

Project Muse Guide – April 2010



Music of Pham Minh Thành

This presentation will focus on music of Vietnamese composer Pham Minh Thành, with performances by members of Southwest Chamber Music and the Vietnam National Academy of Music

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ABOUT THE VIETNAM NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Originally established in 1956 as the Vietnam School of Music (Trường Âm nhạc Việt Nam) and conferred university status in 1982, the Conservatory is Vietnam's premier music training, research and performance institute. It offers eleven-year Secondary Certificate programmes and four-year Bachelor of Music programmes, plus two-year Master of Music programmes and Doctoral research. The Conservatory currently has over 1,000 students at various levels. The majority of its 200-plus teaching staff (which include 17 Nghệ sĩ Ưu tú or Excellent Artists) are graduates of overseas conservatories in the former Soviet Union, Western Europe, North America and Japan. To date the institution has trained over 7,500 students, including overseas students from Russia, France, Japan, Germany, China, the United States, Cambodia and Laos.



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ABOUT SOUTHWEST CHAMBER MUSIC

GRAMMY® Award-winning Southwest Chamber Music has been bringing PROJECT MUSE in-school performances to schools throughout Los Angeles County since 1994 with music that reflects the vast diversity of art music from around the world. We perform throughout the year in venues throughout Los Angeles County, including the Armory Center for the Arts, The Colburn School, and a summer festival at The Huntington Library.



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WHAT IS ASCENDING DRAGON?

Ascending Dragon Music Festival and Cultural Exchange is a six week cultural exchange, sponsored by the U.S. State Department that will bring 19 Americans to Vietnam in March 2010, and 19 Vietnamese to the U.S. in April-May 2010, each for three weeks. The *Ascending Dragon Music Festival* will present public concerts in Vietnam in honor of the 1000th anniversary of the city of Hanoi, followed by an *Ascending Dragon Music Festival* in Southern California.

WHERE AND WHAT IS VIETNAM?



Geography

Area: 331,114 sq. km. (127,243 sq. mi.); equivalent in size to Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee combined.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Vietnamese (sing. and pl.).

Population (2009): 85.79 million.

Annual growth rate (2007): 1.188%.

Ethnic groups (2003): 54 groups including Vietnamese (Kinh) (85.73%), Tay (1.97%), Thai (1.79%), Muong (1.52%), Khmer (1.37%), Chinese (1.13%), Nung (1.13%), Hmong (1.11%).

Religions (2008): Buddhism (approx. 50%), Catholicism (8%-10%), Cao Dai (1.5%-3%), Protestantism (0.5%-2%), Hoa Hao (1.5%-4%), Islam (>0.1%), and other animist religions.

Languages: Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and other ethnic minority languages.

Education (2006): *Literacy*--90%.

Health (2008 estimate): *Birth rate*--16.7 births/1000 population.

Infant mortality rate--15/1,000. *Life expectancy*--72.2 yrs. *Death rate*--4.9/1,000.

Government

Type: Single-party constitutional republic (Communist Party). Branches: *Executive*--president (head of state and chair of National Defense and Security Council) and prime minister (heads cabinet of ministries and commissions). *Legislative*--National Assembly. *Judicial*--Supreme People's Court; Prosecutorial Supreme People's Procuracy. – U.S. State Dept

FEATURED COMPOSERS



Phạm Minh Thành was born in 1978 in Hanoi. He studied piano and composition at the Vietnam National Academy of Music under the tutelage of composer Do Hong Quan until 2000. From 2000-2006, Minh Thành studied composition at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory with Professor Konstantin Batashov. His compositions have been performed and broadcast throughout Vietnam, as well as in Moscow. He is currently teaching composition at the Musicology /Composition /Conducting Department at the Vietnam National Academy of Music.

Notes

FEATURED WORKS

Thăng Long

Thăng Long was commissioned by Southwest Chamber Music for its Ascending Dragon Music Festival and Cultural Exchange in celebration of the 1000th Anniversary of the city of Hanoi. This composition, inspired by Buddhism, is written for dan bau (monochord), pagoda bells and wood blocks, two violins, viola, cello, and double bass with a structure of slow/fast/slow. Though I don't use any of the chants or verses from Buddhism, the usage of dan bau as the soloist will create the voice and the peaceful atmosphere that one can find in a pagoda in Vietnam. - *Phạm Minh Thành*

Notes

WHAT IS A DAN BAU?



The đàn bầu (đàn độc huyền or độc huyền cầm) is a Vietnamese monochord. While the earliest written records of the Dan Bau date its origin to 1770, many scholars^[who?] estimate its age to be up to one thousand years older than that. A popular legend of its beginning tells of a blind woman playing it in the market to earn a

living for her family while her husband was at war. Whether this tale is based in fact or not, it remains true that the Dan Bau has historically been played by blind musicians. Until recent times, its soft volume limited the musical contexts in which it could be used. The Dan Bau, played solo, is central to Vietnamese folk music, a genre still popular today in the country. Its other traditional application is as an accompaniment to poetry readings. With the invention of the magnetic pickup, the usage of the Dan Bau spread to ensembles and also to contemporary Asian pop and rock music. Now, electronics designed for the electric guitar are sometimes employed with the Dan Bau to further expand its tonal palate.

Originally, the Dan Bau was made of just 4 parts: a bamboo tube, a wooden rod, a coconut shell half, and a silk string. The string was strung across the bamboo, tied on one end to the rod, which is perpendicularly attached to the bamboo. The coconut shell was attached to the rod, serving as a resonator. Now, the bamboo has been replaced by a wooden soundboard, with hardwood as the sides and softwood as the middle. An electric guitar string has replaced the traditional silk string. While the gourd is still present, it is now generally made of wood, acting only as a decorative feature. Also, most Dan Bau now have modern tuning machines, so the base pitch of the string can be adjusted. Usually the instrument is tuned to one octave below middle C, about 130.813 Hz, but it can be tuned to other notes to make it easier to play in keys distant from C.

Playing the Dan Bau is simple but requires a great deal of precision. The pinky of the right hand gently taps the string at one of seven commonly used nodes while the other fingers pluck the string using a long plectrum. The nodes the pinky taps are the notes of the first seven overtones. So the pinky plays flageolets, similar to what guitar players do at the string positions above the octave (1/2), the perfect fifth (2/3), the perfect fourth (3/4), the just major third (4/5), the just minor third (5/6) and two tones not appearing in the Western scale: the septimal minor third (6/7) and the septimal whole tone (7/8). With the left hand, the player can push the flexible rod towards the instrument using the index finger to lower the pitch of the note, or the player can pull the rod away from the instrument with the thumb to raise the pitch of the note. This technique is used both to play notes not available at a node as well as to add vibrato to any note. - Wikipedia

Musical Vocabulary (from the California Standards for the Arts, unless noted otherwise)

DYNAMICS are various degrees of volume in the performance of music, such as loud and soft.

EXTENDED TECHNIQUES are unconventional, unorthodox or “improper” techniques of playing musical instruments, in order to expand and explore the possibilities of different instruments.

IMPROVISATION is the spontaneous creation of music.

An **INTERVAL** is the distance in pitch between two tones.

A **MELODY** is an organized sequence of single notes.

The **METER** is the grouping of beats by which a piece of music is measured.

PONTICELLO is a string instrument technique where one plays on the bridge of the instrument to achieve a special effect.

RHYTHM is the combination of long and short, even and uneven sounds that convey a sense of movement in time.

SCORDATURA is an alternate tuning used for the open strings of a string instrument. It is an extended technique used to allow the playing of otherwise impossible melodies, harmonies, figures, chords, or other note combinations.

A **SCORE** is the written form of the entire composition. All players have a part of the score for their instrument, unless they have memorized the notes.

SOUND PERCEPTION is how you interpret what you hear and where you hear it.

The **STRING FAMILY** (also called **Chordophones**) is the group of instruments that uses strings to produce sound. The strings are made of gut, steel, or nylon. Stringed instruments can be played with a bow- a long stick that has horsehair attached to it, or they can be played by plucking or strumming the strings with the fingers.

The **TIMBRE** is the tone color or character of sound heard.

The **TONALITY (KEY)** is the tonal center of a composition.

TREMOLO is a shaking sound which is achieved by repeating the same note extremely quickly or by playing two notes very quickly, one after the other.

TUNING is to adjust a music instrument to the desired frequency or pitch.

Continue Learning with these Internet Resources:

For more information on Vietnam and its Music, visit:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4130.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Vietnam

For more information on our featured composer dan bau, visit these websites:

<http://www.dantranh.com/danbau.html>

To try to create your own composition at

www.creatingmusic.com

Another excellent interactive website for kids with information about instruments is www.playmusic.org

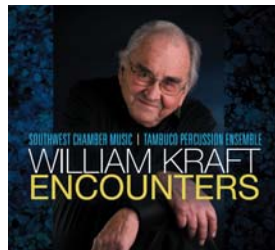


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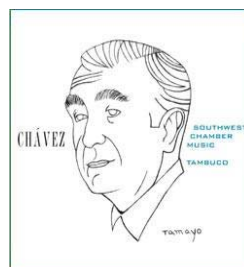
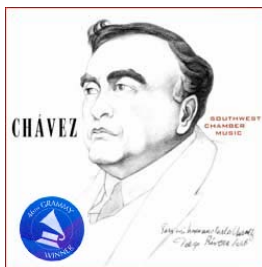
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Alexandra du Bois



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