BENGKEL INOVASI PEDAGOGI

Ethnic Music in the Classroom: Belian dadu (Kenyah long-dance songs) and Peruncung (Bidayuh bamboo percussion ensemble) in Music Education

by

Chong Pek Lin
Institut Perguruan Batu Lintang
peklin_chong@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Malaysian music educators are woefully short of teaching materials. Existing KBSR and KBSM books which feature mainly composed songs in the major scale, are not suitable for the application of the Kodaly and Orff pedagogical methods. This paper presents two folk genres of Sarawak which offer a unique solution to this problem. Kenyah long-dance songs, belian dadu have four characteristics of special value to music educators. Firstly, they feature homophonic multi-part singing (a very rare phenomenon). Secondly, they are overwhelmingly pentatonic and thus especially suitable for the Kodaly method. Thirdly, belian dadu are regular metrically, usually in 4/4 rhythms, and are accompanied by attractive dance-movements. The lyrics are also attractive and reflect life in rural Sarawak. This paper also features the Bidayuh peruncung ensemble as a suitable application of the Orff Approach. In the process of playing these bamboo idiophones, students learn rhythmic patterns, coordination and team-work.

Subject: Music Education

Innovation:

(a) Kenyah songs are particularly suitable material for the Kodaly Choral Approach in music pedagogy (teaching of music through singing, using folk songs and beginning with the anhemitonic pentatonic scale)

(b) The Bidayuh peruncung ensemble is a suitable application of the Orff Approach where students learn rhythmic patterns and basic ensemble skills through playing simple percussion instruments. Orff also encourages the use of folk and traditional materials.

Target Group: Both Primary and Secondary Music classes

Objective

Expanding teaching materials: Use of folk songs from Sarawak and local instruments in music lessons.
**Strategy:** Lecture/Demonstration/Workshop
(a) Slide Presentation and lecture (20 min)
(i) Kenyah songs: Actual performance in Longhouse/applications in classroom and stage 
(ii) *Peruncung*
(b) Demonstration by students: songs and movement/workshop: 25 min
(c) *Peruncung* demonstration by students/workshop: 25 min

**Benefits:** Music teachers in Malaysia are woefully short of teaching materials. The present KBSR books (which contain mainly composed songs in the major scale) are not suitable if teachers try to apply the Kodaly and Orff pedagogical methods. Folk-songs and instrumental music represent the living culture of our people.

**Equipment:**
(i) LCD projector and speakers
(ii) Microphone
(iii) Space for movement
(iv) Notes & Music scores to be printed for all participants (about 10 pages)

**Facilitators**
12 students from IPBL will be involved as facilitators for the workshop.

**A. Contemporary Music Education Approaches**

1. **The Kodaly Method**
The Kodaly method which evolved in Hungarian schools under the inspiration of Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1987) is based on several basic tenets. Firstly, Kodaly firmly believed that the attainment of music literacy is a universal right. Music thus ought to be taught effectively to children in every school, without the need for expensive instruments. This goal can be achieved using a system of teaching music through singing. This leads to the second basic tenet of Kodaly's philosophy, which is that “*Singing is the best foundation for musicianship*”. The songs used as teaching materials in the Kodaly method are carefully selected materials, ideally, folk songs. In fact, Kodaly believed also that “the folk songs of a child's own heritage should be the vehicle of all early instruction”. Another important aspect of the Kodaly method is the highly sequenced order of teaching music concepts. The first few stages in the sequential teaching of melodic groupings is summarized below:

- (i) s m
- (ii) l s m
- (iii) m r d
- (iv) l s m r d (the anhemitonic do-pentatonic scale)
- (v) extensions of the do-pentatonic scale into the lower and higher octaves
- (vi) la-pentatonic, so-pentatonic and re-pentatonic scales

Thus, teachers implementing the Kodaly method would need to have access to a many songs in different tonalities. This is especially significant to Malaysian teachers, as most of the songs in KBSR and KBSM song-books are composed songs in diatonic major or minor scales. Materials for the first six stages in the sequence (pentatonic songs) are notably absent. Kenyah songs, which are predominantly pentatonic, could fill this void. Theses songs would also serve as excellent materials for two other aspects of the Kodaly system, that is, part-singing and a *capella* singing, which are introduced at an early age. To aid sight-singing, the Kodaly approach
includes a system of hand signals developed by John Curwen in 1870. Children are taught to associate pitches with these hand signals.

2. The Orff Method

Carl Orff developed an approach to music education for young children, starting with the basic concept that feeling precedes intellectual understanding. Orff activities are built on materials such as the rhythm of the child's speech and movement, childhood songs, traditional singing games, dances and folk-tales. He also developed specialised instruments, the Orff instruments, with which children can develop musicality in classrooms.

3. World Music Pedagogy

In Western countries there has been a gradual increase in emphasis on the inclusion of ‘non-Western’ musics in the school curriculum, while in Asian, African and South-American countries, there are concerted attempts to bring indigenous music into the education system. Numerous materials for instruction in world musics have been produced. However, many music educationists find they cannot cover such a wide range of styles given the limited class-time. They are faced with a plethora of musical styles, some of which have little connection to other parts of their curriculum which emphasis music literacy.

Kenyah recreational songs can make a unique contribution to the solution of this dilemma, particularly in Malaysia, as they are definitely Asian in melodic character, and yet conform to Western musical syntax.

B. Ethnic Music of Sarawak Applied To the Above Methods

1. The Kenyah Long-Dance Song “Belian Dadu”

These songs are vastly different from “Western influenced” contemporary songs. While the latter are based mainly on diatonic major and minor scales, Kenyah songs are overwhelmingly pentatonic (5-tone scale). The vast majority of the songs belong to the belian dadu (literally “long-dance songs” genre. These are the most well-known and are sung by the whole community at social gatherings. Kenyah songs are mostly in two-part harmony, and the parts are easily distinguished.

_Belian Dadu_, are sung while performing a simple line-dance, the _tu’ut dadu_ (literally “long-dance”). This dance is an informal one, and consists basically of a step and shuffle punctuated with stamps at the end of certain phrases. The basic sequence: _step, shuffle, step shuffle_ produces a duple meter, while the common variant: _stamp, shuffle, step, shuffle_ results in quadruple meter.

I have recorded and transcribed a total of 43 songs in this genre, encompassing repertoire from eight locations in the Baram: Long Moh, Long Mekaba, Long Semiyang, Long Tungan, Long Selatong, Long San, Long Lama, and Kg Perpindahan, Marudi, and one village, Uma Sambop in Belaga. I have also documented several songs associated with instrumental tunes. Five examples are given below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Tone-set</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ateklan</td>
<td>( s \mid d \mid r \mid m \mid s ) ( H: s \mid l \mid t \mid d' )</td>
<td>do-pentatonic</td>
<td>Belian Dadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pui Ngeleput Burui</td>
<td>( s \mid l \mid d \mid r \mid m )</td>
<td>do-pentatonic</td>
<td>Song associated with sape tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nombor Satu Nombor Dua</td>
<td>( s \mid l \mid d \mid r \mid m \mid s \mid l )</td>
<td>do-pentatonic</td>
<td>Belian Dadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Telu Tiang</td>
<td>( t \mid d \mid r \mid m \mid f \mid s' \mid l' )</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Belian Dadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lane Tuyang</td>
<td>( M: s \mid l \mid d \mid r \mid m \mid s \mid H: s \mid d \mid r \mid m \mid s \mid l \mid d' )</td>
<td>re-pentatonic</td>
<td>Belian Dadu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 1. Ateklan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Singable Malay version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pemong Jaiee telu tiang</td>
<td>Tonight my friends we gather Tonight under the moonlight Tonight, tonight Under the light of the emerging moon, Truly I say this to you my friends</td>
<td>S’lamat datang tetamu ke Telang Usan¹ Malam ini Malam bulan terang Malam, malam ini, terang terang bulan Mari kawan menari di rumah panjang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alem ini alem ini edang bulan</td>
<td>Alem, alem ini Edang, edang bulan Ateklan nelan nalo ina tuyang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Telang Usan literally “pineapple juice” is the name used commonly by the Kenyah to refer to the Baram (because the river water tasted as sweet as pineapple juice to their ancestors)

Pembudayaan Penyelidikan Ke Arah Kecemerlangan Profesionalisme Keguruan
Example 2: Pui Ngeleput (This is also the basic motif for a well-know sape tune used for various group dances such as datun julud)

Lyrics
Pui ngeleput burui ia
Paun langan aun tiga

Translation
Grandfather shoots the magic bird with his blowpipe
The arrow is not good
Pui Ngeleput Burui

**Kenyah Sape tune (for long-dance)**
Lyrics: Traditional; based on folk-tune

---

**Teaching suggestions:**
The class can be divided into two groups: one group sings the melody, while the other imitates the second sape which plays the ostinato: **do do so**, accompanied by the hand signals for the solfege.

**Example 3. Nombor Satu Nombor Dua (boat-song)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Literal Translation</th>
<th>Singable Malay version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Mesai muit,*  
Telu tiang lalu lan telit  
Lalu telit piping,  
Lalu telit piping langan  
Nelane. | *Paddle on my friends,*  
To the quiet part of the river  
Straight and light as the dart of a blowpipe we speed  
Truly so. | *Mari kawan, mari mendayung*  
*Menghala Ulu Baram*  
*Dayung dayung sampan*  
*Lurus laju bagai anak panah,*  
*Dayung sampan* |
| **Chorus:**  
Nombor satu, nombor dua  
Le mesai cha lidung sungai  
Neken cha lidung tu’on  
Lo’uban lan tawai | **Chorus:**  
Number one, number two,  
Paddle to the sheltered part of the river  
Pole² through the rapids  
We recall the course of the journey | **Chorus:**  
Nombor satu, nombor dua  
*Mendayung ke hulu sungai*  
*Galah rentas jeram,*  
*Selamat sampai ke rumah panjang* |

² When they reach a steep stretch of rapids, the boat-crew drive long poles into the river-bed, lifting the boat above the water.
The actions accompanying the song clearly portray the rowing of a boat. While singing the verses, the participants perform the ordinary step-brush movement, moving anti-clockwise in a circle. During the chorus, the dancers remain stationary, and perform the following actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Legs</th>
<th>Arms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Step back right foot.</td>
<td>Swing arms down together as if holding a paddle (in a right-back diagonal direction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 And</td>
<td>Step (front) left foot</td>
<td>Bring arms forward and up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 4. *Telu Tiang*

The gentle, lyrical tune of this song conveys the atmosphere of a quiet night on the longhouse verandah. The first verse conjures up images of nights in a longhouse before the advent of electricity. The second describes the sentiments of friends who meet too rarely but gather now in close comradeship. It effectively portrays the isolation of life in the interior of Sarawak.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Malay version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Telu tiang tipa lan tepat kau*
*Telu tiang nentuk lan kayu*
*Nentuk kayu lunang lan lian*
*Nelane, nelane* | Dear friends we sit here reminiscing
By the light of the firewood
The glowing embers
Truly so, truly so | Teman-teman, renungkan masa dulu,
Teman-teman, kayu api membara
Kayu api membara
Sesungguhnya begitu |
| *Telu tiang menjat ne telu jita*
*Telu tiang batung lan usa*
*Batung usa eyong inan*
*Nelane, nelane* | Dear friends seldom do we meet
Dear friends we gather now in close comradeship
Truly this is so | Teman-teman, jarang kita bertemu
Teman-teman, kini kita kumpul bersama,
Rapat sekali, sehati, sejiwa
Sesungguhnya begitu. |

Score 4: *Telu Tiang*  
Transcribed: Chong Pek Lin

Although the tone set is definitely that of a major scale, the first two phrases are pentatonic. This song is thus a useful transitional exercise to introduce *fa* and *ti*. 
Example 5: *Lane Tuyang* (“ Truly my friends”)  

This is another popular *belian dadu*, always performed in two-part harmony.

**Kenyah lyrics**  
*Lane tuyang nelan ne sa-lan lamat*  
*Lane tuyang telu neman lan palat*  
*Neman palat ujuh*  

**Translation**  
My friends, let us celebrate  
My friends, let us shake hands  
Lets shake hands  

**Chorus:**  
*Lan de talan, lan de tuyang*  
*Menjam puyan kumbin*  
*Lan de tuyang*  

**Chorus:**  
Truly, my friends  
How do you do?  
How are things going, my friends?  

---

**Score 5**  
*Lane Tuyang* (version 1) Descant begins on bar 6
2. **Bidayuh Peruncung Ensemble (as taught by Simon Pitu, Dayak Cultural Foundation, based on the tradition at Kg.Krusen,Tebakang)**

In Bidayuh culture, the peruncung ensemble, consisting of a set of 8-10 bamboo tubes of different sizes, was traditionally played as an invocation for rain. During the sowing season, people returning from the fields would play these bamboo tubes on the way back from the padi fields, in the belief that this would persuade the gods to send rain.

There is no fixed pitch or melody. However, as the pitch varies with the length and thickness of the bamboo, each tube has a different pitch. The bamboo tubes are held with the left hand and struck with a wooden beater. Performers consist of both men and women. Each player is assigned a short rhythmic pattern which he repeats throughout. This interlocking pattern of constant beats results in complex and attractive cross-rhythms.

**Perun cong Rhythms for 10 players**  
Transcribed by Chai Sheau Ming

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10
References


Copyright: Chong Pek Lin 2007