of *Nhac Viet* lyrics on Appendix I).

In fact, he uses three modes of the regular pentatonic scale to express three main states of human feeling, which are ‘vui’ (joyfulness), ‘buồn’ or ‘thương’ (sadness) and ‘mừng’ (gladness). It is obvious that regular pentatonic scale is based on the cycle of 4 fifths. For instance, from the generating C4, one will have successively G4, D5, A5 and E6. Reduced within an octave, those notes form the regular pentatonic scale in the C key, or position: C-D-E-G-A-(C). In F position, we will have the regular pentatonic scale F-G-A-C-D-(F). The three notes 1-2-3 (for instance, C-D-E),

---

<sup>12</sup> Hai-Linh, Xuan-Thao, Nam-Hai, and Thien Lan, *Chuong Trinh Huan Luyen Ca Truong II* [Choral Congducting Textbook II] (Texas: Nhom Que Huong, 2003), 21-27.

with the smallest intervallic distance between them (a major third), are called ‘pycnon’ after Riemann.<sup>13</sup> The first note of the pycnon, being the generating note of the scale, is the key note or position-note of the scale. It is important to find out the pycnon in order to know the key-position of the scale, and so to recognize different modes used in a piece, the modal mixture as well as the metabole [change of position] from the initial position to at least four other different positions.

Transcript 2.

**Regular Pentatonic Scales**

2a. cycle of the fifths

2b. Regular pentatonic scale in C position (key)

2c. Regular pentatonic scale in F position (key)

Pycnon

Pycnon

Other Vietnamese pentatonic scales not based on the cycle of the fifths are called irregular scales, such as Oán pentatonic scales, the Tây Nguyên scale<sup>14</sup> (Nguyen, 2002) and so on. The regular scale is used by people of all the continents.<sup>15</sup> But what makes the difference is the manner in which people organize and embellish these five tones.. With five notes, we can have five different aspects (e.g. 1.c-d-e-g-a; 2.g-a-c-d-e; 3.d-e-g-a-c; 4.a-c-d-e-g; 4.e-g-a-c-d). The Chinese use these five aspects as five different modes. The Vietnamese organize these aspects in only three điệu (modes)

- 1) Điệu Bắc or Xang (modal system Bac or Xang, similar<sup>16</sup> to the major mode in “septatonic” scale, expressing joyfulness);
- 2) Điệu Ai or Xự (modal system Ai or Xu, similar to the minor mode in “septatonic” scale, expressing sadness);
- 3) Điệu Xuân or Xê (modal system Xuan or Xe, no corresponding mode in Western music, expressing gladness, triumphal victory)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Tran Van Khe, *op.cit.* 1986, 9

<sup>14</sup> Nguyen Xuan-Thao, *op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Tran Van Khe, *Problemes de Pentatonisme en Extreme-Orient* (Paris, 1986), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Similar, but not identical to major mode in Western seven-note scale: pentatonic scale does not have the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> degree, so it sounds differently in respect to melodic lines as well as harmonic structures.

<sup>17</sup> Nguyen, Xuan-Thao, *Nhac Ly Can Ban* (HCM City: Nhom Que Huong, 1980),

Transcript 3:

**Three Modes used in VN Folk songs**  
(In F position/key)

Some possible chords

1. *Điệu Bắc/Xang* (VUI - Major, joyful) (Mode Bac/Xang)

2. *Điệu Ai/Xu* (Thương - minor, sad) (Mode Ai/Xu)

3. *Điệu Xuân/Xê* (Mừng - Rejoiceful, glad) (Mode Xuân/Xê)

Hai-Linh uses **mode mixture** in the instrumental introduction (mm. 1-18), beginning with mode Xang (F-g-A C-d-F, with F, A, and C as pivotal notes), followed by mode Xu (D-F-g-A-c-D, with D, F, and A as pivotal notes), and continued mostly by mode Xe (G-a-C-D-a-G, with G, C, and D as pivotal notes).

In the vocal introduction (mm.19-48), the composer begins mostly with mode Xe, passing through mode Xu (mm. 39-44) before ending with mode Xang. A **metabole**, - change of position (Chuyển vị, phrase used by Hai-Linh), or transmigration of scale (phrase used by Nguyen T. Phong, 1998)-, from F position to D position in mm.47-48 (D-E-F#--A-B—D; Transcript 4) leads the listeners to the A section in D key, mode Xang.

In the A section, mode Xang can express the joyfulness of itself. But brighter joyfulness are brought about by a large change of position -- up to three ascendant fifths, from F position to D position. Transcript 4:

# Nhạc Việt

Mai Sinh

1

TRANH 1

NHẠC mở đầu

TRANH 2

7

13

19

AI ĐỀ

Nhạc Việt Nhạc Việt hệ thống (tính bằng có) năm a cung năm a

(Phách gõ đầu nhịp)

TRANH MỸ SẠO

26

theo (a ma theo ta) naim dau Chong a chung tieng a chung của giông

Thanh & Sao

32

noi Đi mau (ma tinh lai) đi sắc (chú ma) đi

Thanh & Sao

38

hoi Cá tinh (a ma tinh lai) tá ý (mới) tá a

Thanh & Sao

44

đôi chú đôi tá đôi biết Nam (ORGUE d'ami) O' đó

rall... metabole Ténues

Thanh & Sao

49

ta dô ta ô hô dô ta Dô ta ô dô ta Dô

Dô hô Hô dô ta Dô

cresc.



In the B section, mode Xu in F position, a three-descendant-fifth metabole from D position, is used to express sadness as shown in the lyrics: (Transcript 5)

74

16-string Zither

79

16-string Zither

84

*Sadness abounds from the cruelty of war;  
 from wives weeping for their warriors near and far;  
 from nature's devastations;  
 from hearing the sobbing of dreamy Autumn rain;  
 Rain falling brings vague and lonely melancholy;  
 Rain falling sounds as human laments.*

In the C section, mode Xe in position F is used to depict gladness in celebrating triumphant victory of heroic warriors:

Congratulations to the many victorious warriors of Vietnam!

On celebrations of the victorious days,

Songs of triumph ring with gongs and drums.

C. MỘT HỒI CHIỀNG TRÔNG  
CHIỀNG RE (D)  
TRÔNG SOL (G)

The musical score is written for Tenors (Ténors và chiềng) and Basses (Basses và Trông). The Tenors part includes the lyrics: "Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng." The Basses part includes the lyrics: "Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng." The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are in Vietnamese and describe the triumph of the Vietnamese people.

Ténors và chiềng  
Basses và Trông

Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng.  
Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng.

Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng.  
Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng.

Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng.  
Chiến công nay lấy lòng. Không khen chiến công nay lấy lòng.

S  
A

Ông chiến mà nay am khúc, khúc khái hoàn khái hoàn mà tàu vang, ngấm

T

Ông chiến mà nay am khúc, khúc khái hoàn khái hoàn mà tàu vang, (a) tàu

(Trùng Chàng đánh theo 3 bè hãm).

Bary Bass

Tùng

vang. Chiến công nay lấy lương mừng khen chiến công nay lấy lương.

vang. Chiến công nay lấy lương mừng khen chiến công nay lấy lương.

Bary Bass

Tùng

Của bao tài bao nhiêu Đảng anh hùng Anh hùng mà nước Nam, nước Việt

Của bao tài bao nhiêu Đảng anh hùng Anh hùng mà nước Nam, (a) nước

Bary Bass

Tùng

In the Cantata *Ave Maria* (1956-1986), the composer uses the same three modes in most of the main themes (melodies) in his eight movements, except in Movement II B (mm.103-142) and C (143-184), and the Finale Movement (mm.343-397) where, even though he adds some “foreign notes” from seven-note scales, he still preserves the folk-like ambiance of the whole cantata.

Transcript 6: Mov.IIB in C position, mode Xu (A-C-d-E-[f]-g-A)

The image shows a musical score for Movement II B, consisting of six systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are in Vietnamese. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, *pp*, and *cresc...*, and performance instructions like *Chậm hơn* (slower) and *Hm.* (humming). The lyrics describe a scene of a woman weaving in a forest, with the text: "Cho tôi dâng lời cảm tạ phò nguy. Trong cơn làm luy còn làm luy nữa trái qua dưới thê. Rừng rùng hai đồng lè. Dông thao thao bát tuyệt của nguồn thơ." The score concludes with the words "Dông thao thao (dây) Dông thao thao của nguồn thơ."

## Variation of the poem text

An interesting technique in Vietnamese folk songs is **textual variation**. The text of the 6-8 word poem is set to music with a kind of variation by adding new vocables (such as ‘a’, ‘a mà’), new words (such as ‘tình bằng có’, ‘chứ mà’, ‘là’, ‘nay’...), or by repeating or inverting some words or phrases (such as ‘Nhạc Việt’, ‘chứ đời là đời’, ...). This textual variation helps not only to create balanced structure to the music by affording varied melodic lines and rhythmic patterns, but also to add some concrete meanings and folk flavor to the piece. Compare the original poem of *Nhac Viet* and its variation with the words in the parentheses of the lyrics:

Mừng khen chiến công lấy lừng:> (Chiến công nay lấy lừng) Mừng khen chiến công (nay)  
lấy lừng

Của bao nhiêu Đấng Anh Hùng Việt Nam:> Của bao (là bao) nhiêu Đấng Anh Hùng (Anh hùng  
mà nước Nam, Nước) Việt Nam

Mừng ngày chiến thắng vinh quang:> (Chiến thắng mà vinh quang) Mừng ngày chiến thắng  
(mà) vinh quang

Trống chiêng am khúc khải hoàn tấu vang:> Trống chiêng (mà nay) am khúc, (khúc) khải hoàn  
tấu vang (ngân vang).

In the Church cantata *Ave Maria*, he makes use of textual variation mostly by repetition of words or phrases, avoiding using vocables that may create a too secular ambiance in worship.

## Traditional Instruments

Another element which adds a greater Vietnamese flavor to his music, especially in *Nhac Viet*, is the use of traditional instruments such as the 16-string zither (fig 1a-b), the transverse bamboo flute (fig 2a-b), the wooden or bamboo claves (fig. 3), and the gong (fig.4) and barrel drum(fig.5).<sup>18</sup> They give a new timbre and help “paint” the lyrics of each section. Especially the

---

<sup>18</sup> Vo Thanh Tung, *Nhac Khi Dan Toc Viet* [Musical Instruments of Vietnam] (HCM City: NXB Am Nhạc, 2001)

gong and drum(section C) create a festive ambiance, as they may usually be used in festivals and even in church festivities.

### Traditional Instruments used in *Nhac Viet*

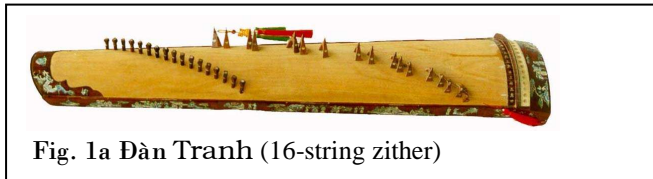


Fig. 1a Đàn Tranh (16-string zither)

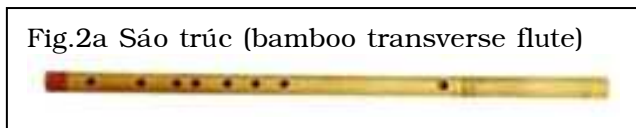


Fig.2a Sáo trúc (bamboo transverse flute)



Fig.2b (Sao player)



Fig.1b (ground seating posture)



Fig. 3 Phách (Claves)



Fig. 4 Chiêng (gong)

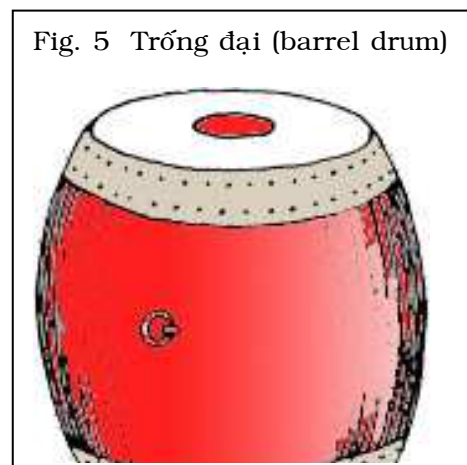


Fig. 5 Trống đại (barrel drum)

## TO WESTERNIZED TECHNIQUES

### **Diversified Texture**

Due to the tone language, Vietnamese vocal music was mostly monophonic before 1945. In *Nhac Viet* (NV) and *Ave Maria* (AV), Hai-Linh uses varied kind of structures: (canonic) polyphonic in the 16-string zither introduction in NV mm.1-18; almost monophonic with zither and flute accompaniment in vocal introduction in NV mm.19-48; homophonic in the A section; homophonic with vocal accompaniment and zither ostinato in the B section in NV mm. 74-94; from monodic (NV mm.109-126) to homophonic (NV mm. 127-165) with the ostinato of open fifth G-D, -the two pivotal notes of mode Xe-, by barytone voice and gong, and bass voice and drum. The cantata *Ave Maria* also shows a combination of textures, from polyphonic (AV mm. 9-14; 103-126; 143-176) to homophonic (AV mm.15-43; 79-102; 127-142; 177-184; 239-267), and monophonic with solo Bass (AV mm.52-69; 210-217), solo Soprano (188-199), solo Tenor (203-210; 268-283) , or with tutti (AV mm.221-238). One interesting point is that in polyphonic texture, the composer manages to let the next voice enter only when the first voice almost finishes the phrase (e.g. AV mm. 9-12; 103-126), so that the different voices will not cover each other. The result is that listeners may hear the lyrics clearly, -an asset of homophonic texture he tries to obtain in polyphonic texture. On the other hand, in homophonic texture, the composer rarely makes use of chorale style, but very often he creates a dialogue between voices, or a pair of voices (e.g. AV mm.284-328;363-389). Consequently, the texture appears thin, -a means to deal with the different tones of the Vietnamese language. And much more, he manages to compose melodic lines even in secondary voices, -an asset of polyphonic writing he tries to obtain in homophonic texture. As a result, he has to deal “creatively” with homophonic harmony.

### **Simplified Harmony and Diversified Chord Structure**

In *Nhac Viet* the number of chords used is restricted (see Transcript 3, possible chords). For example, in the A section only three chords I, V and vi (DM: D-F#-A; AM: A-E-A; and Bm:B-D-F#). The chord structure is varied: from tertian chords such as FM, Dm in F position, to quintal chords like A-E-A in D position or G-D-G in F position, mode Xe. With open fifth G-D as ostinato

bass, the structure of the chords used in C section (mm.127-163) may be more complex: from G sus 2 and sus 4 (G-A-C-D) or G11 (G-D-A-C) in mm.128-129, to G7 (G-D-F) in m.130. G-D may also be considered as double pedal. In the cantata *Ave Maria*, sometimes Hai-Linh makes use of chords composed of pitches that do not belong to the actual pentatonic scale, such as Bb and E in the chord BbM and CM, while the actual melody is F position F-G-A-C-D-(F) (AV m.24; 35-36...). This is a compromise to make the folk-based flavor less “pure”, but the sounds “richer”. So although the harmony is simplified, the chord structure is diversified, in order first to preserve the genius of the language, second to obtain the favor of pentatonic folklike music and finally to offer interesting melodic lines for every voices in a very “democratic” spirit (term expressly used by the composer himself), not allowing one only voice (usually the Soprano voice) to “dominate” while other voices serve it as “filler in” to complete any chord structure in harmony.

### **Import and Allusion**

In *Nhac Viet* Hai-Linh imports, that is, incorporates folk song “*Cò Lả*” (mm. 59-63), and includes allusion to folk song “*Hát Trống Quân*” (mm.63-67) to accompany and illustrate the meaning of the text. *Co La*, meaning ‘The Flying Tork’, is a very popular folk tune, which used to be sung while working in the rice fields. The tune *Co La* can be sung with any other 6-8 word poem by modifying the melodic schema to fit with the tones of new lyrics. The composer incorporates a portion of melody of the refrain to ‘paint’ and accompany at the same time lyrics in the main melody of his piece, expressing “joyfulness through the songs in rice fields.” To make the accompaniment more suitable, he has to change E pitch class to F# (F#-A-F#-E-D instead of E-A-F#-E-D).



Transcript7:

Import of Cò Lả

**Retrain CỎ LẢ (Flying Stork)** A folk song in rice fields

The image shows a musical score for a folk song. It consists of two main parts. The first part is a 'Retrain' section with a melody line and lyrics: 'Tinh tinh tang tang tinh tinh, dân làng rảnh, dân làng đi rảnh có biết, biết hay chẳng, rảnh có biết biết hay chẳng,'. The second part is labeled 'NHẠC VIỆT' and contains three staves of music (treble, alto, and bass clefs) with lyrics: 'Vui tiếng ca trên cánh đồng (joyfulness through songs in rice fields), Lúa đâm bông chờ cây lúa lúa đâm bông (the rice to bloom waiting for the rice, the rice to bloom), Chờ cây lúa lúa đâm bông chờ cây lúa (waiting for the rice, the rice to bloom)'. A bracket connects the 'biết' in the first part to the 'biết' in the second part.

He also uses allusions to the folk tune “*Hát Trống Quân*” (Song of Trong Quan). *Trong Quan* was first a military drum, made by a rattan string which “vibrates when struck with a pair of bamboo drumsticks. The vibration is transmitted to a board which covers a resonance hole [dug in the ground] or to a tin can serving as resonator.”<sup>19</sup> In peaceful times, the military drum was used to accompany *the Hat Trong Quan*, a tune alternated between girls and boys at communal or regional festivals. Like *Co La* tune, the *Hat Trong Quan* tune can be sung with any 6-8 word poem lyrics. Hai-Linh makes allusion to the *Hat Trong Quan* tune by letting the bass voice imitate the military drum sound “*thình thùng thình*” while the tenor voice sings a *Hat Trong Quan* motiff with the words “*Hội hè (này) [F#-A –D-D]*” (mm.63-64), using similar rhythmic patterns and text-variation.

<sup>19</sup> Tran Van Khe, *op.cit.*, 1962, 133

## Transcript 8:

Allusions to Hát Trong Quan

HÁT TRỐNG QUẦN folksong

Ước gì (này) anh lấy được nàng

63 NHẠC VIỆT 66

(Butterflies and bees [young lovers] convey their intimate feelings)

Hội hè (này) ong bướm đưa tình (này)....  
(At festivals young lovers convey their intimate feelings)

(là) thình thùng thình (là) thình thùng thình (là) thình thùng thình

### Melodic and harmonic Ostinato

He makes use of melodic and harmonic ostinato to add layers to monophonic-born melodies. In the B section of *Nhac Viet*, the 16-string zither melodic ostinato F-G-A in mm. 80-94 adds even more layers and timbre, and may suggest something monotone and melancholic. In the C section, the G-D fifth ostinato in NV mm. 128-160 adds a bass fundament to the melody and alludes to the gong and drum sounds “Tùng! Bi-ri! (Boom! Clang!).” The ostinato of the vocable “Păng, păng, păng...” in NV mm.96-103 suggests rain falling while the melodic theme sings “Rain falling brings vague and lonely melancholy; Rain falling sounds as human laments.” In *Ave Maria*, the word ostinato “Ave Maria” in mm.28-38 allows the composer to accompany the pentatonic melody more freely, because the latin phrase “Ave Maria” has no tonal marks like the Vietnamese lyrics.

Hai-Linh tries to find solutions to his concerns through all his works, especially *Nhac Viet* and *Ave Maria*. *Nhac Viet* is typical because it is the only piece whose lyrics sound like a statement of his option. And he was successful in carrying out his intentions in this choral piece. The Vietnamese tone language is respected. Folk-based materials, such as pentatonic scale, modes, text variation, and traditional instrumentation, are used in harmonious combination with Westernized

techniques, such as tonal harmony, polyphony, homophony, import, allusion, and ostinato. He tries to preserve the spirit of the national language and music through a deep study on folk songs. In the cantata *Ave Maria*, he succeeds in finding ways to harmonize the pentatonic themes (melodies) in a more varied and richer texture. He knows how to choose from Western music only those things which seem appropriate to his Vietnamese language and music. He knows how to simplify Western harmony so that it fits the requirements of tone language and national use of pentatonicism. He seemed to be a stranger in the midst of his prominent contemporary colleagues. However, he is not alone, as Donald Jay Grout and Claude Palisca (2001) observe in their chapter on *The American Twentieth Century* (p. 780):

To speak only of the newest, most prominent, or most novel trends does not do justice to the large proportion of “mainstream” composers. This term does not mean that they share a set of beliefs about music or esthetics; rather, they compose in a great diversity of styles within a generally conservative and somewhat retrospective posture. Tonality or at least the maintenance of a tonal center often, though not necessary, characterizes their music. Because they want to communicate with a large public, these composers offer listeners a thread that can be followed through identifiable musical themes, musical designs that are on the surface rather than hidden, and programmatic subjects or titles, and they strike a balance between lyricism and liveliness, expression and logic, caution and risk. The successful middle-of-the-roaders have also discovered the secret of inspiring performers to champion their music, creating works that musicians are eager to play more than once.

Hai-Linh is one of these musicians, especially vocal musicians such as Samuel Barber(1910-1981), Ned Rorem (b.1923), Gian Carlo Menotti (b.1911), to mention only American musicians of his era.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Grout, Donald J., and Palisca, Claude. *A History of Western Music*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2001.
- Hai-Linh, Xuan-Thao, Nam-Hai & Thien-Lan. *Chuong Trinh Huan Luyen Ca Truong II* [Choral Conducting Textbook II]. Texas: Nhom Que Huong [Homeland Group], 2003.
- Kamien, Roger. *Music: An Appreciation*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1996.
- Kostka, Stefan. *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*. Second Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999..
- Morgan, Robert P. *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991.
- Nguyen, T. Phong. "Vietnam." In *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, ed. Terry E. Miller and Sean Williams, 4: Southeast Asia. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988.
- Nguyen, Xuan Thao. "Hat Quan Ho: A Vietnamese Folk Tradition." (Folk Music Tradition Report. RU- MUHL 366 World Music). Chicago, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Nhac Ly Can Ban* [Fundamentals of Music]. HCM City: Nhom Que Huong [Homeland Group], 1980.
- Paul, Van Chi. *Catholic Choral Music in Vietnam 1945-1975*. Portland: Pastoral Press, 2002
- Trần Văn Khê. *La Musique Vietnamiennne Traditionnelle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Problemes de Pentatonisme en Extreme-Orient* (typed manuscript), Paris, 1986
- Vo, Thanh Tung. *Nhac Khi Dan Toc Viet*. HCM City: NXB Am Nhạc, 2001