

XÒE DANCE OF THE TAI AND ITS MUSIC

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Abstract: *To understand the music used in Xòe dance of the Tai people first of all, we need to understand the performance space associated with this art form. Xòe dance is performed in three main spaces with three different performance scales and artistic content. Out of these spaces, the one that is of artistic feature devoted to Then performance.*

To persuade community members and make them believe in the religion they are devoted to, the circle of Then masters has attempted to elaborate folk arts and art organizations since early times. The organization included the Then masters acting as main artists and some groups of dancers and background musicians as supporting artists.

Background music for dancing was played by Tính Tấu (Gourd lute) lutenists, who were called Báo Khá. They were instrumentalists closely attached to Then Masters. Whenever Then Masters held their rituals, Báo Khá went with them. Báo Khá played Tính Tấu very well and they knew many music pieces used in Then dance.

In acknowledging the attractiveness of Xòe dance and Tính Tấu music used in Then rituals, the community gradually “lifted” these practices out of their sacred space and entered them into their daily life’s entertainment activities. This is the second performance space which was originated from Then rituals.

When wealthy noble classes emerged in the Tai society, provincial and regional officials exploited the art of Xòe dance associated with Then rituals. They organized professional Xòe dance groups to perform in ceremonies and diplomacy receptions under their authority. These noble Xòe dance groups performed in their own exclusive space. This is the third space of Xòe dance of the Tai.

All the three performance spaces of Xòe dance of the Tai share a common music resource, that is Khấp Then, music associated with Then. However, in compliance with different dance forms, the music is developed variedly into many variations.

Keywords: *Xòe dance of the Tai, Khấp Then, Then performance, Tính Tấu.*