

THE SOCIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF HÁT XẨM IN VIETNAM - DIRECTIONS FOR PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION

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Hát Xẩm is a unique folk performing art form used by blind artists to earn a living at the wharf, market or street corner, country road, etc. At the same time, Hát Xẩm has a long history: more than 700 years (since 14th century). The art of Hát Xẩm is improvisatory, and the performers can improvise with a thoughtful, skillful, and engaging storytelling style. Hát Xẩm has profound artistic value: it is a folk music imbued with humanity, aesthetics, and education of a genuine labor profession.

Central to understanding of Hát Xẩm are the social trade guilds that help to promote the art. Hát Xẩm artists organize performances in groups and associations in order to maintain the tradition. The guilds help to transmit the art, develop careers and generally support the artists. The paper discusses the social characteristics of Hát Xẩm and describes the characteristics and activities of Hát Xẩm guilds, concentrating in Xẩm clubs in Hanoi city and in Ninh Bình province as case studies. The paper suggests several ways in which the art of Hát Xẩm might be celebrated and preserved in contemporary life.

Keywords: conservation, Hát Xẩm, art, promotion, guild.