

Introduction to Volume 9 of SIMP

Report on the ICTMD Study Group on Musical Instruments Symposium in New York, hosted by the New York Institute of the Humanities and Social Studies

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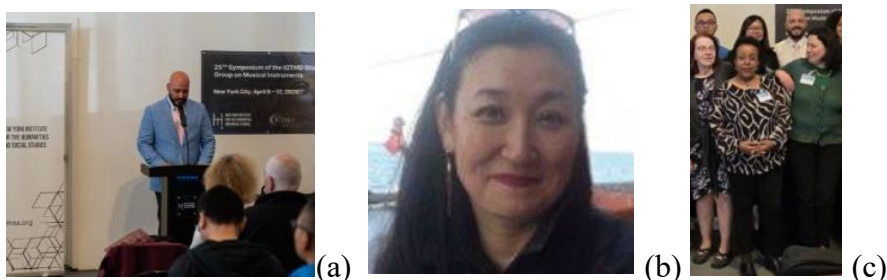


Figure 1a – 1c: Pictures of Rastko Jakovljevic (left), Rinko Fujita (middle; who attended online), and Timkehet Teffera (right)

The Symposium, from which the articles in this volume are coming, took place from April 9 -12th, 2025 in Manhattan, New York. This was the first time the symposium has been held in New York. The New York Institute for the Humanities and Social Studies was the host institution for this symposium.

After a selection of the best proposals, the symposium was attended by approximately 35 in-person participants, with additional online presence of members who could not attend. The conference was mainly performed live, and on a virtual conference room via the Zoom platform. We also had renowned scholars as chairs for the sessions, and a great turnout of the audience, with the notable appearances and participation of Judith Olson, Ken Moore, Tina Frühauf, among others.

The focus of this symposium revolved around two major areas of interest – *Changing Musical Instruments and Artificial Intelligence*, while the second topic covered research on *Musical Instruments in Public Life*. Having a large number of good-quality presentations brought rich insights into novel technologies, pan-heterotopias (B. Kleikamp), robotics (R. Fujita), AI, and

¹ These were the people, who were working out the report of this 25th symposium. They can be reached per email available on the host's website and in the ICTMD directory.

the production, learning, performance, and expressiveness (G. Jähnichen, Jin Yun-Kyung, Zhang Yu, Mao Yue, A. Faudzi Musib, C. Miller, Hippocrates Cheng). Among these significant presentations, one panel discussion was also organized on *AI Musicking: Innovative Approaches to Creative Instrumental Practices through Machine Learning* (U. Eldem, G. Caruso, A. Yip & C. Percivati), which gave another practical input to this topic.

Aspects of musical instruments and their production of space (Huang Wan), virtual musical instruments in particular communities (Julio E. Vargas López), interesting findings of histories, materiality, roles of instruments in public life, and their environmental sustainability (C. Poske, R. Pérez-Fernández, C. Rodríguez, C. P. Meddegoda, G. Kirdiene), interrelations to vocal performances (Geethika Abeysekara), and the intriguing issues of ambiguities of cultural identities (Lahiru G. Komangoda) made a second thematic circle. Another set of presentations showcased important aspects of musical instruments and localities, laws, and economics (Ramiro Godina Valerio, J. Clark), opening discussions of gender and race (M. Brown-Boateng), novel research in symbolism, numerology, and iconography (Patrick Huang), musical instruments and their intercultural dialogues (J. Arnautovic), musical instruments within conflicts and crisis (R. Jakovljevic), and finally very important rich musical ethnographies localities and identifications (K. Bindu, N. Renzi, Kamani Samarasinghe, Zu Lingshan & Lin Zhi), and musical instrument technologies (K. Näumann & M. Flinzberger, Abetekova Altynai). The symposium was closed with an elaborate lecture, *Beyond Public and Private: The Transcendental Secrets of Guqin Performance* (Hoh Chung Shih and Xu Yunheng, online attendance). We were happy that this symposium gathered most prominent experts in the field from over 20 different countries such as Germany, the United States, China, Austria, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Belgium, Canada, Sri Lanka, The Netherlands, Mexico, Cuba, Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, United Kingdom, and Italy. Having such a wide range of research and discussions brought new ideas for future collaborations and new findings about musical instruments, new technological developments, performance and musicianship, as well as analyzing instruments' role shifts in everyday public life and changing social environments, which was extremely valuable.

The final event was dedicated to the collection of musical instruments exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This was an excellent addition to the program and a well curated exhibition, provided by courtesy of Ken Moore and Jayme Kurland, who showcased one of the most significant collections of musical instruments in the world, which was a unique and extremely appreciated resource for our members.

The Study Group's business meeting was scheduled for the second day (10th of April). The agenda was already distributed with the program some months ago, and it was also written in the official program and abstracts printout circulated among the present people.

It was decided that the official renaming from ICTM Study Group to ICTMD Study Group on Musical Instruments should take place. The second decision was about a new nomination committee. The members attending the meeting decided that Gaila Kirdiene, Ken Moore, and Judith Olson will form the nomination committee. The collection of nominations for all will be finished around the 15th of June 2025. Lastly, it was decided that the next Symposium may take place in the Guangxi Arts University, Nanning, in 2027, the week before Easter, under the leadership of local staff and together with the ICTMD Study Group on Iconography. The plan is, furthermore, to publish a selected body of research in *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, No. IX. The deadline for final submissions is the 15 May, 2025. This continues the SIMP (NEW SERIES) No. VIII, which was based on the best research papers given during the last symposium, held in Colombo.



Self-Accompaniment in Hindustani Vocal Performance: A Study of Musical Instrument Use in Sri Lanka

Geethika Abeyssekara¹

Abstract

This research investigated the habitual integration of musical instruments in vocal stage performances, focusing on how self-accompaniments influences technical performance, confidence and artistic execution. The study examined the complex reasons for using instruments such as harmonium, tanpura and swarmandal in Hindustani music. It utilized qualitative data gathered from professional classical vocalists and music educators within the Sri Lankan context. Key findings reveal that self-accompaniment serves not only as a pedagogical and expressive tool, also as a source of psychological comfort and personal identity for performers. Furthermore, the impact of musical idols and stage dynamics significantly shapes the development of these performance habits. This paper contributes to ongoing discussions in music pedagogy and performance psychology, emphasizing the evolving and multidimensional role of instruments in vocal artistry.

Keywords

Self-accompaniment, Hindustani music, vocal performance, habitual effect

Introduction

Music has long been an integral part of human expression, with vocal performances often accompanied by musical instruments across various cultures and traditions. The practice of self-accompaniment, where singers play an instrument while performing, has evolved due to historical, cultural and pedagogical impacts. Research indicates that instrumental accompaniment enhances vocal control, pitch accuracy, and rhythmic stability². Moreover, the

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² Matthews, Tomas, Thibodeau, Joseph, Gunther, Brian, and Virginia Penhune. (2016). The Impact of Instrument-Specific Musical Training on Rhythm Perception and Production. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 69.

From Tradition to Transformation: Trumpet Music and Intercultural Dialogues at the Guča Festival

Jelena Arnautović¹

Abstract

The music festival *Guča* was launched in 1961 in the small town of Guča in Serbia, and since then has had a prominent social and cultural role. Originally, the festival aimed to preserve and promote traditional trumpet music and other segments of Serbian cultural heritage. Gradually, *Guča* has been transformed into a large-scale commercial festival of world music that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors from different countries every year. The former folk music festival of local importance became in the 21st century a postmodern pastiche of folk and popular culture, and a mass spectacle primarily known for its good entertainment and a unique hedonistic experience usually described by visitors and mass media as ‘Balkan madness’. No matter where they come from, visitors at the *Guča* festival communicate through dancing to irresistible trumpet music. In this paper, I will argue that *Guča* has been an important platform for developing intercultural dialogues and overcoming war traumas. By analysing intercultural dialogues at *Guča*, we can also better understand the roles and power of musical instruments in public life.

Keywords

trumpet music, *Guča* festival, intercultural dialogues, tradition, identities

Introduction

Contemporary music festivals are complex and significant artistic, cultural, social, political and economic phenomena. They function as places of intercultural dialogues and can help overcome war traumas and inter-ethnic conflicts. To understand this process, it is important to define intercultural dialogues first. The Council of Europe defined intercultural dialogue as respect, understanding and exchange of cultural differences, as well as a key tool for

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Ladies Shingari Melam: Drums, Fun and Dance as Integral Parts of Functions and Festivals in South India

Karin Bindu¹

Abstract

Shingari melam is regarded as a secular variety of chenda melam, an orchestra consisting of various chenda drums and cymbal players. Performances of shingari melam have been integral parts of temple festival processions in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, but more recently also serve as entertainment during functions such as weddings, school festivals and inauguration ceremonies. Shingari melam teams consist of male drummers, women-only troupes or gender-mixed groups. One of the first female shingari melam groups, Sthree Shakthi, was formed in 2006 in Vayalapra, Kannur. Team Rudrathalam, another female shingari melam troupe from Nedumangad block panchayat, was formed in 2017 to empower women, especially women belonging to scheduled castes and tribes. Public performances on a regular basis provided female groups with new possibilities for income and new social roles as performers. They also served as role models for other female groups and female professionals. The excitement of the powerful rhythms and dance movements is not only strengthening community engagement and social relations within the country, but also abroad – several booking sites offer shingari melam for private and official functions. Ultimately, the story of shingari melam and its gendered dynamics reflects broader tensions between tradition and modernity, ritual and entertainment, and exclusion and empowerment. While its trajectory remains uncertain, the presence of women in this space signals an ongoing negotiation over who gets to perform, where and why. In this sense, shingari melam serves not just as a musical innovation but as a social dialogue in rhythm.

Keywords

Ladies, shingari melam, Drums, Festivals in South India, Dance

Introduction and Instrumentation

Shingari melam, one of the many percussion traditions in Kerala, is a male-dominated, secular art form that emerged in the 1990s. It contrasts with the traditional, temple-associated chenda melam, which existed for over three centuries and were historically performed by members of the Marar

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Bindu, Karin. (2025). Ladies Shingari Melam: Drums, Fun and Dance as Integral Parts of Functions and Festivals in South India. *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, 9. Edited by Gisa Jähnichen. Berlin: Logos, 27-38.

The Development of Robotic Musical Instruments in Japan: A Historical Perspective

Rinko Fujita¹

Abstract

Improvements in control theory, image processing and voice recognition technologies in recent years have broadened the applications of robots from industrial technology to entertainment purposes. Moreover, as advances in AI technologies have made human–robot interactive communication more feasible, various companies have begun to release small robots that can be used on a personal level.

The term ‘robotic musical instruments’ or ‘musical robots’ is generally used for a wide range of musical machines that produce music autonomously using various kinds of mechanical parts. In the 1980s, a project team at Waseda University in Tokyo/Japan developed the piano robot, the WABOT-2, a pioneer musical humanoid with the ability to communicate with humans. Since then, various research institutions have been conducting research and development on robotic musical instruments. In recent years, the robotic musical instruments have been developed for application in three areas: entertainment, medical and nursing care, and education.

This article focuses on the development of robotic musical instruments in Japan, particularly in the fields of entertainment and medical and nursing care, providing an overview of the background and characteristics of their development along with the creators’ objectives. It also considers questions regarding the relationship between humans, musical instruments and music.

Keywords

History, Japanese Musical Instruments, Robots, Development of Musical Instruments

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Docerola, Corridos Tumbados and the New Generation of Guitarists

Godina Valerio, Ramiro ¹

‘Folk people sing it, made into a feeling, they open their throats, and cast it into the wind.’²

Abstract

Corridos tumbados are a Mexican musical expression that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and has achieved international fame, to the point of winning a Grammy in 2024. A fundamental element in the configuration of this music is the 12-string guitar, called docerola. The impact of this chordophone is reflected in the taste of the new generations of guitarists; however, this musical expression has currently been singled out by the Mexican government due to its lyrics and the ties of some of its singers and producers to criminal organizations. This ethnographic work, through thick description, explores the interactions between these young people and their outcomes around this music, where the docerola is the common thread.

Keywords

Corridos, corridos tumbados, docerola, thick description, guitarists

Three Encounters. Introduction

In 1995, the duo Miguel and Miguel was a success in the Mexican music scene, ‘Sonora y sus ojos negros’ (Sonora and its black eyes), from the album ‘Cruz de Madera’ (A wooden cross), and has been in the collective memory since then. A fundamental part in the image and sound of this musical ensemble was and is the 12-string guitar, called docerola. The importance of this chordophone is largely due to its melodic function. I listened to this duo when I was a teenager. It was my first encounter with the docerola.

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² Lyrics fragment from ‘El corrido’, by composer Enrique Manuel Franco. Los Tigres del Norte Oficial (February 2025) *El corrido* [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGtrVa2VuP4>

Ramiro Godina Valerio. (2025) Docerola, Corridos Tumbados and the New Generation of Guitarists. *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, 9. Edited by Gisa Jähnichen. Berlin: Logos, 55- 74.

Admiring a Re-Materialized Musical Instrument: Kazakh Dombra Sculpture's Production of Space in Public

Huang Wan¹

Abstract

Dombra is a musical instrument ubiquitous in Kazakh daily life. In the northwestern regions of Xinjiang, China, various scales and styles of dombra sculptures are emerging in Kazakh settlements. This raises important questions: Why is there a need for re-materialized or sculptural representations of musical instruments in public spaces for people to admire? How do the form and scale of a dombra sculpture interact with the public consciousness of the space in which it is located? Based on fieldwork conducted since 2018, I have found that, on one hand, local Kazakh communities, fearing the loss of tradition, are constructing and placing dombra sculptures in authentic or historical styles in public spaces. This is intended to educate the younger generation about their cultural heritage and instil a sense of place and ethnic pride. On the other hand, several gigantic dombra sculptures have emerged, particularly after the concept of 'heritagization'² gained traction in 2008, which transcends local appreciation. These new sculptures help strengthen a sense of community within the Chinese nation. They reflect the contemporary paradigm of heritagized traditional instruments adapting to the internet-celebrity economy, all within the context of cultural commodification, and resonate with the national Belt and Road Initiative policy. Furthermore, this paper seeks to offer a new perspective on musical instrument research by arguing that dombra sculptures in public spaces should merely be regarded as objects, but rather as 'hypercode'³. The texture and structure of these sculptures provide viewers with impressive physical sensory experiences and associative synesthesia that goes beyond their function as musical instruments. As viewers or admirers engage with the flowing textures of meaning in shifting contexts, their critical observation and exploration of the sculptures become a poetic, timeless and insight-provoking rite of admiration, through which spaces are created.

Keywords

Dombra sculpture, Re-materialization, Production of space, Thing, Social life

- ¹ Huang Wan is a professor of ethnomusicology at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Any further information can be asked via email.
- ² Bendix, Regina. (2009). Heritage between Economy and Politics: An Assessment from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology. *Intangible Heritage*. Edited by Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa. New York: Routledge. 253-269.
- ³ Lefebvre, Henri. (2021). *The Production of Space*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.

Huang Wan. (2025). Admiring a Re-Materialized Musical Instrument: Kazakh Dombra Sculpture's Production of Space in Public. *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, 9. Edited by Gisa Jähnichen. Berlin: Logos, 75-94.

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The Fear of Losing It: Real Dancing to Unreal Music

Gisa Jähnichen¹

Abstract

In a number of regions, real dancing is the most common appearance during festivals and ceremonial opportunities.

This paper will try to consider the possible and fictive ways in which an AI could take over the production of musical instruments and how AI has an impact on dancing as an expressive activity coordinated according to instrumentally patterned music. Examples are collected in diverse, relatively isolated territories throughout the world. This can be a specific analytical step in order to make experiences in media technologies better understandable. Limited local resources may play a specific role in the discussion. A strict differentiation between mood dancing and ceremonial requirements from staged performances is obviously more important than the previous division into music for one's own mental and bodily needs of expression and those mass-commercial ideas that were often the centre of attention to make some debatable final suggestions. The investigation will focus on the interplay between real and unreal things and feelings explored from different perspectives through the interpretation of data collected during field trips and from accessible and preparatory literature. What makes musical instruments real, and what adds doubts to this reality? Which functions have added artificial components? Which result may be felt in the dances? How are observations used in this regard? This paper might be a step further in the direction of analysing the connection between instrumentally supported dancing in need of musical communication and manifold technologies of moving.

Keywords

Instrumental music, dance, AI applications, examples of irreality, Philippines

The Approach

One can easily see from the table in Figure 1 that the music is not overly prominent (only 20% of the scoring). Rhythmical synchronization between movements and beats is one of the criteria regarding music in this example. But this example can show much more than the simple criteria of judging. It shows what people know about dances and dance music. As in music itself,

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Reviewing the Boudha Bubble: The Sounds of a Pan-heterotopia

Kleikamp, Bernard ¹

Abstract

Boudhanath (or Boudha), a suburb of Kathmandu, is a major Buddhist pilgrimage site, renowned for its stupa, which is the largest on Earth. The area, often referred to as the 'Boudha Bubble', is home to around 40 Tibetan-Buddhist monasteries within a 2x2 sq km space.

Visitors can expect to encounter public musical performances on any given day. This may occur during weddings, funerals, or meditational prayer services ('pujas') in the monasteries, all of which are open to the public. The sounds of these services can often be heard in the streets, as the monastery doors are always open. Inhabitants of Boudha carry out their daily circumambulation of the stupa, known as kora, either before or after work, accompanied by instrumental music and chanting emanating from the six or so monasteries surrounding the stupa.

These public musical displays often have a religious character and involve various instruments such as drums, bells, cymbals, telescope trumpets and shawms, which are here described rather conventionally. These performances play a crucial role in shaping the social, economic, cultural, temporal, aural, visual and spatial dynamics of the Boudha Bubble.

Using footage collected during my fieldwork in Boudha and elsewhere from 2012 to 2019, I will discuss examples of the various public musical displays in Boudha and analyse their functions and impacts.

Keywords

Tibetan-Buddhist musical instruments, heterotopia, Boudha Bubble, Boudha stupa

Introduction

In and near the Kathmandu suburb of Boudhanath (or Boudha), there are an estimated 15,000 ethnic Tibetan expats, although the exact number is unknown. All of them practice Tibetan Buddhism. Additionally, around 20,000 or more Tibetans reside in Boudha area, including those who have migrated from Tibetan-populated regions within Nepal or from neighbour-

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Kleikamp, Bernard. (2025). Reviewing the Boudha Bubble: The Sounds of a Pan-heterotopia. *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, 9. Edited by Gisa Jähnichen. Berlin: Logos, 105-112.

Instruments of the State Music Ensemble of Sri Lanka and the Ambiguities of Cultural Identity

Lahiru Gimhana Komangoda¹

Abstract

The State Music Ensemble (SME) of Sri Lanka was founded in 1976, during the tenure of a socialist-oriented government led by Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranayake. The purpose of establishing the SME and the State Dancing Ensemble was to maintain standards in performances at national and international cultural events. At the inception, it was guided by William Banda Makuloluwa, who was a keen Sri Lankan folk music enthusiast cum scholar.

At the commencement of the SME, the ensemble typically included indigenous musical instruments, Indian instruments, and a few Western string and percussion instruments. The addition of the non-indigenous instruments has been occasional and has depended on the particular musical presentation. Later, the permanent composition of instruments in the SME has changed more widely into synthetic instruments. In the 1980s, Sri Lanka experienced a trend of utilizing synthetic musical instruments by music bands, which is examined as if the trend has had an impact on the changes in repertoire and composition of instruments in the SME in this work. One other concern of the study is that, since the establishment of the SME, no instruments that represent minor ethnicities such as Tamils and Muslims have been included.

The author also proposes a structure on how the SME can advocate better inclusive compositions of instruments and repertoires of national identity.

Keywords

Sri Lanka, indigenous instruments, synthetic instruments, cultural identity, ethnic instruments

Introduction

The State Music Ensemble (SME) of Sri Lanka was founded in 1976, during a period of political and cultural nationalism under the leadership of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Bandaranaike's government, from 1970 to 1977, was deeply influenced by socialist, nationalist and Sinhala-Buddhist

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The Challenges Faced by the Harmonium Used in Sri Lanka's Public Musical Life

Meddegoda, Chinthaka Prageeth¹

Abstract

This paper is dedicated to the use and the distribution of the harmonium, a free reed musical instrument, in Sri Lanka, where the British heritage item was often applied in musical dramas, spoken plays, religious and ceremonial contexts. It developed its own life on the island in comparison to other British colonies such as India, Malaysia, in some areas of Myanmar or Singapore, where Indian theatre troops travelled. The main research question might be the questioning of its sustainability throughout time and the diversity in use throughout history. School curricula and public disseminations had a big part in keeping the harmonium's imagination. However, technology allows for more than this, and one can find the harmonium often as samples or as stage performance supporting items in circumstances other than traditional contexts. Another interesting observation is the admiration of the harmonium as a musical instrument of the learned and of the well-trained. All these stigmatizing and labelling ideas have to be thoroughly scrutinized and investigated with interview and report tools that have to be made available to everyone.

Keywords

Sri Lanka, South Asia, Instrumental sound, Parsi theatre, Indian musicians

The Use and the Distribution

The use of harmonium in Sri Lanka is not much different from how it is used in India in comparison to other former British colonies such as present-day Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. Rahaim² and Meddegoda³ provided an overview of the history and use of the harmonium in South Asia and South-east Asia, referring to the main centres where the harmonium was adapted in respective cultural contexts. This research discusses how the harmonium has

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² Rahaim, Matt. (2011). That Ban(e) of Indian Music: Hearing Politics in the Harmonium. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 70 (3): 657–682.

³ Meddegoda, Chinthaka Prageeth. (2013). Adaptation of the Harmonium in Malaysia: Indian or British Heritage? *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, 3: 219–238.

Meddegoda, Chinthaka Prageeth. (2025). The Challenges Faced by the Harmonium Used in Sri Lanka's Public Musical Life. *Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis (New Series)*, 9. Edited by Gisa Jähnichen. Berlin: Logos, 129-146.

The Daula in Sri Lankan Public and Its Social Functions

Meddegoda, Nishadi Prageetha ¹

Abstract

The daula, a drum that represents the Sabaragamuwa dance tradition, plays an essential role in a variety of cultural, social and spiritual practices in Sri Lanka. Tracing its historical and cultural roots, the daula has served as a powerful medium for communication, fertility rites, celebrations and ritualistic expressions. This paper explores the sociocultural contexts of daula, which is traditionally used to comprehend its role beyond mere musical instruments.

According to the classification of traditional musical instruments known as *pancatūrya nāda*, the home-grown fivefold instrument classification. Accordingly, the daula belongs to both the *ātata*, that is struck with hands, and the *vitātāta*, that is struck with a stick and a hand. It is a cylindrical-shaped drum, with the shell measuring about 14–16 inches in length and approximately 45–48 inches in circumference. It is typically crafted from woods with hard cores, which provides durability and resonance. The drum heads and straps are often made from animal skins, commonly goat or cow.

Sri Lanka's three distinct musical traditions, as described in many writings, each featuring their own unique drums, shape the artistic and communal identities of their region. The daula plays an important role across all three regions, especially in *hēvisi*, an offering of homage through drums, rituals. Beyond its religious significance, the daula has been integral to various social functions. It has been used as the *rana bera*, a war drum; *mala bera*, the funeral drum; and for conveying royal commands, transmitting messages and even accompanying offenders to their executions and some agricultural rituals.

The study aims to determine the role of the social functions that daula plays beyond religious and ceremonial contexts, distinguishing it from other drums.

Understanding the specific characteristics of the historical, religious and social contexts of the daula is essential to appreciating its individuality and the depth of its contributions to the Sri Lankan stock of musical activities.

Qualitative musical analysis has been used as the main approach in this study. Some socio-musicological studies are studied in this regard, as well as personal interviews with experts, scholars and craftsmen were conducted in order to gather information.

Keywords

daula, drums, play, Sri Lanka, social life, religious ceremonies, rituals

¹ Nishadi Prageetha Meddegoda is a postgraduate at the Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya. Further information via email: nishadimeddegoda@yahoo.com.

'No Marriages Without It': Ancient Afro-descendant Tarimba in Costa Chica, Mexico

Carlos Ruiz Rodríguez¹

Abstract

Studies of musical instruments and public life generally tend to focus in social processes based on present city settings. However, what happens with musical instruments involved in processes of identity and locality construction which take place on isolated rural environments of the past? This paper addresses a peculiar and little-known musical instrument called tarimba, which remained in use until the mid-20th century in a restricted Afro-descendant area of the Costa Chica region in southern Mexico. Tarimba was a monochord ground zither, essential to a form of musical entertainment known as bailes de alambre (wire dances). Tarimba favored to construct an important public space for meeting persons and the development of a community sense. According to local testimonies no festivity was possible without the presence of this musical instrument. Drawing on ethnographical material and organological literature this paper focuses on three issues: 1) instrument making linked to local natural materials of this isolated area, 2) the way this musical instrument and its performance practice fostered an important space of community participation, cohesion and social reproduction in the past, 3) tarimba's Afro-descendant backgrounds and its relation with other musical instruments of Latin-America.

Keywords

Mexico, Costa Chica, Tarimba, marriages, history

Introduction

While ethnomusicological literature provides a general overview of local musical traditions of that region, some little-known expressions continue to emerge through musical research. Such is the case of the so-called wire dances and their leading instrument, the tarimba, a peculiar chordophone that fell into disuse in the mid-20th century, but which was possible to document at the beginning of the current century along with its last performers. Unfortunately, all those people who participated in that occasion today have passed away. Drawing on ethnographical material and organological litera-

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Holographic Voices in the Mexican Public Space: Construction of Communities and Political Corporalities in the Vocaloid Scene of Mexico City

Julio Enrique Vargas López¹

Abstract

This article explores the Vocaloid phenomenon from an ethnomusicological and philosophical perspective, based on fieldwork conducted between 2023 and 2025 with the Vocaloid community in Mexico City. Beyond its function as vocal synthesis software, Vocaloid is examined as a musical instrument, a performative entity and a composite body with agency. Drawing from Baruch Spinoza's notion of the composite body, Mark Fisher's concept of gothic materialism and Paul B. Preciado's idea of the somatheque, the article analyses how this technology becomes a site for affective, aesthetic and political articulation. The second part focuses on the practices of the local community, showing how young fans transform Vocaloid into a collaborative space of resistance and reimagination of public life through music, technology, and digital embodiment.

Keywords

Vocaloid, Hatsune Miku, musical instruments, holographic concert, Mexico City

Introduction

Can music software become a singer with a life of its own?

With this question, I would like to start a reflection on Vocaloid, a technology that has redefined the boundaries between musical instrument, performer and living entity. Vocaloid is a voice synthesis software developed by the Japanese company Yamaha in 2003, designed to create vocal melodies through 'voice banks' consisting of sounds pre-recorded by singers and voice actors.

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Analysis on the Construction of Guzheng Learning Platform and Cultural Inheritance Assisted by Artificial Intelligence

Zhang Yu [张宇] and Mao Yue [毛悦]¹

Abstract

In recent years, the application scope of artificial intelligence technology in music education has gradually expanded. However, in the field of guzheng enlightenment teaching, there are still practical problems such as limited teaching resources and lack of instant error correction. The study uses the 'Yinqu B1' platform developed by Yinqu Future Technology Co., Ltd. as the technical basis, conducts A/B group control experiments and semi-structured interviews in teaching practice and analyses its support effectiveness for beginners and user experience feedback. The experimental data used in the study were provided by the cooperative unit, and the author conducted teaching analysis and effect evaluation based on the use of data. The results show that the experimental group is superior to the control group that did not use the platform in terms of learning time, performance accuracy and user satisfaction. The platform integrates XR visual feedback, audio recognition and a scoring mechanism, which improves the practice efficiency while enhancing the autonomy and enthusiasm of beginners. The interview also shows that the platform is particularly effective in teaching popular repertoires and basic fingering and is suitable for the self-study needs of zero-based or young users. The study believes that although the AI platform cannot replace the in-depth guidance of musical expression and style in traditional master-apprentice teaching, it is feasible in the popularization stage and provides new ideas for the digital transformation of traditional musical instrument education and the contemporary expression of guzheng culture.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, guzheng education, extended reality (XR), music technology, design-based research

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Beyond Private and Public

The Continuum of Interpretations in Guqin Music

Hoh Chung Shih and Xu Yunheng¹

Abstract

Guqin was spectacularly re-launched² into the public limelight at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and later endowed with tremendous multimedia exposure, igniting wide public imagination on the quintessence of Chinese music. Scholars have been trying to approach the guqin from various aspects, including aesthetics, finger techniques, hand movements, literary studies, statistical analysis of fingering, temperament studies, timbral analysis and the like. In this essay, we try to focus on the introverted, private aspect of qin, i.e., the micro-space of music-making. We discovered that for guqin, the music-making process, instead of the sonic product, is the music itself. The notation and playing techniques involve kinaesthetics, timbre, melody and aesthetics related to naturalistic self-realization. In order to reveal the details of the multidimensional process, we devised a transcription of historical scores unpacking the details, and then observed the details in performance analysis, and referenced discourses on guqin produced by practitioners since the Mid-Tang Dynasty (ca. 9th CE). We selected the middle part of the work, Yuge, that is rich in annotations and interpretations in its scores. By comparing the interpretations in corresponding performance recordings, we verify the range of foci on the continuum between unsingability and melodiousness in different generations of players. However, these analyses and critiques are not vague impressions but are discovered through referencing a threefold intraconnected system of movement–timbre–melody. Hence, we arrived at a preliminary conclusion that guqin music-making must be a multidimensional process that brings the scores, the movements, the melody and the sonic aspects together. through a process of dialoguing amongst the various dimensions. As we show how the notation indicates hand movements with fingerings producing unique qualities in addition to the pitch–tone, we realize that earlier sonic or melodic analyses do not give us a satisfying picture. The ultimate goal in guqin music-making seems to be to achieve a balance through interactivity among the qualities involving natural individualities.

Keywords

Guqin, multidimensional, movement–timbre–melody, Chinese music, Yuge

Approaching State of Research on Guqin³

The study is conducted through intimate collaboration between the two researchers. The transcultural perspectives and exchanges of opinions enrich

¹ Hoh Chung Shih and Xu Yunheng are both independently working authors. They can be reached by email: hohchungshih@yahoo.com, yunhengx@gmail.com. This is supplementary research that was added as a workshop paper to complete this selection.

² Voyager 1 was launched into space in the year 1977. The full tune, named “Flowing Water” (流水), performed on the guqin by Master Guan Ping-hu, was recommended and thus became a part of the Golden Record traveling with ‘Voyager 1’.

³ Guqin is also spelled Gu-qin or Ku-ch’in. Guqin is also known as qin, used interchangeably in this essay. The prefix ‘gu’ means ancient, acknowledging the ancient history of this instrument.