

# **DEVELOPMENT OF METHOD BOOK FOR VIOLIN BEGINNERS THROUGH UTILIZATION OF MALAYSIAN FOLK TUNES IN THE FIRST POSITION TECHNIQUES BASED ON IVAN GALAMIAN PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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## **Abstract**

Early instruction in music is connected with understanding of own culture. Kodaly associates it with a sense of belonging or so-called ‘mother-tongue’ language. In the modern world, the influence of media threatens the sustainability of folk music heritage. To counter the influx of foreign culture into Malaysian violin beginners’ instruction there must be books based on profound teaching systems using traditional tunes made available. The music preferences and taste acquisition of a violin beginner are formed under the influence of folklore and composed music, which is foreign to the local violin students whereas popular traditional tunes are not reflected in the violin repertoire of those method books. The product of our research was aimed to meet the demands of the local violin teachers in terms of techniques as well as serve as an agent for sustainability of Malaysian folk heritage. The book *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* by Galamian (2013) is among three treaties that have made biggest impact on modern violin pedagogy that address both the technical and artistic aspect of violin pedagogy. His violin method proved to be successful in twentieth century. This paper expounds on methods of application Galamian’s principles through selection, utilization of Malaysian folk songs as resources and materials for the mentioned methodology as well as on interdisciplinary process of creating a chapter for a violin method book.

*Keywords: Violin, Malaysian Folk Tunes, Violin Pedagogy, Sustainability, Folk Music Heritage, Violin Learning*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mayya Musaeva, Clare Chan Suet Ching, and Christine Augustine conducted this research at Sultan Idris Educational University. Their expertise in different disciplines allowed for successful collaboration in creating violin method book (chapter). Their research attempted to bridge the gap among the multicultural population as promoted by the nation with the reality of diverse cultural groups through the creation of new violin book utilizing Malaysian folk songs. Tunes from the Malay, Chinese, Indian, Orang Asli, Sabah and Sarawak culture familiar as well as not familiar to the various multicultural communities in Malaysia used in this book get exposure through reaching out to the violin learners. Short summaries of the meaning of these tunes in its cultural context hoped to ignite a sense of appreciation, mutual respect, understanding and acceptance for others among and within cultures. Attraction to

the tunes may influence stronger desire to learn more about their background and cultural context.

Zoltan Kodály has said, "each nation has a great many songs which are especially suitable for teaching, if we select them well, folk songs will become the most appropriate material through which we can present and make conscious new musical elements"<sup>24</sup>. One of the tenets of the Kodály' teaching philosophies was the use of music of high artistic value, be it folk or composed. Selecting well meant that the developmentally beneficial folk songs were preferred. Most violin method and violin beginner books available in Malaysia introduce folk songs that do not derive from the Malaysian folk music heritage. The exclusion of the folk music and songs in a local violin beginner teaching and learning creates a void that deprives a formative musical learning experience from the opportunity to play and learn familiar folk songs or mother-tongue songs. This also hinders violin beginners from connecting to their nation's cultural heritage and being "stewards of their cultural heritage"<sup>25</sup>. It is important that new mediums for violin instruction based on sound philosophies of teaching and practice methods will be developed in Malaysia.

Galamian's "Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching (2013) is one of the few treaties that have made biggest impact on modern violin pedagogy. According to Arney among the treaties, that address both the technical and artistic aspect of violin pedagogy, only three remain in use<sup>26</sup>. One of these books is Galamian's book, which is widely used in modern violin pedagogy<sup>27</sup>. One of the elements that contributed to its success is that it provides ground for simultaneous complex artistic, musical and technical development of the young violinist.

### Statement of problem and objectives

The Malaysian folksong heritage is under growing influence of the Western culture<sup>28</sup>. Mass media heavily propagates Western musical culture<sup>29</sup>. Music of Western tradition and folk songs of other countries pervade beginner's violin literature and instruction books as well. From the very first lessons violin beginners are playing folk songs of foreign origins. Although some Japanese or Korean songs have made it into violin beginner's books, Malaysian songs are missing. The historical settings of Malaysia' formation determined the richness of cultural traditions and of folk traditions. It consists of diverse heritage of Malay, Orang Asli, the indigenous people of Sarawak and Sabah, Chinese, and Tamil. This mixture of folk heritage needs to be equally protected and, in some cases, even revived. Preservation of the folk heritage must become one of the aims that Malaysian educators can achieve through becoming agents for promotion and keepers of Malaysian folk music. Through the playing folk music, the beginner will learn about Malaysian culture, language and understand traditions. Knowledge and understanding will inevitably contribute to the preservation and sustainability of multicultural heritage.

<sup>24</sup>"Kodály Concept", 1985

<sup>25</sup>Houlahan, Mícheál, and Philip Tacka. *Kodály Today: A Cognitive Approach to Elementary Music Education*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup>Arney, Kelley M. "A comparison of the violin pedagogy of Auer, Flesch, and Galamian: improving accessibility and use through characterization and indexing." (2007).

<sup>27</sup>Galamian, Ivan, and Sally Thomas. *Principles of violin playing and teaching*. Courier Corporation, 2013, 3.

<sup>28</sup>Bird, Allan, and Michael J. Stevens. "Toward an Emergent Global Culture and the Effects of Globalization in Obsolescing National Cultures." *Journal of International Management* 9, no. 4 (2003): 395-407.

<sup>29</sup>Abdullah, Mohamad Hassan. "Introducing the Traditional Malay Children's Songs to the Early Childhood Education" at the *Malaysian National Child PERMATA Centre Conference paper, International Conference for Academic Disciplines*, Vienna(2014):1.

The researchers attempted to select and utilize Malaysian folk songs as resources and materials for the book to aid learning of the first position on violin. The developed book aimed to assist the learning of the first position on the violin through Ivan Galamian Principles utilizing Malaysian folk tunes. Another objective was to establish its effect on Malaysian violin beginners in terms of promotion of cultural heritage.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Two types of literature been sought for in this research, which were 1) violin method books and 2) multicultural folk songs from Malaysia. Galamian approach was explained in *The principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*. It has “ become one of the most important text books for the teaching and learning of the violin in the twentieth and twenty first centuries...”<sup>30</sup>. It consists of Galamian’s instructions on various aspects of violin learning and playing from the basics of posture to his philosophical point of view on interpretation. This method focuses on an individual approach to each individual student’s physical built-up, scientific principles of anatomy, psychology and psychophysiology. Galamian stressed on importance of the inclusion of technical exercises and scale into daily practice. He incorporated the rhythm and bowing exercises into scales bringing new challenges into the routine practicing thus assisting in avoidance of dreary repetitions<sup>31</sup>.

The conducted review on a number of violin method books available in Malaysia was summarized in few main trends: the sequences of teaching beginners start with practices of playing on open strings. Holding the bow was introduced after the learning of basic finger positioning of the *half-steps* (semitones). Left hand first position techniques are commonly started with learning of D major scale or fingers combination (finger positions) for 1 tone + 1 tone + 1/2 tone + 1 tone progressing to advanced combination at various paces. The time signatures were limited to 2/3, 3/4, 4/4 in most of the above mentioned books. The sequence of introduction of the notes values progresses from semibreves, minims, crotchets to quavers. There were some variation of the pace in learning rhythms and right hand techniques. All of the methods used slurred bow of two or three notes for development of the right hand techniques. Most of the books mainly used folk song for first lessons. None of the books used any of Malaysian folk tunes.

The research reviewed a various sources in a search of suitable folk songs. Malay and non-Malay children who learned in national schools learned mainly English and some of popular Malay folk songs. The researchers selected a few of them from six songbooks designed for the classrooms from Standard 1-6 published by Rhythm Publishers due to their familiarity to the students as well as some of Chinese songs, found in Lew and Campbell<sup>32</sup> that were suitable for the violin beginners. Although there are many other Chinese songs, sung in national Chinese schools, our research was limited to mainly literature review of songbooks

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<sup>30</sup> Shipps, Stephen. *Ivan Galamian. Studying with the greatest* [Video file]. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBCV2\\_U9Qm0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBCV2_U9Qm0)

<sup>31</sup> Green, Elizabeth AH, Judith Galamian, and Josef Gingold. *Miraculous teacher: Ivan Galamian and the Meadowmount experience*. Elizabeth AH Green, 1993.

<sup>32</sup> Lew, Jackie Chooi-Theng and Campbell, Patricia. *Games Children Sing. Malaysia*. USA: Alfred Publishing, 2016

written in English. Tamil songs are rarely published in Malaysia. In *Buku Nyanyian*<sup>33</sup> (1993) published by Parti Gerakan Malaysia, the song text of a number of Tamil songs is printed but there was no accompanying music notation to it. Campbell and Lew documented two Tamil songs, both in written text and music notation. Most of the tunes were found in *Lagu Kanak-Kanak Melayu Tradisional* (Mohd Hassan Abdullah, Mohd Nizam Nasrifan, Nor Azman Mohd. Ramli), a collection of nearly 130 children's songs that are sung in the rural villages of the peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak by the local Malay children<sup>34</sup>. Classified according to their state of origins, these songs were lesser known as compared to many more "tuneful" and catchy folksongs in Malaysia.

### Review and analysis of selected songs

Researchers analyzed 23 songs selected for the book. They were assessed on subject of developmental value and placement in the book. Following is an example of the analysis of the Kelantanese song *Anggur hijau limau merah*.

*This folksong used diatonic scale (do, re, mi, fa, so, la). The range of song is a Minor 10<sup>th</sup>. The intervals between pitches are Major 3<sup>rd</sup>, Minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, Perfect 4<sup>th</sup>, Perfect 5<sup>th</sup> and Perfect 8<sup>th</sup>. It is composed of semiquavers, crochets and dotted crochets and triplets. This song is suitable for the first position based on the tone-semitone-tone finger combination. The use of dotted crotchet with quaver rhythms makes this tune to challenging for the first lessons of violin learning. The researchers used this melody as developmental for the advancement in bow techniques and expressions.*

<i>Anggur hijau</i>	<i>Green grapes</i>
<i>Limau merah</i>	<i>Red lemon</i>
<i>Hendakkan saya</i>	<i>Want me</i>
<i>Mari sebelah</i>	<i>Come here by my side</i>

**Figure 1.** *Anggur hijau limau merah*<sup>35</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses both the qualitative and quantitative approach. The sequence of the research was literature review, selection and analysis of folksongs, discussion of Galamian approaches, and application of selected songs to Galamian approaches, and evaluation of the book.

### Selection of folksongs

This research analyzed 118 folk songs. The components evaluated in each song were modes, pitch utilized, ranges from lowest to highest pitch, frequent intervals, meter, note value frequency, rhythm pattern and others. Our findings have shown that only 22 songs were suitable for adapting into a beginner violin book based on Galamian approaches in the teaching and learning of the violin. The researchers divided analyzed folksongs into well-

<sup>33</sup>*Buku Nyanyian*. Malaysia: Published by Parti Gerakan 1993.

<sup>34</sup>Mohd Hassan Abdullah, Mohd Nizam Nasrifan, Nor Azman Mohd. Ramli. *Lagu Kanak-Kanak Melayu Tradisional. Koleksi, Analisis Dan Aplikasi Dalam Pendidikan Muzik. Final Research Repor.* (Tanjung Malim, Perak): University Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 2009

<sup>35</sup>*Anggur hijau limau merah*. Source: Mohd Hassan Abdullah, 2005.

known and popular folksongs, regional folksongs, Chinese, Indian, Orang Asli, Sabah and Sarawak folksong. Analysis showed that many of the folk songs in Malaysia that they were either 1) Too challenging rhythmically and/or technically 3) Complicated tonally or modally 4) Not enough technically/musically challenging or too repetitive. Researchers identified songs that were suitable and not suitable for a violin beginner based on Galamian approach into tables.

### **Application of selected songs to Galamian approach**

The selection of songs for Galamian approach to beginner method book was based on intervallic characteristics of the melody. This enabled to use tunes for four finger positions learned at early stage. The research employed Galamian method of illustrating finger and thumb positioning by suggesting the shape in different intervallic combination(Pic.1).



**Picture 1.** Positioning semitone between second and third fingers. 1 Tone+ 1 Tone + $\frac{1}{2}$  Tone+ 1 Tone

### **Adapting selected folksongs**

The process of songs adaptation went through several stages: The designation of the suitable key, determination of the time signature, simplification of the challenging rhythms or rhythmic figures, assignment of the bowings, addition of scales and arpeggios, composition of piano accompaniment score and violin part, assignment of the dynamics and other markings.

Some of the melodies contained rhythmic elements that were too challenging for violin beginners such as dotted quavers with semiquavers. The changes were made with regard for preserving the integrity of the original melody. The assignment of bowing is the next important step in the progressive development of the right hand techniques. The straight bow stroke techniques were applied throughout some of compositions such as *Joget Pahang* (Pic.10) for two violins. The melody that is still challenging for beginners at this stage would be played by the instructor and accompaniment using straight bow stroke on open string would be played by the student.

### *Joget Pahang*

**Figure 2.** *Joget Pahang*

Whilst Galamian Book Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching does not assign preferred scale and arpeggios patterns for the beginners his predilection towards variety of rhythm and bowing pattern use in scales and arpeggios is apparent in Contemporary Violin Technique<sup>36</sup> and video recording of his classes.

The scales were introduced in the order of increasing number of sharps and flats. Minims and crotchets as simple note values were used in one-octave scales (Fig. 3). Quaver values were used later on in G major two-octave scale (Fig.4)

**Figure 3.** G major scale and arpeggio

<sup>36</sup>Galamian, Ivan, and Frederick Neumann. *Contemporary Violin Technique*., pt. 1. Scale and Arpeggio Exercises. Vol. 1. Galaxy music corporation, 1977.



**Figure 4.** G major two-octaves scale

### Piano Accompaniment

Mayya Musaeva composed the piano accompaniment. Traditional characteristic rhythms and styles were incorporated into piano accompaniment to preserve original specific lineament of Malaysian folk songs. E.g. Slow character of *Ulik Mayang* determined choice of the tempo and accompanying chords that instructed to be played in style of *rubato* (Fig. 5). Violin parts then were extracted and piano parts were added to the respective chapters.



**Figure 5.**Ulik Mayang

### Artistic development

The idea of importance of the progressive artistic development, one of the fundamentals in violin pedagogy was expressed through thorough attention towards learning of dynamic expressions. The dynamics assigned to songs in progressive manner develop learner from simple dynamics towards skills of dynamic changes such as in *crescendo* and *diminuendo*.

### The book and accompanying CD recording

Edited researched were compiled into the book draft with the summary of the Galamian principles of violin playing and teaching of first position added. The draft then was tested and evaluated through user and expert evaluations. The final editing was conducted upon reviews and suggestions given by the reviewers.

Violin and piano parts recorded in the studio as separate tracks for full score and piano parts only. The purpose of the piano part recordings serving as a backing track allowed playing with accompaniment outside of the class settings. All the tracks compiled into an audio CD.

### **Research subjects and research instrument.**

This study was conducted at Sultan Idris Education University, Perak, Malaysia. The research instrument applied in this study was a questionnaire used to seek the efficiency of utilization of Galamian principles in teaching and learning the Malaysian folk tunes (Appendices III). The researcher designed a questionnaire with the assistance of co-researchers. Thirty(30) violin students of beginner level were identified to participate in this study.

## **RESULTS**

In general, the three main questions of this research have indicated good outcomes where the method book facilitated the learning of Malaysian beginner violinist using the Galamian principles. All questions demonstrated a high total mean. This showed strong agreement of the participants on the book's assistance in learning first position technique. The beginners benefited from learning folk tunes of the violin supplemented by comprehensive information in the book. This research reached main aim of establishing whether the utilization of Malaysian folk tunes in a book for violin beginners through Galamian principles would be beneficial for Malaysian violin beginners for the learning of first position techniques in terms of violin learning and promotion and sustainability of Malaysian culture.

### **Conclusion and implications**

The team created the book efficient in application of Galamian principles through utilization of Malaysian folk songs. Grounded on Galamian approach of teaching and playing the materials in the book were arranged in constructive advancing order related to violin theoretical instruction, induction of folk tunes in first position violin playing, musical content such as piano accompaniment and additional techniques exercises. Created book and audio CD demonstrated the strength in introduction of unknown folk tunes, their cultural attributes and sustainability of known tunes and is a novelty in Malaysia published violin books.

The conceptual frameworks in two research focus areas (selection, utilization of Malaysian folksongs and promotion of cultural heritage through the book) provide a useful schema for other researches. They might be replicated for creation of new method books/materials for other instruments in context of various cultures.

This research resulted in creation of the book that can become a main or supplementary material in violin beginner's classroom. Composed and carefully arranged melodies played and performed by the violin students will bring Malaysian musical heritage back to music schools. The book with some additions has potential to become a part of series in creation of Malaysian violin method with second book on second and third position techniques towards advanced violin techniques.

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