

피아노 교육에 있어 태국 동북부 민속 선율의 통합: 음악 교수법과 창의성의 문화 간 접근

Integrating Northeastern Thai Folk Melodies into Piano Education: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Music Pedagogy and Creativity

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Abstract This study aims to explore the integration of Isan folk melodies into piano education as a cross-cultural approach to music pedagogy, and to develop piano lessons that preserve cultural heritage while enhancing the educational experience for students. The research followed a qualitative methodology, with informants selected purposively from four key groups: folk music experts, performance specialists, music academics and undergraduate piano students. Results show the effectiveness of newly developed lessons in promoting both cultural preservation and musical innovation. The findings further highlight potential for these integrated lessons to be used in various educational settings, contributing to the broader goal of fostering cultural understanding and appreciation in music education. The integration of Isan folk melodies into piano education represents a significant step forward in the cross-cultural approach to music pedagogy. Suggestions include integrating arts and cultural performances into public and private learning centers, offering additional potential for community engagement. The creation of Isan melody piano lessons in this study also demonstrates the potential for further educational applications and innovations in music learning, with the potential to be expanded into music learning materials tailored to various levels, incorporating historical or cultural content to enrich the educational experience.

Key words: cross-cultural pedagogy, intercultural composition, Isan folk music, multicultural music education, piano education

초록 본 연구는 이산 민속 선율을 피아노 교육에 통합하여 문화유산을 보존하고 학생들의 교육적 경험을 향상시키는 문화 간 음악 교육 방안을 탐색하는 데 목적이 있다. 질적 연구 방법을 기반으로, 민속 음악 전문가, 공연 전문가, 음악 교육자, 피아노 전공 학부생 등 네 개 집단에서 목적 표집법으로 참여자를 선정하였다. 연구 결과, 새롭게 개발된 피아노 수업은 문화 보존과 음악적 창의성을 동시에 촉진하며, 다양한 교육 환경에서 활용 가능성이 높음을 보여준다. 또한 이러한 수업은 음악 교육에서 문화에 대한 이해와 감상을 증진하는 데 기여할 수 있다. 결론적으로, 이산 선율의 통합은 음악 교육의 문화 간 접근 방식에서 의미 있는 진전을 나타낸다. 본 연구는 예술·문화 공연을 공공 및 민간 교육기관과 연계하여 커뮤니티 참여를 확대하고, 다양한 수준의 교육 자료로 확장 가능한 가능성을 제안한다.

주제어: 교차문화 교수법, 문화간 작곡, 이산 민속 음악, 다문화 음악 교육, 피아노 교육

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I . Introduction

Folk music is a vibrant aspect of Northeastern Thai (hereinafter referred to as Isan) culture that is deeply embedded in the local way of life. Encompassing language, music, performances, folklore, and traditions, it provides psychological support, imparts wisdom, and promotes personal development (Khuntajan, 2024). The music is divided into two main styles: Mor Lam, dominant in Northern Isan, and Kantrum, dominant in Southern Isan. While they share some similarities, these sub-genres are usually played with different instrument types, sung in different dialects, and performed as part of different cultural activities (Homhuan & Sensai, 2024). Historically, Mor Lam performances were elaborate events similar to Western opera, featuring grand stages and a mix of Western and traditional instruments. However, shifts in technology, economic conditions, and cultural preferences have gradually diminished these traditional performances. These changes have also prompted the integration of Thai instruments and folk elements into modern musical compositions and educational programs, addressing new challenges in music education, such as developing instrumental exercises and transcribing folk music for Western instruments (Khamhongsa et al., 2021; Seeyo et al., 2024). Thanks to its versatility and global recognition, the piano is an ideal conduit for blending traditional music with Western music theory. The instrument's ability to independently produce melody and harmony makes it well-suited to convey the complex musical traditions of Isan (Phulaiyaw, 2021). This is especially true given its prominent role in diverse musical disciplines, its ability to be adapted for solo and ensemble performances, and its effectiveness as a teaching aid (Yan et al., 2024).

Multicultural education has become an important consideration in contemporary pedagogy, emphasizing the integration of cultural diversity within educational frameworks (Chen & Wong, 2022). The core principles include content integration, equity promotion, the development of cultural competency, prejudice reduction, and the incorporation of diverse perspectives into the curriculum (de Villiers, 2021). The aim is to provide learners with opportunities to engage with varied cultural content that will help them foster a deeper understanding of differences among individuals and ethnic groups, cultivate empathy, and address inequality (Barton & Riddle, 2022). In Thailand, multicultural education is increasingly embedded within curricula from primary to higher education levels, reflecting a broader commitment to cultural inclusivity (Boonno et al., 2023; Patras et al., 2022). The approach is evident with the recent inclusion of world music in the curriculum (Miller & Shahriari, 2020). This expansion seeks to embrace the diversity of musical traditions from across the globe, encouraging the exchange of knowledge related to

community-based music practices and an understanding of global music cultures. Curricula at both the primary and higher education levels also explore cultural perspectives and the historical contexts of these traditions (Laovanich et al., 2021). The careful selection of teaching materials is essential to ensure that they are culturally appropriate, creatively designed, and maximally beneficial to learners.

Within Thailand, current approaches to multicultural musical creativity are largely centered on two key areas: musical arrangement and composition. These processes vary by context (Damrhung & Skar, 2020). This can include arranging music for different instruments, using these arrangements in educational settings, developing new cultural content, creating teaching aids, and even commercializing these materials as a means of safeguarding cultural and artistic heritage (Tongjarat & Woramitmaitee, 2021). However, in the context of piano education, the researchers' experience has shown that many students, especially those at the higher education level, often lack a foundational background in piano practice, putting them at an immediate disadvantage. A secondary, localized problem in Isan is that the instructional repertoire is predominantly composed of classical pieces rooted in Western music traditions, which many students find unfamiliar, potentially hindering their confidence and progress in self-directed learning. Recognizing these challenges, the researchers sought to develop piano lessons that integrate Isan folk melodies. This included the creation of a comprehensive set of learning materials intended to enhance local students' musical abilities and facilitate the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The research aligns with local development initiatives and is consistent with principles of multicultural education outlined above.

• Research Questions

1. What are the core musical principles of Isan folk music and Western music theory?
2. How can integrated piano lessons be created based on Isan folk melodies, designed for late beginner adult learners?
3. How effective are the new training exercises among beginners or those with basic piano skills?

II. Literature Review

While specific research related to Western-style piano education in Asian cultures remains

limited, studies in India have concluded that British colonial practices have influenced a formal, assessment-driven approach (Dumlavwalla, 2019). In China, rapid economic development has led to a growth in ‘materialist and individualist value orientation’ in music students, which manifests in a thriving contemporary music scene where a wide variety of international styles can be found (Ho, 2006). However, “collective socialist, ethical and family values are still emphasized in moral and music education” as fundamental components (Huang & Thibodeaux, 2017, p. 16). This is a growing trend in global music education, especially at university level, as educators seek to ‘de-westernize’ instrument teaching by advocating for the composition and incorporation of traditional, local pieces as part of degree courses to better reflect a diverse cultural landscape (Giami & Taoh, 2022). Indeed, these measures are also being taken in Western music textbooks, where authors are encouraging music teachers to reconceptualize “the canon” and “debunk the perception that the only great literature came from the United States and England”, thus broadening the educational repertoire (Brener, 2011, p. 23). This evolving landscape suggests that diverse teaching methodologies and cultural representations can be integrated within the curriculum, enhancing both the pedagogical approach and the student experience in global music education.

The development of practical music exercises is a crucial tool for classroom teaching, focusing on creating skill exercises to address specific instructional challenges. For example, Moller’s research on developing trill exercises for piano in Bach’s compositions emphasized testing the effectiveness of practice sets through real-world evaluations (Moller, 2020). This methodology underlines the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices, which adapt classical training techniques to encompass a wider range of musical traditions (McKoy & Lind, 2022). In this context, integrating diverse musical elements becomes a conduit for broader musical and cultural understanding, enriching the traditional curriculum (Rakena et al., 2024). This echoes trends in Thai and Thai folk music scholarship, which seek to incorporate elements from traditional Thai melodies and Isan folk music. These include overlapping fourth intervals typical of the khaen sound, the use of the pentatonic scale, and characteristic phrases from traditional Thai music, all arranged according to Western harmonization principles (Phulaiyaw, 2021; Yan et al., 2024). Arrangements of Thai songs for solo piano integrate Western music arrangement principles with various Thai music performance techniques, such as Klon-Rop (echo and response), canon, and presenting Thai musical idioms and techniques like ornamentation, trill, and grace notes, all transposed onto the piano to create a rich and varied musical experience (Chaichana, 2022). By mapping Isan modal systems onto standard Western keyboard theory and

structuring lesson sequences after Suzuki's incremental approach, educators can scaffold student learning in a way that preserves authentic folk characteristics while building technical proficiency.

Building on this foundation, the current research integrates Western music teaching principles and piano skill instruction with a multicultural approach to music education, emphasizing the incorporation of local Isan identity through creative processes such as arrangement and composition. The approach is aligned with ethnomusicological principles of intercultural composition. Bartleet et al. (2020) highlight that intercultural music-making enhances students' embodied artistic know-how, where learning is deeply immersive and continuous interaction with a diverse range of musical forms and traditions enriches their artistic and cultural competencies. This form of engagement promotes the synthesis of new musical expressions and supports the development of a nuanced understanding of music's role in cultural identity and intercultural communication. Intercultural composition therefore goes beyond superficial blending; it often involves a deep synthesis that generates new musical expressions and meanings (Wismol, 2014). In the context of Thai and Western music, this hybridization seeks to integrate the unique melodic, rhythmic, and structural elements of Thai music with the harmonic and formal complexities of Western music (Chaichana, 2022), thereby developing and augmenting artistic expertise as these musicians engage in embodied performance that combines different skills and perceptual capacities (Coessens, 2014).

Interculturalism in the arts, particularly in music education, provides a variety of learning opportunities that encourage the exploration of diverse cultural identities and musical languages. The concept emerged in linguistics and communication studies to address cross-cultural interactions and the creation of a global cultural space that transcends national boundaries (Elias & Mansouri, 2020; Safdar et al., 2023). In music, interculturalism has been used interchangeably with terms such as fusion, hybridity, syncretism, and synthesis (Everett, 2021; Irving, 2014; Kloppe, 2010). However, it is important to distinguish between interculturalism and mere musical hybridity. Interculturalism is often associated with the self-identity of a musical form that consciously combines multiple cultural influences, particularly those of foreign national music, to increase audience appeal or preserve traditions (Finchum-Sung, 2017; Kvaal, 2018). This conscious blending within musical education broadens students' artistic horizons and deepens their musical understanding as a tool for intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. By engaging with interculturalism, music educators and students alike participate in a dynamic process of learning and exchange, which can lead to the development of more inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices.

Traditional Thai music, especially the local variants of Isan folk music, is often performed as part of larger ceremonies linked to calendrical rituals (Morton & Duriyanga, 1976; Myers-Moro, 1988). Research in this domain has typically focused on the cultural aspects of the music or the categorization and characteristics of various styles according to ethnic groups or geographic origins within Thailand (Boonmatham et al., 2013; Wisuttiapat, 2015). The Thai traditional music system, characterized by its single main melody accompanied by variations and its seven equidistant pitches in the tuning system, differs significantly from the twelve-pitch Western musical scale (Roongruang, 1990). This difference has historically posed challenges for integrating Thai music into Western notational and compositional frameworks. Despite these challenges, there has been a growing recent interest in the fusion of Thai and Western musical styles, particularly in compositions that seek to combine traditional Thai sounds with Western techniques. However, much of this fusion remains underexplored in academic literature, with a notable lack of research on the syncretism of piano and traditional Thai instruments (Garzoli, 2018; Jianjun & Jia, 2022). The first attempts to record traditional Thai music for piano, such as those by Dr. Natchar Pancharoen, imitated the highly ornamented style of Thai singing but often omitted fine details like articulations and fingering, which are crucial for preserving the essence of traditional styles (Suwanthada, 2014). This gap in research highlights the need for further exploration of intercultural compositions that integrate the piano with traditional Thai music. By framing Isan folk melodies within established Western pedagogical taxonomies this study addresses that gap and offers a structured model for future curriculum development.

III. Method

During this study, we focused on the development of integrated piano lessons derived from Isan folk melodies, and addressed three primary areas.

1. First, we explored the forms, techniques, and methods of music creation that blended Western music theory with the preservation of unique characteristics inherent in Isan folk music. This included an in-depth analysis of rhythm patterns, main melodies, harmonic structures, and tonal colors.
2. Second, we aimed to develop piano practice exercises that could enhance piano performance skills.

3. Third, we ensured that Western music theory and piano techniques were taught while embedding the traditions of Isan folk music. We hoped that the lessons would offer students a comprehensive learning experience that bridged cultural and musical education.

Our purposively-selected study area was Bangkok and higher education institutions in Isan. These regions are rich in cultural heritage and they are sites where the fusion of Western music education and Isan folk music occurs. Data were collected during a summer term to coincide both with the academic schedule and with key regional festivals in which Isan folk music is actively performed. Capturing field observations and interviews at this time allowed us to document authentic performance practices and secure the engagement of folk-music masters, piano instructors, and adult learners in a single intensive window. The subsequent organization and analysis phase provided ample opportunity for iterative consultation with participants: we conducted follow-up checks on our transcriptions, refined lesson materials based on student feedback gathered during the fall and spring semesters, and verified our thematic coding with a panel of experts. Participants were purposively selected to capture a full range of practitioner, pedagogical and learner perspectives, and were organized into four groups: Isan folk music expert (n=1), piano pedagogy & performance specialists (n=3), music academics (n=3) and undergraduate piano students (n=8). The compositions were based on a carefully curated selection of 17 Isan folk melodies, chosen to reflect the diversity and complexity of the region's musical heritage. We selected songs featuring traditional Isan instruments like the khaen (reed mouth organ), phin (lute), and pong lang (xylophone-like instrument).

We conducted interviews and then led specifically tailored piano lessons for beginner piano students. Experts reviewed the selected Isan folk melodies, ensuring their fidelity and alignment with the study's goals, all within the context of established music theory and performance standards. Following this verification, a creative team, including piano scholars and instructors, adapted these melodies for the piano. This team also sought direct feedback from students to gauge the relevance and effectiveness of the lessons. We explored the structure, content, and teaching strategies documented in these materials, drawing insights from local and international educational practices. All empirical data was verified by triangulation, focusing on the sequencing of content, the integration of practice exercises, and the overall alignment of the lessons with the goals of multicultural music education. After student feedback had been gathered post-implementation of the new lessons, the final evaluation of the Isan folk piano exercises was conducted through a focus group discussion with experts, Isan folk artists, and music scholars.

The evaluation focused on key areas such as musical creativity, the integration of music content, the presentation of the lessons, and the accessibility of cultural values inherent in Isan folk music. Throughout the research process, we strictly adhered to ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and any potential risks. The confidentiality of participants' information was protected, and data were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. The research also respected the cultural significance of Isan folk music, ensuring that the traditions were honored and accurately represented in the developed piano lessons.

IV. Results

1. Core musical principles of Isan folk music and western music theory

The unique characteristics found in the structure of Isan folk music include elements that are both similar to and different from Western music. Differences were observed in the development of melody forms, tonal colors from instruments or performances using wind instruments like *khaen*, which can harmonize similarly to keyboard instruments in Western music. This contrasts with Western wind instruments, where a single instrument typically plays only a single melody. Additionally, the continuous use of consonant intervals to harmonize the main melody, as seen in *khaen* melodies, contrasts with Western music, which develops melodies using various scales. Isan music often develops bass lines in the form of ostinatos, using a drone to harmonize the main melody throughout the piece, as seen in *khaen*, *phin*, and *pong lang* melodies. The development of song sections, transitions, and linking melodies with main tonal clusters was also noted. This often involves combining rhythms from other folk melodies to create a longer, new melody. However, elements such as dynamics markings (e.g., *p* for piano, *sfz* for sforzando, *cresc.* for crescendo) are not typically found in Isan folk melodies.

The study also found that the unique musical elements of Isan folk music and Western music can be effectively integrated using several key components:

1. tonal color and instrument techniques: techniques such as glissando, trill, legato, and grace notes.
2. musical elements: rhythmic patterns, syncopation, and the development of main tonal clusters into Western scales.

3. instrument types: wind, string, and percussion instruments that can play single melodies, intervals, and chords.

The critical aspect of successfully integrating these two musical cultures lies in the techniques, creative principles, and methods of Western music arrangement. Based on the key points mentioned earlier, the content has been organized to align with beginner piano instruction and is divided into four main groups as follows: 1) content related to basic Western music theory, including the piano keyboard, the musical alphabet, grand staff, notes, time-signature, the melody, the bass clef, triads and extended tertian chords, chord progression, rest signs, eighth notes, intervals and unison, musical notation (signs); 2) exercises for creative techniques and piano skills, five-finger position in treble clef, coordination studies (separate & hands together), block and broken chords, arpeggios study, repetition technique, augmentation technique, imitation technique, inversion technique, motivic development, responsorial technique, the motions, contrasting texture, the accompaniments; 3) piano practice pieces integrated from 17 Isan folk melodies - Pong Lang, Lom Phat Phrao, Toey Khong, Serng Kapho (for 2 Pianos), Toey Hua Non Tan, Phu Thai, Tang Wai, Po Sai, Lai Soi, Sud Sanen (for 2 Pianos), Tab Tao, Toey Thamada (for 2 Pianos), Toey Phama, Serng Bang Fai (for 2 Pianos), Lam Sing, Bai Sri Su Khwan (for 2 Pianos), Serng Yai Khai Mod Daeng; 4) the final part of the lesson includes a summary for testing creative thinking skills in music, highlighting key learning points in the form of a diagram.

2. The integrated piano lessons developed from Isan folk melodies

The developed Isan folk melody piano lessons consist of 18 main lessons. Each lesson is divided into three content groups: 1) Western music theory and piano practice; 2) performance techniques and musical creativity; 3) piano practice pieces

Within each group, students move from theoretical instruction to practical rehearsal of the lesson's assigned pieces, and all content is carefully interlinked. After mastering the core material of each lesson, learners apply the principles and techniques they've studied in a creative-music thinking assessment, which is scheduled in the third content group. Additionally, for these lessons we composed 12 solo piano pieces and 5 piano ensemble works to foster listening skills, hands-on practice, and collaborative musicianship. Each piece weaves in Isan folk idioms - through varied rhythmic patterns, principal melodic contours, timbral structures, and techniques consistent with Western creative-music principles - creating an intercultural synthesis on the piano.

These subtopics aim to prepare students both physically and intellectually, aligning with the practice pieces created for each lesson. The experiences gained from learning the key content in each lesson lead to a final summary that tests the students' creative thinking and musical performance skills through a creative music activity at the end of the lesson, summarizing the knowledge and understanding gained.

An example of this process is explained below. The piece comprises two main sections, arranged in an ABB form, and concludes with a Coda. A transitional phrase is developed to link back into Section B for its second iteration. Theme A is presented briefly, developed from the original Isan folk melody, before transitioning into Theme B beginning at measure 10, as follows [Figure 1].



[Figure 1] Theme A, developed by the researchers from the original Isan folk melody, before transitioning into Theme B beginning at measure 10

The opening presentation is developed by repeating the original motif, with call-and-response harmonization across two key areas, supported by parallel melodic motion in thirds in both tonal regions. This approach combines note-repetition techniques with melodic displacement—both in parallel and contrary motion—while preserving the original rhythm and melodic identity of the folk tune. The melody is further elaborated by expanding it into compact scalar passages, repeating small note-groups, or shifting pitch levels, all in conjunction with motif repetition to develop diverse harmonic textures: repeating the motif in measures 22-24, together with repeating a group of notes and transposing pitch levels, as follows [Figure 2].



[Figure 2] An example of repeating the motif in measures 22-24, together with repeating a group of notes and transposing pitch levels - developed by the researchers

3. Evaluation of developed piano lessons

The evaluation of the piano lessons revealed key findings in the following areas:

1. The usefulness and appeal of the lessons
2. The completeness of the theoretical content structure
3. The completeness of the musical pieces
4. The emotional engagement with the music
5. Integration and further application
6. The results of the creative process and practical application
7. Other suggestions

The study found that the lessons were interesting in terms of the arrangement and creation of melodies and harmonies, which have a unique Western style blended with the sounds of Isan folk music. This blend also proved beneficial in developing integrated music education resources that effectively combine cultural values. The content and practice exercises for each lesson could be adjusted to include additional skill-building activities between lessons, with guidance from instructors to enhance the students' ability to practice the pieces more easily and quickly. Moreover, it was observed that students were interested in using the pieces for live performances or applying the creatively arranged pieces in ensemble settings and performance exams. The overall content of the lessons is suitable for late beginner to intermediate levels, approximately grade 1-3, or higher for non-piano majors. The appropriate duration for completing the lessons is at least one semester and not more than one academic year, or more than one year for non-piano

majors who have no prior piano experience.

Further testing among four groups of students revealed that students majoring in piano could perceive the Eastern tonal elements embedded within the piano pieces, while still feeling the dominant Western musical style. Non-piano majors found that practicing familiar pieces or those with which they had prior experience in playing or listening made the lessons more engaging and easier to practice. Students with prior experience in Isan folk music could clearly identify the main melodies of traditional Isan folk tunes within the piano pieces, leading to enjoyment and excitement in learning new content. Students with prior experience in Isan folk music but who struggled to accurately play the solo piano pieces had difficulty distinguishing or adapting to the additional melodies introduced in the pieces due to their strong familiarity with the original tunes. The results of evaluation are summarised below in Table 1.

<Table 1> Analysis of feedback on the experimental use of piano lesson content structure and sequencing

Suggestions	Non-piano majors	Piano majors
Content appropriateness	Should increase basic content in theory and practical skills for those with no prior background.	Appropriate for students; should include explanations of advanced techniques such as trills and grace notes.
Linking and presenting lesson content	Beneficial to incorporate Western music theory in each piece; presenting subsections of pieces for practice before full pieces is appropriate.	Beneficial to incorporate Western music theory in each piece; presenting subsections of pieces for practice before full pieces is appropriate.
Content sequencing	Should reduce complex content and increase basic theory content, proper fingering, and supplementary practice to improve finger accuracy and start with one hand at a time.	Content should be adjusted to be more continuous and systematically progressive. Clearly define content boundaries to align the difficulty level of each piece with a clearer content sequence.
Practice pieces	The pieces are creatively sound but complex, requiring more time to practice.	Suitable as supplementary pieces; complex pieces should include additional technical content and specific practice methods.
Suitability for teaching integration	Should be used as supplementary skill-building pieces.	Suitable as supplementary lessons for skill-building and for those with specific interests.
Difficulty level	Pieces used in initial practice should be at levels 2-3, with most pieces at level 4 or higher.	Pieces used in practice should be at beginner to intermediate levels, grades 2-5.
Duration for piano lesson integration	At least 1 year.	One semester, and no more than 1 year.
Additional suggestions	Theory content is suitable for levels 2-3, and students can learn independently, but practical skills require instructor guidance for accurate and complete learning.	Theory and basic practical techniques can be self-learned by students; should include clear explanations in more complex content.

V. Discussion

Multicultural education has become increasingly important in contemporary learning environments. Facilitating students' understanding of different cultural perspectives leads to the development of educational materials or resources for both classroom and extracurricular learning. In the context of multicultural music education, content can be developed by integrating musical elements from different cultures, such as combining Western and Eastern music traditions, or other diverse international cultures. This approach is crucial in light of research on intercultural composition, which highlights the value of blending musical elements, traditions, and techniques from diverse cultural backgrounds to create new, distinct musical forms (Wismol, 2014). The integration of Thai and Western music, for example, not only preserves traditional cultural elements but also enhances students' engagement with a broader range of musical traditions, aligning with the principles of interculturalism that transcend national boundaries (Elias & Mansouri, 2020; Irving, 2014).

Multicultural education is crucial for students to learn and understand their own cultural values, fostering an appreciation of cultural equality and acceptance of differences from other societies. This is particularly suitable for young learners, as it helps cultivate cultural understanding from an early age. This concept is supported by research highlighting the importance of art in human life as a medium for expressing physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The development of piano practice exercises that incorporate elements from Isan folk music, as explored in this study, serves as a concrete example of how local cultural identity can be preserved and disseminated through education. Such initiatives not only support cultural preservation but also foster a deeper appreciation of diverse musical traditions among students, thereby enhancing their cultural competency (Chaichana, 2022; Phulaiyaw, 2021).

Additionally, the process of developing integrated piano lessons from Isan folk melodies in this study demonstrates how small cultural units, such as Isan folk music, can be developed by borrowing musical structures, tonal colors, rhythms, and melodies that express the unique identity of local Isan music. These elements are integrated with Western music theory, which is internationally recognized, through Western techniques and music creation processes. This process of hybridization, which involves the deep synthesis of diverse musical elements, aligns with the concept of interculturalism, where distinct musical cultures are consciously combined to create new, innovative forms (Everett, 2021; Finchum-Sung, 2017). The resulting lessons not only promote cultural exchange but also address the instructional challenges faced by students,

particularly those who may be more familiar with Western music traditions. The lessons are designed to align with piano teaching, including music theory, practice, listening skills, and creative thinking. The learning process is tailored to the students' skill levels and the developmental stage of their learning, with proper preparation to guide teachers in using the lessons effectively. This approach reflects the findings of previous research, which emphasize the importance of adapting educational content to meet the varying needs of students, particularly in a multicultural context (Klopper, 2010). The careful integration of Isan folk music into piano lessons allows students to engage with both familiar and unfamiliar musical traditions, thereby fostering a deeper connection to the music and enhancing their overall learning experience.

Incorporating multicultural music education as a foundation for student awareness encourages interest in new concepts by starting with familiar ones and then extending to unfamiliar areas through music, which is widely accepted in society. The diversity and variety of musical genres can serve as a bridge for cultural integration. The integration of Isan folk melodies with Western piano music in this study serves as a model for how traditional music can be adapted for modern educational settings, promoting both cultural preservation and innovation. By combining familiar elements of Western music with the unique characteristics of Isan folk music, the lessons encourage students to explore and appreciate different cultural perspectives, thereby broadening their musical horizons and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

It can be said that the highest level of this process is the integration of the tones or unique characteristics representing Eastern music or Isan folk music with Western musical structures and creative techniques. This results in cross-cultural learning between Isan folk music and Western music, leading to a two-way learning process: students familiar with Eastern music have the opportunity to learn more about Western music, while those familiar with Western music can absorb and become accustomed to the sounds of Isan folk music. This bidirectional exchange aligns with the concept of syncretism, where the blending of different cultural elements leads to the creation of a new, enriched cultural expression (Irving, 2014). The study's findings suggest that such integration can enhance students' appreciation of both their own cultural heritage and the musical traditions of others, thereby promoting a more holistic understanding of music as a global art form.

This exposure can enhance their appreciation of the original Isan folk music, leading to a deeper musical enjoyment that can be naturally and harmoniously integrated into their daily lives. This can help students in Isan, who often lack awareness of their local music, to rediscover it. Since many current students are more familiar with Western music than with their local traditional

music, this method serves as an excellent medium for cultural dissemination. Moreover, the study highlights the role of creative music exercises in bridging cultural differences, supporting the idea that music education can serve as a powerful tool for cultural transmission and exchange (Safdar et al., 2023). By introducing students to the rich traditions of Isan folk music within the framework of Western music education, the lessons not only preserve cultural heritage but also contribute to the broader goal of fostering cultural understanding and appreciation among students.

Moreover, the use of creative music as a medium to bridge differences among individuals or groups within a society can also extend the transmission of local music to a broader, international community. This approach connects diverse groups through the local tones embedded in each lesson, promoting awareness beyond traditional Western culture and encouraging a reverse process of exploring the roots of another culture. This approach is supported by research on the syncretism of Thai and Western musical styles, which emphasizes the potential of such integration to create new, globally relevant musical forms (Garzoli, 2018; Jianjun & Jia, 2022). By extending the reach of Isan folk music beyond its traditional boundaries, the lessons developed in this study contribute to the global exchange of cultural knowledge and the promotion of cultural diversity in music education.

The results of this study highlight the uniqueness of the piano pieces developed from Isan folk melodies. The integration of Isan folk tones with Western musical forms allows those who engage with the music, whether through practice or listening, to experience it in a new way. The study demonstrated that Isan folk tones, when interwoven into Western melodies and creative techniques, result in a melody that differs from the original while preserving certain elements, such as rhythmic patterns or maintaining key notes. This finding aligns with previous research on the challenges of integrating Thai traditional music with Western notational and compositional frameworks, highlighting the need for innovative approaches to preserve the essence of traditional styles while adapting them for modern educational contexts (Suwanthada, 2014).

In the context of multicultural education, the idea of integrating music into general education curricula involves incorporating music from multiple countries, often more than two, into the classroom. This approach includes students from various national backgrounds, selecting musical pieces that reflect the distinctive musical elements of each country for classroom teaching. For example, pieces that stand out in terms of rhythm, harmony, melody, and movement associated with rhythm. Moreover, students are given the opportunity to discuss the origins of the content presented by the instructor, facilitating an exchange of knowledge. Additionally, music can be integrated into other subjects, such as combining music with mathematics, sports, and history, to enhance the learning experience.

The development of creative music based on Isan folk melodies opens up significant opportunities for further artistic exploration and performance. These melodies can be transformed into modern musical compositions, forming the basis for contemporary music ensembles and performances that can be showcased both domestically and internationally. However, these recommendations stem from a limited pilot implementation and may not fully account for regional pedagogical differences or resource constraints in diverse educational settings. Moreover, the methodologies and findings from this research can serve as a model for developing lessons, compositions, or skill exercises for other Western musical instruments. Further studies are needed to evaluate the transferability of these materials across different age groups and institutional contexts.

Integrating arts and cultural performances into public and private learning centers offers potential for community engagement but may require significant investment in teacher training and infrastructure. Such initiatives would contribute to the dissemination and enhancement of the economic value of music through creative works that showcase national cultural identity. The creation of Isan melody piano lessons in this study demonstrates the potential for further educational applications and innovations in music learning. These lessons could be expanded into music learning materials tailored to various levels, from early childhood to adult learners, incorporating historical or cultural content to enrich the educational experience. However, the digital delivery of these lessons may face challenges related to internet access and technological literacy among target populations. Content should be adapted to match the basic skills of different learner groups, ensuring accessibility and relevance. Furthermore, these lessons could be adapted for other music-related subjects, such as accompaniment, ear training, and arranging, and even integrated into non-musical subjects. For example, music could be used to enhance learning in areas like mathematics, language, arts, sports, and social development, naturally emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity, nationality, language, and diverse perspectives.

The establishment of a music skills assessment center that incorporates these lessons or creative pieces for various instruments could play a crucial role in training musical skills while promoting national musical identity to the public. Such a center would provide educators with the tools to integrate music into various teaching activities, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural differences and helping to bridge gaps between individuals through creative expression. Music, therefore, has the potential to become a vital tool for addressing societal issues and fostering unity in diversity.

VI. Conclusion

The integration of Isan folk melodies into piano education represents a significant step forward in the cross-cultural approach to music pedagogy. This study has demonstrated that by carefully blending the unique characteristics of Isan folk music with the foundational principles of Western music theory, it is possible to create a set of piano lessons that not only preserves cultural heritage but also enriches the educational experience for students. The developed lessons offer a comprehensive and culturally sensitive learning pathway. The research highlighted the importance of adapting educational content to meet the varying needs of students, particularly those with differing levels of prior experience. The findings suggest that while piano majors benefit from advanced technical explanations and complex practice pieces, non-piano majors require more foundational content and a gradual increase in difficulty to build their skills effectively. The inclusion of culturally-relevant Isan folk melodies was shown to enhance student engagement and foster a deeper connection to the music. The study also demonstrated the potential for these lessons to be used in ensemble settings and live performances.

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