

DRAFT

THE FIRST APPROACH TO HÁT XẨM USING SPECTROGRAM TO AID THE TRANSCRIPTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF ITS DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

by

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Abstract

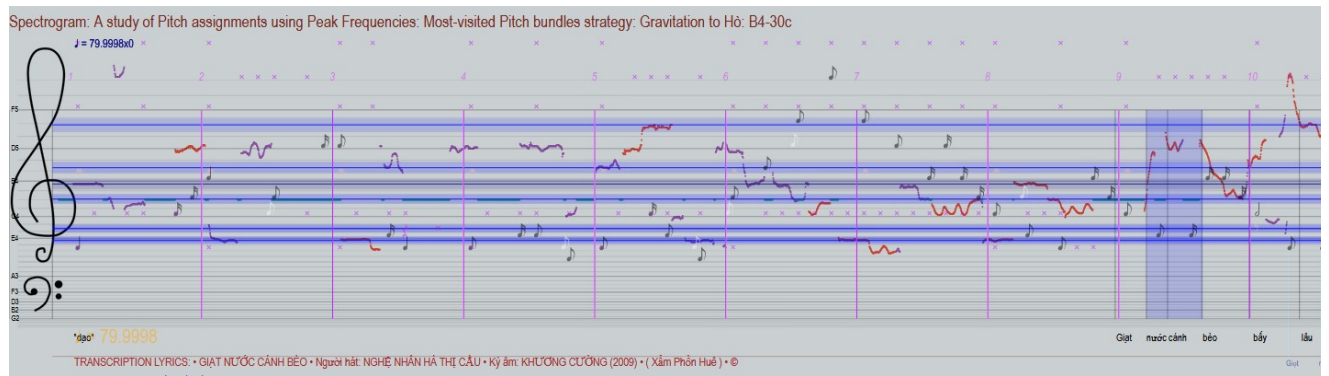
The majority of the Vietnamese traditional music has a characteristic of oral transmission, improvisation and delicateness in exposition. Until today, the identification, the determination of folk musical style and distinctive features in general, and Hát Xẩm in particular have been analyzed by scholars based on the western tempered staffs. Albeit the usefulness of western staffs, the Vietnamese music is not based on tempered notes, and the transcription also loses the delicate details in performance and playing. It is clear that the western staffs and tempered notes do not represent the Vietnamese traditional music adequately.

Using Hát Xẩm as a sample in this study, the paper introduces the spectrogram as a aid to transcription and identification of musical sounds, and in its nature, can support research and analysis of Vietnamese traditional music. A spectrogram is a 3-dimensional matrix, recording 3 sound measurements: pitch in *Hertz* (Hz), intensity in *Decibels* (dB), and duration in *milliseconds* (ms). Based on spectrograms, the paper will introduce the concept of *chữ nhạc* “musical syllable” widely used to establish *lòng bản* “core melody” in *nhạc tài tử Nam bộ* “southern musical jam”, where spectrogram is visually represented as instant photograph of sound, or “transcription” by spectrogram.

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Heretofore, the paper would like to introduce a methodology of a new type of music transcription and processing which also allow researchers to classify using up-to-date technology. For example, the spectrogram in *Giọt nước cánh bèo* by Hà Thị Cầu 1998 gives us the top 6 frequencies that occur most, i.e. E4-30c, F4+40c, A4+10c, B4-30c, C5+30c and E5-10c, and the syllable onsets are not distributed evenly eventhough it retains the rhythm of the song.

Key words: spectrogram, musical word, Hát Xẩm, transcription means, method of identification.