

My personal approach of using the Iranian santour

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The pentatonic mode on the santour

The pentatonic modes consist of 5 notes and are used in the music of many countries. This text does not seek to detail the concepts, theory and construction of this type of mode, but to provide an example of its application on the santour.

In the following, I present a pentatonic scale (a pentatonic mode built on a given note) on the santour with the examples of my compositions "Chiang Mai girl" and "Chiang Mai boy".

It is possible to build numerous pentatonic scales. One method is to build them from major or minor scales by removing 2 of their 7 notes, while avoiding to keep any half-tone intervals. The figure 1 shows the pentatonic scale I have used for my 2 compositions. This scale (also called pentatonic minor) comes from the G minor scale, without its 2nd degree (the A, avoids the half-tone between A and Bb) and 6th degree (the Eb, avoids the half-tone between D and Eb). It is thus made up of G, Bb, C, D, F. It is therefore a matter of playing, "only," the notes marked in green on figure 1 (the complete universe of the G minor scale includes also the notes marked in yellow).

Mineur G 1 - 424 4 244 - Majeur Bb 442 4 442

			F-½	F	F#			F#	F#	F	F	Bb	C	-½	F	1	2	3	2
		E	Eb	D#	Eb	Eb^	E	E	E	Eb^	Eb	Ab		E	1	2	1	1	
D#	D	Db^	Db	Db	Db^	D	D#	D#	D	Db^	Db	G		D	3	3	3	1	
		C#	C	C	C#	C#				C#	C	F		C	1	1	1	1	
		B	Bb	Bb	Bb^	B	B			B	Bb	Eb	E	B	1	1	1	1	
A#	A	Ab^	Ab	Ab	Ab^	A	A#	A#	A	Ab^	Ab	D		A	3	3	3	1	
		G#	G	G	G#					G#	G	C	C#	G	1	1	2	1	
		F#	F	F	F#	G#				F#	F	G#	B	F	1	1	1	2	
E	Eb^	Eb	D	D	Eb	Eb^	E			E	D	C	Bb	E	1	1	2	1	

Figure 1

It should be noted:

- That, in general, music composed or improvised in pentatonic modes includes very few "jumps",
- That with most pentatonic modes, each of the 5 notes can be used as the tonic of a new mode, offering in turn pleasant sonorities.

You can see the complete version of my compositions with these links:

- [Chiang Mai Girl](#)
- [Chiang Mai Boy](#)