

A Film Guide written by Barley Norton (2010) for:

Hanoi Eclipse

The Music of Dai Lam Linh

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INTRODUCTION

The making of the film *Hanoi Eclipse: The Music of Dai Lam Linh* was made possible by a collaborative research grant from the Getty Foundation for a project titled *Contemporary Experimental Performance Culture in Vietnam*. The grant was awarded jointly to myself and Nora Taylor, who is Alsdorf Professor of Southeast Asian Art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. A key aim of the research project was to investigate a variety of experimental performance events in Vietnam in order to further knowledge of contemporary artistic expression in Vietnam and the social, political and artistic contexts in which musicians and artists were working.

During the planning for the research, I decided to make an ethnographic film about the contemporary music scene in Vietnam. I was attracted to filming as part of the research process because I thought it was well suited to the aims of the project. The promise of making a film was that it would be possible to explore the aesthetics of contemporary performance in a way that writing could not. I had made video recordings as part of my previous research on Vietnamese music for a number of reasons. For instance, I videoed music lessons to help me learn traditional Vietnamese instruments and I used video recordings of performances to analyse musical structure and performance dynamics (see Norton 2005; 2009). Rather than using footage primarily for the purposes of learning, documentation and analysis, for the Getty-funded project

I intended to make a narrative film that would appeal to audiences beyond academia as well as specialists in ethnomusicology, anthropology, performance studies and Asian studies.

In a chapter titled “Visual Anthropology and The Ways of Knowing”, anthropologist and filmmaker David MacDougall considers the vexed question of whether visual forms such as film and video can be “recognized as a *medium* of anthropology” (1998:63; emphasis in original). His argument is that ethnographic films are a distinctive way of knowing and construct particular forms of knowledge that are different in kind to written ethnography. Film, he suggests, favours an experiential, affective, embodied understanding of individuals and relations between individuals in specific contexts, whereas text is more effective at explanation and generalizing about culture (1998:80). In highlighting such tendencies, MacDougall does not concede that contextual information, reflexivity, theory and explanation are the exclusive reserve of text or that the ethnographic authority of writings and films are necessarily in a hierarchical relationship, as Kirsten Hastrup has argued (1992:22). Indeed, MacDougall makes a persuasive argument that explanatory knowledge and reflexivity can be found in the “structures of editing” (1998:81) and “through the very grain of the filmmaking” (1998:76). Nonetheless, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists who make films often write film guides partly because of the differences between visual and textual ethnographies discussed by MacDougall. Guides offer the filmmaker opportunities for reflection on the filmmaking process and for discussion of the process of inquiry involved in making the film in ways that are quite different to the filmmaking itself.¹ The aim of this guide to Hanoi Eclipse, then, is to provide supplementary information about the research context, to offer an account of the process by which the film was made, and to reflect on the reception of the film.

DAI LAM LINH AND EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC IN VIETNAM

Having conducted extensive research on Vietnamese traditional music since the mid-1990s, I was well acquainted with the music scene in Hanoi before starting the Getty-funded project. It was not possible, however, to determine the subject for the film before going to Vietnam, because I could not anticipate what performance activities would be taking place or who would agree to being filmed. Shortly after arriving in Hanoi in early January 2009, my co-researcher Nora Taylor and I were invited to attend a rehearsal by a band called Dai Lam Linh. At the time, I did not know about Dai Lam Linh, but I had briefly met the band’s pianist and songwriter, Ngoc Dai, at a concert in Hanoi in July 2008 and I had published a short review of his first album called “Solar Eclipse” (“Nhat Thuc”), which was released in 2001 (see Norton 2007). At the first rehearsal, we found out that Dai Lam Linh was rehearsing in preparation for recording a debut album and a concert at the Hanoi Opera House. After attending several more rehearsals, I realised the potential to make a documentary that followed the progress of the band during the creative process of recording the album. The vibrant personalities and charisma of the band members also made me think they would make interesting “subjects” for a film. I therefore approached Dai and other band members to ask permission to make a documentary about them and they agreed to my suggestion.

Dai Lam Linh was founded in 2007 by the male composer Ngoc Dai and two female singers, Thanh Lam and Linh Dung. The band's name combines the names of these three founding members and I will refer to them by their abbreviated names, Dai, Lam and Linh. Dai has a reputation in musical circles for being "mad" (*dien*), for being a volatile, argumentative character who is difficult to work with. From the perspective of finding an interesting "character" to focus on in a film, however, Dai was ideal as he was never reticent about speaking frankly on a wide range of topics ranging from his life and his music, to his views about Vietnamese politics and culture. Some of the major events in Dai's life and Dai Lam Linh's development are outlined in the film, but there was limited space to include background information about Dai and the band. In the rest of this section, I therefore provide some additional information about the main members of Dai Lam Linh based on extended interviews I conducted with them, and I situate the band in the context of the experimental music scene in Hanoi.

Dai Lam Linh's music has often been referred to as "experimental music" (*am nhac the nghiem*) in the Vietnamese press.² In Vietnam, this term is often used loosely to refer to music that does not conform to a mainstream genre, but rather pushes the limits of conventional genre boundaries and perceived musical norms; any music that is perceived to be "different and strange" (*khac la*) or "freaky" (*quai la*) is typically referred to as experimental. The label "experimental music" therefore has different meanings in the Vietnam than it does in the context of Western art music. Whereas in the West experimental music is typically associated with particular composers (e.g. John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, La Monte Young) and compositional processes (e.g. indeterminacy, minimalism) (see Nyman 1999), in Vietnam the idea of the experimental refers to difference and otherness and is linked to issues of nationalism and identity. Experimental music as a marker of alterity is necessarily un-Vietnamese; it is understood by Vietnamese critics to be a consequence of the forces of globalisation and increasing effects of foreign influence on Vietnamese culture. In the Vietnamese press, the experimental nature of Dai Lam Linh's music is ascribed to the unorthodox vocal styles of Lam and Linh, the daring content of the lyrics, and the band's unusual performance style and musical arrangements. Lam and Linh's voices have sometimes been described as "howling" (*hu het*), "snorting" (*gam gu*) and "screaming" (*gao thet*), terms that are commonly used to refer to the sounds of animals like dogs, pigs and cats.³ Through such descriptions, the music of Dai Lam Linh is not only un-Vietnamese, it is likened to non-human sounds.

Tran Thi Kim Ngoc, a well-known Vietnamese composer, told me in an interview that she thought the music of Dai Lam Linh was a form of "experimental popular music" (*nhac dai chung the nghiem*). The classification is useful, I think, because it points out that Dai Lam Linh's music is closely aligned with the tradition of Western-influenced Vietnamese "popular song" known as *ca khuc*, while at the same time suggesting that the band have "experimented" with the conventions and content of popular song. Another term that was applied to Dai Lam Linh's music by some members of the band is "installation music" (*am nhac sap dat*). As will be discussed in the "Film Structure Explored" section below, the idea of "installation music" highlights the eclecticism of Dai Lam Linh's music.

Dai is accredited as the composer for all the songs performed by Dai Lam Linh and his eclectic songs often draw inspiration from his life experience. A feature of many of Dai's songs is

that they reference, either directly or indirectly, traditional Vietnamese music. Dai was first introduced to traditional genres such as *cheo* folk theatre and *ca tru* chamber music by his father, who is himself a keen amateur musician. As a young boy growing up in the countryside in Nam Ha province about 60 kilometres south of Hanoi, Dai informally learnt to play traditional instruments, like the 4-stringed lute (*dan tu*) and the 16-string zither (*dan tranh*), and in his teens he taught himself the accordion, guitar and piano. After graduating from college, he briefly taught music at a school, but in 1968, when he was 21 years old, he joined the army to fight in the Second Indochina war, which I will refer to as the Vietnamese-American war. In my discussions with Dai, he sometimes spoke of the horrific events he witnessed during the war and how these experiences had affected him. After the war ended in 1975, he left the army and in 1977 went to study composition at the Hanoi Music Conservatoire (Nhac Vien Ha Noi). Dai was dissatisfied by the teaching at the Conservatoire because he found it outdated and constraining. Strongly influenced by the conservatoire system in the Soviet Union and China, the Hanoi Music Conservatoire at that time limited its teaching of Western composition to pastiche exercises based on the standard compositional forms and styles of the classical and romantic periods (e.g. sonata form and the symphonic works of the nineteenth century Russian masters). In keeping with the ethos of Vietnam's socialist society in the aftermath of war, musical expression was tightly controlled to ensure it conformed to the nationalist political aims of the Vietnamese Communist Party.⁴

While Dai was studying at the Conservatoire, he became disillusioned and suffered a breakdown. To help him recover, Dai left Hanoi to live in his first wife's parents' house in Nam Ha province. Despite his breakdown, Dai's time at his in-laws' home was creatively productive: while staying there he composed numerous songs, some of which he now performs with Dai Lam Linh. After graduating from the Conservatoire in 1983, he worked as the music director of the Youth Theatre (Nha Hat Tuoi Tre) in Hanoi, but he left after just a year to work as a freelance promoter and composer. In the 1990s, he gained considerable success as a promoter, programming large-scale concerts for famous Vietnamese pop singers such as My Linh, Tran Thu Ha, and Thanh Lam. Dai's first major breakthrough as a musician in his own right came in the early 2000s with the release of his album "Solar Eclipse," which featured the pop diva Tran Thu Ha. The album reputedly sold tens of thousands of copies and the concert tour based on the album, which took place in 2002, was described as a "phenomenon" in the Vietnamese press. All the tracks on the album "Solar Eclipse" are based on the poems of Vi Thuy Linh, who is a well-known female poet, and the use of these poems became highly controversial due to a dispute over royalties and copyright between Dai and Vi Thuy Linh.⁵ In 2004, Dai released a second album called "Solar Eclipse 2" ("Nhat Thuc 2"), this time working with the singers Khanh Linh and Tung Duong. This album was less successful commercially than "Solar Eclipse," and after its release Dai went to live for some time with his second wife in Brussels, but he returned to Hanoi again in 2006.

Lam and Linh had both met Dai and rehearsed some of his songs around the time he was working on the album "Solar Eclipse," but they had only worked with him briefly. Having met through a mutual friend, Lam and Linh told me in interviews that they began to rehearse some of Dai's songs in 2006, initially without Dai's involvement. For Lam and Linh their rehearsals together were a voyage of discovery in which they experimented with vocal

techniques and devised unusual arrangements of Dai's songs through a process of improvisation. Linh said that the first rehearsals with Lam were a truly revelatory experience; never before had they felt so free to explore their voices and express their emotions. When Dai heard Lam and Linh's versions of his songs he was impressed and they decided to form a group together.

Lam and Linh have quite different backgrounds and vocal styles. Before Dai Lam Linh was formed, Linh was a professional singer and performed internationally as a member of the state-run Central Theatre of Popular Music and Dance (Nha Hat Ca Mua Nhac Nhe Trung Uong). She also gained national recognition in Vietnam when she was chosen to sing the theme song for the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, which was held in Vietnam in 2003. However, she found the state-run troupe constraining creatively, so she left the troupe and worked on developing her voice through taking lessons at the Hanoi Music Conservatoire. It was after this period of further vocal training that she started to practice with Lam. Unlike Linh, Lam has not been a member of a state-run troupe, and for several years she lived and worked as a teacher near the town of Son La, in the remote highlands of northern Vietnam. This region is home to minority groups like the Hmong and Muong, and, while living there, Lam was strongly influenced by the musical cultures of these groups. This influence can be heard in some of Dai Lam Linh's songs in which Lam incorporates references to traditional Hmong and Muong songs in her vocal improvisations. While working as a teacher, Lam developed her singing through regular performances at singing competitions and other music events, and she performed in some of Dai's "Solar Eclipse" concerts in the early 2000s.

Compared with Dai's previous two albums, Dai Lam Linh deviates more from established conventions of Vietnamese popular song and their innovative approach has much to do with the creative input of Lam, Linh and other band members, particularly Nguyen Manh Hung, Nguyen Thanh Thuy and Nguyen Xuan Son (aka Son X). These three musicians – Hung, Thuy and Son X – are key figures in the small contemporary music scene in Hanoi and they have been involved in numerous experimental music projects in recent years. For instance: Hung and Son X have performed together with the "noise artist" Vu Nhat Tan, as part of an electronic-based improvisation group called DC-Factory; Son X has composed electronic pieces for dance performances choreographed by Ea Sola that have toured internationally; Thuy has released an album called "Ngau Hung Tranh" ("Improvisation") with the Sweden-based electronic composer Jakob Riis (Nguyen Thanh Thuy and Jakob Riis 2010); and Hung, Thuy and Son X were all featured in the first "Hanoi New Music Meeting" in 2009, an event organised by Tran Thi Kim Ngoc, which aimed to bring "together the best experimental contemporary composers in Vietnam with renowned international artists."⁶ While it was not possible to focus on the contribution of these musicians during the film, their collective experience of performing, improvising and composing has undoubtedly influenced Dai Lam Linh's music and ways of working. For instance, many sections of Dai Lam Linh's songs are not strictly determined by a musical score or detailed instructions from Dai. Rather, they are devised through an improvisatory process, which leaves considerable scope for individual musicians to develop their own contribution to the collective whole. Much of the song, "Evening," for example, was devised collectively by the band through a process of improvisation.

The band Dai Lam Linh, then, is somewhat unique in the context of the contemporary music scene in Vietnam and their music is hard to neatly align with any particular genre or musical movement. While Dai Lam Linh cannot be described as producing “experimental music” as defined in the history of Western art music, the “experimental” label clearly marks their status as different from the mainstream and it also points to their ambition to forge new musical directions.

SHOOTING THE FILM

The shooting for the film was done during two visits to Vietnam in 2009: a four-month trip from January to April, and a one-month trip in July. The film was shot on mini digital videotapes with the Sony DSR-PD170 Camcorder using the DVCam setting. I did all the filming on my own, without the assistance of a sound engineer. The only exception to this was the concert at the Hanoi Opera House. For the concert, Dai Lam Linh hired additional cameramen to shoot the film using four HD video cameras. When shooting solo, I had two microphones available when filming: a directional microphone (Rode NTG-2) and an omni directional microphone (Audio-technica AT8010). Most of the time I used the Rode microphone mounted on the camera, except for some shots when I used both microphones: in static situations such as interviews, I sometimes placed one microphone on a stand near the sound source and mounted the other on the camera. At times, I found it restricting to film with only one microphone mounted on the camera because I had to be positioned close enough to the subject to make sure that the sound recording was clear. To overcome this restriction, for a trip to Nam Ha province on the 5 and 6 July, I borrowed a contact microphone from the filmmaker Nguyen Trinh Thi. Although filming on my own sometimes posed problems with recording sound, it had the advantage that I could quickly respond to events as they unfolded with little prior planning. This was important because the band’s schedule often changed at the last minute. Unencumbered by additional crew, I could follow the band and film in a relatively unobtrusive way. In addition to filming, the days I spent with the band during rehearsals and in the studio were important because they enabled me to gain an understanding of the musical and lyrical content of the songs and the intricacies of the band’s dynamics.

The “Film Shoot Diary” below lists the main scenes that I shot, along with the location and the dates of filming. In addition to the scenes listed, I spent several days shooting general views in and around the city of Hanoi.

Film Shoot Diary (January to April 2009)

Dai Lam Linh rehearsal at Dai’s house in Hanoi - 5, 8, 14 January and 13 February

Dai Lam Linh recording the album at the studio on Hoang Hoa Tham street in Hanoi – 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22 January

Interview with Lam at a café on Doi Can street in Hanoi – 22 January

Dai Lam Linh performance for foreign journalists at The National Academy of Music in Hanoi – 14 February

Interview with Dai Lam Linh's guitarist, Nguyen Manh Hung, at his home in Hanoi – 20 February

Business meeting (with Dai, Lam, Ly and Hubert Olié) about the production of the CD at L'Espace, Centre Culturel Français de Hanoi – 2 March

Interview with Linh at "Tadioto" Gallery on Trieu Viet Vuong street in Hanoi – 10 March

Mixing the Dai Lam Linh album with Ly and Dai at the temporary studio on Thi Sach street in Hanoi – 18 March

Dai Lam Linh press conference at L'Espace, Centre Culturel Français de Hanoi – 2 April

Dai Lam Linh rehearsal on the stage at L'Espace, Centre Culturel Français de Hanoi - 14 April

Dai Lam Linh dress rehearsal at the Hanoi Opera House watched by the committee of censors - 17 April

Dai Lam Linh's album-launch concert at the Hanoi Opera House - 18 April

Performance by Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble and interviews with the Ensemble at the Zen Spa in Hanoi - 19 April

Interview with Dai at the private house of the performance artist Dao Anh Khanh in Hanoi – 23 April

Interview with Lam at her house in Hanoi - 27 April

Interview with Tri Minh at his home in Hanoi - 27 April

Interview with the composer Tran Thi Kim Ngoc at her home in Hanoi – 29 April

Interview with Dai Lam Linh's zither player, Nguyen Thanh Thuy, at her home in Hanoi – 29 April

Film Shoot Diary (July 2009)

Trip with Dai to Nam Ha province to visit his parents and his first wife's parents' house – 5, 6 July

Trip to the martyrs' cemetery near Lanh Giang temple in Ha Nam province – 22, 23 July

Performance by the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble and interviews with the Ensemble at the Zen Spa in Hanoi – 26 July

EDITING THE FILM

The preparations for editing began after the first shoot: on my return to London in May 2009, I started to log the tapes I had shot over the previous four months. Having time to work through the footage before returning to Vietnam for a final period of shooting in July was invaluable as it enabled me to carefully view the footage and to plan the next shoot. After the second shoot, I logged and made rough translations of the entire footage (approximately 60 hours in total) and then prepared a paper cut. To help edit the film, I hired Hikaru Toda, a graduate of the MA in Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths who has worked professionally as a filmmaker for several years. Hikaru's technical expertise and editing experience greatly benefited the film. She frequently queried the reasons why I wanted to include particular scenes in the film and she was vigilant about not including any footage that did not contribute to the development of the film's narrative.

At the outset of the filmmaking process, I decided to tell the story of Dai Lam Linh through interviews with the band and observational footage, rather than through a disembodied voice-over or on-screen narration. I was attracted to the interview-based and observational styles because I wanted to avoid the "Voice of God" stance of a voice-over and because I had limited options for on-screen narration and reflexivity due to the fact that I was filming on my own. For the edit, I therefore had to complete the complex task of piecing together extracts from hours of interview footage to construct a narrative. As I was not adopting a reflexive, "fly-in-the-soup" approach,⁷ I also decided to edit out my interview questions, unless they were needed to make sense of the response; in the final film I am only heard on two occasions asking short questions. Although I have a good level of competency at Vietnamese, during the editing I was concerned whether the sequence of interview extracts that formed the textual narrative of the film would "flow" and sound "natural" to a Vietnamese native speaker. The fact that Hikaru did not speak Vietnamese also made the editing process more arduous from a practical point of view and it limited her ability to assess the footage and make creative decisions about content. Although the language problems would have been avoided if I had worked with a Vietnamese editor, Hikaru's dispassionate scrutiny ensured that the film would be comprehensible to viewers with little familiarity of Vietnamese culture.⁸ To allay my concerns about Vietnamese language, I sent a rough cut of the film to the Hanoi-based filmmaker Nguyen Trinh Thi, who reassured me that the rough cut had no major language problems. Thi's feedback at the rough-cut stage also helped me make final decisions about content.

The editing with Hikaru Toda took 13 days and was done in several spells in the autumn and winter of 2009. At the end of the editing with Hikaru, the audio stems were exported from Final Cut Pro and I took them to be mixed and mastered by the composer Jim Copperthwaite. Using the software Cubabase, Jim balanced the levels of the stems and worked on mastering the sound tracks to improve their audio quality. In consultation with me, Jim used EQ to decrease some background "noise" (for example, to lessen the background humming of lights or a

“boomy” acoustic) and a small amount of compression was applied to the entire sound track to ensure that the dynamic range was appropriate. Few effects were used, except for a small amount of reverberation in some places. After the audio mix had been completed, the audio tracks were reimported into final cut and another editor, Yaron Lapid, colour balanced the film.

A key decision that had to be made during the editing process was which songs to include; Dai Lam Linh recorded 13 songs for their album and they could not all be in the film. The decision to concentrate on four songs – “Solar Eclipse” (“Nhat Thuc”), “Evening” (“Chieu”), “Dreaming” (“Mo”) and “Drifting” (“Luu Lac”) – was informed by structural and aesthetic considerations. One of my aims in making the film was to explore the meanings and aesthetics of Dai Lam Linh’s music, so I tried to choose contrasting songs that addressed some of the broad themes that recur throughout the album, themes such as “loss”, “breakdown”, “death”, “war”, “religion”, “sexuality” and “politics”. Inevitably, directorial decisions reflect personal preferences, but my understandings of songs were informed by my discussions with band members. Structurally, the four songs featured in the film became central to the film’s narrative as key sequences were structured around the themes of the songs. Rather than trying to fit Dai Lam Linh’s music into a predetermined narrative, the songs themselves became an integral part of the narrative development of the film. In addition to aesthetics, then, songs were chosen based on how they could contribute to the film’s narrative. For instance, Dai spoke about how his inspiration for composing “Evening” was connected to his experiences of war, so this song contributed to the film’s exploration of the impact of war on Dai and his musical creativity. Conversely, some interesting songs from Dai Lam Linh’s album, which I would have liked to include in the film, were not featured because they could not be effectively integrated into the film’s narrative structure.

THE RECEPTION OF THE FILM AT THE FIRST SCREENING IN HANOI

On 24 July 2010, I organised a private screening of *Hanoi Eclipse* for the band and their friends at the Hanoi Cinematheque, a 100-seat cinema in the centre of Hanoi. This screening was the first time that the band had seen the film, and the event provided an opportunity for band members to discuss the film and give me feedback. In order to facilitate discussion, I asked the filmmaker Nguyen Trinh Thi to chair a panel consisting of myself, Dai and Linh after the screening. Unfortunately, Lam could not participate as she was in Europe at the time. The panel discussion was followed by a question and answer session with the audience. In what follows, I provide a brief account of some of the main points that were raised.⁹ The discussion was mainly in Vietnamese and the translations into English are my own.

During the screening, the predominantly Vietnamese audience laughed on many occasions, often in response to Dai’s comments and his idiosyncratic, “colourful” use of language. Dai is known for speaking frankly, at times very bluntly to the point of causing offence, and during the filming he did not hold back from swearing to express his feelings. As well as provoking amusement, some of the audience members told me that they were truly shocked by Dai’s language. Although common in everyday life, swearing never appears on Vietnamese television and is usually edited out of documentaries. Dai was clearly very conscious of the

audience reaction to his swearing: after the screening, he said he was concerned that the audience would think he was “uncultured” (*vo van hoa*) when they heard him use “vulgar” (*tuc*) and “unclean” (*mat ve sinh*) language. However, he praised me for “daring” (*dam*) to include it and he thought it added to the film’s veracity as it showed how he spoke in everyday life. In general, Dai’s reaction to the film was very positive: he said he found it “moving” (*xuc dong*) and thanked me for making it. In his initial comments about the film, Dai expressed his view that the film was successful in two ways. First, it managed to reveal the expression of his inner feelings through his music, feelings that he had difficulty in verbalising. Second, it explored the connections between his music and his life, and between his music and the broader context of politics, religion and society.

An issue that was raised several times during the discussion was the film’s focus on Dai’s life story. Several of the band members praised the film for giving a moving “portrait” (*chan dung*) of Dai. For instance, Thanh Thuy, the main *dan tranh* zither player in the band, said that after watching the film she “understood more” (*hieu hon*) about Dai’s music and “loved” (*yeu*) him more, even though she had been in the band for the last two years and already knew Dai and his songs well.

The emphasis on Dai’s life story was challenged by the panel chair, Nguyen Trinh Thi. She said that after watching the film she was curious to know more about the singers, Lam and Linh, and she asked Linh whether she would have liked the film to have explored the lives and creative input of the singers in more detail. Linh resisted saying that she wanted more about herself and Lam in the film, but she did critique some aspects of the film narrative:

Linh: ... the film concentrated a great deal on Dai’s life story, and the film ... speaks about the taboos in contemporary Vietnamese society, censorship, and the assistance of the Centre Culturel Français, but it does not explore fully the inner sentiment of the music ... the song “Solar Eclipse” has both yin and yang elements, and when they are in balance they reveal the true and the false, and those elements have not been fully examined.

Thi: So you agree with me that there should be more about the two female singers in the film?

Linh: No, I don’t think there should be more about the two singers ... I don’t know whether you have the right kind of footage or not, but I feel there is a lot of talking in the film, a lot is explained, and I think through images alone you can reveal the singers’ inner worlds, it doesn’t need to be verbalised.

Linh suggests, then, that she would have liked the film to be less reliant on explicit, verbal explanation and that images could have been used more evocatively to reveal the singers’ thoughts and feelings. In response to Linh’s interesting critique, I acknowledged that parts of the film were interview-based and conceded that if the film did not manage to convey inner sentiments then this was an unfortunate limitation. During the editing process, I was very conscious of being over-reliant on interviews, and at various points in the film I endeavoured to give space to the music and to limit spoken comments. Although Dai said that he thought the film successfully revealed feelings that were difficult to express, on first viewing Linh thought it

could have gone further in this regard. It should be noted, however, that several weeks after the screening Linh sent me an email to explain that she felt differently about the film after watching it a second time.¹⁰

A notable aspect of the band's initial response to *Hanoi Eclipse* was their consideration of what was *not* in the film, as well as what was in it. Of course, the band members themselves were in a unique position compared with other viewers. Not only were they viewing themselves on screen, they also had their own memories of what happened while I was shooting. It was clear from comments made by some band members that they had imagined, if only in a vague or subconscious way, what might be included in the film based on their own recollection of the most memorable moments. None of the band members saw the rushes, but each seemed to have their own memories of what I had filmed and their own opinions about which scenes were the most interesting. For example, the guitarist Nguyen Manh Hung said:

I thought there were many things missing in the film. I know that Barley filmed many interesting scenes and interviews, [he filmed] when we were eating, practising and recording together, when we were arguing with each other, even when we were sleeping together. I wanted all that to be in the film. I know that I am being greedy, but I thought the film lacked many of those things. Yet the film's length is only 50 minutes, so how could everything be included? Barley faced a very difficult task choosing material ... Regarding the use of music in the film, I thought that there was too much emphasis on the song "Solar Eclipse" and that there should be more of other songs.

Hung was extremely helpful and attentive when I was shooting and his comments go to the heart of an important issue inherent to the filmmaking process: inevitably much interesting material is "sacrificed" during editing and the shots selected in the final edit are "only extracts from the more varied view of the subject that exists in the rushes" (MacDougall 1998:23). Hung's self-confessed greediness, his wish to see more of the scenes he remembered being filmed, might be interpreted as a desire for the film to be closer to his memory of the interactions that unfolded while I was filming.

During the editing process I was acutely aware that many different films could have been made from the footage and that the film that was eventually made would necessarily be reductive. Hung's "closeness" to the footage also seems to be evident in his opinion that the film dwelled too much on "Solar Eclipse". Presumably his intimate knowledge of the songs, made the repetition of "Solar Eclipse" in the film seem unnecessary and he would have preferred instead for some other songs to have been included. Before Hung made his comment, Dai also voiced his opinion that he would have liked two songs – "Bamboo Chopsticks" ("Dua Tre") and "The Tree of the Buddhist Nunnery" ("Cay Nu Tu") – to have been explored in more depth in the film because he thought they were especially interesting. However, he did not express any dissatisfaction with the choice of the four songs featured. Indeed, he said that "enough" (*du*) songs were in the film and suggested that interested viewers could find out about other songs by listening to Dai Lam Linh's album.

A final note about ethics. When I was shooting the film, Dai and I made an agreement that the band would view the film before it was publicly distributed. Due to the contentious nature of some scenes, I was keen to arrange a screening in Hanoi as I wanted to be sure that the film would not create difficulties for band members with the Vietnamese authorities. After watching the film, Dai and the rest of the band confirmed that they had no concerns in this regard. Rather, they saw potential for the film to be used as a promotional tool for Dai Lam Linh, which might assist their efforts to organise a concert tour in Europe in the future.

DAI LAM LINH AFTER THE MAKING OF HANOI ECLIPSE

When Dai Lam Linh recorded their debut album in 2009, the band was not widely known by the Vietnamese public at large. The audiences for their concerts were mainly made up of other musicians and artists in Hanoi, as well as Vietnamese and expatriates with a keen interest in the contemporary arts. However, in June 2010, Dai Lam Linh were invited to perform five songs on the primetime show “Bai Hat Viet” (“Vietnamese Song”) on the national Vietnamese television channel, VTV3. The appearance on VTV3 resulted in Dai Lam Linh becoming widely known nationally and it sparked a storm of controversy. After the VTV3 broadcast, clips of the songs on the show were uploaded to Youtube. Within three months of the song “The Tree of the Buddhist Nunnery” (“Cay Nu Tu”) being posted on Youtube on the 29th June 2010, it had been viewed over 50,000 times and had received hundreds of comments. The majority of these comments are extremely critical and some use abusive, foul language to make their point in no uncertain terms. Running counter to the wave of criticism, the band also has a growing fan base and after the VTV3 appearance a Dai Lam Linh fan club was set up on Facebook. The two quotes below are indicative of the polarised reaction to Dai Lam Linh: in the first quote the extended vocal technique of Lam and Linh is dismissed as insane and incomprehensible, and in the second the unusual vocal style is praised as a powerful expression of deeply felt emotions:

I can't understand what type of music this is. I only knew that this song was broadcast on VTV3 through a friend. I felt so ashamed. Music must bring out the beauty and interesting essence in both the words and the melody. But this song uses words that have no feeling, that are uncultured and depraved, it's like people ranting and raving. There has never yet been such a melody. I don't think this is a piece of music, I think it is a minute of 'improvisation' in a mental hospital. Those who have responsibility for broadcasting the programme should be more responsible. (“todinhphuc”, posted on Youtube, August 2010)

The music of Dai Lam Linh is very emotional, the sound comes from deep within each person's soul. The song lyrics describe happiness, sadness, desire, endurance, despair and pain that you cannot convey in words alone; the sentences have to be muttered with groans that are not clearly articulated. Perhaps it is best to listen to the connection between words and music ... then everyone will find their own way of

appreciating the songs. (“Duc Keny”, posted on Dai Lam Linh’s fan site on Facebook, August 2010)

The polarised audience reaction to Dai Lam Linh’s television appearance was also paralleled by comments in the press by prominent Vietnamese musicians. For instance, the songwriter and head of a music copyright association in Vietnam, Pho Duc Phuong, is reported as saying that he found it “difficult to accept” Dai Lam Linh’s performance, while the popular musician Le Minh Son is quoted as saying that he “respects and likes the music of Dai” and that “Vietnamese music really needs people like Dai”.¹¹ It seems likely that Dai Lam Linh will continue to court such controversy as long as they continue to record and perform.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FILM

For the purposes of this guide, the structure of the film has been divided into 13 chapters. Markers have been placed on the DVD of the film so that the chapters can be easily accessed, but these chapters are not labelled in any way on the film itself.

Chapter 1 (00’00” – 1’40’) – Title Sequence

Chapter 2 (01’41’ – 08’55”) – Introduction to Dai Lam Linh

Chapter 3 (08’56” – 11’39”) – “Solar Eclipse” (“Nhat Thuc”)

Chapter 4 (11’40”-15’31”) – Dai on his life and music

Chapter 5 (15’32”- 19’13”) – “Evening” (“Chieu”)

Chapter 6 (19’14”- 22’09”) – The “bia hoi” scene

Chapter 7 (22’10”-26’10”) – “Dreaming” (“Mo”)

Chapter 8 (26’11”- 32’15”) – The Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble and “Drifting” (“Luu Lac”)

Chapter 9 (32’16” – 34’45”) – Visit to Dai’s parents

Chapter 10 (34’46’ – 40’55”) – Producing the album

Chapter 11 (40’56”- 47’14”) – Concert Rehearsal and Censors

Chapter 12 (47’15” – 53’53”) – Concert Performance of “Solar Eclipse” (Nhat Thuc)

Chapter 13 (53’54”- 55’54”) – Credits

THE FILM STRUCTURE EXPLORED

Chapter 1 – Title sequence

The opening title sequence uses shots from the performance of the song “Solar Eclipse” at the Hanoi Opera House. The sequence aims to draw the audience into the band’s music and the intertitles provide basic contextual information. No subtitles of the song lyrics are given in Chapter 1; the film concludes with a complete performance of “Solar Eclipse” with subtitled lyrics (see Chapter 12).

Chapter 2 – Introduction to Dai Lam Linh

The main purpose of Chapter 2 is to introduce the band and its music. Throughout the chapter, extracts from the interviews with Dai, Lam and Linh are intercut with shots of the band rehearsing and recording. The shots in the opening montage, in which we see the band rehearsing and the argument between Dai and Linh, were filmed on the stage of L’Espace on the 14 April, just four days before the concert at the Hanoi Opera House. Dai was particularly tense in the lead up to the concert, but arguments between Dai and other members of the band flared up on several other occasions too. Dai and Linh’s argument therefore provides an insight into the dynamics and tensions within the band, and it acts as springboard for Lam and Linh to reflect on Dai’s reputation for being “mad”.

After reflecting on Dai’s “difficult” personality, Lam describes Dai’s music as “installation music” (*am nhac sap dat*). The term *sap dat*, which literally means “to arrange”, is more commonly used to refer to art installations and its use in musical contexts relates to its meaning in the visual arts.¹² While there is debate in artistic circles about the meaning and validity of the term “installation music”, Lam uses it to evoke the idea that Dai’s songs draw on and bring together diverse musical elements from different parts of the world. In this way, Dai’s songs are metaphorically comparable to the technique of juxtaposing contrasting objects in art installations. The musical eclecticism encapsulated by the notion of “installation music” was often mentioned by Dai when reflecting upon contemporary Vietnamese music and its standing in the world at large. Dai frequently voiced his frustration with what he saw as the parochial, stagnant, inward-looking nature of much Vietnamese music, and he suggested that Vietnamese musicians should have a more international outlook and be more strongly connected to musical developments in the rest of the world. The idea of “installation music”, as explained by Lam in the film, therefore not only refers to Dai’s musical influences, it also implicitly asserts the band’s ambition to appeal to an international audience across national boundaries.

Following Lam’s description of “installation music”, she gives a brief account of how the band came together and explains how she worked with Linh to devise versions of Dai’s songs through a process of “improvisation” (*ngau hung*). Lam’s comments about the improvisational process give an impression of Lam and Linh’s creative contribution to the band’s music. Dai is listed as the composer and arranger for all the tracks on Dai Lam Linh’s debut album, yet this downplays the significant creative contribution made by Lam, Linh and other band members.

During the course of the chapter, there is a shift from the stage at L'Espace to the recording studio when we see five instrumentalists recording "Solar Eclipse" in the main studio space. Shortly after this scene, Lam and Linh are shown singing in a small recording room next to the main studio space. Initially, the band intended to record together as if they were performing live, but this proved to be impractical because the studio did not have the necessary equipment or the right spaces to properly isolate different performers. In the studio, the band spoke a great deal about whether the performances had "spirit" (*tin*h *than*) and "soul" (*hon*), and in the film Dai is heard saying, "it's not about the technique, it's the spirit that matters". In a similar vein, Lam says to Linh, "we sang like we were possessed" to describe a good take. In this comment, Lam uses the word *len dong*, which literally refers to spirit possession rituals held by Vietnamese mediums (see Norton 2009). But Lam uses *len dong* figuratively to suggest that their performances were inspired and had the right "spirit", rather than meaning they were literally possessed by spirits. Such comments bring to the fore the band's attempts to ensure that the expressivity and emotion of the performances came through on the recordings. The "dead" atmosphere, which is typical of recording studios, however, meant that they were often unsatisfied with the "spirit" of their performances.¹³ While I was filming, I imagined that more of the film would be devoted to exploring the creative process of rehearsing and recording. When it came to editing the footage, however, some of the intricacies of recording were left out because it was difficult to portray such details in a visually engaging way.

Chapter 3 – "Solar Eclipse" ("Nhat Thuc")

Having introduced the band in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 shifts to a more poetic mode of representation to explore the aesthetics of "Solar Eclipse".¹⁴ The chapter primarily consists of shots of a crowded temple full of worshippers cut to the recording of "Solar Eclipse" on Dai Lam Linh's debut album. Some short interview extracts of Dai and Lam commenting on the meanings of "Solar Eclipse" are included, but the chapter aims to evoke the expressivity and feelings of the song, rather than rely on lengthy verbal explanations. The song lyrics, which are taken from a poem by Vi Thuy Linh, speak of a woman's desolation while she is waiting in vain for her lost lover to return. The woman's state of despair is symbolized through the metaphor of an "eclipse", a disruption in the normal balance between day and night, darkness and light, *yin* and *yang*. Distraught from her lost love, the woman seeks solace in Buddhism. The poem therefore makes use of the trope of "Buddhism as refuge", a trope that is common in many Vietnamese stories, poetry and music drama.¹⁵ The poem's religious atmosphere is evoked musically through Lam and Linh whispering, muttering and chanting prayers to Amitabha, the Goddess of Mercy, and Lam also sings fragments of a Catholic hymn. During the filmed interview with Linh, she described the musical and religious connection in following way: "On festival days the pagodas and temples in Vietnam are very crowded ... Inside the pagoda, many different sounds clash with each other and it sounds chaotic. The beginning of 'Solar Eclipse' evokes this atmosphere." Although this interview extract is not in the film, it was Linh's comment that initially gave me the idea to cut images of worshippers to the song. The chapter begins and ends with landscape shots of Hanoi: light, daytime shots are used at start of the chapter and darker, dusk shots at the end. This visual framing parallels the symbolic oppositions evident in the song's lyrics.

Chapter 4 – Dai on his life and music

In Chapter 4, Dai reflects on his life and musical development. At the start of the chapter, Dai speaks about his early musical background while growing up and explains why he felt compelled to join the army at the height of the Vietnamese-American war. He then recounts how he felt disillusioned while studying at the Hanoi Conservatoire in the early 1980s, which led him to move out of Hanoi to live at his wife's parents' house in Nam Ha province. Dai's narrative about his life in this chapter gives an impression of how he was scarred by the experiences of war and how his breakdown in the early 1980s resulted in an intense period of musical creativity. Dai's breakdown after leaving the army might be interpreted as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder, but Dai's reflections also provide a critical commentary on Vietnamese culture and society in the aftermath of war. His disparaging remarks about the socialist musical culture promoted by the Hanoi Music Conservatoire and his desire to find inspiration in the musical environment outside of state-run institutions point to the limits of political influence on musical expression. Dai was clearly not content to follow the socialist-influenced styles of musical composition promoted by state-run music institutions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and he sought to develop his own distinctive musical style without political interference. The difficulties faced by Vietnam's socialist command economy in the aftermath of war are also hinted at by Dai's throwaway comment that he considered making money by "smuggling cars" into the country.

Chapter 5 – "Evening" ("Chieu")

Chapter 5 focuses on the song "Evening" ("Chieu"). The live audio recording of the song from the concert at Hanoi Opera House underpins the entire chapter. The chapter begins with Dai lighting incense and kowtowing in front of the ancestral altar of his first wife's parents and grandparents. This sets the mood for the song "Evening", which is faded up during the scene. Dai then says that he wrote "Evening" in honour of his fellow soldiers, his friends who died on the battlefield in Quang Tri in 1972. Quang Tri province was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting in the Vietnamese-American war and was devastated by bombing. The lyrics of the song, written by the poet Nguyen Trong Tao, make no direct reference to war. Rather, they describe the world being bathed in the golden glow of twilight. The poem describes how the landscape ("trees" and "stone") and people ("skin" and "hair") become yellow as evening falls. While the poem is open to numerous interpretations, such images perhaps conjure up a landscape devastated by bombing and the effects of Agent Orange.

To poetically evoke the connection between "Evening" and the loss of war, shots of a "martyrs' cemetery" (*nghia trang liet si*) are cut to the song.¹⁶ The shots of the tombs of war dead in the chapter were filmed at a cemetery a few hundred metres from the Lanh Giang temple in Ha Nam province. The caretaker of the cemetery, who was lime washing the tombs when I visited, told me that he had been crippled by a war injury and that many of his friends who died in battle in central Vietnam were buried in the cemetery. Some of the shots of the

caretaker at the cemetery were filmed with a slow shutter speed, which gives the images a distant, otherworldly quality.

A notable musical characteristic of “Evening” is the incorporation of a traditional style of folk song known as “Ho Hue”, which is closely associated with the region around the city of Hue in central Vietnam. In some of the concert footage used in the film, the singer Ha Vi sings in the “Ho Hue” style from behind a hanging sedge mat, adding another layer to Lam and Linh’s overlapping vocal phrases. “Ho Hue”, which is traditionally sung while rowing in a boat, is characterised by long, arching vocal phrases that are ornamented with a distinctive, wide vibrato. Dai incorporates Hue folk song into “Evening” in order to evoke his profound feelings of sadness about war: for Dai, “Ho Hue” reminded him of the time he spent fighting in Quang Tri province, north of the city of Hue. I found Dai’s explanations about the use of “Ho Hue” interesting, but they were not included in the film mainly because his brief comments would not have been clear without more detailed contextualization.

Chapter 6 - The “*bia hoi*” scene

In Chapter 6, Dai narrates his wartime experiences and his post-war breakdown while eating lunch at a typical Hanoian “*bia hoi*” restaurant with other members of the band. The name “*bia hoi*” refers to the weak, locally brewed beer that is served in these restaurants. In Dai’s monologue at the restaurant, he speaks emotionally about the horrific casualties of war and gets visibly upset when he describes how his desolation after the war led him to “burn” things that were dear to him in the past. Dai’s disillusion with the Vietnamese Communist Party, hinted at in the previous chapter, is made more explicit when he recounts how he threw his Party membership card on the fire, and he also talks metaphorically about burning his “homeland” and his “soul”.

The “*bia hoi*” scene was shot on the 18th of January, during the period when the band was recording, and after lunch they returned on their motorbikes to the studio. A long shot of Dai and other band members driving on their motorbikes and arriving at the studio concludes the chapter. The recording of the song “Bamboo Chopsticks” (“*Dua Tre*”) from Dai Lam Linh’s debut album is used as non-diegetic music over the return journey to the studio. The song’s jazzy, bass riff and quirky, upbeat percussion rhythm seemed to suit the dynamic shots of travel. The song’s lyrics are not subtitled in the film, but it is worth briefly noting that they whimsically refer to death. The song text refers to an offering consisting of three chopsticks, a hardboiled egg and a small bowl of rice, which is usually placed on the deceased’s coffin at Vietnamese funerals. At one end, the chopsticks are split and bent into the shape of flower heads, and the other ends are stuck into a peeled, hardboiled egg, which rests on top of a bowl of rice. The chorus of the song describes this ritual offering:

Bamboo chopsticks, chopsticks made of bamboo
Split chopsticks shaped into three flowers
Stuck in an egg
Placed in a bowl of rice

Dai wrote the lyrics for “Bamboo Chopsticks” and he said that he wanted the song to be performed at his own funeral. “Bamboo Chopsticks” would have been an interesting song to feature in the film, but it is not explored in detail because I could not find an effective way for the song to become part of the film’s narrative. A scene in which Dai sang a humorous version of the song’s chorus, however, appears alongside the credits at the end.

Chapter 7– “Dreaming” (“Mo”)

Chapter 7 is structured around the song “Dreaming” (“Mo”) and the theme of sexuality. Vi Thuy Linh’s poem, which is used as the text for the song, concerns the desire and anguish of a woman who is separated from her lover. The poems of Vi Thuy Linh have provoked much interest in Vietnamese literary circles because of their daring sexual references, and “Dreaming” addresses female sexual desire and loss.¹⁷

The chapter mainly consists of shots of Lam and Linh performing “Dreaming” intercut with interview extracts in which Dai, Lam and Linh comment on the song’s meanings. In an unprompted remark, Linh says that she imagines a woman exploring her sexuality when performing the song, and Dai’s and Lam’s comments raise broad issues relating to sexuality and Vietnamese society. Dai suggests that he addresses “greed for sex” in his music to highlight the destructive force of greed in the world, especially “greed for money and power”, and Lam reflects on changing attitudes in Vietnamese society toward women and sex before marriage. The scene of a couple having their wedding photographs taken, which is cut to Lam’s comments about pre-marital sex, provides a light-hearted counterpart to the intense expression of sexual longing in “Dreaming”.¹⁸

Chapter 8 – The Ca Tru Thai Ha Group and “Drifting” (“Luu Lac”)

Chapter 8 addresses the interaction between Dai Lam Linh and the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble, who were invited by Dai to perform on three tracks of the album: “Solar Eclipse” (“Nhat Thuc”), “Drifting” (“Luu Lac”) and “White Dream” (“Chiem Bao Trang”). The main performers of the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble are the drummer Nguyen Van Mui, the singer/percussionist Nguyen Thuy Hoa, and the lutenist Nguyen Van Khue. I first met the Ensemble in 1995 when I was conducting research on the music of *ca tru* and I have worked with them on numerous occasions since then (see Norton 1996; 2005). *Ca tru* is a chamber music genre in which a singer, who also plays rhythms on bamboo “clappers” (*phach*), is accompanied by a *dan day* lute player and a drummer who plays the “praise drum” (*trong chau*). I filmed the Ensemble in the recording studio, but I also arranged a separate shoot so I could film a “traditional” *ca tru* performance and ask them about their experience of performing with Dai Lam Linh.¹⁹

At the beginning of Chapter 8, the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble perform part of the musical form called “Gui Thu” (lit. “Sending a Letter”). This section of “Gui Thu” was adapted and incorporated into “Solar Eclipse” for the concert at the Hanoi Opera House.²⁰ The song text for “Gui Thu” is written in the form of a letter by a woman to the man she loves, as she waits in vain for him to return (see Norton 2001). This theme fits well with Vi Thuy Linh’s poem “Solar Eclipse”, but the two poems are contrasting in terms of style: the text of “Gui Thu” is in a

classical style and makes use of old Sino-Vietnamese terms, whereas Vi Thuy Linh's poem is written in a fresh, modern style and does not follow a conventional poetic metre.²¹ A translation of Vi Thuy Linh's poem and the section of "Gui Thu" sung by the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble is provided in Chapter 12 of the Film Script below.

In the film, the performance of "Gui Thu" is cut with brief comments by Khue about the history of *ca tru* and reflections by both Thuy Hoa and Khue about how they approached performing with Dai Lam Linh. The music by the Ensemble on the album is closely related to traditional *ca tru*, but changes were made to suit Dai's songs. For instance, Khue improvised new phrases on the *dan day* lute, and Thuy Hoa sang with different timing and phrasing. Contrary to traditional practice, Mui did not play the drum when Thuy Hoa and Khue were performing; instead he adapted *ca tru* drum patterns to accompany Lam's voice on the song "White Dream". In addition to stylistic changes, the interview extracts with Thuy Hoa reveal how she adopted a quite different attitude to performing: she felt like she could express her own "individuality" and was no longer constrained by tradition when singing with Dai Lam Linh.

After introducing the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble, the latter part of Chapter 8 focuses on the song "Drifting". My translation of the lyrics for "Drifting", which were written by the poet Nguyen Trong Tao, is as follows:

Drifting into Buddhist scriptures,
Blinded by the sunset.
Drifting into power,
Life unravels.
The road is long,
Entangled like a spider's web.
We are lost,
We keep going but never arrive.
A worthless, maudlin song,
A misled lad,
Drifting into absurdity.
A country lad, wandering the streets in a daze,
He remembers his ancestors lovingly,
When would he return to his home village?

In the film, Khue gives an interpretation of the poem. He suggests that the song text warns of the corrupting influence of power and exposes the endemic corruption in contemporary Vietnamese society. Based on Khue's discussions with Dai about the poem, he also relates the "country lad" character to Dai's own experiences as a young man, when he moved from the countryside to Hanoi.²² This autobiographical connection made it possible to make a conceptual link between the song's chorus and the shots of Dai travelling back to his home village to meet his parents in the next chapter of the film.

Chapter 9 – Visit to Dai's parents

Dai and myself, along with two of Dai's friends, made a trip to Dai's parents' house in Nam Ha province on the 6th of July. Before the visit, Dai was concerned that his father might not be very welcoming, although he did not clearly explain why this might be the case. Nonetheless, I urged him to make the visit as planned because I thought it would be an opportunity to discover more about Dai's past. The meeting with Dai's parents was much briefer than I had expected; it lasted about 30 minutes in total. I filmed the entire visit and, although Dai briefly explained to his mother and father that I was making a film about him, his parents' seemed to pay little attention to the presence of the camera. Chapter 9 is essentially a shortened version of what transpired during the visit and I did not intervene to set up scenes for the camera. Shortly after we arrived, Dai's father, started to play some traditional instruments: the *dan bau* monochord and the *dan nhi* two-string fiddle. Dai briefly updated his mother about the Dai Lam Linh project, but he spent most of his time trying out the instruments with his father. The instruments were amplified to a high volume because Dai's father is hard of hearing. Before the visit, I had hoped to film interviews with Dai's parents, but this turned out to be inappropriate because of the brevity of the visit and because of his father's hearing difficulties. At the end of the chapter, Dai's father plays a piece called "Luu Thuy" (lit. "Flowing Water") on the two-string fiddle while Dai plays an accompanying rhythm, in an unconventional way, by hitting the body of the monochord with a wooden beater. The piece "Luu Thuy" is part of the repertoire of royal court music in Hue, known as *nha nhac* (lit. "refined music"), but it is also performed in many ritual contexts, such as mediumship rituals, temple festivals and processions.

Chapter 10 – Producing the Album

Chapter 10 addresses the production and promotion of the album and it fills in some detail about the economic and cultural context within which Dai Lam Linh are working. It starts with shots of Nguyen Nhat Ly, the producer of the album, and Dai having lunch at a typical street food stall, known in Vietnamese as *com binh dan* (lit. "commoner food"). After lunch, they return to the makeshift post-production studio where they are mixing the album. In the studio, Ly explains that they are aiming to achieve a "natural" sound and that they did not want to add many studio effects. Dai was not happy with the production of his previous album "Solar Eclipse 2" because he thought that the producer Do Bao had added too many electronic effects, and he wanted the Dai Lam Linh album to be mixed in a way that respected the original sound of the instruments and voices. Ly then discusses the funding provided by the Centre Culturel Français to make the album, and we see shots of Dai, Lam and Ly meeting the Vice-Director of L'Espace, Hubert Olié, followed by shots of a press conference to promote the concert and album. Since the 1990s, much Vietnamese contemporary music and art has been funded by foreign organisations and the fact that Dai Lam Linh received French funding raises important questions about neo-colonial influence on the contemporary arts in Vietnam. While acknowledging the financial help of L'Espace, Ly expresses his regret that Dai Lam Linh were supported by the French, rather than the Vietnamese, state. Dai also vents his anger about the lack of support for his music by Vietnamese media companies, and he presents himself as an outsider, a "free musician" who is out of step with mainstream, state-run systems of music production.

The final part of this chapter consists of extracts from an interview I conducted with Tri Minh, a well-known Hanoi-based DJ who runs the Hanoi Sound Stuff Festival, an annual three-day festival that started in 2008. A short section from a Vietnamese Television (VTV) programme about the 2009 Hanoi Sound Stuff Festival, which I recorded off the television, forms part of the sequence. In this context, the VTV programme serves to contextualise Tri Minh and provides a brief insight into another aspect of the popular music scene in Hanoi. I arranged an interview with Tri Minh because I wanted an informed “outsider”, somebody who was not part of Dai Lam Linh but who knew the music well, to comment on the band’s significance.²³ Tri Minh’s comments in the film – which reflect upon the influence of globalization on Vietnamese music and the controversies that have surrounded Dai Lam Linh’s performances – suggest that Dai Lam Linh have made a significant contribution to the development of contemporary music in Vietnam.

Chapter 11 - Concert Rehearsal and Censors

Chapter 11 documents the preparations for the concert in the Hanoi Opera House and addresses the politics of performance. Following Nguyen Nhat Ly’s comments about Vietnam’s cultural isolation from the rest of the world, Lam suggests that culture is inherently political and she asserts that Dai Lam Linh have remained true to their unique artistic path without being restricted by “outside forces in society.” Such forces are made more concrete in the next scene when a committee of censors evaluates Dai Lam Linh’s performance. The head of the committee, a man called Thang, accepts that the concert will go ahead, but he still offers advice on how Dai could “improve” his music by reducing the “noise and screaming” of the vocals. On the surface, Dai accepts Thang’s advice and even agrees with his suggestion that some aspects of the musical arrangement could be improved. One of the women on the committee then makes the suggestion that it would be better for Dai Lam Linh to go to Europe to perform. She expresses her view that the band’s performance was “difficult to watch and to listen to” for Vietnamese and that it was more suited to foreign tastes.

When reviewing the footage of Dai talking to the censors, I was struck by how apologetic he was to them. As the censors leave, Dai shakes their hands and says: “I’m very sorry about today, I had no time to do anything for you”. While Dai does not state his meaning overtly, the subtext here is that Dai is letting the censors know that he was not able to prepare an “envelope” (*phong bi*) for them, an “envelope” being a common euphemism for a bribe. In other words, Dai could not give the censors money, as would normally be expected to ensure that there were no difficulties with being granted permission to perform, because it was the Centre Culturel de Français that had organised the event. While I was unable to make the subtext of bribery explicit in the film, the scene of the censors leaving is interrupted by a cut to Dai commenting, in a separate interview, that he knew that censors did not like his music. This juxtaposition makes evident some of the contradictions between what is being said and thought in the interaction between Dai and the censors.

Following the censors scene, Dai and other members of the band are seen preparing for the concert and Dai is heard making a passionate plea for state support of Vietnamese contemporary arts. He suggests that only with state support will Vietnam “have a voice in the

world” and be able to “contribute to the world’s culture”. The implication of his comments being that the Vietnamese state is failing to support contemporary artistic development and innovation.

Chapter 12 – Concert Performance of “Solar Eclipse”

Chapter 12 consists of the concert of “Solar Eclipse” at the Hanoi Opera House. Although “Solar Eclipse” is quite long, lasting over six minutes, I wanted to include an entire song so that the structure and scope of Dai Lam Linh’s music could be appreciated more fully.²⁴ The concert was filmed by four cameras, and despite some problems with the quality of the camera work, this greatly enhanced the editing possibilities. “Solar Eclipse” is Dai’s most famous song, and I chose it not only because it is one of my personal favourites, but also because it encapsulates some key aspects of Dai Lam Linh’s music and brings together some of the main themes in the film. The performance of *ca tru* in the track connects to the chapter on the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble, and the emotional breakdown expressed in Vi Thuy Linh’s poem seem to resonate with Dai’s life own story and his musical inspiration. There is an obvious element of circularity in the film as some of the same footage of “Solar Eclipse” is used in the opening title sequence and at the end, giving the film a sense of closure.²⁵ My hope is that viewers will listen to the song in a different way in the final concert performance through having gained a deeper understanding of Dai Lam Linh’s music during the course of the film.

Chapter 13 - Credits

Alongside the credits is a three-shot sequence. The first shot is of the band receiving flowers on the stage at the end of the concert. The second is of Dai lightheartedly singing the chorus for the song “Bamboo Chopsticks” (“Dua Tre”), which he did spontaneously in a break during an interview. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Dai reportedly wants “Bamboo Chopsticks” to be performed at his funeral, but Dai’s laughter gives the song a comic twist. The third shot is of Dai smoking “Laotian tobacco” (*thuoc Lao*) – a strong tobacco grown in Laos for the Vietnamese market – in a large bamboo pipe. Smoking Laotian tobacco in pipes is popular at tea stalls on the streets of Vietnam, and I filmed Dai on several occasions smoking at such stalls. As can be seen when Dai inhales, the strong nicotine typically makes the smoker feel dizzy. Looking up at the camera after exhaling the smoke, Dai says in French “merci beaucoup, merci”, thereby seeming to thank the viewer for watching.

THE FILM SCRIPT

Chapter 1 (00'00''-1'40'') – Title Sequence

Intertitle:

In Vietnam, where musical experimentation is not encouraged, the Hanoi-based band Dai Lam Linh dares to be different.

Intertitle:

In 2009, Dai Lam Linh recorded their debut album, and performed a launch concert at the prestigious Hanoi Opera House.

Title:

Hanoi Eclipse
The Music of Dai Lam Linh

Chapter 2 (01'41''-08'55'') – Introduction to Dai Lam Linh

Dai: My aim is to create a kind of contemporary Vietnamese music that can be accepted around the world. I just want to share my love of music and the history of my life. For me, humans are the most important thing.

Dai: I've told you exactly how to do this already. I don't understand why you are still arguing! One ... Two ... Enter. If you don't understand, I don't fucking understand!

Linh: When we practice you should be calm.

Dai: I can only be fucking calm up to a point!

Linh: We can't be creative when we're frustrated.

Dai: Yes, I've been frustrated since yesterday! I didn't dare say a word yesterday. I have the right to say how we should play.

Linh: The whole band is frustrated because you've ranted too much.

Dai: You're damn right!

Intertitle:

Lam

Singer

Lam: Dai is one of God's special creations! Sometimes Dai is extremely annoying, but he is also lovable.

Intertitle:

Linh

Singer

Linh: Everybody calls Dai a madman, but I think he's normal. He's not mad at all.

Dai: Sometimes we had difficulties because Lam and Linh had different ideas than me about how to sing. We don't always agree but I respect them.

Lam: Dai is very talented. His music is very human. Dai shares so much through his music. That's what makes me want to work with him, even when he's unbearable.

Lam: I call Dai's music "installation music". It mixes many different styles of music. Dai uses Western harmony but he mixes it with folk music. Dai's music has the scope to combine music from anywhere around the world. That's what I mean by "installation music".

Linh: For the recording of the Dai Lam Linh CD, we wanted to have an open music path. We didn't want to play the songs in just one way. We experimented and worked out different ways of playing each song.

Dai: Ok. That was better. It had more soul that time. There are still a few problems, but what the hell! You need to sort that bit out. It's not about the technique, it's the spirit that matters. It should be a bit slower and calmer.

Lam: That sounded great.

Linh: No it didn't. My voice isn't warmed up yet.

Lam: No, it was amazing because we sang like we were possessed. We should have some more time to warm up our bodies. Let's stand up, so we can sing with a free spirit.

Lam: Linh and I rehearsed some of Dai's songs before we sang them to him. He was really pleased when he heard us, and he said we should work together. We wanted to perform his music because we found his songs so appealing. That was 2 years ago and we've been working together since then. We practiced together every day and created the music through improvisation. Linh and I would improvise together and we would work on polishing and refining the songs until we were happy with the structure. Then Dai would write out the structure which we had arranged.

Dai: Why didn't you sing the last phrase?

Linh: Last time you said I should drop it.

Dai: It's good, I think you should include it.

Linh: Ok, I'll use it this time.

Linh: The first few days Lam and I practiced together, I think we will never forget them because we explored the deepest part of our inner selves. If someone entered the room when we practiced, we wouldn't notice them because we reached such a high level of concentration. There were times when we felt like our souls were splitting off from our bodies.

Chapter 3 (08'56"-11'39") – "Solar Eclipse" ("Nhat Thuc")

Dai: The song "Solar Eclipse" is about an emotional breakdown. When someone has a breakdown they lose faith in themselves and they seek solace in religion and superstition. They want to meditate and be serene. They go to holy temples and pagodas. They go to pray to Buddha and the spirits to overcome their breakdown.

Lam: Each person prays for different reasons. Some for good reasons and some for bad. The song "Solar Eclipse" evokes the contradictions of modern society. Black is white ... white is black. Night is day ... day is night. That is what the song is about.

Solar eclipse

Lunar eclipse.

River becomes desert.

You are nothingness.

Chapter 4 (11'40"-15'31") – Dai on his life and music

Dai: My father bought me a piano when I was 16 years old. By that age, I had taught myself how to read music. I was never taught professionally. When I finished school I carried on studying music at a local college. I also started teaching music at a secondary school. After that, I went into the army.

Barley: What year did you go into the army?

Dai: I went into the army in 1968. I was glad to go to the army because we were fighting to protect ourselves. I couldn't bear to stay at home, so I volunteered for the army. At that time I was a teacher, but I couldn't just stay at home quietly. I heard about the cruel policies in Saigon and how they were affecting society. I heard how the Americans were assisting such a savage

and cruel regime. I'm an artist and I can't accept anything that is cruel to people. It was really evil and terrible. I really couldn't bear it. After I came back from the war, I didn't want to do anything except music because I wanted to express all my feelings about humanity. I wanted to alert people to the evil in the world.

Dai: This is my first wife's native village about 60kms from Hanoi. In the early 1980s, I lost my artistic direction. I was at the Hanoi Music Conservatoire, and the teaching was very old fashioned. I couldn't listen to the music there. So I went out of the city to look for different types of music for inspiration. I was really fed up because all the music was propaganda in the 1970s and '80s. I couldn't compose any proper music so I wanted to stop making music completely. I was disillusioned so I came to live here. I didn't know what to do anymore. I was really confused. I even thought of smuggling cars or getting some other kind of job. This is the room that my parents-in-law gave to my wife and I to stay in. I sat here and wrote music while my baby slept over there on the bed. Over the 3 years I lived here, I wrote 30 to 40 songs.

Chapter 5 (15'32''-19'13'') – “Evening” (“Chieu”)

Dai: All my deepest feelings about my friends, my fellow soldiers ... Feelings of great loss ... great sadness ... great love ... the madness of humanity. All those feelings are expressed in the song “Evening”.

Dai's friend (Nguyen Quoc Khanh): As a soldier you witnessed the battles in Quang Tri province didn't you? You must have seen many comrades die. You went through that.

Dai: In this song, I wanted to tell the world about the great loss of the soldiers who fought at Quang Tri in 1972. Nobody can compensate for such loss. The Americans can't. The Communists can't. And I can't repay them by writing a song. I want to pay back the debt to the war dead, but how can I? At night, I often dream about my friends who died.

Yellow trees.

Yellow stone.

Time is fleeting ... like a purple hibiscus sky.

Evening falls.

Yellow skin.

Yellow hair.

Yellow skin ... yellow hair ... yellow people ... yellow trees ... yellow stone ...

Evening ...

Chapter 6 (19'14''-22'09'') – The “bia hoi” scene

Dai: In 1972, I was stationed in a rural commune called Mai Sac Thanh. I heard B52s dropping bombs 9 times a day. I was there for 3 months and I survived. But I almost died and became a war hero. A bomb blast injured me. I was bleeding from my mouth and nose. I was told to leave

the frontline but I decided to stay and help at an underground hospital. So many people were injured in the guerrilla war going on in Quang Tri. I saw young girls with their legs cut off. I had to shave their pubic hair so they could have surgery. Several times, the bombs destroyed our combat formation. People were blown to pieces, their flesh was like this dog meat here. I joined the Tet offensive in 1968, and I was in the 1972 campaign. I saw the fiercest fighting but I didn't fucking die. People are terrified when they hear about my time as a soldier. I was so disillusioned after I left the army that I burned my Communist Party card. I returned home like a ghost one night. I had a drink with my father under the moon. Then I burnt everything. I burnt my homeland. I burnt my soul. I couldn't bloody cope.

Chapter 7 (22'10"-26'10") – "Dreaming" ("Mo")

Dai: The song "Dream" is about sexuality. Sexuality between people. Between men and women, between women and women. It's about sexuality in life as a whole.

Linh: When I sing this song, I imagine a girl writhing on a bed exploring her body. The girl imagines herself making love with someone or maybe many people.

Lam: In the past, if a woman had relationships or had sex before marriage then people thought she was a bad woman. A woman who had no virtue and was uneducated. But these days things are more open. It's not like it was in the past.

Dai: Sexuality is a natural part of being human. It's a wonderful thing. But when sexual desire can't be satisfied it can be destructive.

Lam: In the song "Dream" we sing: "*The night is calling. A stormy path. I rush onto a stormy path*". It's about the craving of a woman, about her burning desire. The woman is passionate and open. She expresses her deepest feelings. People think that emotions and desires should be hidden away or not mentioned. But in this song, Dai hasn't been shy about revealing emotions.

*I'm thirsty ... for you to hold my breasts ... for your kiss.
Painful ... silence ... after crying.
My darling, I long for you.
Come to me, let's burn a curtain of fire around us.
The empty space echoes around you.
I beg you to sow my flesh and set alight a curtain of fire.*

Dai: The whole world is in disorder because of human greed. I address the issue of sexuality in my music not just to comment on greed for sex but also greed for money and power. Greed is prevalent throughout the world, not just in Vietnam. I want to comment on human greed in my music.

Chapter 8 (26'11"-32'15") – The Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble and “Drifting” (“Luu Lac”)

Intertitle:

The Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble

Dear handsome, talented young man

I only want to speak of love

Khue: In the early 20th century, there were many singing bars in Hanoi. They were very common, like karaoke bars are today. Poets and music connoisseurs came to the bars and invited singers to perform. They came to appreciate the music and poetry of “Ca tru” music.

Lover, where are you rushing to?

Thuy Hoa: When I sing traditional “Ca tru” music, I imagine that I’m from a past generation. I perform exactly what I have been taught according to the “Ca tru” tradition. When I sing in Dai’s songs I am freer. I can express myself, my individuality.

I want to tell you about my love

Khue: When I first played the “dan day” lute with Dai’s band I found it hard to find my own place in it because the music was already so full. I played the lute with special ornamentation to say ... “I’m here! This is the lute.” So the beautiful music of the “dan day” lute could blossom in Dai’s music. When I first practiced with Dai I sang in a strictly traditional way. Then I listened to how the other musicians expressed their thoughts and feelings. So I started to express my own feelings through the medium of “Ca tru”.

Dai: Hold it ... *Kinh Quyet Bay Lau* ... think about it first. 2 ... 3 ... *Tam Duong* ... You see ... start there. Wait 2 beats so you introduce yourself well. The entry of the next phrase must be beautiful.

Khue: Dai doesn’t get too involved in politics but I think that his songs are really truthful about today’s society.

Drifting into Buddhist scriptures

Blinded by the sunset

Drifting into power

Khue: The lyrics, *Drifting into Buddhist scriptures*, describe how people pray to Buddha when they are dispirited. The lyrics, *Drifting into power*, refer to when people get power and how they can’t escape from it. When people get power they often become corrupt and harm society. Dai’s songs reflect the problems of modern times. His songs aren’t directly political, but they have political meanings. I think Dai’s songs are inspired by his own life experiences. The

song “Drifting” is about a country lad who moves to the city and finds it strange. He longs to return to his home village and visit the graves of his ancestors.

*A country lad, wandering the streets in a daze.
He lovingly remembers his ancestors’ tombs.
When will he return to his home village?*

Chapter 9 (32’16’’-34’45’’) – Visit to Dai’s parents

Dai: Hello mother ...

Dai’s mother: So you came home via Nam Dinh town?

Dai: Yes I interviewed some musicians there. For the last year a French organisation funded my band. So we could practise, record a CD and perform. They gave us funds to cover all the costs. To pay the band, to hire the recording studio and the opera house. They gave us US\$30,000. They’ve never given money to a band like that before. We were very lucky.

Dai’s mother: That’s great news.

Dai: Father ... when you play the “dan bau” monochord ... Father, you missed out this note. When I was young, my father used to play music in this yard with other musicians. I used to sit over there and listen. My love for music began here in this yard.

Chapter 10 (34’46’’-40’55’’) – Producing the album

Ly: That was the manager of the opera house on the phone. The 18th is booked, so it’s best for you to rehearse there on the 17th.

Dai: Give me some of those intestines ... and beans.

Intertitle:

Ly

Producer

Ly: Dai and I are now mixing the Dai Lam Linh album. We spent 4 weeks recording all the instruments and vocals and we now have 2 weeks for mixing. I bought these comfortable new chairs this morning. We got backache from the cheap plastic chairs we were using yesterday. This room isn’t a professional studio. The working conditions aren’t ideal.

Dai: But it’s fine.

Ly: It’s enough for us to do the job well.

Ly: That bit is terrible! We want to make the CD to sound as natural as possible. We don't want to use many studio effects or unnatural sounds. We want the instruments to sound like they did when they were played. This project is entirely funded by the French Cultural Centre "L'Espace." The French have helped Dai Lam Linh a great deal.

Intertitle:

Hubert Olié - Vice Director of L'Espace

Hubert Olié: Dai Lam Linh is an intersection. A coming together of a contemporary composer with the talents of the singers who are also dancers. In fact, it's an ensemble.

Ly: The Vietnamese state has funding to support the arts. But they mainly fund state-run music troupes. I think Dai Lam Linh have a great deal of talent and potential. They've created a new musical style which is truly Vietnamese. It's sad that such an important band has to ask a foreign country for funding.

Hubert Olié: So the CD sleeve notes are in both French and Vietnamese ...

Dai: Funding is terrible in Vietnam. I've never asked for money from the Vietnamese state because I know for sure they would never fund my music.

Barley: Why?

Dai: Because I'm not in a state-run troupe. I'm an independent musician who has freedom. Vietnamese organisations have never paid me to write music. The authorities don't like my music. Vietnamese producers have never asked me to record my music for the radio or tv. I don't understand why they don't like my music.

Hubert Olié: I am happy to welcome you this morning to the French Cultural Centre "L'Espace" for the press conference on Dai Lam Linh.

Dai: I want to say that Dai Lam Linh's music is about sharing people's inner feelings. It's about feelings that are very hard to articulate. Sometimes you don't have an outlet for your feelings. Sometimes you don't want to speak about them. Sometimes you want to speak about them but can't. That is the story of Dai Lam Linh.

Intertitle:

Tri Minh

DJ and Organizer, Hanoi Sound Stuff Festival

Tri Minh: Just a few years ago Dai Lam Linh would not have been able to perform publicly because of their experimental music and performance style. Now they are allowed to perform.

But many people in Vietnam find Dai's music very new and strange. Dai Lam Linh have caused quite a scandal because their songs use noise, screaming voices and sexually explicit lyrics.

Intertitle:

Hanoi Sound Stuff Festival 2009
from Vietnamese Television

Vietnamese Television reporter: The festival attracted the participation of a number of artists including Good Night Electric Band from Indonesia. Electronic music is quite new to Vietnamese audiences. It is a kind of music that employs electronic musical instruments and electronic musical technology.

Tri Minh: Due to the effects of globalisation in Vietnam many distinct musical styles have collided and fused very quickly. In this context, Dai Lam Linh have been very influential because they have established a clear direction for contemporary Vietnamese music. They have really developed the experimental music scene in Vietnam.

Chapter 11 (40'56''-47'14'') – Concert Rehearsal and Censors

Ly: Vietnam has been through many wars and for so many years it was closed off from the rest of the world. So Vietnam became poor and cultural exchange with foreign countries is still quite limited. I really believe that Dai's music is a great medium for cultural exchange between Vietnam and the rest of the world.

Opera House stage assistant: Is the stage set up ok?

Linh: It's ok ...

Dai: We want every instrument to sound as natural as possible. Of course it is difficult to blend sounds together to tell a musical story. We need to practise to get the balance right.

Lam: What is politics? In culture there is politics. In politics there is culture. I don't follow politics closely. But I think there is a political aspect to culture and the arts.

Dai: Play the drum loudly ...

Lam: For the Dai Lam Linh project, we are doing exactly what we want to do. Vietnamese musicians should be allowed to choose their own artistic path. The most important thing is to be true to yourself and not let society control your artistic expression.

Chair of the committee of censors (Thang): This committee of censors would like to make some suggestions. So you can correct and improve your compositions. There is no major problem and there isn't time to make big changes. In the performance there are some very developed

sections when the singers are very expressive. Personally I think the voices sometimes conflict with your beautiful melodies. I think you should correct those sections. So there is less noise and screaming.

Dai: I think you are right about some parts of the musical arrangement. If I want to evoke in music a psychological breakdown ... I must spend a lot of time working on the music.

Female member of the committee of censors: I think it would be better if you took your music to Europe. It's very experimental. For Vietnamese, it's hard to watch and to listen to.

Dai: I don't know whether Europeans will like my music or not but some Europeans do like it.

Thang: Ok that's it. I wish you success with the concert tomorrow evening.

Dai: It's very clear that they don't like my music. But whether they like it or not, they have still given me permission to release a CD.

Dai: I'm very sorry about today, I had no time to do anything for you.

Hubert Olié: So now you have the blessing of the authorities!

Dai: That's my way of dealing with them.

Vietnamese official from the L'Espace: Yes, now you have permission from the government authorities.

Intertitle:
Hanoi Opera House

Dai: Look out for the French ambassador and his wife, they've supported Dai Lam Linh. Vietnam cannot separate itself from the rest of the world's culture. Vietnam must understand that fact clearly. The Vietnamese state should promote the arts and support the development of musicians and intellectuals. Vietnam will only have a voice in the world when it develops its culture and the arts. Only then will Vietnam contribute to the world's culture. Only then will Vietnam speak to the world.

Chapter 12 (47'15"-53'53'") – Concert Performance of "Solar Eclipse" ("Nhat Thuc")

(Buddhist chanting)
The wind rages as I lie,
gnawing on a straw sleeping mat.
I'm still waiting for you.
The daylight fades,

*in the middle of the day.
My breath turns cold,
in the middle of summer.
The way is dark,
I see with my heart.
Don't go away anymore.
Solar Eclipse.
Lunar Eclipse.
River becomes desert.
You are nothingness.
The sound of the mouth organ echoes.
Eyes like dead leaves.
Don't stray far anymore.
I've given up everything.
I've forgotten everything.
I've forgotten the sunlight.
I've forgotten my name.
I've forgotten my age.
I've lost my way.*

*I only speak of love.
Lover, where are you rushing to?
Come here and let me speak to you.
The drum rings out for the night watch.*

*I've forgotten everything.
The sunlight.
My name.
My age.
I've lost my way.*

Chapter 13 (53'54''-55'54'') – Credits

Directed, filmed and produced by Barley Norton
Edited by Hikaru Toda
Funded by the Getty Foundation
Translations by Barley Norton and Nguyen Trinh Thi
Production Consultants, Nguyen Manh Tien and Nora Taylor
Technical Consultant, Ricardo Leizaola
Live concert audio by Nguyen Nhat Ly
Additional camera at the Hanoi Opera House by Trinh Tin, Le Quang Vinh, Dang Xuan Truong.
Audio post-production by Jim Copperthwaite at Adapted Silence
Colourist/Fine Cut, Yaron Lapid

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Traditional “Ca tru” music performed by the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble

All songs composed and arranged by Ngoc Dai

All songs performed by Dai Lam Linh

Singing: Thanh Lam and Linh Dung

Piano: Ngoc Dai

Electric bass: Nguyen Tuan

Acoustic bass: Vuong Minh

Electric Guitar: Manh Hung

“Dan tranh” zither: Thanh Thuy and Van Mai

Percussion: Quoc Hung, Phan Nam, Son X

“Hue” folk singing: Ha Vi

“Ca tru” singing: Thuy Hoa

“Dan day” lute: Van Khue

Praise drum: Nguyen Van Mui

Recording and Mixing: Nguyen Nhat Ly

Song text for “Solar Eclipse” (“Nhat Thuc”): Vi Thuy Linh

Song text for “Evening” (“Chieu”): Nguyen Trong Tao

Song text for “Dream” (“Mo”): Vi Thuy Linh

Song text for “Drifting” (“Luu Lac”): Nguyen Trong Tao

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¹ For further discussion of the relationship between film guides and ethnomusicological films see Baily (1989:13).

² For vivid descriptions of Dai Lam Linh's "experimental" music in the Vietnamese press see the following articles: <http://dantri.com.vn/c23/s23-404753/nhom-dai-lam-linh-lan-dau-tham-gia-bai-hat-viet.htm> (accessed Aug 2010); <http://vietnamnet.vn/vanhua/201007/Dai-Lam-Linh-thanh-minh-ve-am-nhac-hu-het-gam-gu-920358/> (accessed Aug 2010).

³ See for example, Tuan Anh's article on Dai Lam Linh at: <http://vietnamnet.vn/vanhua/201007/Dai-Lam-Linh-thanh-minh-ve-am-nhac-hu-het-gam-gu-920358/> (accessed Sept 2010).

⁴ For information about the impact of socialism and nationalism on visual art in Vietnam see Taylor (2004).

⁵ On the copyright dispute between Dai and Vi Thuy Linh see the following two Vietnamese newspaper articles at: <http://vietbao.vn/Van-hoa/Hau-truong-cua-Nhat-thuc/10769261/181/> (accessed September 2010); <http://vietbao.vn/Van-hoa/Tran-Thu-Ha-Vi-Thuy-Linh-khong-the-can-tro-Nhat-thuc/10769633/181/> (accessed September 2010)

⁶ Quote taken from the website for the Hanoi New Music Meeting at: <http://www.hanoinewmusic.110mb.com/About.html> (Accessed Sept 2010).

⁷ For an interesting discussion about reflexivity in film see MacDougall (1998:87-90).

⁸ Some filmmakers have worked closely with the communities being filmed during the editing process. For such a "community determined approach" see Katrina Kassler Waters' study guide for the film "From the Elders" (Waters 1987).

⁹ I am grateful to Jamie Maxtone-Graham and Alex Leonard for filming the post-screening discussion.

¹⁰ In an email dated 31 August 2010, Linh wrote: "On seeing the film for the first time, myself and other members of the band (because we are from Vietnam) had so many wishes and desires. But when I saw it again, I more fully appreciated that the film is made by a different person with an objective point of view about Dai Lam Linh. I just want to say that the film is really excellent." (My translation from Vietnamese).

¹¹ These comments by Pho Duc Phuong and Le Minh Son, which are cited in an article consisting of comments by prominent Vietnamese musicians about Dai's music, can be read in Vietnamese at: <http://vietnamnet.vn/vanhua/201007/Nha-dai-nha-quan-ly-noi-gi-ve-DaiLamLinh-920865/> (accessed Aug 2010).

¹² Art installation is rendered in Vietnamese as *nghe thuat sap dat*, which literally means "arranged art". A press interview with Dai in which he discusses the term *nghe thuat sap dat* can be read in Vietnamese at <http://news.mego.vn/alphacms/vi/giai-tri/van-hoa/chuyen-sao/read/12280.html> (accessed October 2010).

¹³ For other ethnomusicological research on recording practices and musical creativity in different parts of the world see Greene and Porcello (2005).

¹⁴ Bill Nichols describes the poetic mode in documentary as follows: "The poetic mode is particularly adept at opening up the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to the straightforward transfer of information ... This mode stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion" (Nichols 2001:103).

¹⁵ Two of the most famous examples of the "Buddhism as refuge" trope can be found in the Vietnamese national poem The Tale of Kieu (Truyen Kieu) by Nguyen Du and the *cheo* folk theatre play, Thi Kinh, the Goddess of Mercy (Quan Am Thi Kinh). For information about the *cheo* play Thi Kinh see Hoang Kieu (2001).

¹⁶ For more on martyrs' cemeteries and the commemoration of war dead in Vietnam see Malarney (2001).

¹⁷ For further information about Vi Thuy Linh see Nguyen Huy Thiep's article, titled "Vi Thuy Linh Phenomenon" (Hien Tuong Vi Thuy Linh) at <http://nguyenhuythiep.free.fr/giangluoi/HIENTUONG.html>. For English translations of some of Vi Thuy Linh's poems see Nguyen Do and Paul Hoover (2008).

¹⁸ It is common in Vietnam for couples to get their wedding photos taken in different locations prior to the wedding itself. Jamie Maxtone-Graham has produced a fascinating series of photographs of Vietnamese couples having their wedding photograph taken, see <http://www.jamiemaxtonegraham.com/photography/rented-white-gowns/> (accessed October 2010).

¹⁹ The first shoot with the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble was on the 19 April, but I was not entirely happy with the footage so I arranged another shoot on 29 July. At the time of making the film, the Ensemble occasionally met to perform in front of a small audience of friends at the Zen Spa in Hanoi on Sunday mornings. The first shoot was on one such morning, but the filming did not go as well as I hoped: the sound recording quality was hampered by a poor PA system and I did not feel at liberty to get the best camera angles close to the performers for fear of spoiling the event for the audience. For the second shoot, I therefore asked the Ensemble to perform for the camera only, without an audience.

²⁰ In the Hanoi Opera House performance, the Ca Tru Thai Ha Ensemble performed part of "Gui Thu" during "Solar Eclipse" and part of "Ty Ba Hanh" during "Drifting". On Dai Lam Linh's debut album, however, the extracts of *ca tru* pieces are swapped: "Gui Thu" and "Ty Ba Hanh" feature in "Drifting" and "Solar Eclipse" respectively.

²¹ Numerous texts can be sung to the musical form "Gui Thu", but they are usually based on the poetic form *song that luc bat*, which consists of two lines of 7 syllables followed by a line of 6 then 8 syllables (Do Bang Doan and Do Trong Hue 1962:67).

²² According to the guitarist Nguyen Manh Hung, Dai likened the "country lad" in the poem to Ho Chi Minh when he went to Paris as a young man. While Dai's interpretation of the poem is somewhat idiosyncratic, the image of Ho Chi Minh "wandering in a daze" in Paris and wondering when he would return to his "home village" is an entertaining one.

²³ I also shot an interview with the composer Tran Thi Kim Ngoc about Dai Lam Linh, although this interview does not appear in the film.

²⁴ The filmmaker and ethnomusicologist Hugo Zemp argues forcefully that a "music piece" should be filmed and edited in its entirety as a sign of respect for the music and the musician (1988:393). The idea of a bounded "music piece" is problematic in many performance contexts and in my view shortening a musical performance in the edit does not necessarily show disrespect. While I do not follow Zemp's "rule" in much of the film, I thought it was important to include an entire performance of the song "Solar Eclipse" in order to allow viewers time to engage with the music and gain a better understanding of the structure of Dai Lam Linh's music.

²⁵ In an insightful article about narrative in ethnographic film, Paul Henley highlights "circularity" as a feature of what he refers to as "the 'classical formula' for producing readily comprehensible, engaging narratives" (Henley 2006:381).