

# The Application of Western Music Techniques in Isan Folk Songs for Developing Music

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research were to 1) explore the application of Western music techniques in Isan folk music, and 2) develop a music performance management process using Isan folk music integrated with Western music techniques. The study employed qualitative research methods. The findings revealed that the soprano saxophone was used to play the main melody, imitating techniques such as grace notes and intervals. The alto and soprano saxophones performed the melody and harmonized it, while the tenor and baritone saxophones supported the bass section. In terms of performance management, the creative works developed for research dissemination involved a rehearsal process and quality improvement of the music before performances. Regarding the evaluation of musical quality, high levels of satisfaction were observed in musical structure, harmony, and emotional expression. The integration of Western music techniques with Isan folk music modernized the traditional music, making it more appealing to contemporary audiences.

**Keywords:** Western music - techniques Isan folk music - music performance management.

## 1. Introduction

Isan folk music is a long-standing cultural heritage of various ethnic groups residing in northeastern Thailand, characterized by its distinctive melodies and rhythmic styles. This music features unique tonal characteristics, including the use of minor mode or pentatonic scales and lively, upbeat rhythms (Boonrod, 2021). Music in different cultures also serves as a medium of individual and group identity, reflecting each community's cultural and musical identity (Mukdamuang, 2018). The creative process of musical arrangement, instrumentation, and ensemble formation within and across cultures adds depth, beauty, and value through free thought, allowing participation in societal development (Thammabut, 2018). The blending of music across different eras and cultures leads to contemporary music, arising from the fusion of songs, instruments, and languages (Sirindhon Music Library, 2019). Applying Western music theory to other cultural music requires appropriate linkages, leading to new approaches and cultural integration that foster musical learning and creativity (Khantachan & Sirimukdagul, 2022).

Thai and Western music originated on opposite sides of the world, each developing along its cultural path, which led to the creation of unique musical identities in each region. Differences between Thai and Western music span various aspects, including their roles in society. As Eastern and Western cultures began to intersect, Western music became more prominent in Thai society, leading to ongoing efforts to blend musical cultures. This convergence has resulted in some level of integration. Analyzing music academically, one finds that the key elements

distinguishing the music of different cultures are "musical techniques," encompassing composition and performance techniques. These techniques create diverse soundscapes and textures (Phanchroen, 2016). With societal changes, the influx of Western and other foreign cultures, and technological advances in music, some Thai musicians have adapted to the modern world. These musicians have experimented with blending Thai music with Western and ethnic music, composing diverse works that reflect society, philosophy, and the potential of modern life (Phonchuan, 2020).

Music performance management is crucial in creating a rewarding experience for both audiences and artists. Jaroensuk (2021) stated that performances connect art with societal culture, ranging from classical and folk music to pop music. Isan folk music combines universal musical elements with local culture, resulting in distinctive works that express the essence of Isan based on the application of Western music theory. This can be found in the research by Danuches Wisaison (2018) who applied classical Western composition techniques to Isan folk music by emphasizing the use of classical guitar to express Isan identity to enhance the diversity and contemporaneity in composition. Moreover, the study by Panis Pothisriwongchai (2018) on blending Isan music with Western music to reflect a new image of Isan music in the modern era, using Western music and digital technology as key tools for promoting and developing folk music. The study revealed that Isan music became more accessible to variety of audiences and acknowledged internationally.

According to the concepts mentioned above, this study aims to explore the application of Western music techniques in Isan folk music to enhance music performance management. The research was conducted to demonstrate the integration of Isan folk music with Western music through the creative development of musical works and performance processes. This approach illustrates the collaboration of Western music evolution with the preservation of Isan folk music culture. The results of the study would be able to provide the potential integration to be applied in the development of other musical works.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Isan Folk Music

Music is a kind of art that has been developed along with human beings until present, and it possibly continue developing into the future. Although forms and definitions may change; musical instruments constantly retain its fundamental structures and functions (Pikulsi, 1995). The role and composers of music reflect both consistency and artistic transformation, particularly in folk music which present the unique identity of each locality. Folk music is performed using indigenous instruments with identical characteristics of geography and culture in its region (Detpimon, 1988). Particularly, Isan (Northeastern Thailand) folk music is differentiated by its lively and fast-paced rhythms that obviously represent its local lifestyle and cultural practices. The classification of musical instruments varies across cultures, with different criteria used depending on the purpose of categorization, such as for musical performance or museum display (Pikulsi, 1999). The classification of instruments is designed for ease of use and learning, and each culture develops its own system of categorization that reflects the needs of its community and the musical users within that society. Folk music is typically composed by local musicians who have not received formal theoretical training, and these songs are passed down through oral tradition rather than written notation (Chanphairoj, 1983). Key characteristics of folk music include the anonymity of its composers, themes related to everyday life, and a form of expression that reflects the emotions and experiences of the community. Having been constantly changing based on the preferences of the performers and audiences, folk music can be difficult to identify the original melody of the songs.

### 2.2 Wind Instruments in the Musical Culture of the Mekong River Basin and Isan Region

Wind instruments play a crucial role in shaping the melody and atmosphere of music in the musical cultures of the Mekong River Basin and the Isan region. Apart from musical purposes, wind instruments consisted of symbolic significance reflecting the culture and traditions of the local people. Wind instruments are made of wood and metal with wide variety in terms of shape, material, and sound production (Kamjadpanpai, 2020). Woodwind instruments are categorized into two main types: those with reeds, such as the pi (oboe), to produce sound; and

those without reeds, such as the khloi (flute), in which the sound is produced by blowing air directly through the mouthpiece. There is another kind of wind instrument made of metal. The metal wind instruments are not as renowned as woodwinds; however, it also significant in exchanging cultures between the Mekong River communities and other parts of the world through brass instruments in terms of communicating and dominating diversity of cultures. Wind instruments are essential components in Isan folk music for producing sounds using air, they are often made out of local materials which can be found in natural sources, such as bamboo tubes and animal horns. These materials were drilled into holes to create a wider range of notes (Nestsinth, 2020). Popular instruments include the khloi, pi, and khaen which are normally made of wood and played by blowing air from the top of the instrument. The development and adaptation of these instruments demonstrate the creativity and adaptability of Isan's musical culture in response to diverse environmental conditions.

### 2.3 Elements of Folk Music

The key elements of folk music consist of five main components: rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color, and form. These components are essential in helping listeners understand the various aspects of music in a more comprehensive manner (Phonprathom, 1995). Understanding these elements opens opportunities for scholars to effectively study music in different cultures. Rhythm is the organization of time in music, and its main sub-elements include accent and tempo. The combination of these elements creates diversity and enjoyment in a song. Rhythm has a direct impact on the listener's emotions and physical responses, which can be observed through movements such as clapping or tapping along with the beat of the music (Phukhaothong, 1999). Melody influences listeners' cognitive perceptions, allowing them to distinguish between different songs. The sub-elements of melody include pitch (high and low) and duration (long and short) of the sounds. Additionally, the scale plays a crucial role in shaping the framework of melody in different musical expressions (Chanyanon, 1979). Harmony is created when sounds are played simultaneously, contrasting with melody, which is played in a linear, horizontal fashion. Harmony adds to the song's emotional depth and is a subtle but important element that enhances the beauty of the music (Charoensook, 2002). Tone color refers to the unique characteristics of sound produced by different sources, whether it be the human voice or musical instruments. The variation in tone color is influenced by playing techniques, the materials used in instrument construction, and the shape and size of the instruments. For example, low and long tones are typically produced by larger and longer instruments, while high and short tones come from smaller and shorter instruments (Phukhaothong, 1999). Form is the structure of a song, which unifies the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and tone color toward a single artistic goal. The organization of form, including the length of the song and the alternation of its sections, plays an

important role in creating completeness and continuity in the music (Khammong, 2009).

#### 2.4 Prototype Melodies of Isan Wind Instruments

The khaen is a principal instrument that plays a significant role in accompanying lam performances, which are an integral part of Isan folk music culture. The khaen melodies used in performances vary widely depending on the player. However, musicians learning to play the khaen must master the fundamental melodies, known as "Lai Mae Bot," which are the foundational tunes for mor khaen (master khaen players). These fundamental patterns have been studied and categorized by music scholars based on principles of musicology, enabling learners to understand and practice them systematically. From a theoretical perspective, scholars have classified khaen melodies into two main groups based on their tonal structure: short-pattern melodies (Diatonic Major) and long-pattern melodies (Diatonic Minor). The short-pattern melodies include tunes used in various occasions, such as Lai Po Sai, Lai Sud Sanen, and Lai Soi, which are commonly performed in Isan folk music. The long-pattern melodies are more complex in structure and performance, including Lai Noi, Lai Yai, and Lai Se, which are often reserved for formal performances or those that require advanced technical skill (Khlangprasri, 2006). Meanwhile, one of the famous Isan folk music masters named Khru Sombat introduced a learning approach of fundamental khaen patterns for learning khaen melodies to following a progression that includes Lai Yai, Lai Noi, Lai Sud Sanen, Lai Po Sai, Lai Se, and Lai Soi (Sihakhot, 2011). This systematic approach helps learners to develop their khaen playing skills in a manner that aligns with the traditional learning methods of Isan folk music.

#### 2.5 Musical Assessment

In musical assessment, there is one effective approach for evaluating learning outcomes known as Performance-based assessment. It is an opportunity for students to exhibit their skills or competencies in creating work, whether through answering exam questions or presenting projects (Lane, 2010). This kind of assessment allows learners to demonstrate their skills, competencies, and real-world work processes with clear rating criteria to measure the quality of the work. For performance-based assessment students create work or demonstrating processes, using specific evaluation criteria and careful observation to assess the quality of the students' works (Brookhart, 2015). This assessment approach focused on the work process more than the final product. Moreover, Miller, Linn, and Gronlund (2009) proposed that performance-based assessment involved the evaluation of both the process and outcome. For example, assessments might include evaluating the process of data collection or the use of research tools, as well as the final product, such as writing a complete report or creating an artwork. This approach differs from theoretical knowledge tests, which often have only one correct answer. Instead, performance-based assessment focuses on the effectiveness of execution and the creation of the work

itself. Authentic assessment is another form of evaluation that emphasizes the development of skills that students will need in real life and that will help them continue to grow in their learning. The primary goal of authentic assessment is to assess the abilities demonstrated through practical tasks, without comparing learners to one another. Instead, the focus is on helping each student develop their unique skills to their full potential (Ong-artvanich & Boonrod, 2021).

#### 2.6 Musical Creativity and Orchestration Theory

Orchestration is an art that requires a deep understanding of music theory. In addition to theoretical knowledge, an orchestrator must also possess a comprehensive understanding of each instrument to create arrangements that convey the emotions of the music effectively. Phusit Suwanmanee (2014) conducted a study based on Dr. David Brinkman's text, *How to Orchestrate and Arrange Music*, which outlines three essential foundations for orchestrators: knowing the range of each instrument, understanding the register of the instruments, and creating balance and blend between the instruments in the ensemble (Suwanmanee, 2014). Knowledge of the range and playing techniques of each instrument is crucial, as the choice of instruments in orchestration directly affects the conveyance of the emotional nuances of a composition. Therefore, studying the range of each instrument through various resources—such as books, music software like Finale, or direct consultation with instrumentalists—is a key process in developing expertise in orchestration. Orchestrators must also understand the timbral qualities produced by different instruments and how to balance them in an ensemble, ensuring a coherent and emotionally resonant performance. Additionally, applying concepts and theories of music analysis in orchestration plays an important role in fostering creativity within musical arrangements. Music analysis, grounded in the principles of ethnomusicology and musicology, advocates for the use of Western music theory in examining musical characteristics. In studying the elements of folk music, five key aspects should be considered: rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color, and form (Pikulsi, 1995). These elements are foundational for creating arrangements that are not only technically sound but also artistically expressive.

#### 2.7 Saxophone Quartet

The saxophone, a wind instrument, has undergone significant development and improvement over several centuries. Since its early production, various types of saxophones have been created, differing in size, shape, and sound. While many experimental designs were introduced, only four types of saxophones remain popular and widely used today: soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, and baritone saxophone (Laokonka, 2020). Each type has a distinct range and playing style, catering to different musical contexts and the needs of musicians. The soprano saxophone is small and high-pitched in the key of Bb usually substituting clarinet in certain ensembles. The alto saxophone, pitched in Eb, is popular among

beginners and is used in a wide range of musical genres, including pop, jazz, and classical music because of its lightweight design and accessible sound. The tenor saxophone is popular in jazz and found in other musical genres as well. This kind of instrument produces deep and resonant sound, like a male vocal tone, enhancing richness and warmth to the music. Finally, the baritone saxophone, the largest and lowest pitched of the group, is well-known in terms of both solo performances and ensemble settings, due to its powerful and versatile tone (Laokhonka, 2020). The development of chamber music ensembles featuring saxophones as a part of classical and modern performances demonstrates the compliance of saxophone across musical genres. Saxophone quartet typically is a highly flexible ensemble that can interpret and perform compositions originally written for other ensembles, such as string quartets or vocal choirs consisted of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones, (Samaitertsak, 2020). In Thailand, the saxophone quartet tradition initiated in 1991 with the establishment of the Bangkok Saxophone Quartet (BSQ). The ensemble is crucial in introducing classical and Thai folk music to the general public. Their diverse performances, including arrangements of the Royal Compositions, lead saxophone to be more accessible and familiar to Thai audiences, fostering a closer connection between Western instrument and Thai musical landscapes (Charoensook, 2016).

## 2. Music Performance Management

Music performance management or concert events can be organized based on the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) quality cycle which is an effective process for enhancing musical events at the higher education level. This process emphasizes clear planning, execution, monitoring of performance outcomes, and appropriate adjustments. The PDCA framework was applied in a concert project by the network of Thai music students "Sum Hua Concert" which combined creative music production together with the development of collaborative work skills (Suwannapakdee et al., 2019). Concert events are normally organized based on PDCA principles with specifically clear tasks including sub-groups, such as performance management, budgeting, and evaluation as organizational structure for continuous monitoring and improvement. Furthermore, students are provided with real-world experience in a learning environment that promote cultivate essential management and organizational skills (Kaewbuadee et al., 2019). In addition, music performance management in this study emphasized the integration of traditional Thai folk music with Western music. The new patterns of arrangements were created with the unique identities of different regions of Thailand, such as Northern, Northeastern (Isan), and Southern music. These traditional elements were combined with classical and contemporary music to produce diverse and engaging performances to draw the attention of wide ranges of audiences (PGVIM Channel, 2019). The organized concert demonstrated strong collaboration between musical educational institutions leading to the development of music events in the future.

Furthermore, the assessment of the satisfaction revealed that most of the audiences and organizers were highly satisfied with the concert which indicated the overall success of the project (Suwannapakdee et al., 2018).

## 3. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the application of performance and arrangement techniques from creative works composed for a saxophone quartet. The primary objective is to present methods and techniques of harmonization aligned with unquiesces of Isan folk music regarding the implementation of all four types of saxophones—soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone—suitable for Isan folk songs. The scope of this study is limited on analyzing the application of arrangement techniques, performance practices, and music performance management processes.

## 4. Research Methodology

The research entitled "The Application of Western Music Techniques in Isan Folk Music and the Development of Music Performance Management" was designed by applying both theoretical and practical approaches divided into followings steps:

### 4.1. Literature Review

- Collect fundamental information on Western music theory and Isan folk music, including case studies and applications of various techniques in musical fusion:
- Review relevant research articles, books, and academic documents on Western music theory and folk music.
- Analyze case studies demonstrating the integration of Western and folk music.
- Gather information on music performance management processes that incorporate Western music techniques.

### 4.2 Analysis and Evaluation of Western Music Techniques

- Study and analyze Western music techniques that can be applied to Isan folk music:
- Analyze the musical components of Western music theory, such as composition, harmonization, rhythm, and musical structure.
- Study and evaluate techniques applicable to Isan folk music, such as complex chord progressions and structures.

### 4.3 Design and Experimentation of Techniques

- Experiment with the application of Western music techniques in Isan folk music and develop performance management processes:
- Select appropriate Isan folk songs for experimentation.

- Adapt the songs using Western music techniques, including harmonization and rhythm modification.
- Conduct trials with musicians and performers to assess the outcomes.

#### 4.4 Music Performance Management and Evaluation

- Develop performance management processes and evaluate the effectiveness of the applied techniques:
- Plan and manage performances incorporating Isan folk music fused with Western techniques.
- Conduct performances according to refined and developed procedures.
- Evaluate the performances through audience and critical feedback and analyze the success of the integration techniques.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis and Conclusion

Analyze the results from the experimentation and performances to draw conclusions about the application of techniques and performance management. 1. Analyze data from surveys, performance recordings, and sound analysis. 2. Summarize findings from the experiments and performances. 3. Compile the research report and propose recommendations for future studies and development.

The concept of "music performance management" refers to a systematic approach for organizing, planning, and executing musical performances, ensuring both artistic integrity and logistical efficiency. A structured framework for music performance management might include several key components: first, planning, where objectives such as audience engagement and thematic focus are established; second, rehearsal coordination, which involves scheduling practices and including feedback sessions to refine performances; third, resource allocation, including budgeting for instruments, venue rentals, and promotional materials; fourth, performance execution, ensuring that all technical aspects—such as sound quality and stage setup—are well-managed; and finally, evaluation, where feedback from audiences and performers is gathered to assess the success of the performance and inform future efforts. This comprehensive framework allows musicians and organizers to optimize their performances, maintain artistic standards, and adapt to feedback, creating a more cohesive and impactful musical experience.

### 5. Research Results

#### 5.1 Western Music Techniques Applied in Arranging Isan Folk Songs

From the arrangement of four Isan folk songs, it was found that Western harmonic theory and composition techniques could be applied without significantly distorting the original melodies. However, appropriate techniques must be selected. Even some of the prohibitions in Western harmony theory could be creatively adapted. The researcher arranged the Isan folk tunes for a saxophone quartet through a trial-and-error process and academic reasoning. They discovered various Western music techniques that can be used to create arrangements while preserving the core melodies.

##### 5.1.1 Parallel Perfect Intervals

Parallel perfect intervals refer to the basic harmonic combination of two notes with perfect intervals (P1, P4, P5, P8). In Western harmonic theory, the use of parallel perfect intervals, especially in four-part harmony, is generally prohibited. However, in this arrangement, the researcher chose to apply parallel perfect intervals freely, as demonstrated in the example.

The image shows a musical score for a saxophone quartet, measures 120-124, section F. The score is written for four staves: Soprano Sax, Alto Sax, Tenor Sax, and Baritone Sax. The music features parallel perfect intervals, with dynamics ranging from ff to pp. The tempo is marked 120. The key signature is one flat (Bb).

In the example from section F, measures 120–124, the melody known as "Ok Yao" is characterized by a lively and cheerful tone. The creative approach for this section involves the use of harmonization with perfect octave intervals, major third intervals, and perfect fifth intervals.

**5.1.2 Use of Chord Progressions:** Chord progressions are employed by selecting primary and secondary chords to guide the harmonization, either as a melodic backdrop or to define the direction of the harmony, as illustrated in the example.

The image shows a musical score for a saxophone quartet, measures 125-129, section F. The score is written for four staves: Soprano Sax, Alto Sax, Tenor Sax, and Baritone Sax. The music features chord progressions, with dynamics ranging from mp to f. The tempo is marked 120. The key signature is one flat (Bb).

In the example from the second sub-section of the introduction, measures 9–27, the concept is based on a melody inspired by the traditional "Kan" instrument tune. The researcher transcribed the notes and set the rhythm at 80 bpm, using chord progressions in the C Major scale to harmonize the melody, including I, IV, vi-, VII, and v- chords.

**5.1.3 Counterpoint:** In addition to traditional harmonization, counterpoint was used to enhance the musical richness, creating more emotional depth and variety in the music, as shown in the example.



In the example from measures 64–67, the researcher chose to harmonize the main melody using the concept of musical interplay between instruments. The alto saxophone and tenor saxophone engage in a call-and-response, enhancing the musical texture and making the background melody more interesting.

**5.1.4 Rhythm Design:** Rhythm design is an important technique used to highlight the melody. In this arrangement, the researcher emphasized the bassline to maintain the traditional song's characteristics, as demonstrated in the example.



In the example from Sudsan, Section H, measures 170–174, the researcher designed the rhythm and harmonization based on the unique playing style of the electric bass. To imitate this style, the baritone saxophone was chosen to replicate the sound and rhythm of the electric bass.

## 5.2 Application of Western Music Techniques in Isan Folk Music

This research presents the application of Western music theory in arranging Isan folk music using four

types of saxophones: soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone. These instruments were utilized creatively in harmonization and performance. The findings indicate that each type of saxophone enhances the sonic diversity and adds depth to folk music effectively. The application is categorized based on the type of saxophone used, as follows:

### 5.2.1 Soprano Saxophone

The soprano saxophone was used to perform the main melody of the songs. When using the soprano saxophone to play the primary melody of Isan folk music, arrangers need to consider specific playing techniques, especially those inspired by the "khaen" (a traditional Isan reed mouth organ). The khaen can blow and draw air simultaneously, creating continuous melodies without pauses for breath. Therefore, the playing technique of the soprano saxophone was adjusted to align with the continuous and flowing nature of Isan melodies, including:

#### Drone Technique

This technique is most prevalent in the "Sut Sanan" khaen style, showcasing the use of drone sounds during khaen performance. The study emulated this technique by incorporating a continuous upper melodic line in soprano saxophone performance. Given the soprano saxophone's high pitch range, adjustments were made to suit the drone sound's performance. An example of this adaptation is illustrated in Example 1.



Example 1: Soprano Saxophone Performing the Drone Technique in the Sut Saneh Style.

This example demonstrates the soprano saxophone emulating the drone technique typical of the Sut Saneh style in traditional khaen playing. The continuous drone sound, adapted for the soprano saxophone's higher pitch, replicates the sustained, uninterrupted tonal quality of the khaen, enhancing the traditional character of the Isan folk melody.

#### Interval Technique

The interval technique, particularly the perfect octave and parallel melody (unison), mimics the sound of khaen playing. This technique is prominently featured in the Sut Saneh khaen style, as it represents a distinct characteristic of khaen performance. The use of these intervals effectively captures the traditional playing style of the khaen, reinforcing the cultural identity of the music. An illustration of this technique is shown in Example 2.



Example 2: Soprano Saxophone Performing Interval Techniques.

This example showcases the soprano saxophone utilizing interval techniques, particularly emphasizing perfect octaves and unisons which effectively imitate the traditional khaen playing style of Isan folk music, particularly in the Sut Saneh style in which the authenticity and depth of the arrangement are dominated.

### Main Melody Performance

Due to the highest pitch range among saxophones, soprano saxophone is highly compatible for performing main melody of the music to enhance the prominence and clarity of melody line. However, it is strongly suggested carefully selecting the appropriate pitch range during the melodic progression to maintain musical coherence and authenticity in application as illustrated in Example 3.



Example 3: Soprano Saxophone Performing Main Melody Techniques.

Example 3 illustrates the soprano saxophone performing main melody, leveraging its high pitch range to highlight the melody line. Using this technique, the melody maintains standing out clearly, continuity and fluidity without breath pauses, and effectively capturing the spirit of traditional Isan folk music.

### 5.2.2 Alto Saxophone

The researcher utilized the alto saxophone to alternate the main melody with the soprano saxophone due to its suitable pitch range and its prevalent use in Isan folk music. The alto saxophone's tonal quality is familiar and appealing to listeners, making it an excellent choice for performing the primary melody of the music. In addition to playing the main melody line, the alto saxophone was also employed to harmonize and integrate with the main melody, fulfilling a role in performing various interval harmonizations. An example of this application is shown in Example 4.



Example 4: Alternating Melody Performance Using Alto Saxophone and Soprano Saxophone

This example illustrates the alternating melody performance between the alto saxophone and soprano saxophone. This approach enhances the flow and dynamism of the main melody in Isan folk music, highlighting the complementary roles of these instruments in creating a rich and varied melodic texture.

### 5.2.3 Tenor Saxophone

The researcher selected the tenor saxophone to harmonize the bass line, perform interval harmonizations, and complement the main melody alongside the alto saxophone. This approach enhances the clarity of the harmonic line and ensures the completeness of the four-part harmonization technique. In certain sections, the tenor saxophone was also used to play the melody and harmonize the main line through parallel intervals, including unison and perfect octaves. An illustration of this application is provided in Example 5.



Example 5: Performance Techniques in Tenor Saxophone

According to example 5, the performance techniques in tenor saxophone emphasizes its role in bass harmonization, interval harmonies, and supporting the main melody using parallel intervals such as unison and perfect octaves to contribute to a balanced and complete harmonic structure that enhance the overall depth of the Isan folk music arrangement.

### 5.2.4 Baritone Saxophone

The baritone saxophone is the lowest-pitched instrument saxophone used for arranging Isan melodies. In this research study, bass line placement techniques were implemented based on four-part harmony theory to support and enhance the melody in order to generate more melodious. Additionally, baritone saxophone also emphasizes chord

progressions to provide more complete harmonic texture. Additionally, the baritone saxophone was used to imitate the sound of electric bass in Isan folk music or luk thung molam songs. This technique is illustrated in Example 6



Example 6: Techniques for playing the electric bass sound on a baritone saxophone.

The figure illustrated in example 6 represents the techniques used for baritone saxophone to imitate the sound of the electric bass in Isan folk and luk thung molam music. For this technique, the performance captures the rhythmic and harmonic essence of traditional bass lines adding a contemporary touch to the arrangement by adapting the deep, resonant qualities of the baritone saxophone.



Figure 1: Rehearsal Sessions Prior to the Live Performance

This figure depicts the rehearsal sessions conducted before the live performance, highlighting the preparation process where musicians refine their techniques, adjust arrangements, and align their performance with the artistic goals of the creative work.

## 2.2 Music Performance and Dissemination

For the performance, the researcher compiled information for a program booklet, including musical characteristics and the creative concepts behind each

## 2. Music Performance Management Process Using Isan Folk Music Integrated with Western Music Techniques

### 2.1 Rehearsal Process

The researcher arranged the music for a saxophone quartet by selecting pieces that had been reviewed and validated for quality and accuracy by music experts. These arrangements were then tested in rehearsals to make adjustments and refine the musical details, including the performance techniques for each type of saxophone, to meet the quality standards set by the arranger. The music was tested with two groups of musicians: four students majoring in Music at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Loei Rajabhat University, who were enrolled in saxophone performance classes, and four highly skilled military band members from the 28th Military Circle, Si Song Rak Camp. From the rehearsal sessions with both groups, the researcher identified issues and revised the musical scores to ensure accuracy before using them in live performances. Adjustments included correcting notes that were inconsistent with the arrangement techniques, modifying notes to better suit the imitation of traditional folk instruments, refining performance techniques, and enhancing the musicians' understanding of the emotional expression of the pieces.

piece, to help the audience understand the composer's artistic vision. The creatively developed pieces were performed and disseminated to the public. The doctoral recital, titled "The Creation of Isan Melodies for Saxophone Quartet," was held on Friday, April 5, 2024, at the Theatre of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University. The performance featured a saxophone quartet from the College of Music, Mahasarakham University.



Figure 2: Schedule of the Doctoral Recital “The Creation of Isan Melodies for Saxophone Quartet” on Friday, April 5, 2024, at the Theatre of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University

This figure presents the schedule of the doctoral recital, highlighting the performance details of the creative work “The Creation of Isan Melodies for Saxophone Quartet,” including the date, time, and venue at the Theatre of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University.

### 2.3 Evaluation of Performance Quality

Following the public dissemination of the performance, a committee was appointed to evaluate the quality of the work according to the methodologies and concepts of academic music creation research. Specific topics and criteria for evaluation were established, and the

information gathered from quality assessments was used to guide the evaluators on the day of the performance. The evaluation committee comprised music scholars and experts from various institutions who assessed the quality of the compositions using criteria tailored for qualitative music research. The evaluation focused on aspects such as the coherence of musical elements, the effectiveness in conveying emotions or creative ideas of the composer. The criteria for analysis and data interpretation are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation Results of the Composition Quality

| Aspect       | Evaluation Criteria                                                                       | Mean        | Percent age  | S.D.        | Evaluation Standard |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1            | The creative work can be a suitable medium for dissemination                              | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 2            | The newly developed Isan melodies are appropriate and retain the original folk essence    | 3.67        | 91.67        | 0.47        | High                |
| 3            | The newly developed work is accessible to Isan folk melodies                              | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 4            | The technique of wind instruments is suitable for creating traditional folk melodies      | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 5            | The technique of creating and developing rhythm is suitable for traditional folk melodies | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 6            | Musical symbols are appropriate for the folk melodies being arranged                      | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 7            | The choice of scale is suitable for the folk melodies being arranged                      | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 8            | The choice of chords and modes is suitable for the folk melodies being arranged           | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 9            | The choice of harmonization methods is suitable for the folk melodies                     | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| 10           | The overall composition can create an impression and be easily accessible to the audience | 4           | 100          | 0           | High                |
| <b>Total</b> |                                                                                           | <b>3.97</b> | <b>99.17</b> | <b>0.05</b> | <b>High</b>         |

From Table 1: Composition Quality Evaluation Results. Overall, the quality of the compositions was rated at a high level (average score of 4). Specific aspects of the evaluation revealed that the creative works are suitable for dissemination and effectively connect with the Isan melodies. The techniques used for wind instruments were appropriate for creating traditional folk melodies, and the rhythmic development techniques aligned well with the original folk music. The musical symbols and notations used were suitable for the arranged folk melodies, and the choice of scales and chords was appropriate for the compositions. The harmonization techniques used were well-suited to the folk melodies, and the overall composition was impressive and easily accessible to the audience, achieving a high rating (average score of 4). The newly developed Isan melodies maintained their traditional essence, receiving an average score of 3.67.

#### General Recommendations from the Evaluation Committee:

1. The compositions were well-balanced, effectively integrating the essence of Isan instruments into the arrangements. The works clearly communicated the intended concept through the ensemble, aligning well with the original creative vision.
2. The use of Western music theory techniques in harmonization contributed to the development of Isan melodies, creating a new form of musical expression. Disseminating these works on social media platforms could enhance art and culture, adding value through creative economy policies.
3. Incorporating soundscapes with the production would enhance the compositions, especially when divided into three parts. For example, "Khaen Sut Saneh" could represent

the planting season of Isan life; "Phu Thai Pipe" could symbolize the harvest season, communal work, and celebration; and "Phu Thai Pipe" could depict family reunions and community bonding.

#### Discussion

This research aimed to study the application of Western music techniques in arranging Isan folk music, specifically by using saxophones—a Western instrument family—to perform creatively arranged pieces with soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones. The findings indicate that integrating these instruments with Isan folk melodies effectively enhances the diversity and depth of the sound, aligning with Naronrit Thammabut's (Thammabut, 2018) concept that the creative arrangement and combination of musical instruments across cultures add depth, beauty, and value through independent thought, allowing participation in societal development in various forms. The fusion of music from different eras and cultures represents contemporary music that emerges through creative methods, incorporating songs, instruments, and languages (Sirindhon Music Library, 2019). Applying Western music theory to other cultural music requires identifying suitable connections that foster learning and creativity through cultural integration (Khantachan & Sirimukdagul, 2022).

In terms of musical creation, using the soprano saxophone to play the main melody exemplifies the fusion of the traditional khaen melodies with saxophone techniques. The adaptation of the drone sound, a distinctive feature of the Sut Saneh khaen style, was modified to suit the high pitch range of the soprano saxophone, which required adjustments for continuous playing without breathing breaks. Additionally, the interval technique, another key feature of the Sut Saneh style, helped create similarities

between the saxophone and the traditional *khæn* sounds. The alto saxophone was also used to alternate with the soprano saxophone, which played a significant role in maintaining the flow of the main melody and adding depth through harmonization techniques. The tenor and baritone saxophones were crucial in balancing and deepening the bass and harmony, ensuring a complete and balanced four-part harmonization, consistent with Natcha Phanchroen's (Phanchroen, 2016) perspective that differences in musical techniques, such as composition and performance, define the unique soundscapes and roles of music within society.

The public performance of this research demonstrated that the creative works were highly regarded by music experts, especially in terms of structure, harmonization, and emotional expression. This aligns with Witthawat Phonchuan's (Phonchuan, 2020) observation that the evolution of Thai society, influenced by Western and other foreign cultures, along with advancements in music technology, has led Thai musicians to adapt by blending Thai music with Western and ethnic elements, composing diverse works that reflect modern social and philosophical contexts. Furthermore, the creative works developed through this research proved to be effective mediums for dissemination, allowing newly developed Isan melodies to resonate with traditional folk elements. The choice of wind instrument techniques was suitable for traditional melodies, and the rhythmic and harmonic adjustments maintained the folk essence while enhancing accessibility for modern audiences.

This is consistent with Danuches Wisaison's (Wisaison, 2018) study, which applied Western classical composition techniques to Isan folk music, using the classical guitar to express the essence of Isan, enhancing diversity and contemporaneity in composition. Similarly, Panis Pothisriwongchai's (Pothisriwongchai, 2018) research focused on integrating Isan music with Western music to present a new image of Isan music in the modern era, using Western music and digital technology as key tools for promoting and developing folk music. This integration has made Isan music more accessible to diverse audiences and enhanced its global appeal.

Integrating Western techniques into Isan folk music presents several challenges, including cultural appropriation, which risks diluting traditional practices for commercial gain without proper acknowledgment. This incorporation may lead to a loss of authentic elements, overshadowing the unique characteristics of Isan music, and creating a skill disparity among musicians who may neglect its nuanced practices. Resistance from purists can emerge, resulting in tensions within the community between those embracing fusion and those aiming to preserve tradition. Additionally, commercialization could prioritize marketability over authenticity, while erosion of communal practices might diminish music's social role. Misrepresentation and resulting identity crises may further challenge musicians as they navigate this blend, emphasizing the need for respectful and

informed approaches to fusion to safeguard the cultural heritage of Isan folk music.

Local Isan musicians involved in the integration of Western techniques often have diverse perspectives on the process. Some view it as an opportunity for artistic expansion, enabling them to reach broader audiences and infuse traditional melodies with new ideas, enhancing their creative expression. They might share experiences of collaborations that have deepened their technical skills while also retaining the essence of Isan music. However, others express concern that these fusions could dilute their cultural identity, risking the emotional connections that define their heritage. Many feel a responsibility to balance innovation with tradition, reflecting on how integrated performances can evoke both excitement and unease within their communities. The emotional expression embedded in their music is vital; musicians often convey that while blending styles can create powerful new sounds, it must still resonate with the heart of Isan culture. Ultimately, this integration process can impact the cultural identity of Isan communities, prompting ongoing dialogue about what it means to honor their roots while embracing change, thus influencing their emotional connection to the music itself.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the intricate relationship between the integration of Western techniques and the preservation of Isan folk music. The analysis reveals that while the introduction of new styles can enhance creative expression and broaden audience reach, it also poses risks to the authenticity and cultural identity of Isan music. Local musicians express a mixture of excitement and concern, recognizing the potential for artistic growth but also the importance of maintaining traditional roots. The findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach that honors the emotional connections and communal practices central to Isan culture. Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of developing a structured framework for music performance management that supports both innovation and tradition, ensuring that the rich heritage of Isan folk music continues to thrive in an evolving musical landscape. The integration of Western techniques into Isan folk music presents both opportunities and challenges that warrant further exploration. Future research could focus on a variety of areas, including the impact of these integrations on cultural identity and emotional connections within Isan communities, allowing for a deeper understanding of how traditional practices evolve in contemporary contexts. Studies could also investigate the pedagogical implications for music education, examining how curricula can incorporate both traditional and modern elements to enrich learning experiences. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of local musicians on the integration process may yield valuable insights into the preservation of cultural heritage amid globalization.

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