

Application of Ivan Galamian Principles for Violin Learning through Malaysian Folk Tunes

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Abstract

Early instruction in music is connected with the understanding of one's own culture. Kodaly associates it with a sense of belonging or a 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 Malaysian violin students whereas popular traditional tunes are not reflected in the violin repertoire of those method books. The product of the research conducted at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris was aimed at meeting the demands of the Malaysian violin teachers in terms of techniques as well as to serve as an agent for the sustainability of Malaysian folk heritage. Galamian's violin method made the biggest impact on modern violin pedagogy. This paper expounds on methods of applying Galamian's approaches through the selection and utilization of Malaysian folk songs as resource materials for the mentioned methodology as well as the interdisciplinary process of creating a violin method book.

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

Background

The development of social media and process of globalisation poses great threat to the sustainability of local culture (Bird and Stevens 2003). The advancement of technologies in

the media and mass communication led to the easy accessibility to Western modern music, which influences the musical preferences of the younger generation today. According to Mohd Hassan Abdullah (2015) "it is incumbent upon the Malaysian educational establishment to assist in re-establishing some of these traditional Malaysian songs through early childhood education". Zoltan Kodály (1882 –1967), one of the profound music educators, whose philosophy and system shaped the music education of twentieth century, has said that "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" ("Kodály Concept", 1985). 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 the shops or online introduce folk songs that do not derive from the Malaysian folk music heritage. For example, *A Tune a Day, Violin Book 1* (Herfurth, 2003), *Essential Elements for Strings* (Allen, Gillespie and Hayes, 2013) and *Strictly Strings: A Comprehensive String Method, Book1* (Jacquelyn Dillon, 1992), all of which are published in the United States mostly utilize tunes from other cultures. Eta Cohen Method book series uses many tunes from French, Jewish and Polish folk songs, while Anderson's and Frosts' *All for Strings, Book 2* (1986) uses many Scottish and British folk songs. This shows that the violin repertoire learned by Malaysian beginner violinists is heavily reliant on musical resources from the Western cultural 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" (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015, p. 37).

Violin instruction literature exists since the eighteen century. With the development of the violin art, more violin instructional books were written, addressing different aspects of violin playing. Books by distinguished violin performers "intended to be used with a teacher, and they had the effect of helping both the teacher and the pupil, making instruction more uniform, and introducing ideas of the best current practice ... to a far wider circle than had been possible previously" (Boyden, 1990. p.357). It was common practice among the violin teachers to instill the ways and the techniques that they were taught themselves (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015). This practice is often observed in Malaysia as well. Violin teachers instruct students in the first position playing using one or two popular methods books. Often, teaching is limited only to books published for Graded exams of examinations boards, such as Trinity College or exam board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) having no regard to student as "an individual with his own personality, his own characteristic physical and mental make-up, his own approach to the instrument and to music" (Galamian, 2013, p.1). Inevitably, the students' individual needs related to the violin techniques will initiate the search for alternative methods of instruction. It is important to consider that new mediums for violin instruction based on sound philosophies of teaching and practice methods are developed.

Modern violin educators agree that Ivan Galamian (1903 –1981) "was the greatest teacher the string world will ever know" (Sand, 2013, pa.1). His impact on modern performance is undeniable with his violin method resulted in producing of a number of the most successful violinists and violin educators in the world, such as Itzhak Perlman, Michael Rabin, Ruggiero Ricci and Pinchas Zukerman to name a few. A number of modern leading

violin pedagogues in the world still carry the Galamian's legacy. Among them are Pinchas Zukerman, Shlomo Mintz, Kurt Sassmannshaus, and North America's Paul Kantor. "Ivan Galamian's influence on violin techniques and performance practice continues undiminished," asserts Barbara Lourie Sand in *Teaching Genius* (Sand, 2015, p. 49).

Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (2013) is one of the few treatises that have made biggest impact on modern violin pedagogy. According to Arney (2006), among the treatises that addresses both the technical and artistic aspect of violin pedagogy, only three remain in use. One of these books is Galamian's book, which is widely used in modern violin pedagogy (p. 3). 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

Malaysia is among countries whose folksong heritage threatened by growing influence of the Western culture (Bird and Stevens, 2004). According to Abdullah, Mohamad Hassan (2014), as mass media heavily propagates Western musical culture, music of Western tradition and folk songs of other countries pervade beginner's violin literature and instruction books. Therefore, violin beginners are playing folk songs of foreign origins from the very foundational lessons. Although some Japanese or Korean songs have made it into violin beginner's books, Malaysian songs are strikingly missing. French song Brother John, Scottish Blue bells of Scotland in *All for Strings/Comprehensive string method* (Anderson, Frost, 1986), American Old MacDonald in *Learn to Play the Violin* (Frank Grapelli, 2008), Polish song Blowing Bubbles (*Eta Cohen violin method*, 2003) are among many others that belong to the Western tradition. Although some Japanese or Korean songs have made it into violin beginner's books, Malaysian songs are missing.

The historical settings of Malaysia's formation determined the richness of cultural and folk traditions. Malaysian culture consists of a 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 strive to achieve through becoming agents to promote and preserve Malaysian folk music.

After the declaration of independence of Malaysia in 1957, the Malays, Chinese and Indian children were educated either to national or vernacular schools. Since 1974, the national schools changed from English to Malay language medium school due to promulgation of Bahasa Melayu as the national language (Darmi and Albion, 2013, p. 3)

Government allowed vernacular schools to conduct lessons in vernacular tongues, providing an education that emphasized learning based on cultural backgrounds and origins. In given settings each ethnic group had no chance to learn the songs of other ethnic groups as well as to learn other than Malay and some foreign languages. The national educations ambiguity in deciding between homogenizing and standardizing the language to one main hegemony system opposed to providing flexibility for learners with different skills. Malaysians should have adopted living in a multicultural country by having access to multilingual and multicultural education. Therefore, it becomes evident that in current state of Malaysian education the music teachers in general and violin instructors in particular can become instruments in promotion of multicultural education through inclusion of the folk music of various Malaysian ethnic cultures. Through the playing of 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 our wonderful multicultural heritage.

Nevertheless, it would be undeniably impractical to negate all the achievements of the western education in music. American, German, Franco-Belgian, Russian violin schools within last three hundred years have produced brilliant violin virtuosi, great teachers, many written works in the field of violin techniques. Unfortunately, among hundreds of books written for all levels of playing there are very few known materials for violin beginners that use Malaysian folk tunes. It is the objective for Malaysian violin teachers to choose what is the best and necessary for the current state of violin education. Therefore, it is crucial to provide multifarious materials utilizing Malaysian folk tunes heritage for different levels and stages of violin learning and teaching based on sound and tested violin methodology.

OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

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 the violin. The developed book aimed to accomplish this through Ivan Galamian Principles utilizing Malaysian folk tunes. Another objective was to establish the effect it would have on Malaysian violin beginners in terms of promotion of cultural heritage.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The research used the qualitative approach in selection, adaptation and utilization of Malaysian folk tunes through literature review, selection and analysis of folksongs, discussion of Galamian approaches, and application of selected songs to Galamian approaches, and evaluation of the book. The literature review section was discussed in the report and the testing and evaluation of the book were conducted. Galamian approaches were discussed with the selection and analysis of folksongs, application of selected songs to Galamian approaches.

Selection of Folksongs

This research analyzed 118 folk songs. The researchers divided analyzed folksongs into well-known and popular folksongs, regional folksongs, Chinese, Indian, Orang Asli, Sabah and Sarawak folksong. 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. The 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 reasons for the choice of included and excluded songs from the violin method book were discussed.

Application of selected songs to Galamian Approaches

The selection of songs for Galamian approaches to beginner method book was based on following components. Galamian illustrates finger and thumb positioning by suggesting the shape in different intervals combination. The following five combinations are presenting four fingers playing on A string as traditionally used for learning in first few violin lessons.

- 1) 1 tone+ 1 tone +½ tone+ 1 tone



A-B-C#-D-E

- 2) 1 tone +½ tone +1 tone +1 tone



A-B-C-D-E

- 3) 1 tone+ 1 tone + 1 tone+½ tone



A-B-C#-D#-E

- 4) ½ tone+ 1 tone +1 tone + ½ tone



A-Bb-C-D-Eb

- 5) ½ tone+ 1 tone +1 tone + 1 tone



A-Bb-C-D-E

Adapting selected folksongs to Galamian approach

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.

The chosen songs were assigned to five chapters based on possibility of use of four different finger placements with combinations of different intervals preceded by the chapter dedicated to straight bow stroke with the use of the open strings. The intervallic analysis of songs allowed researchers to choose appropriate key to accommodate abovementioned combination for progressive finger learning. For example, original key of Kelantan's children song *Hayong Kok Ti Kok Ta* (Fig1.) was F major. This was changed in G major (Fig 2.) to accommodate the third fingering combination: 1 tone +½ tone +1 tone +1 tone.



Figure 1. Original melody of Hayong Kok Ti Kok Ta



Figure 2. Edited violin part for song Hayong Kok Ti Kok Ta

The assignment of bowings was next important step in the progressive development of the right hand techniques. The straight bow stroke techniques were applied throughout compositions *Rasa Sayang*, *Anak Ayam* and *Joget Pahang* (Fig3) for two violins. The melody that is still challenging for beginners at this stage would be played by the instructor. The accompaniment would be played by the student using straight bow stroke on open strings.

Figure 3. Joget Pahang

Other bowing patterns and marks were introduced through additional scale and arpeggio exercises and then applied to songs. The staccato bowing was introduced in E minor scale (Fig.4) and applied on Chinese song *Wan Pi DE Xiao Mao Mi* (Fig.5).

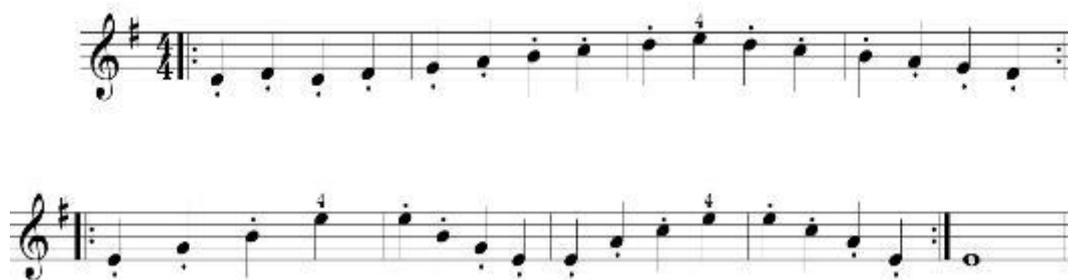


Figure 4. E minor staccato scale



Figure 5. Fragment of Chinese song Wan Pi DE Xiao Mao Mi

Whilst Galamian does not state preference for the patterns of the scales and arpeggios in the Book Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching, his predilection towards variety of rhythm and bowing pattern use in scales and arpeggios is apparent in Contemporary Violin Technique (Galamian, Neumann, 1997).

The scales were introduced in the order of increasing number of sharps and flats. Minims, crotchets and quavers as simple note values were used in one-octave scales. The scales were designed after Galamian scale patterns (Galamian et al.1997).

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 chord that instructed to be played in style of *rubato* (Fig. 6). Violin parts then were extracted and piano parts were added to the respective chapters.

Rubato

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Ulik Mayang'. It is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system features a violin part (top staff) and a piano accompaniment (bottom two staves). The violin part begins with a melodic line starting on a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking 'mp' (mezzo-piano) is present in both parts. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with the violin part showing a dynamic change to 'f' (forte) at the beginning of the second measure. The piano accompaniment includes more complex chordal textures and a longer note in the bass line.

Figure 6. Ulik Mayang

The idea of importance of the progressive artistic development, one of the fundamentals in violin pedagogy was expressed through attention towards learning of dynamic expressions. The dynamics assigned to songs in progressive manner develop learner's skills from simple dynamics towards dynamic changes such as in *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. E.g., these dynamics changes assigned to the song *Jong-Jong Inai* (Fig.37)

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 for playing with accompaniment outside of the class settings. All the tracks compiled into an audio CD.

Edited songs 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.

Implications

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.

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. This 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 will 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 a desire to learn more about their background and cultural context. 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.

Commercialisation potential

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.

Potential future researches

Based on fundamental findings of this research it would be sensible to carry out impact study of the created method book. Another possibility would be to research cognitive, psychomotor and affective components in the application of the created method book.

Literature Review

Two types of literature been sought for in this research, which were violin method books and multicultural folk songs from Malaysia.

Galamian approach

The Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching by Galamian has "become one of the most important text books for the teaching and learning of the violin in the twentieth and twenty first centuries..." (Shipps, 2012). 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. Robin Stowell, the editor of "The Cambridge Companion to the Violin" sums up Galamian teaching method as embodiment of "the best traditions of the Russian and French violin schools" (Stowell, 1992, p.228). This method is based on an individual approach to each individual student's physical built-up, scientific principles of anatomy, psychology and psychophysiology to nurture the musical and technical development of each individual to the maximum (Sand, 2015). The methodical instructions given for the teacher and violin learners aimed to deepen the knowledge in the process of learning. This study was limited to Galamian techniques involved in the teaching and learning of first position for the violin beginners.

Contemporary Violin Techniques, Volume 1 (1977) and Volume 2 (1997) that Galamian co-authored with Frederick Neumann supplement Galamian approach to the violin techniques. 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 (Green, 2003). Inclusion of melodic elements into the scale allows for deeper musical engagement and better mental control over physical factor (Kim, 2006).

Violin method books

The review was conducted on a number of violin method books. Among them researchers discussed only six methods: Suzuki's Violin School Method Book and CD, Volume 1(Suzuki,

2015); All for strings, Comprehensive String Method (Anderson, Frost, n.d.); Early Start on the Violin, Volume 1(Egon Sassmannshaus & Kurt Sassmannshaus, 2010); Essential Technique 2000 For Strings(Allen, Gillespie, 2000); Learn to Play Violin (Capelli, 2008); Preliminary book, Starting Right (Cohen & Brown, 2011) and Violin Method, Book 1(Cohen & Brown, 2003) from Eta Cohen Violin Method series.

The summary of these books reviews shows they all begin the violin teaching through practices of playing on open strings. Left hand first position techniques are commonly introduced through learning of D major scale or fingers combination for 1tone+1tone+1/2 tone+1tone progressing to advanced combination at various pace. The time signatures are limited to 2/3, 3/4, 4/4 in most of abovementioned books. The sequence of introduction of the notes values progresses from semibreves, minims, crotchets to quavers. There is 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. None of the books used any of Malaysian folk tunes.

Folk Songs in Malaysia

Folk songs are songs familiar to the local people of Malaysia. Some of the folksongs in Malaysia are believed to be adopted from or influenced by songs from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and China (Lee and Nadieu, 2011, p. 769). Malay and non-Malay children who grew up in national schools learned mainly Malay and English folk songs, such as, *Lenggang Kangkung* (The swaying of the watercress) which depicts the swaying of kangkung (a type of watercress) swaying side to side as a breeze blows across the paddy fields. *Tepuk Amai-amai* (Clap with the Ladybugs) is another folksong that depicts various insects such as grasshoppers, ladybugs and butterflies flying and hopping around the fields. This song metaphorically represents the three main multicultural ethnic groups in Malaysia – the Malays, Chinese and Indians (Lee and Nadieu, 2011, p. 769). *Wau Bulan* is a folksong from Kelantan that depicted the local kite, known as *wau*, flown in the sky by a group of children. These folksongs are mainly using the diatonic scale and the strophic form.

The research reviewed various sources in a search of suitable folksongs. Malay and non-Malay children who learned in national schools learned mainly English and some popular Malay folk songs. The researchers selected a few of them from six songbooks designed for classrooms from Standard 1-6 published by Rhythm Publishers, due to their familiarity to the students as well as some Chinese songs, found in Lew and Campbell 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 a literature review of songbooks written in English. Tamil songs are rarely published in Malaysia. In Buku Nyanyian (1993) published by Parti Gerakan Malaysia, the song text of a number of Tamil songs is printed but there is 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. Classified according their state of origins, these songs were lesser known as compared to many more "tuneful" and catchy folksongs in Malaysia. Most of them consisted of two, three, four or five tone scales. Simple duple and quadruple time signature with simple quaver-crotchet rhythms is a common feature for many of these tunes. A number of songs from this book are composed of repetitive motives and pitches. Some of the tunes were very similar only with minor differences in rhythm patterns or melody.

Chong (1998) published a book on the folk songs of *Kenyah* community of Sarawak. She arranged the songs according to the Kodály melodic sequence. The Based on the diatonic scale, Kodály sequence is been created according to the Hungarian children's child-developmental pattern. The sequenced utilized began with a minor third (so-mi), adding another solfege syllable one at a time (la, do, re). Although Kodály stated that each nation should create its own melodic sequence based on its own folk music, Chong utilised Kodály's melodic sequence for the folk songs of the *Kenyah* community as well. From the 22 songs Chong collected, one song was in tritonic, another in trichordal, another one more in mixolydian, six were in diatonic and 13 were in pentatonic scale. Although some of the songs were in tritonic or pentatonic scales, the intervallic leaps of many of these songs were not suitable for the Galamian sequence we were utilizing for the violin method for beginners.

Many of the Malay folksongs were selected from six songbooks designed for the classrooms from Standard 1-6 published by *Rhythm Publishers*. These books comprise of the children's folk songs that were more "popular" or well known among Malaysians from across ethnic groups. Unlike Mohd Hassan's collections, which focused on the more rural citizens of Malaysia, these books also included new folksong compositions composed by Malaysian composers.

The book *Dendang dan Dondang Kanak-Kanak* by Azah Aziz and Ariff Ahmad first published in 1953 by Times Book International includes songs identified simply as traditional as well as composed songs. Although the book provides songs' lyrics, it does not mention ethnic or regional origins of songs. Some Malaysian songs have same title but different melody and lyrics such as *Buai Laju-Laju* form above-mentioned book and *Buai Laju-laju* collected from State of Pahang by Mohd Hassan Abdullah, Mohd Nizam Nasrifan, Nor Azman Mohd. Ramli (2009). Therefore, it is important for researchers to refer to the origins of the material for integrity in sustainability and promotion of Malaysian music heritage.

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