

A COMPOSITION PROJECT “MUSIC AND LOVE”

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Abstract

Music and love is a set of compositions for piano solo that aimed to offer original works by Thai composer as a choice for Thai piano students and listeners. Each composition is a program music that reflected and represented different interpretation of affection and love, such as love of a family, love between individual persons, love of the nature, love of religion, and love of national heritage. The title of 10 pieces are as follows: Home, Jasmine, Sibling, Soulmate, Oceans, Spirit of the Forest, Blue Sky Rag, Night Falls, Pagoda, and Blue Moon.

The researcher studied and analyzed character pieces for piano solo from the romantic period and used them as models for this composition project. The stylistic and pianistic approach had a strong connection with the title of each composition.

The researcher invited four distinguished Thai pianists to perform these works. These pianists are Pornphan Banternghansa, Tarin Supprakorn, Akkra Yuenyonghattaporn, and Mintra Rungruengsorakarn. The project was successfully presented as audio recordings, music videos, published score, and an online conference on different platform of social media. The link to music videos of this project was included in the discussion.

Keywords: Thai Composer / Piano / Composition / Music / Love / Community

Introduction

Piano is one of the most popular musical instruments in Thailand, in terms of the number of Thai students taking music lesson and the popularity among the listeners. Piano students and teachers have a wide range of repertoire from several genre encompassing classical, pop, rock, jazz, and traditional music. However, the original piano composition by

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Thai composers and repertoires that reflect Thai culture and social issues are still very limited. The researcher, therefore, created a set of piano compositions to address these issues.

From the social issue point of view, lifestyle of modern-day society creates tremendous amount of tension from stress and competitiveness in the workplace, heavy traffic, fear and worry of sickness and pandemic, economic problems, overwhelming amount of information available on different platforms of social media, and aggressive program on television, movie, and video game. People are rushing through their lives and routines, resulting in frustration, aggressiveness, and great amount of tension. In the beginning, only an individual will suffer from these conditions, but without proper emotional management it may lead to larger problems such as depression, addiction, and domestic violence. When the situation wasn't treated correctly, it could eventually develop into a nation-wide problem.

The researcher recognized these issues and would like to create music that specifically deals with emotional problems mentioned above. Therefore, the researcher composed music for piano that encourage love, compassion, empathy, calmness, and sensitivity. When an individual person achieves stable state of mind, their family, organization, and the country will eventually benefit from it. Some compositions from the set also represented Thai culture to encourage piano students and listeners to develop pride and identity as a Thai citizen.

Research Objectives

1. To create new piano repertoires for Thai piano students and audiences that represent compassion and Thai culture.
2. To encourage other Thai composers to write more piano music for Thai students and utilize Thai musical and cultural elements in the composition.
3. To raise awareness about social issues, such as depression and domestic violence, through music and art.

The Scope of a Study

The main objective of this study is to create a set of composition that has artistic goal of encouraging young Thai piano students to study and perform original composition by Thai composer. The title of each composition also suggested an emotional and psychological benefit, which can lead to a relaxing state of mind of the practitioner and listener alike. Due to the limitation of time and budget, however, this study did not cover an evaluation of its psychological impact on the listeners, but only offered this set of composition as a tool to

promote Thai piano composition and to encourage listeners to develop a positive feeling toward themselves and others. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct future research to measure the value and impact of this research in a scientific way.

Philosophical Underpinning of the Research

Human mind is constantly and perpetually moving. Therefore, most of the religions and philosophies from past to present always address one thing in common: how to control and purify the mind. Meditation practice in Buddhism offers several methods, but the general concept is to find the dwelling for the mind or to concentrate on a single object during a certain period of time. Applying this principle to the study, music could be used as the concentration object to create stability of the mind. Listening to the music that has soothing melody and harmony with moderate tempo would help the listeners to relax and rediscover joyful heart. When an individual expresses calmness and relaxation, a harmony within the family, marriage, and society would naturally follow.

Literature Review

Review of the literature for this study covered two main areas: piano literature and psychological effects of music on human brain. The piano literature part focused on character pieces from the Romantic period, such as compositions for piano by Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, and Schumann. The psychological part surveyed materials from both music and neurological sciences journals.

Research Design

The researcher combined both artistic and scientific approaches to this study. The compositions offered aesthetic and psychological benefit. The research method, however, was strictly scientific and systematic. The compositions were a result of a thorough study of related literature and a scientific way of thinking and designing.

Research Methodology

1. Study and collect information about compositions for piano solo that could express sensitivity, delicacy, and compassion.
2. Study piano compositions from the Romantic period, particularly the character pieces.
3. Experiment with the style, genre, and formal design of the composition.
4. Create 10 compositions for piano solo.

5. Select performers for this project and distribute the scores.
6. Record the compositions.
7. Produce the music video for the compositions.
8. Create presentation package and USB drive.
9. Distribute the music video via social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Soundcloud.
10. Broadcast a live seminar of this research project.
11. Publish a complete report and music score for the research project.

Data Collection

1. Study and collect related information from books, research, and recordings and use them as guidelines to create the desired compositions.
2. Study musical genre and style that could develop sensitivity in human mind and create compositional idiom that is suitable for Thai audiences.
3. Collect scientific information about the effect of sound on human brain and create a suitable use of melody and harmony for this composition project.

Results of the Study

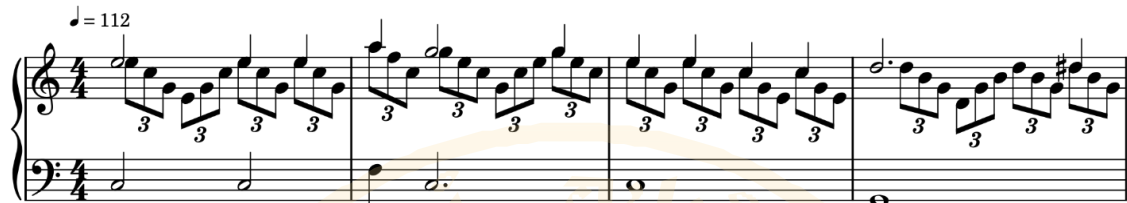
The researcher applied aforementioned materials to create 10 compositions for piano solo. The 10 compositions are as follow:

1. Home
2. Jasmine
3. Sibling
4. Soulmate
5. Oceans
6. Spirit of the Forest
7. Blue Sky Rag
8. Night Falls
9. Pagoda
10. Blue Moon

Discussions and Analysis of the Results

The description and interpretative ideas of the compositions are as follow:

Composition No. 1 (Home) expressed the love and emotional bonding of family members. Family is the foundation of a strong society. Therefore, an initial works of strengthening a society is building a strong family, which is the objective and main message of this composition. The composition was in ternary form. The first and last sections were in C major, and the middle section was in E $\flat$ major.



Example 1 Measures 1-4

Source: by author

The piece started with the note E as a melodic line, as well as the highest pitch of the accompaniment part. Therefore, it simultaneously created both melody and counterpoint. A close relationship between the melody and accompaniment implied a strong connection between family members. The piece continued using this pattern until the end of the first section.



Example 2 Measures 41-44

Source: by author

The second section abruptly modulated from C major to E flat major and used Major seventh chord to reflect influences from pop and jazz music. The accompaniment part also changed from triplet to duplet to create more stability. The musical idea in this section replicated a conversation between the family members.

Composition No. 2 (Jasmine) symbolized the love of a mother toward her child, which is unarguably the most powerful and enduring form of affection. The first section started with

a melancholic melody to express an unconditional motherly love, and the middle section is a reminiscence of lullaby. This composition was inspired by *Intermezzo* of Brahms.



Example 3 Measures 1-4

Source: by author

The main melody in the right hand started from C and D in sixteenth note and moved upward to the E. Then, the melody stayed there for almost the whole measure to create more emphasis on the note E. In Solfège system, E is called “Mi,” and therefore, the researcher would like to suggest its similarity to the word “mommy” that is probably one of the first words a child is able to speak. This composition symbolized an unconditional love of a mother and a strong relationship between a mother and a child.



Example 4 Measures 21-25

Source: by author

The second section is a lullaby in A major that created more stable feeling from horizontal chordal movements in the right hand and arpeggiated bass notes in the left hand. The musical idea of this section represented an affection that the mother has for a child. It could also be a reminiscence for the listeners to retrospectively thinking about childhood.

Composition No. 3 (Sibling) showed the bonding and relationship between brothers and sisters. The composition sounded almost like an improvisation based on ostinato in the left hand. A simple, melancholic, and floating melodic line developed from C major 7th and F major 7th chord. Each small section modulated to an unexpected key.

Slow and dreamy ♩ = 38



Example 5 Measures 1-4

Source: by author

The piece started with a short introduction that juxtaposed C major 7th chords and F major 7th chord to created floating and relaxing atmosphere.



Example 6 Measures 5-12

Source: by author

In measure 5, the main melody started with note B, which is the leading tone of C major. This note created dissonance that represented nostalgic feeling and uncertainty. The melodic line resolved to note A in measure 6 and note G in measure 8, respectively. In measure 9-11, a melodic line in the right hand used hemiola technique to create a slight feeling of syncopation and used G 13th chord in measure 12 to show influence from jazz music.

Composition No. 4 (Soulmate) demonstrated a relationship of life partners. A *Nocturne* of Chopin was a main inspiration that created intimate feeling throughout the piece. The middle section in C minor expressed difficulties in life that everyone must endure, and the following Chorale section brought back consolation and encouragement.



Example 7 Measures 1-8

Source: by author

A beautiful main melody started in Sol-Mi pattern as a homage to Chopin's Nocturne. The research used secondary dominant chord in measure 4-6 to create interesting tone color and finish the phrase with half cadence. This beautiful and gentle melodic line represented love and sensitivity of partnership.

[24]

29

Example 8 Measures 24-32

Source: by author

The same melodic and harmonic structure was developed into a variation that used running passages in right hand with hemiola, while left hand remained similar to the previous section.

[40] **Agitato** ♩ = 64

43

45

47

Example 9 Measures 41-48

Source: by author

As another homage to Chopin, the middle section changed character from cantabile to agitato. The stormy triplets in C minor created more intensity that matched with Neapolitan chord in measure 43 and 47. The middle section concluded in measure 48, where the harmony returned to the original key of C major.

Composition No. 5 (Oceans) reminded listeners the value of mother nature, particularly the water. Without water there would be no life. Currently, the ocean pollution and marine debris have significantly increased to a frightening degree. We, as a global citizen, are responsible to raise awareness and take action to save the water. This composition used a *Barcarolle*-style accompaniment to symbolize water.

Andante Sostenuto**Example 10 Measures 1-6**

Source: by author

The main characteristic influence of this piece is a *Barcarolle*, or a traditional folk song sung by Venetian gondoliers. The rhythm was always in 6/8 and it represented a rocking motion of a Gondola boat. The key of this piece is C minor, which the research would like the key of C to rhyme with the word “sea” to create an awareness of marine treatment and conservation.

Composition No. 6 (Spirit of the Forest) inspired by Chopin’s *Waltz* for piano solo. The vibrant and lively atmosphere of the piece demonstrated the scene in the forest. Trees, rivers, and many species of animal exist together harmoniously, but human are invading the forest and destroy their ecosystem. It is, therefore, our responsibility to restore the balance of the nature.

**Example 11 Measures 5-12**

Source: by author

This piece is a reminiscence of Chopin's *Waltz*, and therefore, the time signature was in 3/4. The main theme represented a liveliness of dance music and used Sol-Mi melodic line as appeared in several Chopin's compositions. An accompaniment in the left hand was in a typical waltz-style: a single bass note followed by two similar chords.



Example 12 Measures 21-29

Source: by author

The second theme, similar to the structure of a typical Chopin's *Waltz*, was a fast running passages based on arpeggiated movement. A great technical facility and agility were required to play this section, which portrayed the picture of a forest and wild animals in their natural habitat.

Composition No. 7 (Blue Sky Rag) raised an awareness of the air pollution in the city. Just in the past few years we have witnessed the air pollution at the level that never happened before. It is likely that the degree of the air pollution will only increase each year. The researcher would like to express concerns about quality of the air through this composition, which was modeled after *Ragtime* of Scott Joplin.





Example 13 Measures 1-9

Source: by author

As a homage to the *Ragtime* piano composition of Scott Joplin, the piece started with G-A-B-C bass line in the left hand as a typical *Ragtime* movement. The melody in a right hand started with a triplet led to the note E and was suggested to play in swing rhythm.



Example 14 Measures 34-41

Source: by author

The second section modulated to F major and used more syncopation in the right hand to portray the spontaneous movement of the cloud in the sky. This section is recommended to play in a swing rhythm, as well.

Composition No. 8 (Night Falls) expressed calmness and silence during the night. Currently, the noise level has increased everywhere, not only in the city but also in the suburb areas. People used “noise” as a distraction, and consequently, became less sensitive to the sound and not able to listen to a real message behind it. This composition used *Chaconne* as a model and developed into several variations based on the same harmonic progression in the left hand.

Moderato

5

Example 15 Measures 1-8

Source: by author

The 8-measure thematic material of this piece was built on a simple harmonic progression in A minor. The researcher drew inspiration from two great variations of the Baroque and Classical literature: Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Beethoven's *32 Variations in C minor*, respectively. A nostalgic theme in A minor represented a loneliness and quietness that we experienced during the nighttime.

89

93

rit.....

Example 16 Measures 89-96

Source: by author

Variations 11 in measure 89 used arpeggiated passages in both hands. The contrary movement created tension and anxiety to portray a stormy sky and the tempestuous feeling in human mind. After this variation, the quiet original theme returned to complete the cycle.

Composition No. 9 (Pagoda) expressed the faith and belief that the researcher and majority of Thai people have in Buddhism. The first section used big dissonant chords to create the picture of a grand pagoda. The following section symbolized the teaching of Buddha (Dhamma), and the final section demonstrated simplicity of people's way of life in the rural area of Thailand.



Example 17 Measures 1-4

Source: by author

A strong introduction with big chords in the right hand and dotted octave in the left hand symbolized the grandeur of a great pagoda.



Example 18 Measures 11-18

Source: by author

The second section in C major created a transparent and simple feeling. A time signature 3/4 also symbolized the Triple Gem of Buddhism: Buddha Ratana (the Lord Buddha), Dhamma Ratana (the Teaching), and Sangha Ratana (the Sangha).

$\text{♩} = 108$
Relax and simple

59 *mp*

63

Example 19 Measures 59-66

Source: by author

A final section of this piece reflected simplicity in a lifestyle of a rural Thai society that focused on the happiness and purity of the mind rather than material gains.

Composition No. 10 (Blue Moon) was composed by HRH Prince Benbadhanabongse, the Prince Pijaya Mahindrarodom under the original name *Lao Duang Duen*. The song *Lao Duang Duen* has been one of the most popular Thai tunes and was usually sung by many Thais who lived abroad because it reminded them of the home country. The researcher used a simplified *Lao Duang Duen*'s original theme and created a left-hand accompaniment in western classical style to show that traditional Thai song is truly a cultural asset of the country, but it should to be presented in a modern and accessible way.

Andante con moto $\text{♩} = 70$

mp



Example 20 Measures 1-8

Source: by author

A lyrical melodic line started in the right hand with a simple accompaniment in the left hand. The researcher kept an original melody and created a piano texture that inspired by the works of Felix Mendelssohn and Franz Schubert. Thus, recreating a traditional Thai music in a Western pianistic design.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study

The research project *Music and Love* was successfully presented through several mediums and platforms. The project was supervised by faculty members of the Music Department, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University and received a grant from National Research Council of Thailand.

The compositions were recorded in both audio and video format. Four distinguished Thai pianists that participated in this project were Pornphan Banterngansa, Tarin Supprakorn, Akkra Yuenyonghattaporn, and Mintra Rungruengsorakarn. The recording supervisor and director was Christopher Janwong McKiggan with supporting crew from *Chris the Pianist Production*.

The audio recording session took place at Piano Academy of Bangkok on Friday October 29, 2021, and the location for the video recordings were Factory of Inspiration and Punntara Botanic Home, which were shooting on Monday November 22 and Friday November 26, 2021. Other footages for the composition *Pagoda* were additionally shot and produced by using a different location to capture the spirit of Buddhism. Those locations were *Wat U-mong*, *Wat Tha-ton*, and *Wat Pratat Sang Rung* in Chiangmai.

The discussion and summary were presented via Facebook live on Monday March 7, 2022. Music videos were available on YouTube and can be accessed at this link: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5_w76XMdp77-_HKIDqJdEsiqLGRLecx8&si=8hIXaYci-AWf174i

The researcher presented this project together with four other projects of a similar nature, which included *Music and Meditation* by Sasi Pongsarayuth, *Music and Harmony* by Yos Vaneesorn, *Music and Encouragement* by Kittinant Chinsamran, and *Music and Technology* by Danuchate Wisajorn.

This study aimed to create an artistic work that combined perspectives from aesthetic, music education, and social development standpoints. The aesthetic part was successfully completed as mentioned in the previous discussion. However, the value of this research project in terms of popularity among Thai piano students and teachers, and the psychological impact of the compositions have not yet to evaluate. Therefore, future study to measure and evaluate the reception and consequences of the compositions are strongly encouraged in order to establish scientific evidence of the educational and psychological value of the project.

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