Musical analysis of *Native Land* for Orchestra*

วิเคราะบทประพันธ์ *ชาติภูมิ* สำหรับวงออร์เคสตรา

Saksri Vongtaradon**

Abstract

Native Land is the fourth movement of a symphonic poem, *Bangkok City*, composed for orchestra. It is the first contemporary music composition inspired by sites and cultural diversity of Bangkok and it seeks to depict composer's impression of cultural diversity and modern Thai society which is a result of globalization. The piece employs musical elements to create ambience of Thai music by combining musical motifs from Thai country music, and melodic patterns typically played by traditional instruments of North East Thailand, *Kaen* and *Pin*, with contemporary compositional techniques. The piece also delivers composer's personality and musical identity through diverse cultural and musical influences drawn to this particular piece while creating a balance between traditional and modern sounds.

บทคัดย่อ

บทประพันธ์ *ชาติภูมิ* สำหรับวงออร์เคสตรา เป็นบทประพันธ์กระบวนที่สี่ของบทบรรเลงดุริยางคนิพนธ์ *กรุงเทพมหานคร* ซึ่งเป็นบทประพันธ์ร่วมสมัยที่ได้รับแรงบันดาลใจจากสถานที่ต่าง ๆ และความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมของกรุงเทพมหานคร บทประพันธ์ *ชาติภูมิ* ต้องการพรรณาถึงเจตคติของผู้ประพันธ์ที่มีต่อความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม และสภาวะทางสังคมเมืองของไทยซึ่งเป็นผลของโลกาภิวัฒน์

บทประพันธ์นี้ประกอบด้วยวัตถุดิบทางดนตรีจากบทเพลงลูกทุ่ง รูปแบบจังหวะและทำนองจากเครื่องดนตรีพื้นบ้านอิสานได้แก่แคน และพิณ ผสมผสานกับเทคนิคการประพันธ์ร่วมสมัยเพื่อถ่ายทอดความเป็นไทยผ่านบทประพันธ์ นอกจากนั้นบทประพันธ์นี้ยังแสดงออกถึงอัตลักษณ์ทางดนตรีของผู้ประพันธ์ที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากพหุวัฒนธรรม และการใช้ดนตรีจากแหล่งต่าง ๆ เพื่อสร้างสมดุลระหว่างดนตรีแบบดั้งเดิม และดนตรีร่วมสมัย

Introduction

Native Land is an original composition for full orchestra, completed by Saksri Vongtaradon in 2013. It is the fourth and the last movement of the symphonic suite, *Bangkok City*. The piece is the first composition for orchestra inspired by different sites and cultural diversity of Bangkok. With Bangkok being the capital and an extreme primate city, it attracts

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populations from all parts of Thailand and abroad. In addition, generosity and indiscrimination has been a norm of Thai culture. This results in a mixture of cultures and traditions that makes Bangkok a truly unique place. *Native Land* reflects composer's impression of cultural diversity and modern Thai society. The piece presents ambience of Thai music by combining musical motifs from Thai country music, and melodic patterns typically played by traditional instruments of North East Thailand, *Kaen* and *Pin*, with contemporary compositional techniques. Perfect fourths and fifths with chromatic intervals are combined as the primary pitch content for this composition. The use of independent musical layers to create variety of textures is consistent throughout the piece.

The composition contains core materials like pentatonic scales, glissandi-like figures, and motifs derived from Thai country music. Perfect fourths and fifths with chromatic intervals are combined as the primary pitch content for this composition. The use of independent musical layers to create variety of textures is consistent throughout the piece. The total duration of the piece is approximately thirty five minutes, eight of which is the length of *Native Land*.

Related compositions and reviews of materials

Several important repertoires for orchestra have been written as contributions to certain places, cities or events associated with such places. Among them include *Three places in New England* by Charles Ives (1874-1954), *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* and *Threnody to the victims of Hiroshima*, by Krysztof Penderecki (1933-present), *A London Symphony* by Raph Von Williams (1872-1958), Symphony no. 4 Los Angeles by Arvo Part (1935-present), Quiet City by Aaron Copland (1900-1990), Pine of Rome, and Fountain of Rome by Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936). All of the compositions drew inspirations from the cities and presented musical and emotional images of the places by using combination of motifs and compositional techniques.

For example, the extended techniques played by strings like slapping on the body of the instrument or bowing behind the bridge in *Threnody for the victims of Hiroshima* produced haunting sounds and intense musical textures, leaving an impression of catastrophe and sufferings of the victims of Hiroshima at the end of World War II.

In Pines of Rome, Resphigi used different techniques to depict pine trees in different locations in Rome at different times of the day. In the second movement, Respighi depicted an isolated chapel. He used lower sounding instruments and organ in the lowest range to present a catacomb. In addition, a quotation of a hymn was heard while trombones denoted a priest chanting.

There has never been a composition written for orchestra that draws inspiration from the city of Bangkok. *Bangkok City* for Orchestra consists of 4 movements: *Shades of Bangkok, Temple Street, River of Life*, and *Native Land*. Each movement associates with different places and different cultural aspects of Bangkok. *Native Land* illustrates the cultural diversity and combination of conservativeness and modernity by drawing musical materials from melodic and rhythmic patterns of *Kaen* and *Pin*, representing traditional sound, combined with motifs from contemporary Thai country songs, *Sam Sib Young Jaew*, *Kor Jai Ter Lak Ber Toe*, and *Rak tong Perd (Nan-Ok),* representing current sound of popular music. These musical materials are later put together using various compositional techniques to construct musical textures of a large scale piece and to create an atmosphere and emotional contents of the piece.

Analysis of the composition
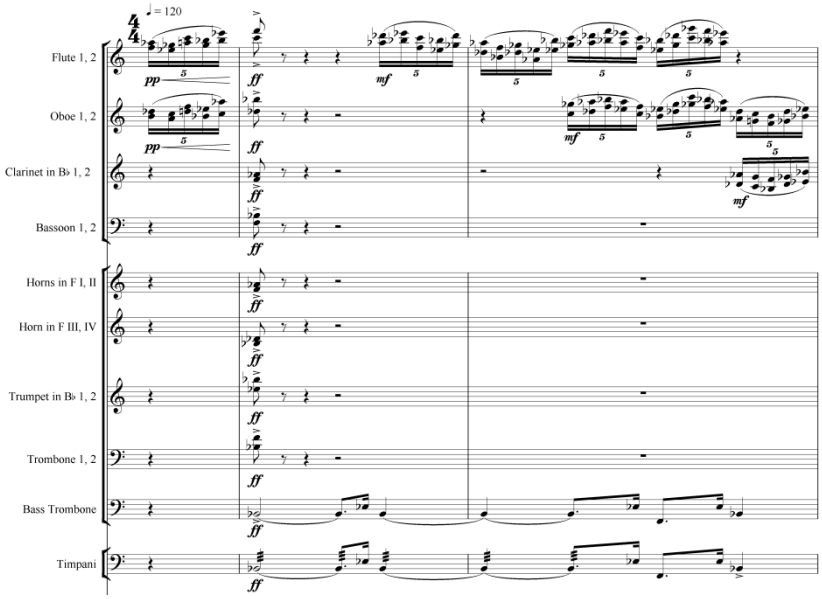
Native Land is written in a ternary form (A-B-C). The outline of each section is as followed:

Introduction measure	1- 13
A section measure	14 – 45
Transition measure	38-45
B section measure	46 - 87
C section measure	88 – 173

The introduction is centered on the note Bb, from which the piece gradually unfolds and develops through the use of Bb Dorian mode. The A section begins with the use of a similar musical texture, groups of quintuplets, found in the introduction of the piece. The groups of quintuplets are later developed into motivic and rhythmic patterns performed alternately between strings and woodwind sections to resemble patterns normally played by a traditional Thai instrument, *Kaen.*

The B section of this movement begins with an abrupt change in tempo, dynamics, and texture, setting a contrasting mood to the A section. The use of different solo parts also highlights the melody influenced by Thai country songs. The C section starts with groups of quintuplets in a faster tempo. The section is gradually developed using different musical textures, repetitive rhythmic figures and wider range of dynamics and pitches to achieve a climatic point at the end of the movement.
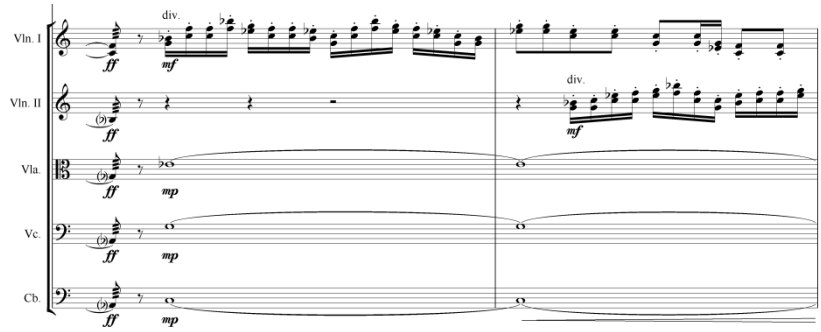
Example 1 Use of quintuplets and intervals of fourth and fifth (measure 1-2)



Example 1 demonstrates the use of quintuplets in the very beginning of the piece to create a rhythmic motif and a musical texture. The group of 5 notes per beat creates a forward rhythmic motion, and it is repeated in different sections throughout the piece to produce coherent ideas and unity of the entire piece.

The example also shows the use of intervals of fourth and fifth in the melody played by Bass trombone and Timpani. The melody is centered around Bb with note Eb, the fourth above Bb, and note F, the fourth below Bb are played to alternately to elaborate the tonal center and to create an ambience of a folk-like melody. Note Bb, Eb and F are the basic pitch materials for the whole piece. In addition, the intervals of fourth and fifth are used predominantly between each voice in the woodwind section.

Example 2 Melodic and rhythmic patterns derived from patterns performed by *Kaen* (measure 14-15)
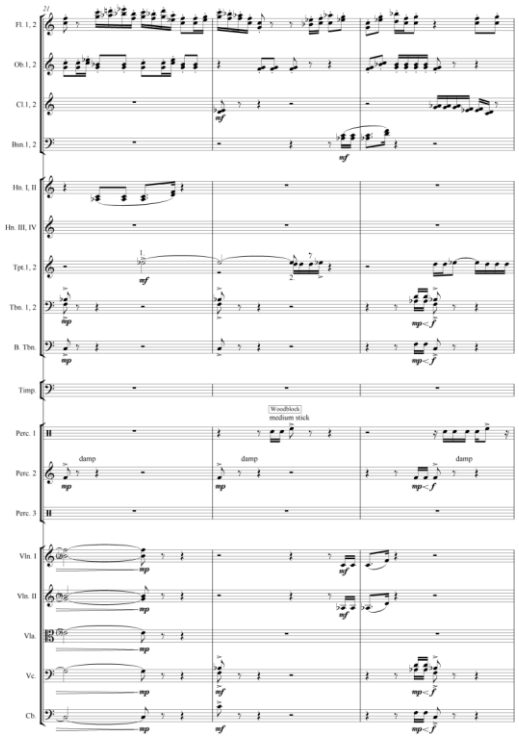


Example 2 shows melodic and rhythmic patterns in the Violin 1 and 2. The patterns are played using stings divisi and staccato to generate a thick and well articulate sound to duplicate the breathing, articulations, and melody produced by a *Kaen* player.

Kaen is a free reed instrument found in folk music, and folk opera of North- Eastern part of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. It is a kind of mouth organ whose pipes are made of bamboo. The pipes are connected with a piece of hardwood with a hole into which air is blown. The instrument is normally tuned to a diatonic natural minor scale, however, majority of music played by *Kaen* use notes from pentatonic scales. For example, a *Kaen* tuned to an A natural minor scale can be played with music in keys of C, F, and G, using C, F, and G Pentatonic scale respectively. It is a multiphonic instrument that creates two layers of sound. The first layer of repetitive patterns is normally played against the second layer of drone-like pedal tones.
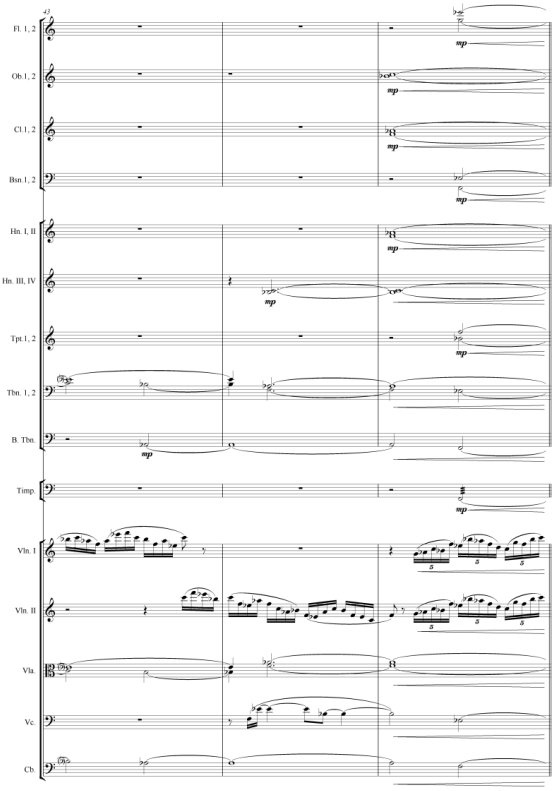
In Example 2, Violin 1 and 2 play melodic and rhythmic figures using pitches from the Eb Pentatonic scale, while Viola, Cello, and Bass play sustain notes, also from Eb Pentatonic scale to create a drone-like texture. By using strings to perform musical patterns normally derived by *Kaen*, this is to incorporate the sound of Thai music into the piece and to create fluid melodic movements, while the drone in lower strings provides cohesiveness throughout the section.

Example 3 Fragments of melodic and rhythmic patterns (measure 21-23)



Example 3 shows the use of fragmentation of the melodic and rhythmic figures played previously. The modified and shortened patterns are spread across the orchestra to create multiple layers of orchestral textures and timbral variety. In addition, the pitch collection used in example 3 is extended from Eb pentatonic scale to C Aeolian mode.

Example 4 Transition (measure 43-45)
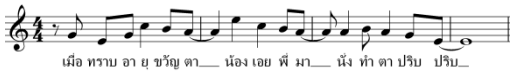


Example 4 shows the transitional section leading up to the B section using a musical texture that contains fluid melodic lines between Violin 1 and 2. Reuse of quintuplets in measure 45 not only creates unity in the piece, but also accelerates and intensifies forward momentum of the lines, while dynamics in all parts increases rapidly from *mp* to *ff* on the first beat of measure 46.

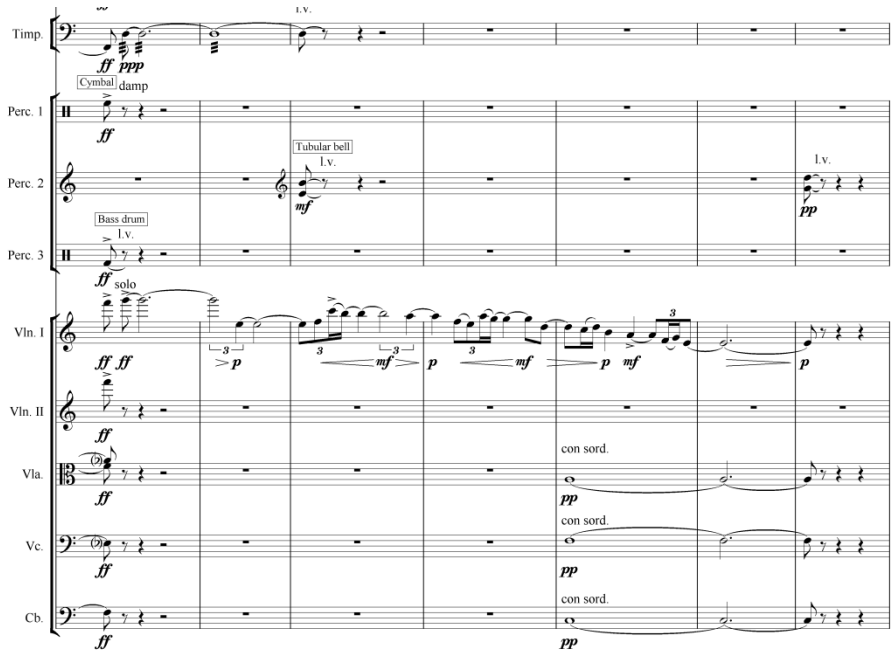
Pitches used during the transition are from Ab pentatonic scale. Note G is added in measure 45 to suggest Ab major scale, with the absent of Db.

Example 5 Melody derived from *Sam Sib Young Jaew* (measure 46-52)

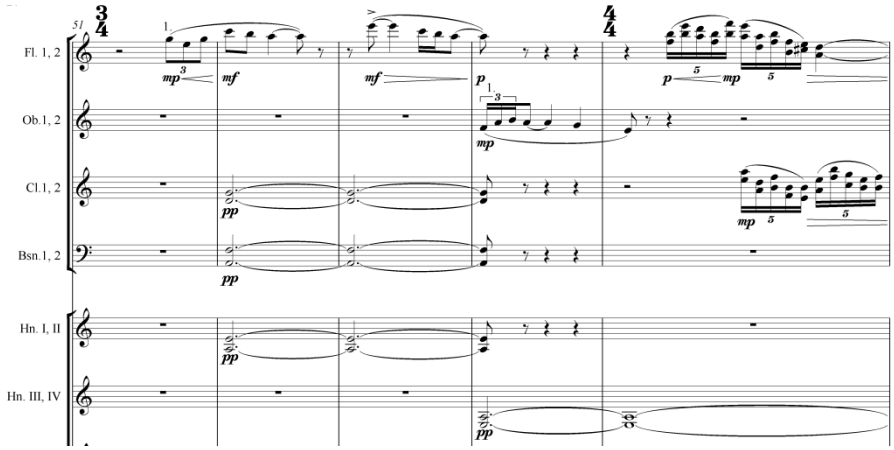
a.



b.



c.
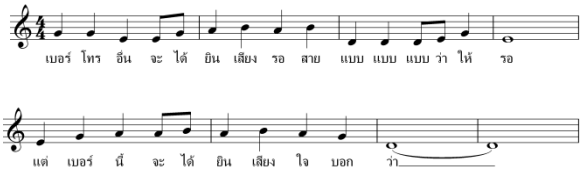


Example 5a shows the beginning of the melody to *Sam Sib Young Jaew*, a Thai country song written by a Thai National Artist, Lop Burirat (1935-present), for a legendary Thai country singer, Yodruk Slakjai (1956-2008). The song was a great success and it has been a classic repertoire for Thai country music since its first release in 1983.

Example 5b shows the beginning of the B section of the piece. Tempo is changed abruptly from a quarter note equals to 128 beats per minute to 56 beats per minute. In addition, the solo part in Violin 1 adds a dramatic contrast to the orchestral texture, while the dynamics diminishes from very loud, *ff* on the first beat of measure 46, to very soft, *pp* in measure 50, together with muted Strings. Starting from note G in measure 46 to note A in measure 49, the first Violin plays a melodic line derived from *Sam Sib Young Jaew*. The original melody is altered using octave displacement, augmentation and diminution.
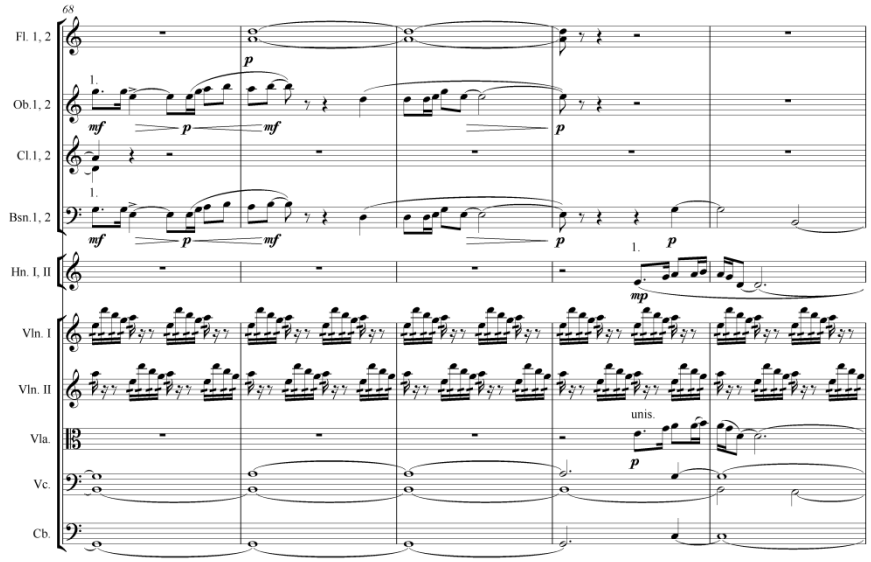
Example 5c demonstrates the use of quotation of the original melody of *Sam Sib Young Jaew*. Starting on the third beat of measure 51, Flute 1 plays the original melody before Oboe 1 picks up the last bit of the melody to complete the melodic phrase.

Example 6 Melody derived from *Kor Jai Ter Lak Ber Toe* (measure 68-67)

a.



b.
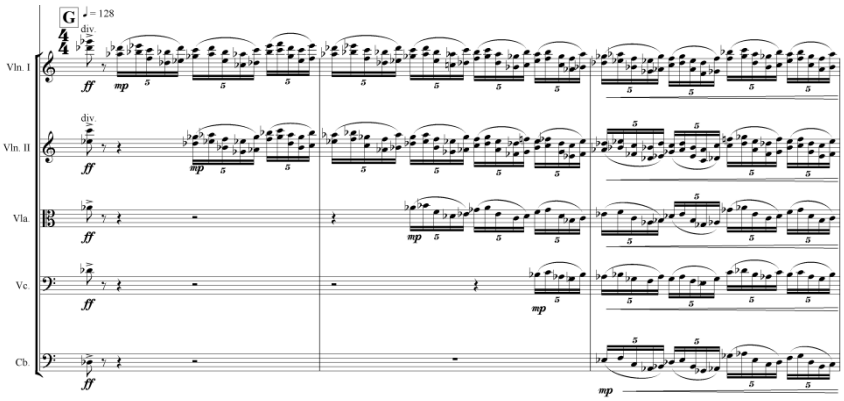


Example 6a is the bridge of a popular Thai country music, *Kor Jai Ter Lak Ber Toe*. The song combines traditional country music elements, simple melody from pentatonic scale and chord progressions derived from Dorian mode, with contemporary rhythm and

arrangements. The song has gained a wide popularity when released in early 2013, and in December 2013, the song reached 76.6 million views on Youtube.com.

Example 6b displays the use of melody from *Kor Jai Ter Lak Ber Toe*. From measure 68 to 71, first Oboe and first Basson play the melody two octaves apart, and in measure 71 and 72, first Horn and Viola continue the melodic line in unison to conclude the phrase. Violin 1 and Violin 2 play repetitive figure which notes are from G pentatonic scale, while Cello, Bass and Flutes play sustain notes to resemble a drone commonly found in traditional Thai country music.
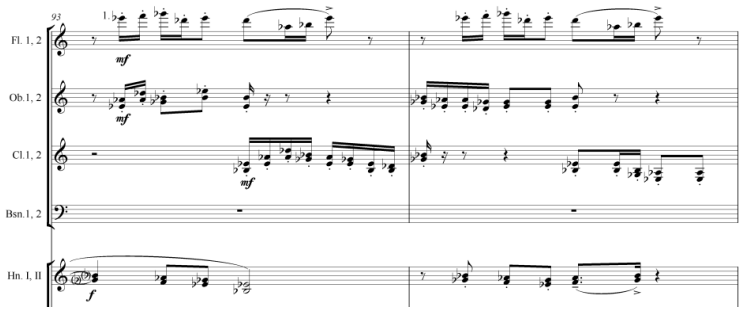
Example 7 Reuse of quintuplets and expansion of intervals (measure 88-90)



Example 7 marks the beginning of the C section. Tempo is changed to 128 beats per minute after a slow tempo in the B section of the piece, and a fermata at the end of measure 87. In the Strings section, quintuplets are used to gradually thicken musical texture layers starting from high notes in the Violin 1 to low notes in the Bass. Using quintuplets, similar to the introduction and other section of the piece, adds unity and coherence to the entire piece.

Notice the distance between top and bottom notes played by Violin 1 and 2 are expanded from the interval of fourth at the first two notes of each group of quintuplets to the fifth on the third note, to the sixth on the fourth note, and to major seventh on the fifth note. In measure 89, Viola plays notes that are fourth below the bottom note in the Violin 2, and Cello plays notes that are the fifth below the Violas. In measure 90, Bass is doubling notes played by the Viola at two octaves below.
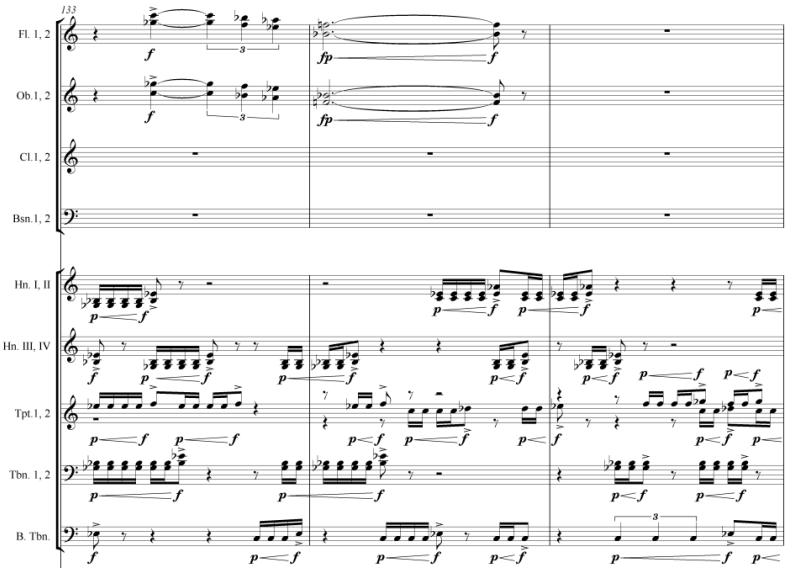
Example 8 Quotation from *Rak tong Perd (Nan-Ok)*, melodic and rhythmic patterns of *Kaen* and melodic riff of *Pin* (measure 93-94)



Example 8 demonstrates the use of a pattern from *Kaen* in Oboe and Clarinet section. Flute 1 is playing a repetitive melodic pattern characteristic to the sound of a traditional strings instrument from the North Eastern Thailand, *Pin.* A 2-4 strings guitar-like instrument typically plays short repetitive motifs in a tradition folk ensemble. In example 8, short motif played by Flute1 uses pitches from Eb Dorian mode.

Horn 1 quote a melody from the bridge of *Rak tong Perd (Nan-Ok)*. Released in early 2013, the song was a huge success. It gained wide popularity both domestically and internationally. In December 2013, the song has got 79.8 million views on Youtube.com. The melody played by Horn 1 consists of pitches from Gb pentatonic scale, while Horn 2 are playing notes the interval of third and fourth below the melody.

Example 9 Quotation from *Rak tong Perd (Nan-Ok)* and repetitive figures in the Brass section (measure 133-135)
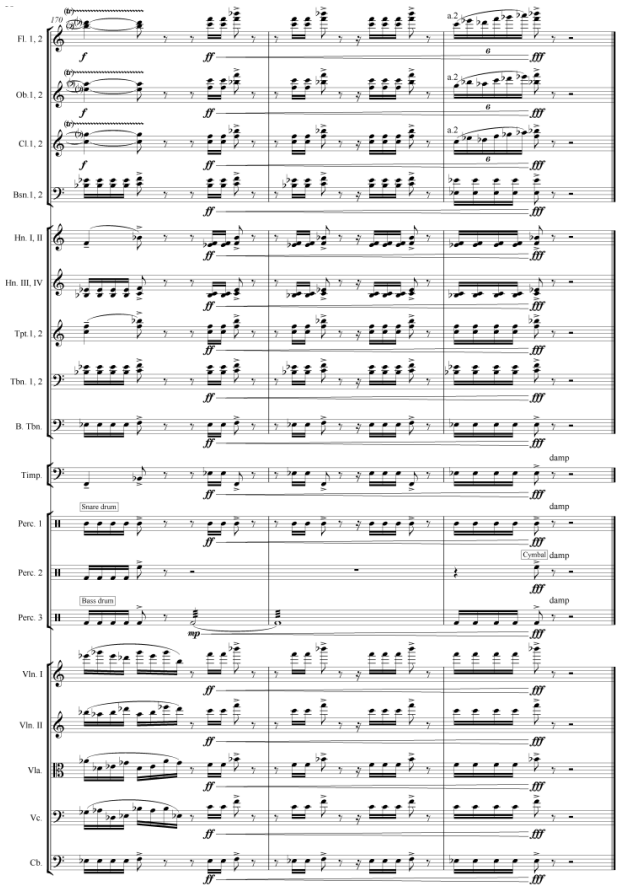


Example 9 shows the use of a quotation from *Rak tong Perd (Nan-Ok)* in the Flute section. In the Brass section, repetitive figures are played across the section to build layers of static harmony as the piece is starting to move toward the climatic point at the very end. The Horn and Trombone section play the repetitive figure starting both on the beat and off the beat, resulting in syncopated rhythm from accents being put in different places. Horn 1, 3 and Trombone 1 play Bb and Eb to emphasize the use of the interval of fourth, while Horn 2, 4 and Trombone 2 play Gb and Bb, a third and a fourth below the melody.

The Trumpet section creates dissonance by playing notes that are a whole step (Eb-F in Trumpet 1, and Db-Eb in Trumpet 2) or half step (F-Gb in Trumpet 1 and C-Db in Trumpet 2). Bass trombone plays C and Eb in different rhythmic group, starting from a group of 4 notes in measure 133 to a group of 5 and 3 notes in measure 134. In measure 135, Bass Trombone plays a group of 3 notes using quarter-note triplets.

In the Brass section, notice the dynamics that increases from *p* to *f* in each part. This creates the layers of independently rising in dynamics to prepare for the large ending when each section of the orchestra plays simultaneously.

Example 10 Ending (measure 170-172)



Example 10 presents the ending of *Native Land.* Notes F and Bb in the Flute, Trumpet, and Violin 1 accentuate the use of fourth in the melody, while Horn section creates density from a cluster of Bb, C, Eb and F. The groups of sextuplet in the last measure produce an effect of a controlled glissando, rising to the Bb, F, and Bb in the Flute, Oboe, and Clarinet section respectively. Beginning on the third beat of measure 170, there is an expansion of vertical rhythm, from a group of three to a group of four in measure 171, to the group of five in the last measure, together with an increase in dynamics from *ff* to *fff*. This amplification is to majestically conclude the piece.

Conclusion

Native Land is the first composition for orchestra inspired by the cultural diversity of Bangkok. It combines musical materials drawn from diverse influence including melodic and rhythmic patterns from *Kaen* and *Pin*, and quotations from *Sam Sib Young Jaew*, *Kor Jai Ter Lak Ber Toe*, and *Rak tong Perd (Nan-Ok)*. The piece is constructed using contemporary composition techniques which results in layers of musical textures. The combination of materials drawn from Thai country music and contemporary composition techniques generates ambience of Thai music through different sections of the piece. The composition achieves a balance between traditional and contemporary sound.

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