Music of the Asian Royal Courts:

A Smithsonian Folkways Learning Pathway for students in grades 3–5.



Teacher's Guide

Lesson 5: Music at the Vietnamese Court

Teacher Lesson Overview

The Vietnamese court music is incredibly diverse, constituting instrumental, vocal, dance and theatrical music. Components 1 and 2 of this Lesson provide insight into some elements of these musical traditions and how they might have been heard by a 17th-century audience in what is now known as northern Vietnam. Students will also be invited to re-enact a Vietnamese ceremony and reflect on how music makes people feel and act.

Component 3 explores the court theater *hát bội* (also called *tuồng*). In this theater, actors and actresses paint their faces various colors, which reflect the personality traits of the characters. Students will be invited to watch a clip and then color in a mask with colors of their own choice. As they do so, they can listen to excerpts from theater performances and allow the music to guide their artistry.

To read further information on music of the Vietnamese Court for teachers, <u>click here</u>.

Student Lesson Overview

It's your birthday! For this special day, you will use your imagination to travel to Vietnam to learn all about Vietnamese Court Music. In this lesson, you will get to listen to Ritual Music of the Great Orchestra, participate in a Ceremony Ritual, and even design your own face mask! Are you ready?



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Lesson Components and Student Objectives*



Imagining the Vietnamese Court (40–55 minutes)
Students will consider the location of Vietnam and learn about the role of the 17th-century Vietnamese court in governing the country.



- 2. <u>Elegant Music of the Vietnamese Court</u> (20–25 minutes)
 - Students will learn to identify some of the typical sounds and instruments associated with *nhã nhạc* or elegant music of the court.



- 3. Court Theater Today (20–25 minutes)
 - Students learn about the life of Vietnamese court theatre (*tuồng* or *hát bội*) and explore how stories are told in these productions.

*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Component. Keep in mind that these Components are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Components they'd like to use from each Lesson.

While all learning types (History and Culture, Music Listening, Music Making and Creation, and Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, nonmusic teachers will be able to use History and Culture and Creative Connections Components without specific musical knowledge.



Teaching Plan

This slideshow is one of many in the Music of Asian Royal Courts Pathway. If you are presenting this to students after presenting the Introductory Pathway (Lesson 1), you can extend the theme of Lesson 1 to this slideshow. Tell the students that they have just landed in Vietnam for their birthdays² and are being greeted there.

Introduction: Start with the following introduction before you choose your Component (slides 3–5).

Slide 3 - Hello Students!

 Explain that Vietnamese is a tonal language* and that "Xin chào các học sinh!" means "Hello Students"!

*All languages use intonation to communicate emotion or intention. A tonal language, however, also uses tone to distinguish words or their inflections. Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese are some of the most-spoken tonal languages in the world.

Play audio in top right corner of slide and have students try to pronounce it.

Slide 4 – Vietnamese names

- Click icon to pronounce Phạm Đình Hổ
- Explain how Vietnamese names are structured: **The last name comes first, then the middle name, and finally the first name.**
- Exemplify that with the name Pham Đình Hổ
- Ask: How would your name be expressed if you were Vietnamese?

Slide 5 – Component Menu Slide: Choose the component you'd like to teach.



1. Component One: Imagining the Vietnamese Court

To Prepare:

- Read through the Component.
- Preview Component 1 of the *Lesson 5 Slideshow* (slides 6–15). Open the "Launch Slideshow" link on the righthand menu of the Lesson 5 landing page. (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the "Student Slideshow link, which will not show the notes.)
- Print <u>map of Vietnam</u> (in worksheets section below)
 - *Optional*: gather crayons or markers to color the map.
- Print <u>Ceremony Exercise Guide</u> (in worksheets section below)

Component One starts on slide 6

Slide 7 – We're on our birthday trip to Asia!

- Vietnam is a country in southeast Asia.
 - Ask students: What letter does Vietnam look like?
 - The country is shaped like an S. It is surrounded by China to the north, and Laos and Cambodia to the west.

Slide 8 – Next stop, Vietnam!

- Vietnam is a country in southeast Asia.
 - Ask students: What letter does Vietnam look like?
 - The country is shaped like an S. It is surrounded by China to the north, and Laos and Cambodia to the west.

Slide 9– Vietnam Today

- (9.1) <u>Vietnam is a country in southeast Asia.</u>
 - o Ask students: What letter does Vietnam look like?
 - The country is shaped like an S. It is surrounded by China to the north, and Laos and Cambodia to the west.
- (9.2) <u>Vietnam in the 17th Century</u>
 - Explain to students the country was once divided, being ruled by two different families.
 - The top section was ruled by the Trinh family and the bottom (yellow) section was ruled by the Nguyen family.
 - (If students ask about the green, orange, or pink parts of the map, you can explain that there were other countries here that do not exist anymore, like Champa, the Khmer Empire, Ming China, and others.)
- <u>Let's Compare the Two Maps!</u>
 - Show current map of Vietnam and compare with the previous one.





• *Optional*: Pass around print-outs of the contemporary map and use crayons or markers to color in the different countries.

Slide 10 – What did the Vietnamese Court Do?

- Show image of the Emperor and the court.
- Explain that their main role was to keep the country safe.
- Ask: What do you notice about how the Emperor is traveling?
 - Answer: The image reflects the importance and prestige of the emperor.
- Mention that the Emperor and his assistants (called mandarins) make laws, collect taxes, and organize military battles. They also conduct rituals to keep the government running smoothly.

Slide 11 – Discussion: Rituals in Our Lives?

- Discuss the meaning of the word "ritual."
 - A ritual is an event that is ordered very clearly with many steps. This makes sure that everyone performs the ritual correctly and without mistake.
- Ask: What about bedtime rituals?

Slide 12 – Ritual in the Vietnamese Court

- Explain that the Emperor and his mandarins pay respect to their ancestors through offerings and make offerings to the Heaven god and the Earth god.
- The goal of the ceremony is to maintain harmony with the universe.
- Ask: What does "maintain harmony" mean?
- Ask: How do you think the Emperor and his offerings maintain this harmony? (We will explore the answer to this in the following slides)

Slide 13 – Ceremony Exercise

Choose one of the activities below, depending on what you think will work best for your class.

- A. Read the ceremony description (in <u>worksheets section</u> below) while clicking through the <u>corr</u>esponding slides.
 - <u>Note</u>: play and pause embedded track, "Ritual Music Orchestra," by Dai Nhac Orchestra, when indicated in the ritual description.
- B. OR, find a video that depicts a similar ritual and describe its elements.

Slides 14 – Optional Activity: Create your own birthday ritual

In this exercise, you get to create your own birthday ritual. Students can write it down, prepare at home and present it for the class, or the class can come up with its own ritual whose steps are recorded by the teacher. Ask students to consider:

• Where should it be held?



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- What will you say at your ritual?
- When should the Emperor/Empress emerge?
- What should people wear?

Slide 15 – Learning Checkpoint

- How did the Emperor travel?
 - The emperor is carried by the mandarins.
- What did the Emperor and the mandarins try to do for the people?
 - The Emperor and his assistants (called mandarins) make laws, collect taxes, and organize military battles.
- What is a ritual?
 - A ritual is an event that is ordered very clearly with many steps. This makes sure that everyone performs the ritual correctly and without mistakes.

Slide 16 – Navigation Slide – choose where you want to go next!

<u>2. Component Two: Elegant Music of the Vietnamese</u> <u>Court</u>

To Prepare:

- Read through the Component.
- Preview Component 2 of the *Lesson 5 Slideshow* (slides 17–27).
 - Open the "Launch Slideshow" link on the righthand menu of the Lesson 5 landing page.
 - (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the "Student Slideshow link, which will not show the notes.)
- Print <u>Vietnamese Vocabulary List for Teachers</u> (in worksheets section below) and listen to accompanying pronunciations in the slideshow.

Component Two starts on slide 17

Slide 18 – Elegant Music of the Court: Share information about nhã nhạc music

- Court music is called *nhã nhạc*, meaning elegant music.
 - Click on the icon to hear it pronounced.
 - $\circ~$ Elegant music is very beautiful and somewhat serious not bouncy or fun.
 - The court music isn't for entertainment. It's serious and educational.
- In *nhã nhạc* that is instrumental (i.e. there is no singing), audiences (including the Emperor) should simply listen and think about what they are hearing.
- In *nhã nhạc* that accompanies dance, the listeners should simply listen and watch the dance without dancing themselves.
- If you like, you can explore "Elegant music" in other East Asian countries through the following Lessons:
 - Lesson 2 <u>Gagaku: Imperial Court Music of Japan</u>
 - Lesson 3 <u>Jeong Ak: Music of the Korean Court</u>
 - Lesson 4 <u>Court Music of China</u>

Slide 19 – Attentive Listening: "Mã Vũ (Dance of the Horse)," an example of ballet music of central Vietnam.

Play embedded track and ask students:

- Can you imagine dancing horses?
- *How difficult would it be for you to sit and listen to this music quietly without dancing around?* This is what the court officials had to do!

<mark>Slid</mark>e 20 – Read about nhã nhạc instruments!

- Explain that we find descriptions of nhã nhạc in old books, such as *Writings on Rainy Days*.
 - In Vietnamese, the title is *Vũ trung tùy bút* (play pronunciation audio)



- The book is by Phạm Đình Hổ.
 - Remind students that this was the name we used at the beginning of the lesson. Ask them which part of the author's name is his "family name."
- We can imagine that the author wrote this book on rainy days when he could not go outside! It covers lots of different topics on life at the Vietnamese court.

Slides 21–22 – Let's listen to that part of the book; Instruments in *Writings* on *Rainy Days; What are* nhã nhạc instruments like?

- (slide 21) Play excerpt from *Vũ trung tùy bút*.
 - Explain that the text in blue indicates instrument names.
 - Ask: How does it look/sound different from English?
- (slide 22) Read translation of that excerpt.

Slide 23 – Two of the Most Important Instruments

- Present two important Vietnamese instruments: Kèn and Trống.
 - \circ Play pronunciation audio.
 - $\circ~$ Ask students to repeat after audio.
- Tell them they would hear these two instruments in music played for the emperor during a ritual ceremony (like that featured in Component 1 if students did that).

Slides 24–25 – Attentive Listening: "Ritual Music of the Great Orchestra" by Dai Nhac Orchestra.

- (slide 24) Listen to the embedded audio
 - Ask: What is "great" about it?
 - Can you identify any of the instruments heard here? (Answer: Ken and Trống.)
- (slide 25) Explain that the word "Emperor" in Vietnamese is "Vua."
 - Play pronunciation audio.
 - Instruct students: "Now imagine that you are listening to music with the Emperor (Vua)."
 - How do you act? (Remind students of proper behavior during nhã nhạc)
 - What do you see?
 - 1. If students did Component 1, see if they can remember the ritual.
 - 2. If not, explain that this music often accompanied ceremonial rituals performed by the emperor and his assistants to bring harmony and peace to his people.



Slide 26 - Audience Participation

- Members of the audience use the *trống chầu* (praise drum) to comment on the performance.
 - If they liked the performance, they used specific sounds to encourage the performers!
 - If they did not like the performance, they used specific sounds to make suggestions to the performers
- Ask: How would you try to make a comment during a performance?
 - Invite students to drum on their desks as you play an excerpt from the song on this slide.

Slide 27 – Learning Checkpoint

- What was court music used for?
 - The court music isn't for entertainment. It's serious and educational.
- What are two important nhã nhạc instruments?
 - Kèn and Trống
- How did the book describe some of the Vietnamese instruments?
 - "The Ministry of Elegant Music uses a big ceremonial drum turned towards the sky, an oboe made of bamboo and covered in gold, two kinds of percussion instruments designed to make a clapping sound, a three-stringed instrument, a four-stringed instrument, or a 15stringed instrument, a flute, a single-sided gold-painted tambourine, and wooden clapper with coins attached to it. "
- What instrument was used to comment during a performance?
 - Trống chầu (praise drum)

Slide 28 – Navigation Slide – choose where you want to go next!



3. Component Three: Court Theatre Today

To Prepare:

- Read through the Component.
- Preview Component 3 of the *Lesson 5 Slideshow* (slides 29–40).
 - Open the "Launch Slideshow" link on the righthand menu of the Lesson 5 landing page.
 - (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the "Student Slideshow link, which will not show the notes.)
- Print Vietnamese <u>Vocabulary List for Teachers</u> and Listen to the accompanying pronunciations in the slideshow.
- Prepare crayons or colored pencils (blue, green, black, red, gold/silver, and white) and print out the two coloring sheets to pass around to students (they will choose one of the two).

Component Three starts on slide 29

Slides 30–31 Share information: Court Theater

- (slide 30) In addition to rituals and music, the Vietnamese court also featured theatre productions.
 - Actors and actresses would act out stories for the amusement of the Emperor and the mandarins of the court.
 - This theater has two names.
 - Play pronunciation for *hát bội* and *tuồng*.
- (slide 31) Theater Today
 - Today, it's no longer performed for the Emperor, but for a general audience.
 - Actors and actresses use costumes, headdresses and face paint to tell a story.
 - The actress in the photo is playing Đào Tam Xuân, who is a serious heroine character type.

Slides 32–35 Share information: Face Paint

- (slide 32) In *hát bội*, the colors on the face represent or symbolize the **personality** or **traits** of the character on stage.
 - $\circ~$ The color is a symbol of the good, evil, or funny personality of the character.
 - We have many other kinds of symbols in our lives. Think of the STOP sign on the road: when the bus driver sees a red sign with the word STOP on it, the driver knows to stop the bus.
 - Often, in the United States, the color red is a kind of warning. In other words, when you see red, sometimes it symbolizes a warning or something you should be aware of.





- (slide 33) Examples of the colors actors and actresses use in Tuồng or hát bội.
- (slide 34) The colors on the face symbolize the personality or traits of the character on stage, such as good, bad or funny personality.
 - Red: strong moral principles, integrity, holds an essence of a deity or god, slightly mysterious
 - White: disloyal, likes to flatter others, shifty
 - Black: simple, righteous, impatient
 - Blue: cunning (clever, sometimes deceptive), proud
 - Green: fickle (quick change your mind), unfaithful
 - Gold and silver: ethical and just; used to depict monks, priests, and gods
- (slide 35) Highlight the fact that when the actors paint their faces, they are pretending.
 - It is important to note that actors **do not paint their faces only one color**; they use two or sometimes three colors. This shows that these characters are complex: they have some character traits of one color and some of another.
 - In everyday life, people have faces described as one color or another, but these are not the same as the colors found in the stories told in hát bội.

Slides 36–37 Watch and Listen: Đào Tam Xuân

- (slide 36) **Play** *Đào Tam Xuân* **video** (Start at timestamp 2:59).
 - Before playing the video, explain the context below. You might also ask students to listen for certain instruments.
 - First, explain that Đào Tam Xuân is the name of the main female protagonist.
 - Her husband has a red face, indicating that he has strong moral principles.
 - Đào Tam Xuân, who is only wearing makeup does not have a painted face here, is saying goodbye to her husband.
 - Optional: Ask What instruments do you hear?
 - Students are not expected to know the names of the instruments, but they can say general names like "**drum**," "**strings**," "**flutes**"
 - *Note:* if they did Component 2, encourage them to remember the *kèn* (oboe) and *trống* (drum).
 - Do your best to explain that they are hearing: *Trống chiến* (drum), *đàn gáo* (fiddle in the shape of a coconut), *đồng la* (gong), *đàn nhị* (two-stringed fiddle), and *kèn* (oboe).
- (slide 37) Listen to another excerpt from *Dào Tam Xuân*.
 - At this point in the story, the character tries to find her husband and **feels great** sadness that he has been lost.



- Hear two characters singing (**both are women**, and who specialize in strong [warrior] roles)
 - Ask: What emotion do you think is expressed?
 - Explain that the character tries to find her husband and feels great sadness that he has been lost.

Slide 38 – Coloring Activity

- Pass around the blank face mask (<u>below</u>) for students to color.
- Remind kids what the colors mean (click to slide below for reference).
 - Play the excerpt of Đào Tam Xuân while students color.

Slide 39 – Learning Checkpoint

- Long ago, who watched court theater?
 - Today, it's no longer performed for the Emperor, but for a general audience.
- How does the audience know the personality of a theater character?
 - The colors on the face symbolize the personality or traits of the character on stage, such as good, bad or funny personality.
- What are some of the color meanings in court theater?
 - Red: strong moral principles, integrity, holds an essence of a deity or god, slightly mysterious
 - White: disloyal, likes to flatter others, shifty
 - Black: simple, righteous, impatient
 - Blue: cunning (clever, sometimes deceptive), proud
 - Green: fickle (quick change your mind), unfaithful
 - Gold and silver: ethical and just; used to depict monks, priests, and gods

2014 National Music Standards Connections

MU:Cr1.1.3a Improvise rhythmic and melodic ideas, and describe connection to specific purpose and context (such as personal and social).

• Can I play along with a drum beat and explain why I chose specific rhythms?

MU:Cr3.2.3a Present the final version of personal created music to others, and describe connection to expressive intent.

• Can I demonstrate basic drum techniques?

MU:Pr4.2.3a Demonstrate understanding of the structure in music selected for performance.

• Can I describe the learning that takes place in Vietnamese court music?

MU:Re7.1.3a Demonstrate and describe how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, or purposes.

• Can I explain how the instruments in Vietnamese court music is connected with the implied learning?

MU:Re7.2.3a Demonstrate and describe how a response to music can be informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as personal and social).

• Can I explain the use of rituals in the Vietnamese court and how the music ties into these rituals?

MU:Re8.1.3a Demonstrate and describe how the expressive qualities (such as dynamics and tempo) are used in performers' interpretations to reflect expressive intent.

• Can I identify when the music in specific examples gets louder and faster?

MU:Cn10.0.3a Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

- Can I identify my favorite Vietnamese court instrument?
- Can I identify my preference in court dance and theatre styles?
- Can I identify different action parts in hát bôi based on the tempo of the music?
- Can I explain technique differences in court instruments?

MU:Cn11.0.3a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

• Can I explain how Vietnamese court music fits with dance?



- Can I explain how Vietnamese court music fits with theatre?
- Can I explain the meaning of rituals and how the music accompanies them?
- Can I explain the construction of theatre masks as an art form.

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Further Information for Teachers

The Vietnamese court music is incredibly diverse, constituting instrumental, vocal, dance and theatrical music. This lesson provides insight into some elements of these musical traditions and how they might have been heard by a 17th century audience in what is now known as northern Vietnam. More than this, however, this lesson encourages students to experience how these musics were supposed to make audiences feel and act. Instrumental court music, for instance, was not meant for entertainment but to govern. The Sacrifice to the Heaven and Earth ritual allowed the Emperor to make offerings directly to the Heaven and Earth deities, thereby ensuring the stability of the functions of the court with the universe. Music accompanied the Emperor's actions during this ritual and therefore ensured the success of the ritual. Any mistakes were considered auspicious signs that the government (or the Emperor) might crumble. As part of the lesson, students listen to this music and are invited to re-enact a short portion of the ritual which has been translated into English.



The music itself is called "elegant," and although serious for ritual participants in the distant past, the sound itself can be loud and quite fun. One of the most famous pieces is called "Dancing Horse," and it's quite easy to encourage the students to imagine the movement of the horse in the sound itself. Indeed, there is a great deal the students can imagine. In one part of the lesson, a description of music has been translated from book titled Writings on Rainy Days. Students can imagine the writer relaxing on a rainy day, thinking about music, and describing it. Although students may be too young to appreciate the meaning of a primary source, they can learn something from looking at the Vietnamese text (and the English translation) and consider the power of words from the distant past.

Entertainment music did exist at the court, however, and students have an opportunity to explore the meaning of court theatre hát bội (also called tuồng). Theatre productions are dramatic and colorful, and students are invited to think about how sound and color work together to tell a story. In this theatre, actors and actresses paint their faces various colors, which provide insight into the personality traits of the characters. Students watch a clip and then color in a mask with colors of their own choir, as if they can create their own characters. As they do so, they can listen to excerpts from theatre performances and allow the music to guide their artistry.



Additional Reading and Resources

Within this final section, please copy and paste printable copies of any lesson resources teachers might want to print out to teach the lesson (if you have any). This could include song lyrics, worksheets, handouts, readings, rubrics, etc...

Worksheets



Map of Vietnam and surrounding countries – (courtesy abcteach.com)

Can you color **<u>Vietnam</u>**? What color did you use?

- <u>Camb</u> odia? _
- <u>Cambodia</u>? <u>China</u>?
- _

- <u>Laos</u>? <u>Thailand</u>?
- FOLKWAYS

- <u>Chin</u> _
 - <u>a</u>?
 - Laos?
 - <u>Thail</u>
 - <u>and</u>?

Ceremony Exercise

The Emperor and his assistants spend a lot of time preparing for the ceremony. These slides present a brief overview to these preparations. These descriptions are found in a book published in Vietnam in 1968 called *The Great Rituals and Dances of the Vietnamese Kings*.

Read the ritual steps below. Play the track on the slide when indicated below.

Two days before the ceremony, the Emperor stops eating meat and only eats vegetables. The Emperor was forbidden to eat animal products of any kind.

One day before the ceremony, the ritual space is prepared. The Emperor's assistants placed tables in front of the Heaven and Earth god altars. They would place offerings on these tables during the ceremony, so it was important to be prepared!

On the day of the ceremony, the Emperor and his assistants need to follow specific steps so the ceremony would be considered successful. Please follow the directions of your teacher now to act out the ritual! Who will play the Emperor? Who will help prepare the offerings?

The Emperor washes his hands.

The Emperor walks through the middle entrance to the ritual space. His assistants walk through the side doors.

The bell sounds three times.

Everyone waits for the bell to finish sounding.

The assistants go to their designated positions.

The Emperor goes to the position where he will pray to the Heaven and Earth gods.

Assistants bring an offering of smoked meat to the ritual space from the easterly direction.

Music begins to play. The ensemble is comprised of a drum (trống), oboe (kèn) and gong (thanh la). (See Component 2 for more information about these instruments).

Assistants bring an offering of liquid from the northwesterly direction.

The music stops.

The emperor goes before the table upon which incense is placed.



The ritual orchestra begins again.

The Emperor kneels down.

The Emperor scoops up the offering with a small ladle.

Assistants kneel and assist with the preparation of the offering in a metal vessel (called censer, like in a church setting).

The Emperor picks up the container with this hands.

The Emperor prostrates (or kneels and bows) downwards.

The Emperor stands up.

While standing upright, the Emperor clasps his hands together as if praying.

The music stops.

All welcome the gods with a sung chant meaning "Song of Desire for Peace and Success."

We thank you for protecting us With the general decree: We offer incense first. Our drum resounds in reverence. Our vessels contain pure offerings. As the bell tolls, You, gods, return the benefits For all of us to enjoy.

Back to Component 1 Back to Slide 13



Vietnamese Vocabulary List for Teachers

Việt Nam: Vietnam Xin chào: hello Nhã nhạc: elegant music Mã Vũ: Dancing Horse Vũ trung tùy bút: Writings on Rainy Days Phạm Đình Hổ: writer of Writings on Rainy Days Trống: drum Trống chiến: battle drum Kèn: oboe Dai Nhac/Đại Nhạc: Great Orchestral Music Vua: Emperor trống chầu: praise drum Ăn chay: vegan/vegetarian Đàn gáo: coconut fiddle Đàn nhị: two-stringed fiddle Đồng la: small gong Thanh la: gong Hát bội: court theatre (another term for tuồng) Tuồng: court theatre (another term for hát bội)

Back to Component 2 Back to Component 3

Coloring Activity

(Scanned from *Huỳnh Khắc Dụng* (1970); face and headdress traced by A. Cannon)







