

ABSTRACT
**A CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING VIETNAMESE MUSIC:
KEY NOTES IN CONTEXT AND PITCH CONTOUR GRAPH**

by
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Areas of difficulty in teaching Vietnamese traditional and folk music to non-Vietnamese include the aural-oral traditions, the use of non-Western European scales and extensive multiple pentatonic scales, their associated airs and modes, the heterophonic texture when musicians improvise a tune simultaneously in an ensemble, the Vietnamese-specific sentence-based poetic structure of the piece—sometimes described as non-metrical. By analyzing voices and instruments, a group of educational community organizers attempt to set up an initial guide for understanding and teaching Vietnamese folk music. It involves, for example, searching for original or commonly accepted musical pieces and identifying the scales, ranges, background knowledge, melodic contour, sequences, motives, and temporal characteristics before the best visual representation of pieces can be suggested for documentation. We use the famous song *Ru con miền Nam* (“Lullaby from south Vietnam”) to demonstrate the guide. Specifically, we first attempt a context-sensitive *key notes in context*, or **knic**, that lays out the frequencies of occurrences of two, three, etc. adjacent pitches that may reveal repeated pitch patterns in the piece. We also attempt a pitch-time graph. This shows the pitch curve as the piece is performed in real time. We aim to show the characteristic rhythmic patterns and metrical structure spread over the time axis. Most importantly, it may reveal the Vietnamese-specific microtones therein, if any, which help music learners to replicate the feel of Vietnamese music.

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