

Creative Music for Orchestra Score: Rabam Ayutthaya

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Abstract

An academic article entitled “Creative music for orchestra score: Rabam Ayutthaya” is a study of creation of contemporary music using Thai traditional instruments integrated with modern musical instruments. This shows a unity of performance art in Thai style performing orchestra and creating beautiful melodies by combining classical Thai music with international one called “temporary music” in various forms. For example, there is a performance of Thai songs using Thai musical instruments along with international musical instruments, such as saxophone, piano and violin, or performing international songs using Thai musical instruments, both Thai string or combining some instruments such as alto xylophone, alto fiddle and flute, resulting in novelty musical aesthetics, a new musical dimension for both musicians and audiences. When bringing the music to the performance, audiences could still enjoy traditional Thai performance as well which would be a music enhancement to the most astonishing.

Introduction

The evolution of mankind in notions of inventing various activities for recreation started from something simple in the first place. It might start from telling a folk lore to each other in a group. In the beginning stories had been told by ordinary verbal expressions. Then to make it easier to remember, rhymes had been added in the stories. The tales had become poems that made more fun and enjoyable to audience. Combining with rhythm, poems had turned to singing. Eventually people added gestures and movement to their singing, and these became a performance. A popular performance would be requested to be longer by audience, so they sequentially coupled it together and evolved to Khon or Lakhon (both are Thai traditional dancing) as in present day.

During Ayutthaya era, Thai dancing such as Lakhon and Fawn had been incredibly famous and prosperous. There were some evidences that mentioned about Rabam but there were not explained exactly in details as the performance. But overall, Rabam had been played often in the royal ceremonies and important rituals of the country in early Ayutthaya period together with other kind of game in a royal ceremony, for example, Mongkrum, Kulateemai, Rabeng and Nang. Those had been referred to in Ayutthaya monarch law which stated that when royal officers had an area of 1,000 fields, 5,000 fields, and 30,000 fields in feudalism, there would be some performance like Khon and Rabam from Rabam master. Rabam master would have been referred to chief or leader in Rabam ceremony. Until the late Ayutthaya period, there were important evidences from Du Royaume de Siam which stated about Rabam.

“Rabam is the dance that both male and female perform together without any act of fighting, battling, and killing, there will only be flirting and conjuring. Those actors and actresses wear exceptionally long artificial nails made from brass, singing and dancing simultaneously with no trace of any fatigue since the dance is in circle. They are only twisting their arms and bodies a bit with no stunting or soaring act.”

There are many types of Thai classical performance that could be separated by their characteristics. For example, Khon and Lakhon have solid structures and formations. Ram and Rabam are episodic performance alongside with Thai classical music. Other types of local folk performance in many parts of Thailand typically perform together with their local folk music.

For example, in the Northeastern part of Thailand local people use Pong Lang music band. In the Northern part of Thailand they use Seo Sung music band. Nowadays, the episodic performance like Rabam and Ram have become popular because these performances do not consume much time and the learning curve is not too high. Most of the organizations in both government and private sectors, for example, schools, collages, and universities would have Rabam or Ram in any ordinary events.

One of the most important Rabam performances is Rabam Borankadee (Thai archaeological dance). This dance originally contained five set of dances, Rabam Dvaravati, Rabam Sukhothai, Rabam Srivijaya, Rabam Lopburi, and Rabam Chiang Saen. All of these choreography dances were designed by Master Chalaya Sukkhavanich and the score was composed by Maestro Montree Tramote. Later in 1986, Professor Seri Wangnaitham, a national artist, created another dance in the Thai archaeological dance series called Rabam Ayutthaya, of which the choreography was designed by Master Chalaya Sukkhavanich and the score was composed by Maestro Jiras Archnarong. This show was inspired by Lakorn King Naresuan the Great, savior of Ancient Thai nation. Using Duo Piphat (oboe-based Thai orchestra) that contained soprano oboe, alto xylophone, alto bamboo xylophone, large Knog circle, small Knog circle, two Indian drums, small cymbals, cymbals, Grap, and Mong for musical band playing Ayutthaya melodies in single and double notes.

In the present day, there is a lot of creativity in music industry, especially a combination between Thai traditional music and international music that creates contemporary music. Many kinds of contemporary music happen. Thai traditional songs have been playing by Thai traditional bands with a notch of international music instrumentals, saxophone, piano, violin, for example. In addition, international songs are also played with Thai classical music band like Thai string instrumental or with alto xylophone, alto fiddle, and flute or Klui.

The Rabam Ayutthaya that was created this time intending to re-arrange Thai traditional score into the form of international band as Orchestra. Orchestra is a standard international music band originated in the Baroque era and continues to be popular until present day. In the past, Orchestra would play classical music, or alongside with Opera and Ballet. But now many genres of music such as Pop, Jazz, Rock, Country, and Folk songs have been re-arranged for playing with Orchestra. The novelty of this process is to increase the dimension of the music for both musicians and audiences. In bringing the music to the performance, audiences could still enjoy the notch of traditional Thai performance that would be a music enhancement to the most astonishing. (Narongrit Thamabutra, 2009)

Objective

The objective of this article is present to you how traditional Thai music, and dances were developed into popular performances as well as how Thai musical instruments could provide melody for international music.

The Concept of Arranging the Score for Orchestra

1. Music instruments could be divided into 2 groups. The instruments that provide main Melody are Flute, Clarinet, Xylophone, Violin, and Viola. And the instruments that provide Harmony are Oboe, Bass-clarinet, Alto-saxophone, Tenor-saxophone, Cello, and Contrabass. The first group would provide the main melody of traditional Thai music from the beginning to the end, and the second group would provide harmony choring mostly as types of Chord. (Francis Nantasukon 2011).

The image displays a musical score for an orchestra, organized into two main sections. The first section includes staves for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bass clarinet, Alto Saxophone, and Tenor saxophone. The second section includes staves for Tuba, Xylophone, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello, and Contra Bass. The score is written in 2/4 time and includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 56. The Flute and Clarinet parts are the most prominent, featuring melodic lines. The Oboe, Bass clarinet, Alto Saxophone, and Tenor saxophone parts provide harmonic support. The Tuba, Xylophone, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello, and Contra Bass parts provide a steady harmonic foundation. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 2/4.

Figure 1: Grouping the music instrumentals

2. Variation technique. Variation technique is to vary the components of rhythm, melody, chord, on tone while maintaining at least one original or most similar component. The most popular component is melody. (Natcha Phancharoen, 2009)

The musical score for Figure 2 shows measures 16 through 20. The woodwind section (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone) and the xylophone play a melodic line consisting of eighth-note patterns. The brass section (French Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba) provides harmonic support with chords and sustained notes. The string section (Violin, Vln. 2, Viola, Cello, Contra Bass) plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Figure 2: Melody variation

Figure 2 shows the main group playing melody by Flute, Clarinet, Alto-saxophone, Xylophone, violin, and Viola in second room to forth room. Melody variation by Trumpet playing the note in Chord in different melody and rhythm.

3. Counterpoint. Counterpoint is the relationship between two or more musical lines (or voices) which are harmonically interdependent yet dependent in rhythm and melodic contour. To compose Polyphony music that has more than 2 melody lines. The main horizon melody lines is independent yet harmonizing with chord in vertical lines. (Natcha Phancharoen, 2009)

Figure 3: Counterpoint (Counter Melody)

Music synchronization in third room of the main instrumental group (Flute, Clarinet, Xylophone, Violin, Viola) interpolating melody by the chorus group (Bass-clarinet, Alto-saxophone, Tenor-saxophone, Cello). The style of performing harmonized similar melody in a different rhythm also be called another name as Counter Melody. This form of Thai traditional music is called Rhythm Overlapping that is widely used in Thai traditional music bands both in one layer and two layers songs in many positions in the scores.

7

The musical score for Figure 4, titled 'Counterpoint (Counter Line)', is a multi-staff arrangement for a large orchestra. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute, oboe, Clarinet, Bass clarinet, Alto Saxophone, Tenor saxophone, French Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Xylophone, Violin, Vln. 2, Viola, Cello, and Contra Bass. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a complex counterpoint arrangement. The Flute part begins with a measure number of 31. The music is characterized by various melodic lines and rhythmic patterns across the different instrument groups.

Figure 4: Counterpoint (Counter Line)

Inserting various melodies of the song based on the principle of original main melody. Counterpoint would compose sound in term of Chord that has music harmonization. This would enhance the main melody to stand out more. Using instruments like Bass-clarinet, Alto-saxophone, Tenor-saxophone, Cello, Tuba, Contra-bass that could provide longer note and using white notes for Counter Line chorusing. It is important that the style of new melodies that composed to synchronize with the original main melody must be in the same direction as the original rhythm and melody.

In arranging Rabam Ayutthaya for orchestra, the composer intended to preserve the formation of Thai tradition performance as much as possible.

1. In grouping aspect. Grouping Thai traditional music instrumentals would be in 2 groups. The main melody was contributed by large Knog circle and Counterpoint would be contributed by soprano oboe, alto xylophone, alto bamboo xylophone, and small Knog circle.

2. In variation aspect. Variation in Thai traditional music could be strictly adhered to principle of conventional variation. In terms of scale it could not be very distorted that in international music presenting in form of Chord as variation sound would be sound in Chord.

And the rhythm that would differ not so much comparing to the main melody. (Saksri Wongtharadol, 2013)

3. In Counterpoint aspect. Thai traditional music had been using Counterpoint as Rhythm Overlapping or Stroke that is a distinctive feature to show the musician ability based on dividing the instrument group into 2 groups. The first group would be the leading group and the other would be the following group. For example, Rabam Ayutthaya single layer utilizes Thai traditional Rhythm Overlapping outstanding style with Orchestra.

57

Flute

oboe

Clarinet

Bass clarinet

Alto Saxophone

Tenor saxophone

French Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Tuba

Xylophone

Violin

Vln. 2

Viola

Cello

Contra Bass

Figure 5: Rhythm Overlapping

In the creation of theme song of Rabam Ayutthaya for performing in Orchestra, composer has intended to develop the original Thai traditional music arrangement performed by Thai traditional musical bands, such as Pi Phat, to be performed by Orchestra. This could be utilized in performing Thai traditional dances. Leading to another form of music creation called Contemporary Music. Audiences would be enriched by novelty of music and performance from musicians and performers while still indulging with notch of Thai traditional music from Rabam Ayutthaya music and performances combining with the internationalization of Orchestra that is the standard of classical music. These will mesmerize the audience to achieve the perception of aesthetics that is suitable for the current era. It could be concluded that "Music is the universal language".

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