

# SOME OBSERVATIONS ON FLUTE PLAYING IN MALAYSIA

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## **Abstract**

Surviving in an environment that seems to be not encouraging music performances for entertainment or for mental contemplation, Malaysian musicians have to strive very hard in order to earn a living. The situation gets worse when it comes to a particular group of musicians who have no choice but share the similar job opportunities. Apparently, the market is not offering enough opportunities for flautists compared to pianists and string instrument players. This eventually leads to a very competitive situation in both the performing and teaching scene. The time frame of this observation reaches back to the time between 2011 and 2016, a cut in cultural market matters caused by the last general election.

By and large, watching pure instrumental performances is yet a new controversy for local audiences. This is the major reason stopping potential sponsors to support local arts though musicians have no way to showcase their passion for music without funding. The situation is more frustrating when focussing on flute performance alone as there is no commonly organised major flute event in Kuala Lumpur. For instance, "The Flute Festival in Malaysia" in 2007 was the first and only flute festival so far, in Malaysia. It was organized by the Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) together with The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac), the Embassy of Japan and the Flute Festival in Malaysia Organizing Committee. The flute festival opened the eyes and ears of the local flute lovers by giving flute masterclasses, bringing in different kinds of flute brands and models for free trials on the spot and having a flute orchestra to perform. It consisted of 60 professional and amateur musicians from Malaysia, Japan and other countries, who came hoping to inspire each other and to purely enjoy flute music. Not to forget the famous saxophone ensemble from Japan, the "Mi-bemol Saxophone Ensemble" that gave a marvellous performance which was greatly inspiring Malaysian audiences of wind instruments. However, this also shows that flute performances alone might not get to stand resolutely in the local market.

**Keywords:** Flute playing, Malaysia, Performance practice, Personalities

## **PUBLIC PERFORMANCES AND CAREER OPTIONS OF MALAYSIAN FLUTISTS<sup>1</sup>**

The number of flute players does not seem to be deflated by the instrument itself being the poor population in terms of performance opportunity. Most of the local active flute players come with an experienced musical background as a participant in primary or secondary school bands or school orchestras. This indirectly motivates them to perform instantly in public group performances when they take music as a profession later on. This also explains the reason why ensemble playing seems to be more favoured by local musicians, despite of considering a paid or unpaid ensemble.

### **Contracted and Paid Orchestras**

In Malaysia, there are only few paid orchestras, namely the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), the National Symphony Orchestra Malaysia (NSO), the Radio Television Malaysia's Orchestra (RTM) and the Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur's Orchestra (DBKL).

### ***Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO)***

On 17 August 1998, with the first musical director, Kees Bakels, the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra gave its inaugural concert at the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (DFP), in Kuala

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, flutists are meant to be musicians who play flute instruments. The term includes all types of flutes found on the territory of current Malaysia. Nevertheless, the term embraces mostly players of the standard Western orchestra flute, a transverse flute widely taught in Malaysia.

Lumpur. The orchestra consists of well refined musicians representing 25 nations who perform a varying and interesting programme of orchestral music every season which includes works from over three centuries, as well as the crowd-pleasing Specials, Pops, Family Fun Day, Chamber and Happy Hour series<sup>2</sup>. The MPO gains its fame under the baton of internationally-commended guest conductors such as the late Lorin Maazel, Sir Neville Marriner, Yehudi Menuhin and so forth. Other than that, it also worked with local and international artists such as the two violinists Joshua Bell and Sarah Chang, tenor Andrea Bocelli, flautist Emmanuel Pahud and others. Other than performing on the concert stage, the MPO also provides an Education and Outreach Programme which is also known as ENCOUNTER, aiming at instilling the need for musical awareness, appreciation and skills of local audiences and music lovers. They conduct instrumental lessons, workshops and school concerts. In addition, they also perform in orphanages, hospitals, community centres and so forth to share their music with the less-privileged.

### ***National Symphony Orchestra Malaysia (NSO)***

The National Symphony Orchestra Malaysia was formed in the year 1989 under the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Malaysia. 17 professional musicians were employed as full-time staff. In the year 1993, the orchestra was launched officially by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia. Residing in Istana Budaya<sup>3</sup>, the NSO delivers performances of great variety. Besides, they perform overseas which includes performances at the Esplanade, Singapore in the year 2003, Tokyo and Osaka in 2004 in conjunction with the Asia Orchestra Week 2004. Currently, there are 50 fulltime musicians who serve under the baton of its resident conductor, Mustafa Fuzer Nawī. Sometimes, they invite local and foreign guest musicians to perform with them for orchestral pieces that need a larger scale of orchestra members.<sup>4</sup> A newly formed wind ensemble is branched out from the orchestra which is the Symphonic Winds of NSO Malaysia (SWONSO). Other than the professional musicians from the NSO itself, it also consists of amateur players. They serve voluntarily and aim at promoting quality band music. They were invited to play in the 23rd Chiayi City International Band Festival in Taiwan on 30th December 2014.

### ***National Traditional Orchestra Malaysia (OTM)***

Orkestra Tradisional Malaysia (OTM) is residing at Istana Budaya as well. It was launched on 6 February 2010 aiming at representing the identity of a multiracial society while preserving the indigenous music and heritage. As its aim is to promote racial harmony among the cultures of Malaysia, OTM musicians are of various ethnic backgrounds. Their repertoire list shows a wide range of compositions developed from Malay, Chinese, Indian, Orang Asli, Sabah and Sarawak indigenous music. Due to its special identity, the orchestra was invited to perform in Singapore and Korea showcasing Malaysian cultures. In the home country, OTM also collaborated with famous musicians from the 'Professional Cultural Centre Orchestra' and the Temple of Fine Arts (TFA). Very similar to the western orchestra, the OTM is divided in seven sections. These are plugged strings, bowed strings, woodwind, percussion, Gamelan and rhythm sections.

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<sup>2</sup> Official website of MPO.

<sup>3</sup> Istana Budaya (Palace of Culture) was initially build in 1995 with construction cost of RM210 million with an area of 5.44 hectare with floor area of 21,000 per square meter. Istana Budaya can be proud of as first theatre in Asia that has sophisticated stage mechanism for theatre performance. The design of this building was based on Malay culture. Istana Budaya is situated nearby Tasik Titiwangsa along Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur. Its construction was completed in 1998. The cabinet has approved the abolishment of National Theatre (Panggung Negara) to ISTANA BUDAYA officially in 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Official website of NSO.

The repertoire is a collection of adaptations from culturally different fragments into a Western orchestra setting and rarely genuinely presented performance tradition.<sup>5</sup>

## **Other Paid Ensembles**

### ***The Actor Studio Malaysia***

The increased development of local theatre and the independent musical scene contributes to another type of opportunities for flute players by introducing the instrument to a wider range of audiences and making flute an easier accessible instrument. At the moment, the production team of The Actors Studio Malaysia and Dama Orchestra are contributing cheerfully for flute players as well as other instrumentalists. For instance, the flute played a significant role in 'Sindbad. The Musical' and in 'Everyone Needs a Hero' presented by The Actors Studio Malaysia<sup>6</sup>. The mentioned musical consisted of nine musicians and the Australian arranger and orchestrator Andy Peterson, who is now based in New York. He assigned an important job to the flute player as numerous flute and piccolo solos were required to bring out the Arabic 'spice' in the musical.

### ***DAMA Orchestra***

The DAMA Orchestra was formed in 1994 by Khor Seng Chew, also a music theatre company which perform works from the east and the west. The ensemble is a combination of western and Chinese traditional instrument such as Dizi, Erhu, Yang Qin as well as a team of composers and arrangers. Thus, they are famous of their beautiful authentic east-west harmonies in their production. Other than getting a well reception from local audiences, they have also performed in Australia, China, Singapore and Indonesia. One of the exceptional results in DAMA's resume would be their recording 'Eternally' is featured in the film 'I Don't Want to Sleep Alone' directed by a famous director Tsai Ming-Liang. Other than that, they also perform for corporate and private events, showing their versatile repertoire list ranging from Chinese, Malay, Indian, Classical and others from around the world. DAMA's production in 2014 'Larger than Life' showed its famous uniqueness of east-west harmonies by using western flute and Chinese Dizi at the same time.<sup>7</sup> It is almost unusual to see a Chinese Dizi Masterclass in Malaysia. However, another contribution to the music community, Dama Orchestra invited maestro Sun Yong Zi<sup>8</sup>, a famous Chinese Dizi player to give masterclass on 28 December 2014, in conjunction with SPB-Dama Young Artists Programme 2013-2014.

## **Unpaid Orchestras**

### ***Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (MPYO)***

For young musicians, the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (MPYO) provides a great platform especially for those who consider making music their career (Chai, 2012). The orchestra gave its inaugural concert on 25 August 2007 in Dewan Philharmonic Petronas, conducted by Kevin Field, the former music director. Having as much as three music camps every year, the MPYO members are given chance to explore a huge range of repertoire list, naming from

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<sup>5</sup> Official website of OTM.

<sup>6</sup> In association with Short + Sweet Australia, The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre and Performing Arts Centre of Penang, from 11 April to 11 May 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Official website of DAMA Orchestra.

<sup>8</sup> In Chinese translation, 孙永志, a native of Xi'an, a capital of Shaanxi province in Central China. He is currently the principal Chinese Dizi with Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. Being an active soloist, he has been performed internationally such as in United States, France, Germany, Japan and others.

Baroque to modern orchestral music. In order to produce quality music, each section of the orchestra is guided by tutors who also known as the MPO players. Other than playing regularly in the DFP, the members are given chance to tour in different places such as being part of an exchange programme in 2012 with the Queensland Youth Orchestra in Brisbane, Australia, performing in Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore in 2009 and not to forget the cities in the homeland such as Sabah, Sarawak, Penang, Kuantan and so forth for the past few years. The MPYO is currently led by their music director, Ciarán McAuley, however they are also sometimes conducted by other international level maestros such as Benjamin Zander<sup>9</sup>. Despite of the busy performance schedule and competitive environment due to external and internal audition every year, the MPYO remains as an essential goal for young musicians in Malaysia. Their most recent performances are listed below:

Date	Performance	Organization	Venue	Ticket Price (RM)
18 - 19 December 2014	MPO/MPYO Side by Side: Home Alone	MPYO	DFP	180, 150, 120 and 90
15 December 2014	Enigma Variations	MPYO	DFP	90 and 50
13 June 2014	A Musical Portrait	MPYO	DFP	
28 March 2014	Shall We Dance	MPYO	DFP	35
20 December 2013	MPO/MPYO Side by Side "It's a Ho! Ho! Holliday Specials!"	MPYO	DFP	30 and above

**Table 1: The MPYO's performances up to January 2015.**

### ***Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Centre Orchestra (KLPac)***

While on the other side, there are a handful of namely amateur orchestras and bands providing performance opportunities such as the Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Centre Orchestra, the Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Centre symphonic band, the Selangor Philharmonic Orchestra (SPO), Petaling Jaya Philharmonic Orchestra (PJPO) to mention but a few. Each of them organizes at least one concert every year, adding the excitement to the music scene by involving more music lovers who are unable to join the more professional orchestras. The KLPac Orchestra is one of the most active community orchestras in Kuala Lumpur. The first auditions were held in October 2006 and soon it had its debut concert in December 2006 which was '*Candlelight Christmas*', conducted by the Orchestra's founder and KLPac's first Music Director & Resident Conductor, the late Brian Tan. The orchestra provides a platform for the classically trained music students and amateurs to perform orchestral music varying among diverse styles deriving from baroque, classical, romantic and modern periods. Residing in the Kuala Lumpur Performing Art Centre, they have no problem locating their rehearsal and concert venues. The ticket sale depends on the concert program. For instance, the 'Magical Movie Moments' got full house for its three shows in a row as the audiences are more attracted to some famous movie tunes. Their most recent performances before 2016 are given as follows:

Date	Performance	Organization	Venue	Local ticket price (MYR)
9-11 January 2015	Magical Movie Moments	KLPac Orchestra and KLPac	Pentas 1, KLPac	63,43 and 33
5-6 July 2014	Romancing the Classics	KLPac Orchestra and KLPac	Pentas 1, KLPac	43 and 23
29-30 March 2014	Light Classics	KLPac Orchestra and KLPac	Pentas 1, KLPac	43 and 23

<sup>9</sup> A famous conductor, author, and inspirational speaker. At the time of this research, he was the conductor and music director of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.

11-12 Jan 2014	Winter Concert	KLPac Orchestra and KLPac	Pentas 1, KLPac	43 and 23
3-4 August 2013	Summer Concert	KLPac Orchestra and KLPac	The Actors Studio at KuAsh Theatre, TTDI	53 and 33

**Table 2: The KLPac Orchestra's performances up to January 2015.**

### *Professional Cultural Chinese Orchestra (PCCO)*

Being one of the most active Chinese orchestras (Tan, 2000) in town, the Professional Cultural Chinese Orchestra (PCCO) just had its recent concert 《跃动 新年》 (Vibrant New Year) on 17 January 2015. The concert programme was the following:

1. 新世纪音乐会序曲 (Overture to the New Millennium) by Tang Jian-Ping
2. 望月听风 (Hearing the Wind Singing under the Moonlight) by Yiu-Kwong Chung
3. 抒情变奏曲 (Variations of Emotion) by Chang-yuan Liu
4. 新年快乐 (Happy New Year) by Chew Hee Chiat
5. 茉莉花 (Jasmine) by Liu Wen Jin
6. 蓝色的思念 (Way Of Remembrance) by Kwan Nai-Chung

Together with a group of Chinese orchestra lovers, PCCO was founded by Singaporean maestros Chew Keng How, Yeo Siew Wee, and Sim Boon Yew in 1988. Under the baton of Chew Hee Chiat, an American-trained conductor, PCCO has organised concerts such as "The Heroine" in Istana Budaya in 2000, "The Sound of ShaanXi" in 2003, "Da Xi Bei" in 2006 and many more. Other than that, the orchestra's profile became more refined when it was invited to perform in the Pteronas Philharmony (Dewan Filharmonik Petronas), apparently being the first Chinese orchestra in Malaysia. Besides, it also works together with the MPO and OTM on regular basis. PCCO were also invited as a member of "Simfoni Rakyat Malaysia" in 2004 by the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism, Malaysia. In 2013, PCCO was independently registered as a society under the Registry of Society Malaysia. PCCO aims to promote traditional music through innovative and creative programmes. Thus, regular auditions are necessary in order to nurse the younger generation and present regular performances<sup>10</sup>. Their most recent performances are presented in the table below:

Date	Performance	Organization	Venue	Local ticket price (MYR)
17 January 2015	<跃动 新年> (Vibrant New Year)	PCCO	The Selangor & Federal Territory Hainan Association (Main Hall, Thean Hou Temple)	35 with promotion of buy 10 free 2 tickets.
26 July 2014	<弹古轮今> 弹拨音乐会 2014 (Spark Pluck, A Chinese Plucked String Instruments Concert)	PCCO	Damansara Performing Art Centre (DPAC)	38
18 Jan 2014	<序缘.启航> (Devine Odyssey)	PCCO	The Selangor & Federal Territory Hainan Association (Main Hall, Thean Hou Temple)	35 (32 if buy 10 and above)
30 August 2012	《飞跃乡音》 (An Oriental Journey)	DFP and PCCO	DFP	120, 90, 60 and 30

<sup>10</sup> Official website of PCCO.

9 and 10 June 2012	《寻找失落的乐章》 (Looking for the Missing Musical Chapter)	PCCO	Auditorium MPAJ @ Pandan Indah	50, 30 and 20
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**Table 3: The PCCO's performances up to January 2015.**

### ***Vivo Experimental Orchestra (VEO)***

The Vivo Experimental Orchestra (VEO) is founded in 2003 as an amateur experimental Chinese orchestra. Led by Wuni Lem, the artistic director, the orchestra aims to promote quality music and train the members in administrative works and leadership development. The VEO has won the 'Best Original Music' awarded by the Malaysian ADA Drama Awards Ceremony<sup>11</sup> in 2006 because of their remarkable musical style which is a combination of traditional and creativity. This is best shown by their concert 'The Musical World of Animation' in 2012. Conducted by Maestro Chew Hee Chiat, currently the Resident Conductor of the renowned Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, VEO played the famous childhood songs such as 'Colours of the Wind', 'Pink Panther', 'Doraemon', 'Angry Birds' and so forth. Apparently, the success is gained as the music is very favoured by the audiences. At the same time, Chinese orchestra is promoted to a wider group of people.<sup>12</sup> Their most recent performances are listed in the following table:

Date	Performance	Organization	Venue	Local ticket price (MYR)
2-4 May 2014	Your Song, My Story	VEO	Damansara Performing Art Centre (DPAC)	45
16 February 2014	<Mali Mali Home!> Chinese New Year Concert	VEO	VEO Music Room, Cheras	20
23 June 2013	<Play.Music> Concert Tour at Kuala Lumpur	VEO	The Annexe Gallery, Central Market, KL	35
29 April 2012	<Pipa Talks II> Concert Tour at Kuala Lumpur	VEO	The Annexe Gallery, Central Market, KL	35
26-29 May 2012	The Musical World of Animation	VEO	Civic Hall, Petaling Jaya	100, 55 and 35

**Table 4: Some of the VEO's performances in Klang Valley area up to January 2015.**

From the table above, we can see the VEO is also performing actively at places out of Klang Valley area such as Terregganu, Melacca, Muar and extends as far as to China.

### **Unpaid Ensemble**

#### ***Zephyr Flute Ensemble (MAS)***

Lastly not forget to mention the only flute ensemble which holding regular performance in Kuala Lumpur, Zephyr Flute Ensemble (MAS). It was founded in 2009 by Ho Chee Kiang, starting with a quartet, which it self-claimed as a body of 'unpaid professionals'. As time goes by, the ensemble appears as an ensemble of seven players (Septet), which guest players are invited occasionally. The Zephyr Flute Ensemble has played a huge range of challenging repertoire from baroque, classical, contemporary to jazz. Each member plays an important role, performing on the different instrument of the flute family which includes concert flute, piccolo,

<sup>11</sup> The only Chinese award ceremony that recognises pure drama performances held in Malaysia. The drama that worked with VEO is Hansel and Gretel (in Chinese translation, 糖果屋历险记).

<sup>12</sup> Official website of VEO.

alto and bass flute. The ensemble's first debut was on 30th May 2012 which organized by the Birdian Saxophone Quartet and KLPac.

Date	Performance	Organization	Venue	Local ticket price (MYR)
4-5 April 2015	The Chamber Wind Project III	Birdian Saxophone Quartet and KLPac	Pentas 2, KLPac	45 and 25
22 Feb 2014	A Flute Music Concert	Zephyr Flute Ensemble	Musica EDU Academy	25 and 15
25-26 September 2013	The Chamber Wind Project II	Birdian Saxophone Quartet and KLPac	The Actors Studio at KuAsh Theatre, TTDI	43 and 23
30-31 May 2012	The Chamber Wind Project	Birdian Saxophone Quartet and KLPac	Pentas 2, KLPac	45 and 35

**Table 5: Zephyr Flute Ensemble's most recent performance, April 2015.**

### ***High Winds Ensemble***

Founded in 2004 by the ENCOUNTER programme, under the leadership of Mr. Joost C. Flach, former Co-Principal Oboist of the MPO, High Winds is the first classical ensemble in Malaysia whose members are all Malaysians. The ensemble consists of each two flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns as well as one double bass. Frequently, they are performing in pre MPO concert events in the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas. On top of that, they also perform for charity purpose, such as in hospitals, shopping malls, dinner parties, orphanages, cultural or diplomatic functions and celebrations. Their repertoire list ranges from Malaysian folksong arrangements, pop songs, classical compositions and specially commissioned works from Malaysian composers. Other than that, they were invited to perform overseas such as ‘The 3rd China-ASEAN Music Festival 2014’, Guangxi on 27th and 30 May year 2014 and another music festival in Yogyakarta in the year 2013.

In 2015, High Winds Ensemble has won the 12nd BOH Cameronian Arts Awards<sup>13</sup> as the Best Group Original Performance under the instrumental category. This motivates them to promote chamber wind music and share their passion via playing various innovative fun programmes.

### **Flute Solo Recitals**

Ever since the first major flute event, the Flute Festival in Malaysia in 2007, there are few numerous flute recitals and concerts going on. The year 2007 would be the most remarkable year for the local flutists as well the music scene in Malaysia as the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra came to perform in a chamber group called the Berlin Baroque Soloists<sup>14</sup>. The musicians include Rainer Kussmaul (violin), Emmanuel Pahud (flute), Wolfram Christ (viola) and Raphael Alpermann (harpsichord). On 16 and 17 October 2007, they performed Baroque works of Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg Philipp Telemann and George Frideric Handel in the DFP hall where it got a full house for both nights. On the next day, the world recognized the flutist, who was also claimed as the successor of Jean-Pierre Rampal<sup>15</sup> as the prince of the flute instrument, giving a flute masterclass to the four flute players of the MPYO. It was another mind-blowing session as the maestro mentioned and remarked that it is not the lips that produce the sound, it is the air itself. The idea of not relying on embouchure when

<sup>13</sup> Founded by Kakiseni in 2002, it is the only awards which judges “live” music, dance, theatre and musical theatre in Malaysia.

<sup>14</sup> In 2006, the Berlin Baroque Soloists, together with members of the RIAS Chamber Choir, clinched a Grammy award for Best Classical Vocal Performance for Bach's *Cantatas*.

<sup>15</sup> French Flutist.

playing the flute was indeed very informative as this was not a common practice for the local flutists especially the amateurs.

Being one of the leading figures in flute playing in Malaysia, Hristo Dobrinov<sup>16</sup> always fulfils his orchestral responsibilities by giving marvellous performances. Other than that, he has been busy as a pedagogue and solo recitalist. On 15 and 16 May 2010, he performed Mercadante's Concerto for Flute in E minor, Op. 50 with the MPO. The concert was significant to the local flutists as it set a great model which good musicians should not be restrained in a certain form of performance and good musicianship will lead and last longer.

Undeniably, the mentioned performances would be a huge success even without much effort in publicity as the name of MPO and Dewan FP symbolize good quality of music as well as promising a certain social status, not forgetting that the soloists are famous internationally. The situation might completely be the opposite when seen Malaysia from the periphery and not from the centre. As mentioned earlier, pure instrumental recital is less favoured which lead to poor support from potential sponsorship. This is the main reason why flute recital does not seem as a common performing art in Malaysia. However, once in a while, the local leading musicians surprise us by importing foreign flute players which help to instil and refresh the local's idea of performing art on flute playing. For instance, on 17 March 2012, the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC) and the SEGi College Subang Jaya presented a contemporary flute recital by the Japanese flutist, Daiske Kino-Shita<sup>17</sup> and the local renowned collaborative pianist, Nicholas Ong. In the first half of the recital, Kino-Shita performed pieces created by the local composers who are Yii Kah Hoe, Chong Kee Yong, Chow Jun Yi, Hong Da Chin, Tzu En Ngiao and Huey Ching Chong. While in the second half, he performed pieces composed by Japanese composers which include his own work, Toru Takemitsu, Kazuo Fukushima and as well as two pieces by Italian composers, Salvatore Sciarrino and Niccolò Paganini. This recital was definitely a brand-new experience for the locals because of its choice of purely contemporary repertoire with heavily use of extended technique<sup>18</sup> on the flute, which they do not get to see it frequently on live. This changes their impression on western flute playing and sees the potential of the instrument within.

As time goes by, the dynamic of western flute performance is gradually raised by local flute players. The performing scene is no longer quiet and has increasingly become active. According to the few recent flute recitals, the content does not seem giving a traditional impression of 'dull and boring' to the audiences. For instance, 'CROSSOVER - A concert featuring some new age and CROSSOVER music between Classical and Jazz' included repertoires composed by contemporary composers such as Ian Clarke, Mike Mower, Claude Bolling and so forth. The solo flutist, Foo Chie Haur<sup>19</sup>, Maxy Chan (Piano), Tan Su Yin (Marimba/Drum) and Eugenia Lou (Bass) offered some tuneful, easy listening and refined quality music to the audience. Foo, who

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<sup>16</sup> Bulgarian who has been the Principal Flutist of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra since 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Born in 1977 in Kanazawa, Japan. He pursued his music studies at Senzoku Junior College, the Toho Orchestra Academy, Hamburger Konservatorium (as an exchange student of the Ishikawa Prefecture), and Hochschule für Musik und Künste Bremen (with Hiroshi Koizumi, Juergn Franz, Helen Bledsoe, Harrie Starreveld, and Mario Caroli). On top of receiving numerous prizes in Ishikawa, he is also a four-time finalist at the Japan Contemporary Music Competition. In this conjunction, he received the jury special prize twice. For his ensemble experience, he was the principal flutist of Toyama Kammer Philharmonic Orchestra and Guiyang Symphony Orchestra. Contemporary music festivals in which he has played in include the Donaueschingen Festival, East Asian International Contemporary Music Festival, and Suntory the Summer Music Festival. Furthermore, he took private composition lessons with Kiyosi Matsumoto and Kouji Aoyama. Currently, he is the chairman of the Asian Contemporary Music Society (ADOK).

<sup>18</sup> New developed techniques to create special effects and new sounds for flute.

<sup>19</sup> One of the informants of the author.



has been very active in the performing line, once said in the interview that ‘it is his pleasure to touch the heart of the audience who came to watch his playing’. Thus, here comes the choice of repertoire list for his recent recitals, which mainly for sharing and educational purpose.

Some rapid western flute recitals were happening in Kuala Lumpur recently. The 'traditional' way of pure classical pieces is no longer dominating the recital. Different instruments are added at times in the form of ensemble to enhance the program which as well appears to be an important educational role for audiences who are without strong musical background. This indirectly brings up the activity log for the other instruments as well as introducing the audience the different performing venue in Kuala Lumpur. Below are the recent recitals of Western orchestra flutes happening in the Klang Valley<sup>20</sup> area:

Date	Performance	Soloist(s)	Accompanist(s)	Venue	Local ticket price (MYR)
25 October 2014	Crossover	Foo Chie Haur and Friends	Maxy Chan	BMA Recital Hall, Wisma Bentley Music	Minimum donation RM30
17 May 2014	The Classic - A Little Trio Concert with Steinway	Dr. Jennifer Teng and Foo Chie Haur	Yong Sue Yi	Steinway Show Room, Wisma Bentley Music	
18 August 2013	Tocatta Flute Series - A Musical Journey	Foo Chie Haur and pupils	Misa Yamamoto	Tocatta Studio	Minimum donation RM30
9-10 March 2013	Across the Channel	Foo Chie Haur	Ogsana Lipinski	Tocatta Studio	Minimum donation RM30
18 December 2012	Jazz Classical Fusion Night	Keiko Nakagawa			
30 March 2012	BMA Young Artist's Platform	Corgan Saw and friends	Shueenda Wong	BMA Recital Hall, Wisma Bentley Music	20 and 15

**Table 6: Flute recitals and details in Kuala Lumpur up to October 2014.**

Comparatively, the Chinese Dizi and the Indian Bansuri (Pravina Manohoran, 2008) appear as less active instruments in Malaysia according to their activity log based on the number of recitals they have. Unfortunately, there are no Chinese Dizi recitals based on the author's observation. However, that was one Indian Bansuri recital played by Sridhar Gopalaraman<sup>21</sup> during the Shantanand Festival of Arts organized by the Temple of Fine Arts in December 2014. In the concert, Sri performed the following three items:

Title of the Song	Ragam <sup>22</sup>	
Teliya lera rama	Denuka	Adi Talam
Bantu reeti	hamsa nadam	Adi Talam
Folk Tune	Not available	Not available

**Table 7: Concert Items of Sri's Recital during Shantanand Festival of Arts in December 2014.**

While on the other hand, there were recitals of some other type of traditional flutes. For example, aiming to achieve cultural exchange, Kohei Nishikawa, a Japanese transverse flutist<sup>23</sup> introduced

<sup>20</sup> Klang Valley means the capital city Kuala Lumpur and its surroundings.

<sup>21</sup> One of the informants of the thesis.

<sup>22</sup> According to Ganamrutha Prachuram, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Born in 1953. He was the principal flutist at the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra before embarking on his career as a traditional flute player. He now plays the bamboo transverse flutes, shinobue and nohkan, to accompany the classical traditional dance Nihon-buyo and Kabuki.

some uncommon flutes to the Malaysian audience in his recitals. Organized by the Petaling Street Art House<sup>24</sup>, Kohei had his first recital 'String and Pipe, Touching the Sky' (弦管・动天三人乐会) together with the Ichigenkin<sup>25</sup> (一弦琴) artist, Minegishi Issui and zither (古琴<sup>26</sup>) artist, Chen Wen. In the recital, Kohei played the Nohkan<sup>27</sup>, a Japanese transverse flute.

Other than performing Japanese transverse flute in Malaysia, Kohei also showed his interest in playing the nose flute of the indigenous people of Semai<sup>28</sup>.

On top of that, Kohei also appears as a guest performer in few local cultural concerts such as the lecture concert 'Music Journey for Flute and Dance - The Cultural heritage and Contemporary Music' on 12 May 2014 organized by the University of Malaysia as well as the 'Japan-Malaysia Traditional Music Exchange Concert'. Furthermore, the performance of 7 February 2015 was organized by the Aswara Malaysia in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in Malaysia. Also, the principal flutist of the NSO Malaysia, Keiko Nakagawa, performed both concerts.

## LOCAL COMPOSERS AND THEIR COMPOSITIONS

Local composers play an important role for the performing scene in Malaysia. No one could ever write like them because of their unique identity of growing up in a multiracial country. Their compositions serve as the music ambassador of Malaysia and the instruments used in it are the medium to convey the message of what make Malaysian identity so unique about. Their compositions sound very 'Malaysian' especially with the use of traditional instruments. In this thesis, only compositions of transverse flutes will be mentioned as below.

Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC) aims to promote Malaysian contemporary music by Malaysian composers. It also works closely with educational institutes hoping to instil interest in contemporary music especially among young people. Besides, it serves as a platform for musical exchanges among contemporary music societies throughout the world.

Yii Kah Hoe and Chong Kee Yong from the SMCC are mentioned as below because of their compositions which comprise of Western flute as well as Chinese Dizi. Other than that, Hong-Da Chin, another young composer who is pursuing his doctorate studies at Bowling Green State University also worth mentioning because of his flute composition as he himself is a western flute and Chinese Dizi player.

### Yii Kah Hoe

Yii Kah Hoe is a Malaysian composer and Chinese Dizi player. Yii was the winner of 11th BOH Cameronian Arts Awards (best music and design 2014), the winner of Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra Forum for Malaysian Composers 2 (2007) and a recipient of the 3rd Prize in the International Composition for Chinese Orchestra organized by Singapore Chinese

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<sup>24</sup> A society that aims to promote cultural arts.

<sup>25</sup> A Japanese single-stringed zither.

<sup>26</sup> A plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument of the zither family.

<sup>27</sup> An instrument used to accompany the Kabuki, a Japanese Traditional Opera.

<sup>28</sup> Residing in Bukit Kala, Gombak. A district located in the state of Selangor, Malaysia, approximately 20 minute-drive from Kuala Lumpur.

Orchestra (2006). He was the finalist of the International Composers Competition "Città di Udine" (Italy, 2010).<sup>29</sup>

Yii's compositions are mainly avant-garde<sup>30</sup> which he likes to use traditional instruments of different ethnic cultures because of their unique tone colour. He composes western and Chinese works, which include works for western orchestra, Chinese orchestra, mixed orchestra (both Western and Chinese), western chamber, Chinese chamber, orchestra and chamber (mixed), as well as for solo instruments. Thus, western flute and Chinese Dizi are included in his entire musical creation.

His works for solo flute are as below (selected):

- Inner Voices II for solo flute (2007)
- Imagery for flute solo and wind chimes (2011)
- My spirit is indestructible for alto flute solo (2013)

### **Chong Kee Yong**

A native of Kluang, Johor, Malaysia, Choong Kee Yong graduated from Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels (Flemish and French sections). He gained his two-time success in Belgium with the Prix Marcel Hastir, awarded by Belgium's Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Fine Arts in 1999 and 2003. 2004 was an important year to him he won the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra International Composers' Award (MPOICA). Recently in 2009, he won a special prize in the Giga-Hertz-Award 2009 (ZKM-Institute for Music & Acoustics, Karlsruhe, Germany). Besides, he won "the Outstanding Young Malaysian Awards" in the Cultural Achievement category awarded by Junior chamber International Malaysia (JCIM).<sup>31</sup>

Chong's music is best known for the use of 'vivid and constantly expanding palette of instrumental colours, while at the same time he is unafraid to explore the traditions of the past and incorporate aspects of tonality, lyricism, and rhythmic vitality into his austere contemporary language. This language is enriched by his multi-layered ethnic and cultural ancestry, which includes Chinese as well as multicultural Malaysian heritage'. (2015, Web: <http://www.chongkeeyong.com/aboutme.html>).

Chong is indeed a prolific composer who writes works for orchestra, string orchestra, solo concerto, large ensemble, chamber group with Asian traditional instruments, chamber and solo instrument. It is common to see western flute and Chinese Dizi in his music, as stated below (selected):

Flute concerto:

- "Threnody of the mother of earth" for flute and 11 musicians (2011)
- "Ye Huo II" for flute solo & 11 strings [2002]

Chamber group with Asian traditional instruments:

- "Metamorphosis VIII" for Sheng, flute, Clarinet, Oboe & Double bass [2007]
- "Yuan-Fei" (Origin-Fly) for Chinese Dizi & 5 western instruments [2009]
- "Ocean's pulse" for 4 Chinese drummers, 2 off-stage Chinese bamboo flute (Dizi) & western flute with Chamber orchestra (15 players) [2007]

Chamber music:

- "Feng Dong" for flute and piano [2011, 2012 Revised version]

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<sup>29</sup> Please refer to the official website of Yii Kah Hoe.

<sup>30</sup> New, unusual and experimental.

<sup>31</sup> Official website of Chong Kee Yong.

- “Metamorphosis II” –Snow river\_ for flute in C (also picc.& alto) and Percussion [2003]
- “Di Jie” (abuttal) for oboe, flute , violin & cello [2002]

Flute Solo:

- “Temple bell still ringing in my heart” version for Shakuhachi solo [2010]
- “The last psalm of the abssy” for flute solo [2003]
- “Si” for flute solo [2000]

### **Hong-Da Chin**

Born in Kuala Lumpur, Hong-Da Chin learned both the western flute and the Chinese Dizi with Yii Kah Hoe from 1997-2002. He was majoring in flute performance, tutored by Keiko Nakagawa, and completed his Diploma in Music in 2005, followed by composition studies with Yii for another two years. He then completed his undergraduate studies at University of Houston, Texas and gained his Master's degree at University of Louisville in Kentucky, for both flute performance and composition study. Currently, he is doing his doctorate research at Bowling Green State University giving special emphasis to composition with Dr. Marilyn Shrude and electronic music with Dr. Elaine Lillios.

Chin focuses more on ensemble and solo pieces in comparison to the other larger scale works such as, orchestral music. Due to a flute player himself, almost all his flute pieces are technically challenging and require extended technique. His flute compositions are as below (selected)<sup>32</sup>:

Flute solo piece:

- Compositions between Wind and Water
- Emptiness
- Even the Sky would Age had It Known Love
- Lost Warblers in the Wood (Piccolo and electronics)
- Whispering of Heart
- Mimoso (Piccolo solo)
- Near yet Far

Ensemble piece:

- Dance of Two Butterflies (Flute and guitar)
- Awakening (Flute Trio)
- Conversations between Owl, Nightingale and Lark (Piccolo/Flute and soprano)

### **PERFORMANCE VENUES**

Undeniably, rehearsal and performance venues are very crucial in promoting a performance. The acoustic environment strongly contributes to the quality of the performance. In Malaysia, it is always a headache for large-scale ensembles, such as orchestras, since they usually do not use the performance venue for rehearsal purposes due to the expensive rent. For instance, the resident orchestra in KLPac is using the rehearsal studios which are initially meant for a full-scale musical rehearsal, thus not being appropriate to fit in an orchestra for weekly rehearsals. The orchestra would move to the concert venue, Pentas 1 only when during the concert week to avoid any unnecessarily expenses. Due to the dramatic change focussing on acoustic quality, from an echoic to a muted one, the players bear a stressful period to get used to the new venue again. This is in fact not a productive way of forming a better community orchestra. Unfortunately, this is just one of so many cases in Malaysia. On top of that, most of the large-space concert venues are multipurpose, rarely meant for the acoustic needs of an orchestra.

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<sup>32</sup> Official website of Hong-Da Chin.

On the other hand, chamber and solo recital are having more choices despite of the acoustics and rental of the venue. Some of the music schools and music centres are attached with a built-in concert hall or auditorium, which are pretty much favoured by a smaller group due to logistic advantages. Usually, these venues are equipped with a piano, audience's seats and perhaps audiences who are music students of the school. Despite of the issues of authority, some musicians' popular choice of concert venues are as below:

Location	Venue	Capacity (Seats), features	Main Function
Kuala Lumpur	Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (DFP)	920, with and w/o amplification	Classical music, pop concert
	Panggung Sari at Istana Budaya	1413, with and w/o amplification	Classical music, pop concert, theatre
	Panggung Bandaraya DBKL (DBKL City Theatre)	350, with and w/o amplification	Productions such as plays and musicals.
	Plenary Hall at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre	3000, with and w/o amplification	Conventions, conferences, meeting, events, banquets, functions, exhibition, concerts
	Pentas 1 at klpac	504, with and w/o amplification	Big scale productions such as musicals, concerts and big dramas.
	Pentas 2 at klpac	190, with and w/o amplification	Small, wide range of mainstream and experimental production.
	Shantanand Auditorium at Temple of Fine Arts	556, with and w/o amplification	Theatre, dance or music, inspiring talks, training programmes and weddings.
	Experimental Theatre at University of Malaya	Approximately 1000, with and w/o amplification.	Stage performance, conferences, seminars, presentations and product launches.
	Recital Hall at UCSI University	450, with and w/o amplification	Stage performance
	Black Box and White Box at MAP <sup>33</sup>	250-300 each	Exhibitions, theatres, music gigs, dance performances, talks, workshops, corporate events, community events, weddings, parties and so forth.
	BMA Recital Hall at Wisma Bentley Music	150	Productions, recitals and workshops.
	BMA Auditorium at Wisma Bentley Music	400	Concerts, corporate and banquet functions.

**Table 8: Some of the performance venues in Klang Valley area and details.**

The previous table shows that there is no common rule to have a particular performance venue with an appropriate acoustic environment that is particularly reserved for purely instrumental music such as orchestral, chamber music and solo recital in Malaysia. Most of them are meant to be versatile and suitable to be rented for almost all kind of events and functions. Besides, the rental fee is one of the reasons which might diminish the urge to organize a concert as the outcome might not always cover the expenses. Thus, some of the chamber musicians choose to have their recital in a 'less-expensive' venue, but also with an uncomfortable acoustic environment. Here comes the bad cycle into play that this fails to convey the message of the recital of carrying good quality music to audiences.

## **Supporting Publicity and Specialized Organizations**

### ***Music Examination Boards***

Music examination boards are popular in Malaysia being one of the providers for leading guidelines for instrumental learning. Learners are encouraged to gain recognition through profes-

<sup>33</sup> A non-profit organization, was created as an integral component of Publika at Dutamas, Kuala Lumpur, It serves as an activity generator for the development. The MAP is an arts and cultural platform that operates as a catalyst to explore contemporary ideas.

sional assessment to ensure their progress of learning. Each board offers graded exam with particular syllabus to make sure candidates have the freedom to show their ability according to their individual level of performing skills.

In Malaysia, the most recognized international music examination boards for western classical instruments are the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and the one offered by the Trinity College London. Both boards offer graded exam ranging from initial to diploma levels. Elements for the graded exams are shown below:

Elements for the graded exam	ABRSM	Maximum marks	Trinity College London	Maximum marks
Pieces	1 from List A	30	1 from Group A	22
	1 from List B	30	1 from Group A	22
	1 from List C (Solo)	30	1 from Group B	22
Scales and Arpeggios	Compulsory as required at each grade.	18	i) Initial to Grade 5, choose either scales/arpeggios or exercises ii) Grade 6-8, choose either scales/arpeggios or orchestral excerpts	14
Sight Reading	Compulsory.	21	i) Initial to Grade 5, any two of the following: Sight reading, aural, improvisation or musical knowledge. ii) Grade 6-8, sight reading and choose one of the following: improvisation or aural	20
Total mark		150		100

**Table 9: Elements for graded exam offered by ABRSM and Trinity College London, revision made in March 2015.**

The table above shows the elements for graded exam and marks will be given based on the music examination board's individual marking scheme. Both boards offer two exam sections in a year. ABRSM offers the first section in March- April and the second section in June- August while on the other hand Trinity College London offers the mid-year section in May-June, and the final-year section in October-December. Below shows their registration fee respectively:

Grade/Level Offered	ABRSM and Registration Fees (RM)	Trinity College London and Registration Fees (RM)
Prep Test / Initial	220	210
1	250	240
2	320	310
3	330	335
4	360	360
5	380	385
6	430	425
7	490	485
8	550	540

**Table 10: Graded exam and registration fees offered by ABRSM and Trinity College London, valid on 10 March 2015.**

The western classical instrument practical examination sections for both boards, reflects the number of candidates every year. Thus, the registration fees of the exam do not seem as the main issue to be considered.

While on the other hand, the most popular music examination board for Chinese traditional instrument in Malaysia is the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music. Only one section of exam period is available in Malaysia, which is around September every year. Candidates are compul-

sory to use the examination book (overseas version) published by the Central Conservatory of Music Board. Three main parts of the exam are presented as follows:

Grade/Level Offered	Part 1: Studies (by memorization)	Part 2: Pieces (by memorization)	Part 3: Aural
1	Choose one from the list of corresponding grades	Choose one from the list of corresponding grades	Compulsory
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7		Choose two from the list of corresponding grades	Not available
8			
9			
Performance's Certificate			

**Table 11: Elements for graded exam offered by Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, revised in March 2015.**

A compulsory criterium for the Chinese traditional instrument practical exam, is based on the memorization of the piece. In the chart below, the registration fees for graded exams offered by the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, are demonstrated:

Grade/Level Offered	Registration Fees (RM)
1	115
2	130
3	145
4	165
5	200
6	250
7	300
8	350
9	570
Performer's Certificate	650

**Table 12: Graded exam and registration fees offered by Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, 10 March 2015.**

A practical exam for Indian traditional instrument is not as common as the two mentioned above. Nevertheless, the Temple of Fine Arts offers Carnatic music exam as well as theory exam. The practical exam usually takes place in March in the institution itself. The table with registration fees is given as follows:

Grade/Level Offered	Registration Fees (RM)
Stage 1	25
Stage 2	35
Stage 3	45
Stage 4	55
Stage 5	65

**Table 13: Graded exam and registration fees offered by the Temple of Fine Arts, 10 March 2015.**

From the table of registration fees, one may note the low amount required, compared to the other examination boards. This would further encourage the students to go through an assessment as recognition of their hard work at every level.

### ***The Borneo Reeds ABRSM Professional Development Prize***

In early 2015, the Borneo Reeds introduced Kenny Lim Yong Jia, a local clarinet player as the winner of The Borneo Reeds ABRSM Professional Development Prize. A grant of RM5000 is

sponsored by The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), which will help to support and let the winner get prepared to complete his recital tour within the year 2005.

The Borneo Reeds ABRSM Professional Development Prize is open audition for wind musicians (Flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, saxophone, French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba and euphonium) who aged from 18 -35. Candidates are required to upload their audition video on YouTube, which is not exceed more than 15 minutes and recorded in one take, without editing on it. Audition repertoires must include two contrasting movements from original literature of the instrument, one is unaccompanied solo and one is with piano accompaniment. Besides, candidates are required to propose a list of five recital programmes. Recital items are varied to chamber music. On top of that, possible date, venue and budget for the individual recital should be included as well. Together with an international panel of wind players, Borneo Reeds would select one talented Malaysian wind player as the winner.

Borneo Reeds is a young enterprise aiming to produce fine and affordable reeds for wind players. Considering that Malaysia is lacking of organizations that help Malaysian musicians early in their career, Borneo Reeds aims at helping local musicians especially, who studied locally and are currently working in the scene. Thus, here Borneo Reeds embarked a very special project which aims at promoting concert recitals in Malaysia, encouraging wind instrument playing, and helping expanding international contacts.

Tan Chai Suang, french horn player and winner of the inaugural Borneo Reeds ABRSM Professional Development Prize 2014, said "This has been an extraordinary period for me. Performing solo recitals for audiences in Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, Penang has been an incredible experience. It's an understatement to say that the prize has changed my musical life. The process has given me the knowledge necessary to become a flexible musician, as well as an entrepreneur." (Tan Chai Suang, personal communication, 2014). During her recital tour, she managed to play with other local musicians such as the two pianists Kenneth and Wong Chee Yean, flutist Foo Chie Haur and oboist Lee Chun Howe. Undeniably, the prize does not only award the winner itself but benefits and providing experiences to the rest of the participants and audiences.

### ***The Selangor & Federal Territory Hainan Association - Malaysia***

The Selangor & Federal Territory Hainan Association in Malaysia was founded in 1889, which initially aimed at uniting the Chinese of Hainanese descent. Since year 1989, the association is reciting its office at the Thean Hou Temple, providing community services such as marriage registration, offering study loan and awards as well as managing all assets and affairs of the association and the temple itself. Other than that, it appears to be one of the non-government organizations who have been actively promoting Chinese cultural activities by offering Lion Dance class and Hainanese language class.

Ever since year 2002, the association alongside with the local radio program 'AI FM' have organized the 'Malaysian Chinese Music Ensemble Competition' every two years in the Thean Hou Temple and officially became the record holder of the "Malaysia Book of Records' on 23 June 2009. The competition attracts a number of Chinese orchestras especially from the secondary schools in Malaysia to participate. Prizes are awarded to the winners selected by the international panel. It aims at introducing and promoting Culture and Arts, among them Chinese music, to the younger generation.

### ***The Temple of Fine Arts Kuala Lumpur***

The Temple of Fine Arts (TFA) was founded by His Holiness Swami Shantanand Saraswathi in 1981. The institution aims to help the "Malaysian youth to revive the cultural, artistic and



spiritual wealth of their forefathers and to make it relevant for themselves as well as for future generations to come" (www.tfa.org.my; Jähnichen, 2013). The institution offers dance class such as bharatanatyam, Odissi, kuchipudi, kathak and so on while on the other hand music courses such as Carnatic and Hindustani vocal, thevaram, flute, guitar and violin. In TFA, the guru is the teacher and the student is the sisyha. This special relationship aims at providing a positive learning environment and making sure the students obtain unlimited musical knowledge from the tutors or instructors.

## TEACHING FLUTE IN MALAYSIA

The analysis shows so far that music is generally a less-appreciated art in Malaysia. Music education remains oppressive and relatively slowly unfolding creative potentials, and that the entire education is pretty much focused on marketability. According to my observations, there are only a few professional flute tutors eligible to teach students of tertiary level as well as the remaining levels. This situation can conclude that Malaysia is short of professional flute tutors. Below explains the teaching field of flute tutors in Malaysia<sup>34</sup>, from formal education which aims for professional making to flute players in secondary and primary school bands as well curriculum courses offered by music centres outside the school.

### Tertiary Education

For music lovers who consider to make music their career and wish to further studies on it, choices are limited when they prefer to do it locally. There are few government universities and private institutions offering music degree programmes with various titles. Most of those are located in Klang Valley area and shown below:

University	Offered Title	Course Duration	Graduation Recital (Yes or No)
UPM	Bachelor Music (Music Performance)	4	Yes
UM	Master of Performing Arts (Music)	3-8 semesters	No
	Bachelor of Performing Arts (Music)		Yes
UiTM <sup>35</sup>	PhD in Music (Research)	3 - 6 years	No
	Master of Music (Research)	3 - 6 years	No
	Master of Music (Coursework)	1.5 - 4 years	No
	Bachelor of Music (Hons)	3 - 4 years	Yes
	Diploma in Music	2.5 years	No
ASWARA <sup>36</sup>	Master of Music (Research)	2 years	No
	Bachelor of Music (Hons)	3 years	Yes
	Foundation in Music	3 years	Yes
Institute of Music, UCSI University	MMus in Performance Studies	16 months to 3 years	Yes
	Bachelor of Classical Music (Hons)	3 years + 3-6 months	Yes

<sup>34</sup> Using older teaching materials of Wye, (1999-2004) and Toff (1985).

<sup>35</sup> Universiti Teknologi MARA. Bachelor of Music on education, composition, performance and business are offered.

<sup>36</sup> Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan. ASWARA was initially established to handle the responsibility of sustaining the traditional arts in the context of a modern society in Malaysia.

	Bachelor of Contemporary Music (Hons)	3 years + 3-6 months	Yes
	Foundation in Music	One year	No
SEGi University	Bachelor (Hons) Music Studies	3 years	Yes
	Diploma in Music Performance	2.5 years	Yes
ICOM <sup>37</sup>	Bachelor of Music (Hons) in Professional Music	3 years	
	Diploma in Music Business	2 years	No
	Certificate in Audio Production	16 months	No
	Foundation in Music	1 year	Yes
MIA <sup>38</sup>	Diploma in Music	6 semesters	Yes

**Table 14: Music degree offered at selected university and college level in Klang valley area up to March 2015.**

Despite of studying overseas, the table above shows some of the popular preferences among Malaysians for their undergraduate as well as postgraduate studies. There is only the performance-based degree taken into account and this further narrows down the choice for flute players who wish to major in flute performance. In general, the titles offered by the universities and colleges are similar, also covering similar areas of expertise. There are few which offering undergraduate studies and only one institute is offering postgraduate studies on instrumental performance, which appear to be an alarming situation in Malaysia since it can easily be interrupted and disturbed by external decisions. Besides, the price range tuition fees are also very diverse, according to my observation. Usually, the government universities offer a more affordable price than the rest. This certainly influences the student intake. On the other hand, most of the universities and private institutes offer only western classical music program. However, being the minority, ASWARA does welcome students who which to major in non-western instrument. Apparently, instrument teachers would be arranged based on the need of the students.

### **Primary and Secondary School Level**

Primary and secondary school education is indeed an important chapter in life. The Malaysian education system set music as a compulsory subject in the primary school throughout the six years aiming at introducing pupils the basic musical knowledge and Malaysian traditional folk songs. However, it could almost conclude that the role of school education is not supportive enough to bring them to a more refined and detailed music education outside of the classroom. Fortunately, pupils are encouraged to participate in co-curriculum activities in schools while school band and school orchestras are always the popular choices. This makes band members appear to be more knowledgeable in terms of musicality compared to whom are not.

Usually, at least one music instructor would be appointed to conduct students. Instruments such as flute, clarinet, trumpet and drums are always dominating due to the setting of a band. The table below shows some selected government primary and secondary school bands and their details:

<sup>37</sup> International College of Music.

<sup>38</sup> Malaysian Institute of Art.

School Name	Primary (P)/Secondary (S)	Rental of Instrument (Yes or No)
SJK(C) Kuen Cheng 1	P	Yes
SJK(C) Choong Wen	P	Yes
SJK(C) Tsun Jin	P	Yes
SJK(C) Puay Chay	P	Yes
SJK(C) Taman Connaught	P	Yes
Kuen Cheng High School	S	Yes
SMK Convent Bukit Nanas	S	Yes
SMJK Katholik	S	Yes
SMJK Chong Hwa	S	Yes

**Table 15: Availability of band or orchestra at selected government primary and secondary school level in Klang valley area, March 2015.**

School Name	Primary (P)/Secondary (S)	Rental of Instrument (Yes or No)
Chong Hwa High School	S	Yes
Confucian Private Secondary School	S	Yes
Kuen Cheng High School	S	Yes
Tsun Jin High School	S	Yes
SMJK Katholik	S	Yes

**Table 16: Availability of Chinese orchestra at selected government or independent primary and secondary level in Klang valley area, March 2015.**

International School	Peripatetic Music Program (PMP)/ Co-curricular Activities (CCA)	Age Group	Rental of Instrument	Available of Band or Orchestra
AIMS <sup>39</sup>	PMP	3-18	Yes	No
Alice Smith School	PMP	3-18	Yes	No
The British International School of Kuala Lumpur	PMP	3-18	Yes	Yes
Nexus International School	PMP	3-18	Yes	Yes
Tenby Schools Setia Eco Park, Selangor	PMP	3-18	Yes	No

**Table 17: Instrumental lesson offered at selected international school level in Klang valley area, March 2015.**

## Music Centres

Music centres are institutions offering music courses for different age groups in different levels. Instruments are played according to a curriculum that is similar to the major examination boards such as ABRSM. In Malaysia, it is a norm for the parents to send their kids to the music centres for instrumental learning and quality education is expected. As examples, here are few selected important music centres in Klang valley areas which hope to be named anonymously:

Name of Music Centres	Grade offered	Duration (mins)	Preparation for Exam (Yes or No)
A Music School	1-8 and above	45-60	Yes
B Music	1-8 and above	45-60	Yes
CY Music	1-8 and above	30-45	Yes
LY Music	1-8 and above	45-60	Yes
M Music	1-8 and above	30-45	Yes

**Table 2: Western flute lesson offered at selected music centres in Klang valley area up to date March 2015.**

Name of Music Centres	Grade offered	Duration (mins)	Preparation for Exam (Yes or No)
AM Music Academy	1-9 and above	30-45	Yes

<sup>39</sup> Australian International School Malaysia, established in 2000.

DH Music Centre	1-9 and above	30-45	Yes
IM Music and Arts	1-9 and above	30-45	Yes
KJ Music Centre	1-9 and above	30-45	Yes
M Music School	1-9 and above	30-45	Yes

**Table 19: Chinese Dizi lesson offered at selected music centres in Klang valley area, March 2015.**

Tables 17 and 18 show music centres offering the Western flute and the Chinese Dizi respectively (some using Qu Xiang and Qu Guangyi, 2009, or Qu Xiang et al, 2007). The duration usually depends on the grade correspondingly, the longer time the higher the grade. Besides, learners can choose either to sit for practical exam or just to learn the instrument as a casual activity.

## VIRTUAL SAMPLES FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN FLUTE PLAYING

To give a very clear picture of how diversity in flute playing is virtually presented, here is a short experiment using the search engine google. After entering the keywords <Kuala Lumpur> <events> <music> <flute>, approximately 10,400,000 items are shown. The first 5 pages can be analysed by counting which flute type or what flute types are mentioned in the shown link. The result gives a quite applicable overview on the raised question; rough overview on how much of each flute type appears in public musical life. Western flute playing dominates 95 per cent of the results, while Indian flutes overtake three percent, other flutes two per cent. Given that, the term the 'Chinese Dizi' might be more widely used, thus, <Kuala Lumpur> <events> <music> <Chinese> <Dizi> were tested. However, the results did not turn out better, with only a small increase. Later on, <Kuala Lumpur> <events> <music> <Indian> <Bansuri> were entered, a higher increase was observed, compared to the previous test.

The results give an overview that 'flute' is usually associated with western flute in Malaysia. While the Chinese Dizi and the Indian Bansuri are not entitled and well known as a 'flute' although flute is also representing vertical flute of other origins.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Malaysians show a higher music preference for western classical music. This suggests that the post-colonial approach has a strong impact on Malaysians in choosing music unintentionally or based on some superficial reasoning. The same or a worse situation can be seen with regard to the Chinese and Indian traditional music as well as other kinds of music that are not discussed here. However, an improvement of the general educational system does not seem to improve the situation mentioned above at the moment as this is a long-term effort to be undertaken. Thus, an improvement of the general situation and the cultural conditions cannot help to sustain a diversity of flute cultures in the near future. Therefore, another possible way to facilitate an improvement is to help the three types of flutes being taught, performed and publicly presented more independently and in mutual understanding of their diverse roles. Flute music of any kind, may lead the audience to get a clearer picture of music as a whole.

It will always be necessary to explore the way of approaching western flute, dizi and bansuri, their cultural context, performance practice, and transmission methods. Investigating transmission methods has to mainly focus on teaching materials used, class structures in terms of participants and sequence of teaching units. This is to understand the different social and cultural contexts of performance practice as well as the transmission methods of the three types of flutes and their mutual perpetuation as part of a multi-layered culture.

Based on the research, western flute stands out as the most popular instruments compared to the Chinese dizi and the Indian bansuri mainly, because it is more appreciated and widely accepted in any form of performance such as solo recitals, chamber music, orchestra concerts,

wedding and hotel gigs. Besides, Malaysians have a tendency to learn Western classical instruments comparably to Chinese and Indian traditional instruments based on the frequency of Western classical concerts and the number of candidates taking music examinations. Hence, there are always a growing number of successors in playing western flute, which is rather a problem with other types of flutes.

The details portrayed in the so far made discussion will hopefully lead to further studies across the region and to some kind of collaboration in supporting each other's cultural efforts.

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