

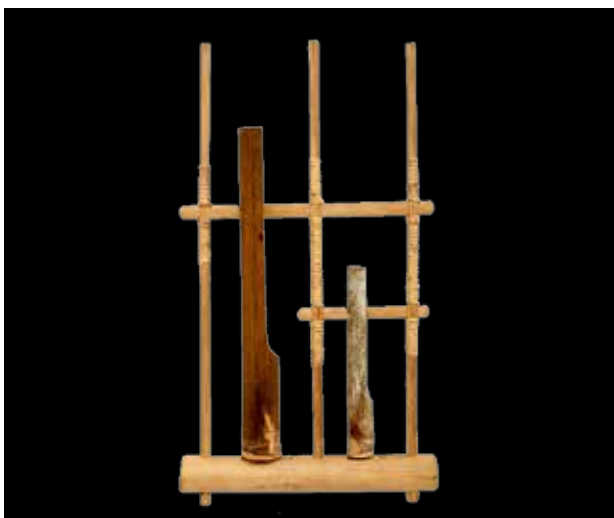


The SUPPORT Arts and Crafts
International Centre of Thailand
(Public Organization)



Artisanal Handicraft

Angklung



The Angklung is a Thai musical instrument that got an influence from Indonesia. The Angklung is made of a varying number of bamboo tubes. It is classified as a percussion instrument. It has to be played together as a band, one is struck at a time to represent each note.



Characteristics which reflect the local wisdom and artisan expertise

Thai musical instrument is classified into 4 types, namely, plucking, fiddling, percussion and blowing instrument. Angklung is classified as a percussion instrument. To create a musical pitch, a leg is to strike against a rail. Playing the Angklung is the knowledge that has been developed in a more complicated way than playing a tube-shaped instrument, such as wooden rhythm clappers. It can be played in harmony up to 3 pitches thanks to a varying size of 3 tubes. This is an evolution of a Thai musical instrument. (Initially, the Angklung from Indonesia consisted of only 2 tubes. Then, Ajarn Chalerm Buathung tried making it with 3 bamboo tubes in 1952. Since then, the Thai Angklung has been developed into a 3-tube Angklung up to the present time).

The Angklung was initiated by using simple material, such as bamboo to create a resonant pitch. Tuning requires listening skill of an Angklung maker to ensure such music can reach to people of all ages and genders. It has been regarded as a valuable musical instrument exhibiting knowledge and arts in music up to the present time.

A secret technique in making the Angklung is a selection process of bamboo. Specific characteristic is a thin and strong bamboo. It gives resonant sound when struck. Pretty old bamboo is more recommended, which can be noticed from its spathes that all peel off. Its color is getting less cream and it turns greener (young bamboo still has white and cream spathe attached to it). Once the bamboo gets fully mature, natural pattern will appear. Dry it in the sun until it turns yellow. It can be noticed that the melodious Angklung normally has a clear pattern. Once the bamboo is dry and a natural pattern is clearly visible, burn it one more time to ensure that all bamboo caterpillars are dead. Immerse or coat it in chemical solution to prevent it from weevil.





A tube of the Angklung has components that play different roles, including

A leg is to strike against a rail to create a musical pitch.

A mouth defines the sound at different tone.

A wing defines a high and low pitch. A big wing will create a high pitch whilst a narrow one provides a low pitch.

A hole for hanging defines volume of the sound. The span from a head of a tube to a hole, from a hole to a mouth, from a mouth to the middle of a tube and from a middle of a tube to a below part of a tube, all must have the same length. If the length from a hole for hanging to a head part is long, that renders a low pitch.

To saw the bamboo to make the Angklung, a single section of bamboo or one section and a half will do. Strike it to make sure that air can flow throughout a tube and that will not create any cracks. The bamboo must not be too thick as it would make it hard to shake. Remove all gnarls from a bottom up to the top to prevent them from ripping and causing any damage to the bamboo. Importantly, saw it and spare for a leg part. The length of a leg part depends on a size of a tube.





Wooden rail



Double-headed drum

Important components

Important components include the following 4 parts

A body of the Angklung Lai bamboo or Phai Lai is chosen to make a body because it is a light and beautiful bamboo. It also gives resonant sound when struck.

Angklung post



A wooden rail Initially, golden teak was used to gouge as a rail to place a leg at a base of the Angklung into a hole. There are 3 gouges and another 5 round holes to place a post to hold Angklung tubes.

An Angklung post มักทำด้วยไม้ไผ่เหลา ไม้เต็ง ไม้เนื้อแข็งนำมาเกลาหรือกลึงจนกลมเรียบ มีความยาวตามความสูงของกระบอกอังกะลุง ขนาดโตกว่ารูที่รางเล็กน้อย

A blocking wood is made of bamboo that is sharpened until it is flat. The middle part is slid off to make a gouge at certain depth to insert through an Angklung tube and hold it with a post.



Knowledge and skill to tune the sound of the Angklung

To make the sound from a bamboo tube mainly requires knowledge that can be noticed and adjusted from material. This can be measured from capacity of a tube. If much wood is removed at the mouth of a tube that results in less capacity, and renders a high pitch. On the contrary, if less wood is removed, that results in more capacity and hence a low pitch. With this capacity measurement technique, those who cannot play any musical instruments can still make the Angklung by measuring water to find capacity of a tube. The sound of the Angklung can be tuned using capacity measurement at a ratio of 1:4:8 at the same pitch. Use a small one to measure. Use a keyboard to tune with universal sound. Use a brass xylophone to tune with Thai sound. If an Angklung maker can play any musical instrument, the tuning would produce more melodious sound.



Background of the Angklung in Thailand

King Rama V introduced and allowed Prince Bhanubandhu Vongsevoradej to pay a visit to Java (Indonesia) on 24th August 1907. He traveled from Bangkok to Dai city in Java Island as the first stop and he intended to go further to Matoer sub-district. Upon his arrival at Matoer sub-district, people from around 10 villages honorably greeted him and arranged 7 musical bands to show their performance in this welcome ceremony. He had the most impression on an Angklung band.

Upon his return to Thailand, he ordered a Thai consul in Java to buy and send 1 set of the Angklung in 1908. Then, he started practicing his royal pages in Wang Burapha. Later on, it spread over nationwide and it was called the “Angklung”.

During the reign of King Rama VI, the Angklung was developed to have 3 tubes, at a smaller size and lighter. The sound was increased to complete 7 pitches. The way to make a sound was changed from swaying to shaking instead. This marked as a model of playing the Angklung at present time.



Double-headed drum

Small cup-shaped cymbals,
cymbals and small cymbals



Gong



Musical Instruments in an Angklung band

Musical Instruments in an Angklung band consist of drum, and Angklung.

Type of an Angklung band

An Angklung band is categorized into a band of 5 pairs, 7 pairs and 14 pairs. (Arrangement of a 14-pair Angklung band is same as that of a 7-pair band and have players sit in an additional row in pair).

Practicing the Angklung

Hold the Angklung with both right and left hands. Hold at a post around 2-4 inches away from a wooden rail depending on the height of the Angklung. It is important to use a thumb to grasp a post.

It is recommended to slightly tense muscle around the lower arm while shaking. Then, use a side of a palm to push a post and use the wrist to shake the Angklung so a leg of the Angklung will strike against a rail as desired.

An Angklung band consists of a set of the Angklung for at least 7 pairs, a percussion instrument, such as

Angklung



small cup-shaped cymbals, small cymbals, wooden rhythm clappers, a pair of gongs, a double-headed drum and other decoration items to make it look beautiful, such as flags or peacock feather. The Angklung has been also taught at schools since it is a Thai musical instrument that renders melodious sound, it is easy to play and does not require high budget to set up a band. This also helps boost harmony and unity among a group.



The Angklung provides melodiousness as well as harmony.

The Angklung is different from other musical instruments. Only one Angklung cannot be played on its own to create a song. One Angklung is equal to 1 note. Thus, it has to be played together as a band, one is struck at a time to represent each note. A player holding any note will shake the Angklung continuously according to his/her note to create beautiful melody. The Angklung can be created in a smaller size for kids to a bigger one for adult. Both sizes provide beautiful melody as the same. This can be taught to students starting from a kindergarten level. It is a strategy to boost harmony among children, which is comparable to playing Angklung together. Without unity, if any one note is



slightly distorted, that would cause unbeautiful song. At present, the Angklung has been developed to be played by one person, which is called “Angklung Rao”



Cut the bamboo into pieces according to a range of the sound from a low, mid and high pitch.



Slide a piece of bamboo off to make legs.



Cut and slide the bamboo tube.



How to make the Angklung

Dry a whole bamboo in the sun and coat it with solution to prevent weevil.

Cut the bamboo that was already dried in the sun, coated with solution and cured to prevent weevil already, into pieces according to a range of the sound from a low, mid and high pitch. One set of the Angklung is equivalent to one note which is required to cut the bamboo into 3 sizes, namely a high, a medium and a small tube. The length depends on a size of the Angklung. The lower part is measured 2 inches high from a section of bamboo to make a pedestal of the Angklung.

Slide a piece of bamboo off at both sides to make as 2 legs for a bamboo tube. Decorate it by using a knife.

Cut and slide the bamboo tube that was cut and decorated. While cutting some part of a bamboo tube, turn on a tuning machine. Slightly cut a bamboo to acquire a desired pitch, for example, a C note is made from a big tube representing a low pitch, a middle one representing a middle pitch and a small tube representing a high pitch. While cutting each bamboo, use a tuning machine for each tube to ensure standard of the sound.

Teakwood used to gouge as a rail



A wooden frame is made of teak. Buy a finished good at a size of 1 foot long. Make a hole on a rail that was gouged, place it along on both sides to measure. Place 4 or 5 pieces of the wood frame in the middle. Place them at the same length of the header part and the bottom part. Put a ruler over in the same direction of a hole and a line of the gouge. Use a pencil to draw a long line for all pieces.



Gouge

Place a wood frame with a line on a gouging machine. Push them tightly by a squeezing machine to prevent it from moving. Turn on a machine to start gouging along a frame that was drawn before. 1 rail wood will have 3 gouges. Decorate them into a rectangular shape.

Make a hole in the gouged rail wood along the line that was drawn. Make 5 holes for 1 rail wood.

Polish a head and the end part of a rail wood with a polishing machine. Polish until it gets into an oval shape.



Make a hole on a rail.



Remove splinters from a rail.



Put the gouged rail wood with holes into a post. Put 2 posts at the header part, each at 1 inch away to hold the Angklung while striking. Put them on all 5 posts, each at different height.

Paint or immerse the rail wood that was already attached with a post into color that has been prepared. Dry them into the sun.

Put the first big bamboo tube representing a low pitch. Place it in the rail wood that has been gouged into a rectangular shape. Insert a blocking stick through a hole of a bamboo tube around the area that was cut. Nail a blocking stick with a post to attach them tightly. Place a middle and a small tube. Attach them with a blocking stick and nail them down thoroughly.

Tie a blocking stick and a post around a nail that has been hammered with a tough rope. Paint the thread and dry it in the sun.

Once it is dry, place each set of the Angklung along a rail and place an alphabet representing each note of a set in a correct order. Decorate it with a flag or peacock feather to make it beautiful. It is now ready to be played into music

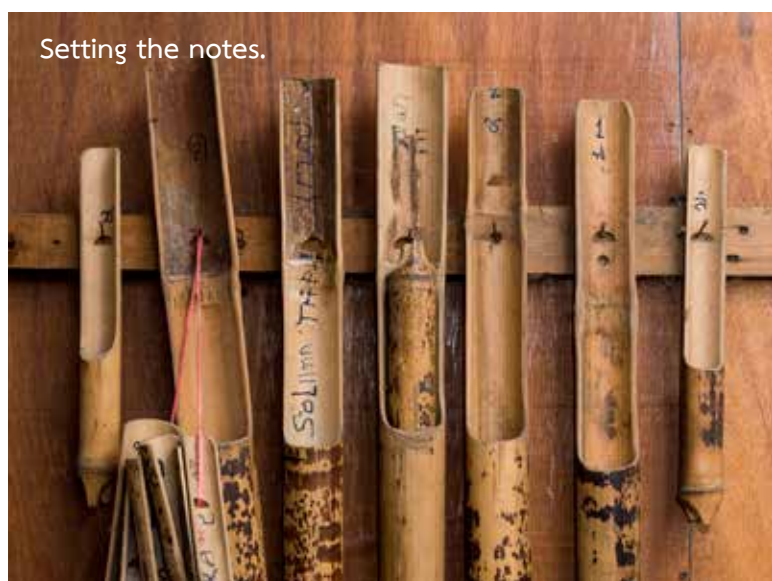
Each component of the Angklung is comprised together to make 1 set of the Angklung. Make a hole as a half-moon shape in 3 bamboo tubes that have been sharpened and tuned (a high, medium and low pitches but at the same range). Place them into a wood frame, attach them with a post and cross them with a rope and glue. Decorate it with paint or lacquer.



nonon Put the gouged rail wood with holes into a post.



Tie a blocking stick and a post with a rope.



Setting the notes.



How to maintain it

The Angklung is made of natural material, hence it can be broken easily, especially by weevil. Once it is bitten by weevil, the Angklung will be lighter and create deviated sound. Playing the Angklung constantly will help prevent it from being bitten by weevil or take it longer for weevil bite. If it is placed with no movement, it would get

damaged easily. Place it slowly and lean it against the wall to prevent it from falling down and cracking. Weather also has major effect to deviate the sound, especially dampness. Playing the Angklung in an air-conditioned room will cause its sound to be deviated also. It is recommended to hang it in a room that is not humid, away from being able to get cracked. Shake it frequently. Coat it with solution to prevent weevil and rodent.





Angklung Rao

The Angklung Rao: an evolution of Angklung

Playing the Angklung requires the same number of players as that of the notes. The Angklung master who teaches how to play the traditional Angklung decided to create Angklung rao. This allows a sole player to play this Angklung in collaboration with other musical band. Only one player can play it or many Angklung Raos can be played together to create enjoyment.

There has been an initiative to make the Angklung Rao with a keyboard. That is an evolution of a Thai musical instrument to be exposed more to students. Since a new generation tend to have more favor in western music, such development would make a Thai musical instrument not to fade out. Our Thai children will help carry on and spread it over.

From local material that provides a resonant sound like a bamboo tube to a road of melodious Thai music along a typical way of a traditional Thai song, it is a scent of unique culture that can get access to a heart of music listeners up to the present time.



Reference

Interview with Mr. Peerasit Buatang, Master of Art, 2016