

French Music in Vietnam in the 20th Century

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Abstract

Arriving in Vietnam, the French brought with them their romantic melodies, which conquered the heart of the Vietnamese and inspired the birth of the local modern music in the 1930s . The passion for French music reached its climax in the 1960s and 1970s. The mid-1960s saw the apogee of French music in Saigon. Middle class Vietnamese emerged in the Vietnam War enjoyed Western music, fashion, and social lifestyle in major cities. Pham Duy, Vu Xuan Hung were the first musicians who introduced French songs to Vietnamese public by rewriting in Vietnamese the lyrics of the famous French composers. Saigon, the capital of Southern Vietnam became the hub of Salut les Copains wave in Asia. Trendy French songs as *Après toi*, *Ensemble*, *L'avventura*, *Bangbang*, *Le Maritza*, *Mal*, *Maman*, etc. were sung by the leading Vietnamese pop singers as Thanh Lan, Elvis Phuong, Julie Quang, Jo Marcel. French music developed into a strong subculture among young Saigoneers at that time. Then the early post war years saw a mutation in cultural activities: while Southern pop culture was restrained, many overseas Vietnamese singers left Vietnam for America and Europe creating new centers of V-Pop in Paris and California. French songs continued to present in the Vietnamese community until the open of the country.

This article presents the blending of French popular music with modern V-Pop in Vietnam in the 20th century. It will reference its original features and diversity, its distinguished songwriters, and its famous performers that have stayed in the heart of generations of Vietnamese, marking one of the golden ages of V-Pop in the very early time of cultural globalization, giving a voice to Vietnam's musical and timeless values and contributing to the rich and diverse treasure of the Vietnamese and European popular culture.

Keywords: V-Pop, French music, Vietnam, 20th century