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NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAMESE SONGS: FROM THEORETICAL HERITAGE TO THE GOAL OF CULTURAL, PHYSICAL, AND AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the movement and transformation of national identity in contemporary Vietnamese songs under the multidimensional impact of globalization, while also considering the relationship between the theoretical legacy of musicology and the practical development of the human person. Building on the theoretical systems of classical scholars such as Tran, V. Khe and Pham Duy (on the Hoi-Giong system), To. N. Thanh (on syncretism), and Dale, A. Olsen's perspectives on popular music, the author provides an in-depth analysis of the process of "localization" through representative musical phenomena associated with Hoang Thuy Linh and Jack.

The study shows that national identity has shifted from relatively static forms toward a form of "modern syncretism," in which music, digital technology, and the language of music video (MV) converge to create a "cultural immune system" for young people. In particular, the article critiques the current condition of "surface culture" and the crisis of values through Duong, V. A's theory of song lyrics. The findings affirm that promoting national identity in music is a key means of achieving the goal of comprehensive human development according to the Culture-Physical Development-Aesthetics model (Văn-Thể-Mỹ). Finally, the author proposes a coordinated set of solutions, including the development of qualitative and quantitative criteria for arts management, with the aim of advancing values that "orient people toward goodness and supreme beauty" in the digital age.

KEYWORDS: National identity; contemporary songs; Hoi-Giong; cultural immune system; comprehensive human development.

INTRODUCTION

Amid profound changes in political systems and major shifts in the global economy, Vietnam has established a position of strategic stability through the process of reform and deep international integration. In this context, the Party and the State have consistently sought to shape a normative artistic culture in which the combination of a scientific worldview, the ideals of the age, and the finest qualities of national identity form a firm intellectual "backbone" for creativity. However, the explosive

growth of digital platforms, together with the soft power of transnational cultural industries such as US–UK popular music and K-Pop, is placing the music of developing countries at risk of homogenization and the erosion of identity.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, Dale, A. Olsen (2024: 23) argues that the endogenous strength of Vietnamese music lies in its flexible capacity to adapt without losing its sense of self. This is, in essence, a conscious process of “localization” aimed at restructuring heritage values within modern musical forms. Defining national identity in contemporary songs cannot be separated from the theoretical systems developed by earlier scholars: from community orientation and sustainability in structures of thought (Tran, N. Them. 2001), to the syncretic relationship between music and spiritual life (To, N. Thanh and Hong Thao. 1986), and the linguistic “genetic code” intrinsically linked to distinctive musicality: “Every tone mark is a musical note” (Pham, Duy. 2017: 15). These perspectives resonate strongly with Tran, V. Khe’s research and with the observation of the Institute of Arts (1976: 104), affirming that the promotion of national identity is a key means of purifying the soul and directing human beings toward the values of Truth–Goodness–Beauty (Tran, T. D. Dan. 2005).

The study of national identity has therefore become a core task of “cultural security.” Music must be regarded as one of the most important forms of aesthetic education for shaping Vietnamese character in the digital age. In the face of a tendency among some young people to become detached from their roots, the creation of values that are “both traditional and contemporary” — exemplified by the success of phenomena such as Hoang Thuy Linh and Jack — offers an effective means of building a “cultural immune system.” This article analyzes the current dynamics of contemporary music and proposes strategic solutions, including a system of qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria, so that national identity may continue to serve as a foundation for the comprehensive development of Vietnamese people in Culture, Physical Development, and Aesthetics (Văn–Thể–Mỹ) in the new period.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MUSIC

2.1. The “Hội–Giọng” System and the Structural Characteristics of the National Musical Language

Vietnamese music possesses a long history and a rich diversity of forms. Rooted in the inherently tonal and melodically inflected character of the Vietnamese language, national music formed its earliest cultural foundations through folk-song genres such as hát ví, hát lượn, and hò. These became the basis for the development of more scholarly and professional art forms such as *Chèo*, *Then*, and *Ả đào*, in which the combination of vocal sound and instrumental music created a strong core axis for Vietnamese musical identity (Vien Nghe thuật - Bo Van hoa, 1976: 23). Within the scope of this study, establishing a precise conceptual system is regarded as a methodological prerequisite for objectively analyzing practical values. We approach “folk musical materials” through the analysis of core structural components, including mode–melody systems, timbre–instrumentation, meter–rhythm structures, and artistic language.

Mode and Melody Systems: Scales and modes are among the most fundamental categories constituting musical discourse. As products of artistic thought without pre-existing models in nature, scales and modes always maintain an organic relationship with the customary characteristics and national identity of each musical culture. They are expressive entities crystallized and shaped throughout the course of human history (Vien Van hoa Nghe thuat tai TP.HCM, 1993: 11). They therefore constitute a major factor in affirming national musical identity. Folk materials are manifested through pentatonic scale systems and characteristic modes such as *Bắc, Nam, Xuân, and Oán*. The key lies in systems of characteristic intervals and ornamentation techniques such as rung (vibrating), nhấn (pressing/bending), *mở*, and *vỗ*, which create the distinctive nuances of Vietnamese melody. It is precisely these inflections and transformations of musical “*hơi*” that have created the unmistakable soul and identity of traditional Vietnamese music in comparison with other Eastern musical traditions (Tran, V. Khe. 2013: 82–83).

Rhythm and Meter: The structure of a musical work is generally understood as being formed from elements such as melody, rhythm, scale, and phrase or sectional form. However, if music is regarded as a language, these constituent elements function as its vocabulary, semantics, and grammatical structure (Bui, T. H. Quan. 2017: 26). The structural backbone of folk material is formed from the rhythms of labor and the tonal characteristics of the Vietnamese language. Examples include the cyclic quality of the “*Lòng bản*” rhythmic framework, the flexible metric organization of *Ca trù*, and rhythmic patterns imitating rowing or rice pounding. According to To, N. Thanh, Vietnamese folk music is syncretic in nature: rhythm is always closely connected with linguistic intonation and traditional bodily or visual gestures, creating an intriguing aesthetic contrast when placed in dialogue with Western meters.

Lyrics and Cultural Symbols: These constitute the “soul” of the material, expressed through lục bát and song thất lục bát poetic structures and characteristic vocables such as “*à ơi*” and “*tình tang*.” Regional filler syllables such as “*dô*” and “*huây*” generally support the principal melody and add vitality and color. The presence of cultural symbols such as the stork, the river wharf, and the communal house functions as a system of codes enabling listeners to recognize musical identity immediately (Pham, Duy. 2017: 53–54). Studies of folk song have emphasized the importance of lyric art as a means of preserving the national psyche and shaping the movement of melody. On the basis of these materials, cultural acculturation occurs as the elements interact, collide, and merge within the environment of global popular music. Vietnamese culture is inherently highly adaptive and transformative; therefore, this combination is not passive “borrowing” but an active process of “renewing the vitality of heritage,” enabling heritage to maintain a sustainable life within modern currents (Tran, N. Them. 2001: 32–35).

The use of folk materials in contemporary popular music is no longer limited to superficial imitation or mechanical borrowing of sonic features; it has moved into a stage of systemic restructuring. Through a survey of representative works, this study identifies the following principal approaches.

According to Pham, Duy (2017), “*Hỏi*” is not merely a scale; it is also the soul and emotional state conveyed through sound. He clearly distinguished the cheerful and ceremonial *Hỏi Khách* of the North from the gentle *Hỏi Xuân* and the sorrowful *Hỏi Oán* of the South. Mastery of these modal principles allows contemporary composers to internalize the national psyche rather than merely borrowing musical instruments at a superficial level.

In agreement with this view, Prof. Dr. Tran, V. Khe (2013: 149) emphasizes that national identity reaches maturity when traditional scales are seamlessly combined with modern creative thinking. He explains that in Vietnamese music, musical tones are not fixed and pitch is relative: the subtly “in-between” intervals (slightly high or low) do not fall exactly within the Western equal-tempered system but vary delicately according to the performer’s artistry. In particular, the six tones of the Vietnamese language themselves constitute a latent melodic structure, requiring composers who set Vietnamese words to music to observe tonal rules carefully so as not to distort the identity of the national language. This theoretical system of musical technique closely complements To, N. Thanh and Hong Thao’s (1986) concept of the “syncretic” nature of traditional music. Accordingly, national music does not exist independently but is always organically connected with rituals, festivals, and community life. Taken together, these values form a solid theoretical framework that helps contemporary songs avoid superficial hybridity when interacting with global genres such as EDM or Hip-hop.

2.2. Cultural Identity and the Philosophy of “Orientation toward Goodness” in Creative Thought

Musical identity is inseparable from a nation’s overall system of cultural values. Vietnamese culture has undergone many transformations; yet because of its distinctive geographical–climatic and historical–social circumstances, it continues to retain unmistakable features of identity despite those changes (Tran, N. Them, 2025: 338). In *Co so van hoa Viet Nam*, community orientation and autonomy are identified as cultural constants that directly influence the psychology of creativity. Vietnamese people tend to receive new influences openly while remaining selective so that they accord with the national sense of self (Tran, N. Them. 2025). National identity in song, therefore, is not merely a sonic exterior but an expression of “soul and character,” an assertion of cultural inner strength amid the torrent of globalization. From the theoretical perspective of *Vien Nghe thuat - Bo Van hoa* (1976), national identity is the organic unity of ideological content and expressive form, affirming that genuine art must educate and serve human beings. For a work to possess a strong national character, the artist must have sincere and profound emotions; under present conditions, those emotions must belong to a person whose soul is that of the new Vietnamese person, an exemplary soul of the age. These very qualities enable us to absorb the finest achievements of foreign music (*Vien Nghe thuat - Bo Van hoa*, 1976: 84). This idea strongly converges with Tran T. D. Dan’s (2005) cultural essays. He argues that genuine art must always aspire to “Supreme Beauty,” a concept encompassing both formal beauty and purity of the soul. Art must orient people toward goodness; that is, it must be capable of purifying and elevating human dignity. *Inferior and backward aesthetic tastes must be suppressed and gradually*

eliminated, while pure and healthy aesthetic tastes should be awakened and increasingly enriched (Tran, T. D Dan. 2005: 618).

The convergence of these systems of thought provides a firm foundation for contemporary music to fulfill the goal of comprehensive human development. When a contemporary song is deeply imbued with national identity, it not only stimulates hearing but also evokes national pride and guides the public toward healthy aesthetic values. Identity then acts as a bridge leading people toward the values of Culture–Physical Development–Aesthetics, contributing to the cultivation of character within a sustainable cultural environment.

2.3. Historical Acculturation and the Adaptive Capacity of Contemporary Music

National identity in music is not a static “fossil” but an entity in constant motion through time. According to Tuan, Giang (2007), every historical period deposits new “layers of cultural alluvium,” enriching the appearance of national music while maintaining a durable connection with its roots. This inheritance provides a stable foundation that prevents Vietnamese music from dissolving as it enters the global arena.

From the perspective of modern ethnomusicology, Dale, A. Olsen (2024) argues that the identity of Vietnamese popular music lies in its flexible adaptability under the pressures of globalization. It must be emphasized, however, that this adaptation is not spontaneous; it requires the creative capacities of artistic agents to be developed to the fullest. Artists and intellectuals play the leading role in selecting, cultivating, and directing the construction of a new art appropriate to the ideals of the age (Tuan, Giang, 2007: 12).

The “localization” of international currents — as Olsen describes it — is in fact a serious process of intellectual labor in which intellectuals function as aesthetic “filters.” They do not merely adopt modern techniques; they also carry out the mission of preserving a “cultural immune system” through education and creative practice. Their commitment transforms foreign musical forms into vehicles for expressing the Vietnamese soul, ensuring that contemporary art advances alongside the goal of comprehensive human development. This demonstrates that when music preserves national identity at its core, it becomes a powerful instrument for aesthetic education and character formation.

2.4. Musical Aesthetics and the Mission of Comprehensive Human Education (Culture–Physical Development–Aesthetics)

At the level of humanistic value, national identity in song extends beyond technical devices toward the perfection of human character. From the perspective of musical aesthetics, The, Bao (2013) argues that music is a distinctive art form capable of penetrating directly into the inner world and shaping attitudes toward life. He interprets the unity of Beauty (the Aesthetic) and humanistic value (the Good) as a process of transformation from auditory emotion into social consciousness. Music, therefore, must go beyond sensory satisfaction toward moral and intellectual awakening, functioning as one of the

most effective “means of character education.” In particular, The, Bao (2013: 88–89) offers a warning concerning the current reception of art: *society often focuses on the aesthetic level of creators while neglecting the need to enhance the aesthetic competence of audiences*. Musical aesthetic education for listeners must therefore receive greater attention in order to create a resonance of values between creative subjects and recipients. This position strongly converges with Tran T. D. Dan’s (2005) view that culture and the arts must “orient people toward goodness and toward supreme beauty.” In this context, national identity serves as an aesthetic “anchor,” helping individuals recognize their sense of self amid the torrent of globalization. When musical art achieves an intersection of “Culture” (depth of identity), “Physical Development” (the vitality of rhythm), and “Aesthetics” (the beauty of national melody), it becomes a comprehensive mode of education.

When a contemporary song preserves the values of “supreme beauty” embodied in national musical expression, it not only has the capacity to purify the soul but also teaches the public to respond to authentic beauty, thereby rejecting harmful, hybridized, and vulgar elements. This is the core goal of aesthetic education: to form a new Vietnamese system of human values in which people understand technology and master global trends while retaining a durable national cultural “genetic code.” National identity in music thus functions as a spiritual foundation for comprehensive human development and meets the requirements of the country’s sustainable development in the digital age.

3. THE CURRENT STATE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAMESE SONGS

From the theoretical framework of national identity and the role of aesthetic education outlined above, it can be seen that Vietnamese popular music today is no longer detached from the current of identity. Musical life in recent years has witnessed a powerful transformation in which traditional values are dynamically restructured within modern genres. This not only demonstrates flexible adaptability (Dale, A. Olsen) but also reflects the creative capacity of artists to construct a new artistic profile that carries both the spirit of the age and the deep essence of the nation.

Restructuring Folk Modes on an Electronic-Music Foundation: Current practice reveals a wave of “revival” of traditional values through techniques of “deconstruction.” Based on Pham, Duy’s (2017) perspective, national identity lies in the continual transformation of modes. Artists such as Hoang Thuy Linh (*Để Mị nói cho mà nghe, See Tình*) have incorporated pentatonic modes and folk-song sonorities into Disco-Pop/EDM structures. Double2T’s *À Lôi* is a particularly vivid example: placing the scales associated with the highland *khèn* and *đàn tính* over Trap/Hip-hop rhythms represents the “embodiment” of identity within a global structure. The digital age, however, tends to “flatten” intervals through equal temperament. To compensate for the loss of the subtle “nhấn, nhả, chênh, non” inflections emphasized by Tran, V. Khe, artists focus on ornamentation that follows the natural tones of Vietnamese speech: “every tone mark is a musical note” (Pham, Duy. 2017). Jack’s folk-inflected articulation in *Sóng Gió* and Double2T’s use of the *Tày* dialect in rap are efforts to preserve the Vietnamese “soul and essence” within a technological environment.

The Use of Symbolic Systems and the Crisis of “Supreme Beauty” in Lyrics: Identity is not located only in sonic structure but is also crystallized in the “soul” of lyrics. According to Tran, N. Them (2001), symbols are a core component of national identification. Many songs make extensive use of literary allusions and folk poetry — images such as the stork, *bánh trôi nước*, and epic traditions — in order to fulfill the function of “orienting people toward goodness and supreme beauty” (Tran, T. D Dan. 2005). Nevertheless, current practice also reveals a tendency toward superficial “cultural appropriation.” From the perspective of Duong, V. A (2000), the lyrics of some artists — notably certain passages in Jack’s *Sóng Gió* — still bear the marks of “assemblage.” The forced overuse of conventional Sino-Vietnamese expressions such as *phong trần* and *hồng nhan* diminishes poetic quality and the authenticity of the soul (Vien Van hoa Nghe thuat tai TP.HCM, 1973). This demonstrates that if a work merely “fits words to music” without deeply absorbing linguistic knowledge, it cannot attain the stature required for the cultivation of human character.

Modern “Syncretism” through the Language of Music Video (MV): Beyond sound, national identity is also materialized visually. Prof. Dr. To, N. Thanh and Hong Thao consistently emphasized the “syncretic” nature of traditional music, in which music is inseparable from ritual, dance, and lived space. In the digital age, the MV represents a new form of such syncretism. Music videos such as *Tứ Phủ*, *See Tình*, and *À Lôi* combine costumes, choreography adapted from *xòe* dance and *bóng rổ*, and national landscapes into a “visual cultural ecosystem.” This is a way of using the “preference for stability” structure (Tran, N. Them, 2001) to articulate identity. The international success of these works supports Dale, A. Olsen’s observation that local elements themselves are often what most attract global audiences. For Generation Z, this is one of the most effective channels of aesthetic education, helping to form a strong “cultural immune system” through emotional engagement with the beauty of cultural roots and thereby supporting the goal of comprehensive human development.

Empirical Analysis: The “Embodiment” of National Materials in Selected Representative Songs. To demonstrate how theoretical acculturation enters creative practice, a closer examination of representative works clarifies the ways in which identity is articulated within the flow of contemporary music:

Double2T’s *À Lôi* – The Articulation of Highland Cultural Identity: The work is an exemplary combination of folk structures and modes with a global musical language. The use of the *khèn* and *đàn tính* — instruments associated with the characteristic “*hơi*” and “*giọng*” of the northern highlands examined by Pham, Duy — over Trap/Hip-hop rhythms vividly demonstrates “adaptive capacity” (Dale, A. Olsen). In particular, the artist makes extensive use of the linguistic “genetic code” through the *Tày* dialect. As Pham, Duy (2017) observed, rhythmic phrasing and ornamentation that follow natural speech tones create a unique and unmistakable identity while generating a powerful wave of cultural pride among young people.

Hoang Thuy Linh's *See Tình* – Modern “Syncretic” Thinking: The work demonstrates a flexible transformation from “national musicality” to “popular musicality” through the use of pentatonic modes and characteristic folk-song sonorities within a Disco-Pop structure. Through the lens of To, N. Thanh and Hong Thao, the *See Tình* MV re-enacts “syncretism” as music, traditional costume, and riverine scenery are rendered through 3D graphics. In this way, the artist uses technology to preserve a “cultural immune system” while pursuing bright and positive aesthetic values in accordance with The, Bao’s (2013) theory.

Excerpt: Hoang Thuy Linh’s song *See Tình*. Use of the pentatonic mode and characteristic folk-song sonorities (G–A–C–D–E).



The 4/4 Disco rhythm incorporates layers of percussion that imitate the pulse of the *sênh tiền* and handclapping heard in community musical activities of the southern countryside, creating a feeling that is both unfamiliar and familiar. From the perspective of Pham, Duy’s theory, Hoang Thuy Linh handles Vietnamese lexical tones with exceptional skill:

Words such as “*tình*,” “*tính*,” and “*tang*” are articulated with a light breath-driven delivery that evokes the flavor of *Lý* melodies. The inheritance of traditional *Lý* tunes (such as *Lý Cây Bông* and *Lý Ngựa Ô*) in contemporary songs lies not merely in borrowing melodies but, more importantly, in phonetic treatment. The artist’s articulation of “*tình*, *tính*, *tang*” with gentle breath propulsion and the characteristic folk technique of *đỗ hột* is a way of re-establishing the “genetic code” of identity within Western Pop/Dance structures. This gives the work both modern vitality and a strong national essence. The ornamentation is light and graceful rather than heavy, making it accessible to international ears.

Images of floating markets, melaleuca forests, snakehead fish, and modernized bà ba clothing are rendered in a candy-coated visual style. This is an excellent form of “localization” (Dale, A. Olsen), transforming heritage into a fashionable premium cultural product.

The song’s global success — becoming viral in South Korea, China, Brazil, and elsewhere — demonstrates that when national identity is professionally deconstructed and reconstituted, it can create strong resilience for local culture while also becoming a powerful means of “exporting” Vietnamese values to the world.

In summary, *See Tình* demonstrates the proposition that identity is not a barrier to integration but a passport for proactive integration. Hoang Thuy Linh’s modern use of folk-song sonorities realizes the goal of comprehensive human development: understanding one’s roots while mastering the technologies of the future.

Jack's Sóng Gió: Inheriting Achievements and Confronting Lyrical Challenges: In terms of phonetic technique, the artist makes extensive use of the characteristic “*hơi*” and “*điệu*” of *lý* and *hò*, supporting the proposition that “every tone mark is a musical note” (Pham, Duy).

Excerpt: Jack's song Sóng Gió. Use of the pentatonic mode and characteristic folk-song sonorities (D–F–G–A–C).



The work absorbs identity into its melodic structure rather than relying only on musical instruments, thereby maintaining continuity in the flow of national music. Jack frequently uses gentle syncopation reminiscent of rowing rhythms or the pulse of rice-pounding *hò*.

The combination of electronic instruments (synthesizers) with simulated timbres of the *đàn tranh* and *đàn bầu* creates a structure of “modern syncretism” (in To, N. Thanh's sense), in which digital technology serves to highlight traditional identity.

At times, the lyrics follow rhyme in order to “fit the music” rather than articulate a profound humanistic idea. This prevents the work from reaching the threshold of “Supreme Beauty” necessary to fully perform its mission of aesthetic education.

In summary, Sóng Gió carries folk-song influences. It succeeds in deconstructing folk musical principles and re-establishing them in digital space, creating a strong “cultural immune system” among young people. However, to become an enduring heritage work, the song requires deeper investment in the literary quality of its lyrics.

4. NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MUSIC: FROM A “CULTURAL IMMUNE SYSTEM” TO THE GOAL OF COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

National Music as an Aesthetic “Anchor” and a “Cultural Immune System” Filter: In the digital age, when cross-border entertainment products exert enormous homogenizing pressure, national identity in song serves not only an aesthetic role but also functions as a kind of “cultural immune system.” Drawing on Tran, N. Them's theory of Vietnamese autonomy and selectivity, music imbued with national identity helps audiences establish an internal filter. When younger generations are nurtured in a musical environment saturated with Vietnamese modes and spirit — in the tradition of Pham, Duy and Tran, V. Khe — they develop an instinct for cultural positioning. This instinct acts as an aesthetic “anchor,” enabling individuals to actively absorb global achievements such as Rap, EDM,

and Jazz without being culturally dissolved. According to Dale, A. Olsen, it is precisely this endogenous strength that helps Vietnamese music avoid an identity crisis and thereby prevents distortions in the lifestyle orientation of the new generation.

Realizing the Goal of “Culture–Physical Development–Aesthetics” through Contemporary Songs: Integrating national identity into music is not merely an artistic technique; it is a direct means of cultivating three pillars of human character:

Culture (Văn): Establishing the Genetic Code of Character. Music with a strong national character is one of the most subtle means of transmitting national values and the life philosophies of previous generations. Rather than through theoretical lessons, it is the highland musical “*hời*” in *À Lôi* or the lowland folk-song sonorities in Hoang Thuy Linh’s works that allow people to absorb culture naturally. This is the process of building a cultural “genetic code,” helping to define Vietnamese character amid the torrent of globalization, in accordance with the principle that culture constitutes the Party’s spiritual foundation.

Physical Development (Thể): The Intersection of Rhythm and New Vitality. In contemporary music, the combination of powerful Western rhythms with national musical instruments not only creates dynamism for young people but also expresses a resilient and modern “cultural physicality.” The lively rhythms of MVs with strong national characteristics encourage an active, healthy way of life and guide people toward harmony between a profound inner life and a youthful, dynamic outward bearing.

Aesthetics (Mỹ): Toward “Supreme Beauty” and Truth–Goodness–Beauty. This is the core objective of character education. From the aesthetic perspectives of The, Bao and Tran T. D. Đan, a song with deep identity cultivates the ability to perceive authentic beauty. When listeners learn to respond emotionally to an ornamented phrase imbued with national essence, they simultaneously develop the capacity to reject what is harmful, rootless, hybridized, or vulgar. The intersection of Culture, Physical Development, and Aesthetics in song is therefore a powerful instrument for creating a model of the new Vietnamese person: technologically literate, capable of mastering global trends, yet steadfast in cultural roots.

Building a Sustainable Value System for the Digital Age: The unity of ideological content and expressive form in music (Vien Nghe thuat - Bo Van hoa, 1976) is the key. When music escapes a “fossilized” state and flows through the bloodstream of the cultural industries, it becomes not only entertainment but also a driving force for comprehensive human development. National identity then provides an answer to the question of how to build a generation of Vietnamese people who are professionally capable yet spiritually profound and resilient in the face of global cultural change.

5. ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Viewed as a whole, Vietnamese popular music is undergoing a highly positive period of transformation. The rise of artists such as Hoang Thuy Linh, Double2T, and Phan Manh Quynh is not merely a commercial phenomenon but evidence of national pride among younger generations in the digital age. Nevertheless, alongside achievements in “adaptation” and “localization,” gaps remain in theoretical depth. Superficial borrowing, the overuse of ornamentation to conceal emptiness in lyrical content, and excessive dependence on Western arranging technologies are producing works that lack sustainability. National identity is sometimes treated more as a decorative “accessory” than as an intrinsic “cultural immune system.”

Proposed Solutions

To strengthen the role of music in aesthetic education and comprehensive human development, I propose three principal groups of solutions:

1. Artist Training and Capacity Building (Creative Subjects): Specialized modules in Musical Aesthetics and Lyric Theory should be incorporated into curricula at conservatories and institutions of cultural and artistic training. Young artists need not only vocal technique but also knowledge of ethnology and linguistics in order to understand the national cultural “genetic code” in depth. Artists should be encouraged to undertake field engagement and study original musical heritage (following the approaches of To, N. Thanh and Hong Thao) so as to avoid superficial cultural appropriation and create works possessing “authenticity of the soul.”

2. Arts Management and Aesthetic Orientation (The Role of the State): In addition to providing orientation, the State should concretize professional standards through modern management tools. Specifically, competent agencies should develop a system of qualitative and quantitative criteria for evaluating “national identity” in musical products commissioned or funded by the State.

Qualitative criteria: Evaluate the degree to which a work internalizes the core values of the *Hoi-Giong* system, the poetic quality of its lyrics, and the authenticity of the Vietnamese soul expressed in the work.

Quantitative criteria: Measure the reach and impact of the work on the public’s aesthetic awareness through engagement and reach indicators on digital platforms.

Applying these criteria would not only optimize cultural investment resources but also ensure that every State-supported work aspires to the value of “Supreme Beauty” and genuinely becomes an effective instrument for comprehensive human development.

3. Aesthetic Education for the Public (Recipients): As The, Bao (2013) observes, listeners require musical aesthetic education. Raising the public’s level of musical appreciation will create a natural

“filter” capable of rejecting products of “surface culture” and supporting meaningful musical values. Social-media platforms should be used to implement communication campaigns about national musical heritage in modern formats such as short videos and livestreams, helping young people recognize national identity as a source of pride rather than as an outdated concept.

6. CONCLUSION

National identity in contemporary Vietnamese songs is a bridge connecting the nation’s heroic past with its promising future in the digital age. Examining musical practice through the theoretical perspectives of masters such as Tran, V. Khe; Pham, Duy; The, Bao, and Tran, N. Them shows that Vietnam possesses an invaluable treasury for positioning identity and advancing human development.

Placing the human person at the center of development strategy means aiming for comprehensive development in Culture, Physical Development, and Aesthetics (Văn–Thể–Mỹ). Culture provides ideological orientation; physical development provides the foundation of vitality; and aesthetics cultivates depth of soul. In practice, promoting national identity in song is no longer merely an artistic technique; it has become a comprehensive mode of education that helps form strong “cultural immune systems” for younger generations. When music reaches the “Supreme Beauty” of the national soul and essence, it can fully perform its mission of purifying the human spirit and help shape a new model of Vietnamese person: technologically literate, capable of mastering global trends, yet steadfast in cultural confidence and equipped with a proactive attitude toward integration on the country’s path to sustainable development.

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