

Themes from the Khse Diev

One-stringed Zither

Trad. Cambodia

All chords open 5ths (no third). You might try playing most of the low D melody notes with the left hand. To shorten the piece, you may skip from any rehearsal letter to rehearsal E (m. 28).

♩ = 75 **A**

6 **B**

11 **C**

16 **D**

21 **E**

26

The Khse diev or Kse diev (pronounced “sigh dyoo”) is a one-stringed zither with a gourd resonator. Its origins date back to the 7th century in the ancient Khmer empire. Played in royal courts and temples, the instrument nearly became extinct with the purges of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970’s. One of the unique characteristics of the instrument is that the player controls the overtones of the gourd by its contact with the chest (leading to its description as “the instrument of the heart”), thus producing more than one pitch at a time despite the single string.

Classical/traditional Cambodian music draws from both Indian and Chinese influences. It has in turn influenced Thai and, to a lesser extent, Burmese traditional music. The melody is very rhythmic, presenting themes and motives repeated with alterations in pitches and rhythms. The effect of the gourd resonator seems best mimicked on the harp by a driving accompaniment of open 5ths complementing the melodic rhythms.

The full recorded piece (a classical composition) that includes the themes chosen here can be heard on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/B1fRwGGpS8c?si=8jgPESTfc7rj-RlW>