

Rojak: A Study of Cultural Elements
Assimilated in Selected Works of
Malaysian Contemporary Composers (2001-2014)

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Abstract

Malaysian contemporary music, an emerging and highly diverse art form, has gained recognition both in Malaysia and internationally over the last decade. Nevertheless, few studies have been completed and most conclude that there is no common compositional trend. This study, however, highlights that one common trend has emerged since 2000, namely, Malaysian composers have increasingly assimilated cultural elements into their compositions. The resulting works have been metaphorically compared to the national salad dish, *rojak*, in which all constituent parts are readily identifiable even when mixed together. It is argued that the assimilation of cultures is central to an understanding of Malaysian contemporary music, even though it is not the only compositional approach. Twenty-nine works by five selected Malaysian composers are analysed in this study. The composers are: Kee Yong Chong (b.1971), Chong Lim Ng (b.1972), Tazul Izan Tajuddin (b.1969), Johan Awang Othman (b.1969), and Kah Hoe Yii (b.1970). Musical score analysis, combined with the interpretation of data collected through fieldwork trips to Malaysia and Singapore, reveal the ways these composers have assimilated a myriad of cultural elements, including gamelan, Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong* [Malaysian ancient theatre], *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet play], Balinese *baris* dance, the concept of *tenunan* [weave] and *batik*, Chinese calligraphy and painting, Chinese orchestra and its instruments, Chinese philosophy, and Islamic, Buddhist and Christian spiritual practices, into their compositions. This study concludes that their use of idiosyncratic approaches is becoming increasingly distinctive to Malaysian compositions and a reflection of the same processes of mixing identifiable ingredients that is found in the national *rojak* salads.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Signed:



Peck Jin Gan

Dated: 14 November, 2017

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Finally, I give my heartfelt gratitude to my loving family for their support and understanding throughout my postgraduate study.

Contents of Disc

FOR EXAMINATION PURPOSES ONLY

Sound and video recordings and their details were provided by the respective composers.

- Track 1 *Monodrama* for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic (2004) | Kee Yong Chong
Recorded in 2004. Performed by the Het Spectra Ensemble (oboe: Piet Van Bockstael), conducted by Filip Rathé.
- Track 2 *Three Sketches for Two Pianos* (2004) | Chong Lim Ng
Recorded in 2004. Performed by Chong Lim Ng and Mei-Chun Chou.
- Track 3 *ittar* for chamber orchestra (2003) | Johan Othman
Recorded in 2003. Performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.
- Track 4 *topeng I* for orchestra (2004) | Johan Othman
Recorded in 2004. Performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.
- Track 5 *whose shadow would fall on* for trombone and piano (2011) | Johan Othman
Recorded in 2011. Performed by Dirk Amrein (trombone) and Jürg Henneberger (piano).
- Track 6 *Tenunan II* for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra (2001) | Tazul Tajuddin
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- Track 7 *Gamelbati III* for string quartet (2005) | Tazul Tajuddin
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- Track 8 *Azan* [Call for Prayer] for mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007) | Tazul Tajuddin
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- Track 9 *Sebuah Pantun IV* [A Malay Poem IV] for violin, cello and piano (2011) | Tazul Tajuddin
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- Track 10 *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree* for flute (also piccolo, alto flute, Thai-gong and tam-tam), clarinet in B \flat (also bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano (2002) | Kee Yong Chong
Performed by Het Collectief Ensemble, conducted by Ivo Venkov.

- Track 11 ***My Spirit is Chanting*** for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions (2011) | Kah Hoe Yii
Recorded in 2011. Performed by the Duplum Duo (bass clarinet: Fernando Dominguez; percussion: Ivan Manzanilla) and Anne Harley (soprano).
- Track 12 ***Bayang*** for *wayang kulit* and Chinese orchestra (2008) | Kah Hoe Yii
Recorded in 2008. Performed by the Istamuzika and the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, conducted by Tsung Yeh.
- Track 13 ***I Hear the Wind Calling*** for ensemble (2003) | Kee Yong Chong
Recorded in 2003. Performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Kevin Field.
- Track 14 ***Shui.Mo*** [水.墨] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*erhu, pipa, guzheng & sheng*) and orchestra (2007) | Kee Yong Chong
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- Track 15 ***Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer*** – for *sheng, pipa, guzheng* and 10 western instruments (2005) | Kee Yong Chong
Recorded in 2005. Performed by Nieuw Ensemble (*sheng*: Wei Wu; *pipa*: XiaoFen Min; *gu zheng*: FengXia Xu), conducted by Ed Spanjaard.
- Track 16 ***Xun Feng*** [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*pipa, guzheng, dizi & sheng*) and Chinese orchestra (2013) | Kee Yong Chong
Performed by Chai Found Music Workshop Orchestra (*dizi/xiao*: Chung-Hsien Wu; *sheng*: Lung-Yi Huang; *pipa*: HuiKuan Lin; *gu zheng*: Jiuan-Reng Yeh), conducted by Ed Spanjaard.
- Track 17 ***Yuan-He*** [源 - 和] Concerto for 5 Chinese instruments and 5 western instruments (2010) | Kee Yong Chong
Performed by Ensemble Dragon and Het Collectief Ensemble, led by Reng Chang Fu.
- Track 18 ***Amorphous*** for string orchestra (2009) | Chong Lim Ng
Recorded in 2010. Performed by the Stream Festival Orchestra, conducted by Christoph Maria Wagner
- Track 19 ***Xiang*** for orchestra (2006-2007) | Chong Lim Ng
Recorded in 2007. Performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.
- Track 20 ***Rimba*** for chamber orchestra (2006-2007) | Chong Lim Ng
Recorded in 2007. Performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Explanatory Note

Recordings for 20 of the 28 Malaysian compositions analysed in this study are included in the disc attached. Regrettably, one of the selected compositions, *Three Sketches for Two Pianos II* (2009) composed by Chong Lim Ng, which was premiered in 2009, has not been recorded. Links to video recordings of the other eight works, where recordings are not readily available, in the order of their appearance in this study, are:

Shadows* for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment (2011) | Chong Lim Ng

<https://youtu.be/wcX189J0JL0>

* This is a rehearsal video for *Shadows* with commentaries from the performers. Recording of the full performance is not available to the public.

Timang Burung for solo piano (2009) | Kah Hoe Yii

https://youtu.be/jpiPd5U_Ir8

Sebuah Pantun VII for solo flute (2013) | Tazul Tajuddin

<https://youtu.be/lwlTMXMP70A>

Gongan for oboe and piano (2008) | Kah Hoe Yii

<https://youtu.be/aEzEkBhw7tY>

My Spirit is Dancing! for solo piano (2010) | Kah Hoe Yii

<https://youtu.be/qIUUfJiEYiQ> (Tomoko Honda)

<https://youtu.be/2t3FY2syAA8> (Yuty Lauda)

Wild Cursive [狂草] for *zhongruan* and string trio (2009) | Kah Hoe Yii

<https://youtu.be/QMypSH3OWZI>

My Ears are Still Ringing for flute and alto sax (2011, revised 2012) | Kah Hoe Yii

<https://youtu.be/hNifJyIHQMU>

A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest for solo piano (2009) | Chong Lim Ng

https://youtu.be/9hDTtjic_LE

Notes on Text

While it is the norm for Chinese names to be written in the order of family name or last name, followed by given name, such order is inverted in this study in accordance with the English language norm of given name, followed by family name or last name. For example, Chong Kee Yong is reordered as Kee Yong Chong.

Additionally, there are a few names with the same surname Chong, namely composers Kee Yong Chong and Julia Chong, as well as musicologists Huey Ching Chong and Yew Yoong Chong. ‘Chong’ is used, in this study, to refer to the composer Kee Yong Chong, while Julia Chong, Huey Ching Chong and Yew Yoong Chong are referred to using their full names.

Introduction

Context and Perspectives

Malaysian contemporary music is more like a salad than a melting pot, where you can identify the lettuce, tomato and all the varied ingredients. They are not blended.

Johan Othman, Malaysian composer
(pers. comm. 8 October, 2013)

This study investigates Johan Othman's observation that Malaysian contemporary music is similar to the national salad dish, *rojak*¹, in which constituent elements remain readily identifiable within the context of Malaysian multicultural society in the 21st century. The ability to clearly identify these constituent parts in Malaysian contemporary music, and to understand the ways in which they have been combined, is central to the understanding of current trends in Malaysian music composition. The primary focus of this study is Malaysian contemporary musical trends during the period of investigation, 2001 to 2014, with the *rojak* metaphor employed as a tool to further this understanding. This study uses musical analysis and critical commentary to investigate the way that many Malaysian composers have written works that are directly or indirectly inspired by cultural elements, particularly those from the Southeast Asian region such as gamelan, Malay poem, *mak yong* [Malaysian ancient theatre] and *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet play].

It is noted that this practice of mixing cultural elements is not unique to Malaysian culture, but can be seen in the musical outputs of composers from across Southeast Asia and beyond over the past 50 years. This is notable in the works of composers including Wen-Chung Chou² (b.1923), Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), Dun Tan, more commonly known as Tan Dun (b.1957), Minoru Miki (1930-2011), and Isang Yun (1917-1995). Composers from elsewhere in the world, such as John Cage (1912-1992), Lou Harrison (1917-2003), Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007) and Morton Feldman (1926-1987) have also become increasingly intrigued with Asia, particularly in the past century.

¹ Ooi (2010: 275) defines *rojak* as: 'A popular dish comprising a combination of fruits and vegetables, *rojak* has become both a salad and a dessert enjoyed by Malaysia's multiethnic peoples'.

² The composer has always referred to himself in the Chinese manner: Chou Wen-Chung. However, for consistency within this study, as noted in Notes on Text, Chou will be listed as Wen-Chung Chou.

Everett identifies three broad categories of compositional techniques³ and seven compositional strategies⁴ frequently used by contemporary composers, particularly those associated with East Asia (Everett 2004: 16). In the first category, transference, the end result does not make explicit reference to its Asian inspiration in its sonic effect. Examples of such integration include Chou's self-derived compositional strategy 'variable modes', based on the *I-Ching* [Chinese Book of Changes⁵]. Cage has also used the *I Ching* to create his chance-based compositional strategy. Takemitsu, Tan Dun and Yun are known to have assimilated Japanese aesthetics, Chinese cultures and Taoist philosophies, respectively, into their creative outputs. Also drawing on Asian elements without making direct reference to 'Asian sounds' are Messiaen and Feldman, who have named Indian rhythmic systems and Central Asian and Middle Eastern rugs as inspirational sources for their respective compositions.

The second and third categories of compositional strategies identified by Everett include the transplantation, combination and transformation of attributes. This is evident in the creative outputs of Chou, Takemitsu, Miki, Yun, Harrison, and Messiaen. Works by Chou, Takemitsu, Miki, and Yun have displayed transplantation of performance practices and techniques of traditional Asian instruments to Western instruments, as well as the combination of instruments from both worlds within one composition. Such strategies are also manifested in the formation of Harrison's 'American gamelan' and Messiaen's use of tuned percussion, both displaying strong influence of the gamelan. These composers are pioneers in their respective compositional strategies for the assimilation of cultural elements and have influenced many subsequent composers. These strategies are discussed in detail in later chapters when they have been found to have had direct influence on a particular Malaysian composer and/or composition.⁶

³ While Everett does not explicitly use the term 'assimilation', she is describing strategies used by composers to create new works in a manner that mirrors such strategies used elsewhere. According to Everett, the three broad categories are transference, syncretism and synthesis. Transference occurs when musical resources are appropriated within a work (2004: 14). Everett describes the process of syncretism as the way Asian and Western musical resources are merged (2004: 18), and synthesis as when musical resources undergo a process of transformation (2004: 19).

⁴ These seven strategies are: 'aesthetics principles or formal system without iconic references to Asian sounds', 'evoke Asian sensibilities without explicit musical borrowings', 'quote culture through literary or extramusical means', 'quote pre-existent musical materials in the form of a collage', 'transplant East Asian attributes of timbre, articulation, or scale system onto Western instruments', 'combine musical instruments and/or tuning systems of East Asian and Western musical ensembles', and 'transform traditional musical systems, form, and timbres into a distinctive synthesis of Western and Asian musical idioms' (Everett 2004: 16).

⁵ The *I Ching* is commonly used as a divination system.

⁶ It should be noted that as Everett's categorisation was completed in 2004, based on repertoire between 1945 and 1998, there is a possibility that the compositional strategies listed have been developed further and/or new strategies have emerged since. This is reflected in the Conclusion.

Composers, including Jonas Baes (b. 1961) and Michael Asmara (b. 1956), from areas of the Southeast Asian region other than Malaysia have been incorporating cultural elements into their music since the 1980s. Baes, a composer from the Philippines, explains his assimilation of Iraya-Mangyan cultures, and specifically the passing down of stories and legends told by their elders to younger generations, into *Patanggis-Buwaya* [And the Crocodile Weeps] (2003) for four wind instruments from any cultures. The physical notation of this work is comparable to a lead-sheet of the Jazz culture where skeleton structure is provided, while the actual performance is realised by the performers using their personal musical languages. The performers are also briefed about the dire situation of the internal refugees in the Philippines, which serves as inspirational imagery for their performance of this work. Baes parallels this to the oral tradition that re-creates itself each time it is performed (Baes 2013: 121-126). Indonesian composer Asmara has written works for traditional instruments such as *Symphony No. 1* for strings, horns, winds, percussion, and gamelan, and *Interaction* for a motorcycle, any number of gamelan instruments in mixed tunings, an audience volunteer, and a participating audience (Siagian 2007: 72-73). Both Baes and Asmara have drawn inspiration from extramusical elements, musical instruments and performance practices.

In Malaysia itself, composers such as Valerie Ross (b.1958), Sunetra Fernando (b.1966), Saidah Rastam, and Razak Abdul Aziz have been incorporating cultural elements into their music since the 1980s. Over the period of this study, as will be shown, there has been a generational shift in the approach taken by Malaysian composers. New composers have emerged who are European-trained and combine classical western techniques with traditional techniques and approaches from their Asian heritage. In its infancy, Malaysian composers approached the assimilation of cultures largely based on the use of Malay folk idioms, such as folk tunes, rhythms, and tales, and the juxtapositioning of traditional and western instruments, as seen in B. Ortega's *Asli Lama dan Baru* [Old and New Asli Songs] (1968), Gus Steyn's *Si-Tanggung* [The Legend of the Batu Caves] (1968), Alfonso Soliano's *Pulau Mutiara* [The Pearl Island] (1975), Johari Salleh's *Rampai Ghazal* [Ghazal Medley] (1970) and *Gurindam Gamelan* (1976) (Chopyak 1987: 443). The return of composers from their musical education abroad in the 1980s initiated a movement to further develop cultural assimilation strategies that defy simple interpretation. In her vocal work *Lapangan Ya-Ya-Ya* (1999), Saidah Rastam incorporated Malay poem in its lyrics, created 'intricate layering of voices, text-painting and addition of lines from the poem' that resemble the gamelan ensemble, and also based the pitch of the work on *pelog* scale (a type of gamelan scale) (Chan 2005: 149-163). Other examples of compositions within this development period, which are discussed further in Chapter 1,

include Aziz's *10 Nyanyian Settings* [10 Song Settings] (1981-1990) and Julia Chong's *Rushing Waters* (1988). Since the establishment of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and the completion of Dewan Filharmonik Petronas, Malaysia's first purpose-built concert hall, in 1997, Malaysian contemporary music has gathered momentum, led by 'more global composers' including Kee Yong Chong, Chong Lim Ng, Johan Othman, Tazul Tajuddin, Adeline Wong, and Kah Hoe Yii (Baes 2011: 40). The musical languages of these composers reflect their musical training abroad but, at the same time, are embedded with cultural elements that are meaningful to them.

One may argue that many, if not most, composers in the contemporary music scene⁷ since the 1950s, including Malaysian composers, have been influenced by cultural elements. Malaysian composers should not, therefore, be differentiated from other composers around the world. However, to extend the discussion further than the examination of this trend in contemporary Malaysian music would be beyond the scope of this study.

The Malaysian contemporary music scene has only been in existence since the 1950s and, thus, is less mature than the established East Asian contemporary music scene. Nevertheless, over the period of this study there has been an expansion of compositional approaches and strategies that increasingly align Malaysian composers with their counterparts in other countries.

This study, therefore, considers the ways in which Malaysian composers combine the individual elements of their sonic *rojak*, while preserving and enhancing the integrity, quality and innovation of their creative output. This is investigated by pursuing two lines of enquiry: firstly, an analysis is undertaken of 29 selected musical compositions by five representative composers, predominantly focusing on the identification of embedded cultural elements. Secondly, the compositions are used as case studies for the understanding of the compositional and scoring techniques these five composers employ in order to combine cultural elements into their compositions.

⁷ The term 'contemporary music scene' is an ethnographic one, and is used in this study to mean the contemporary music community, formed by composers, producers, performers, organisers, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and audiences, irrespective of whether it is local, translocal or virtual. The term also embraces the interactions and inter-relationships between the people involved (Bennett and Peterson 2004).

Key Terms

There are three key terms employed here: *rojak*; cultural assimilation; and Malaysian contemporary music. A definition of the terms within the context of this study is important to fully understand the research findings.

Rojak

Duruz and Khoo explain that '[*rojak*] is usually made of chopped cucumber, green mangoes, yam bean, shrimp paste, roasted peanuts, and sesame seeds. It is covered in a sauce of chillies, shrimp paste, tamarind juice, and soy'. *Rojak*, however, comes in multiple versions: 'Indian *rojak* (known as *pasembur* in [the state of] Penang), *mamak rojak*, Penang *rojak*, Indonesian fruit *rojak* [and] "typical" *rojak* – resolutely embedded in the "local" despite (or rather, because of) its history of border crossings' (Duruz and Khoo 2015: 1). *Rojak*, in colloquial Malay language, is often used to describe a 'haphazard mixture of things' (Hutton 2005: 13). The term *rojak* has become a common colloquial expression for a mixture of cultures, not only in the field of cuisine, but also languages, spiritual practices, festivities, fashion and music.

It is acknowledged that the term *rojak* was used as a derogatory term by pro-Malay ethno-nationalists in the 1990s in their promotion of 'Malay hegemony and linguistic and cultural purity', through references to *kebudayaan rojak* [salad culture] (Duruz and Khoo 2015: 3). Little has been written on this issue, owing to the complex and sensitive nature of Malaysian politics. Today, the pejorative connotation of cultural purity attached to the term *rojak* has not spread beyond the language of political rhetoric, and has since been repudiated by writers and researchers. Malaysian poet Salleh Ben Joned (1994: 56-57) openly challenged such condemnation of *rojak* culture:

Anyway, what's wrong with *kebudayaan rojak*? Malaysians like *rojak*. It's good for them and it helps nation-building. Unity in diversity is certainly better for the vitality of our cultural life than the imposition of an artificially conceived national culture through legislation.

Echoing Joned's suggestion of the cultural diversity that is implicit in the term *rojak*, Duruz and Khoo (2015: 2) clarified *rojak* as a 'set of images' that echo 'that politics of commensality, intercultural exchanges, and identity hybridity and belonging'. This view is

shared by Ooi (2010: 275) who likened *rojak* to the ‘multiethnicity and multiculturalism of the Malaysian society... owing to the intermixture of various sociocultural elements drawn’ from various ethnic groups.

It is recognised that the term *rojak* may be a politically and culturally loaded one for some people. Nonetheless, contemporary Malaysian culture has reclaimed the term from fringe political extremism and uses it to celebrate the uniquely Malaysian blend of multiple cultures that comprise the country. This study uses the term in that same spirit of multicultural creation and integration. It is therefore applied in this study as a metaphor for the multicultural nature of the Malaysian society and the cultural assimilation phenomena found across broader cultural aspects discussed in Chapter 1.5 including cuisine, spiritual practices, festivals and customs, cinema and film, as well as music. A socio-cultural and ethnographic evaluation of the place of this metaphor, however, is not within the scope of this study.

Finally, it is noted that, while *rojak* is employed in this study as a useful metaphor, it is merely a metaphor. It is understood that the use of the ‘*rojak*’ metaphor by Othman to describe his own composition is an apt *post hoc* encapsulation of his working method, and is not a theoretical principle upon which his work is based. The main thoughts and contributions of the composers examined in this study lie in their musical works, not in their philosophical reflections. This study’s extension of that metaphor to Othman’s contemporaries is merely the lens through which the works by the five selected composers can be viewed in order to analyse and understand the cultural elements imbedded in the creative works of each composer.



Figure i.1. Indian *rojak* (Gan 2017)



Figure i.2. Indian *rojak* (Liow 2017)



Figure i.3. Benny *rojak istimewa* (The Halal Food Blog 2015)



Figure i.4. Penang *rojak* (M. Wong 2011)

Cultural Assimilation

Multiple terms have been used to describe the integration process when different ethnic groups coexist, particularly in the field of cultural sociology; these include, among others, acculturation, cultural syncretism, cultural synthesis, and cultural hybridisation. Due to the history of colonialism, which initiated and accelerated the globalisation process, many of these terms carry negative or derogatory connotations. While, in the past, the different terminologies had, to some extent, distinct definitions, increasing globalisation and the evolution of societies has blurred the fine line between these terminologies. For the purpose of this research, the term cultural assimilation is used to depict the unique and complex culture of Malaysia and, more specifically, of Malaysian contemporary music.

According to Boyer (2001: 3032), the term cultural assimilation is employed to describe the scenario where a group ‘gradually acquires’ characteristics of ‘a larger society’s repertoire of concepts and norms’. This is in contrast to other sociological concepts such as syncretism, which is described as ‘the synthetic cultural productions’ created by the ‘coming together of diasporic cultures’ (Buchanan 2010: 463), or acculturation, whereby ‘one cultural system conquers the minds of an individual or group’ (Boyer 2001: 3032). Although cultural assimilation, like many other cultural-related terms, is burdened by the historic connotation of colonialism, it has become an accepted term in many countries around the world, including Australia and the United States.

While the term ‘assimilation’ has, over time, gained negative connotations in certain contexts, such as in relation to the Australian government policies in the 1960s regarding indigenous people (Australians Together n.d.), it remains a term that can be more generally recognised as a process by which an individual comes to fully understand and accept ideas. In the context of this study, it is used to describe the general process of understanding a mix of cultural ideas whereby composers explore this understanding through their creative outputs in such a way that components retain their own integrity in the mixture or, as Othman describes, in the salad mix of *rojak*. It should be noted that the assimilation discussed in this research is circumstantial, not forced.

Various cultural phenomena in Malaysia, including cuisines, spiritual practices, festivities and customs, as well as cinema and film, exemplify the more positive and circumstantial cultural assimilation to which Othman refers in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. As will

be demonstrated in this study, such cultural assimilation is found in the Malaysian contemporary music scene.

Malaysian Contemporary Music

The third key term is Malaysian contemporary music. ‘Malaysian contemporary music’ is the most common term (Ang 2002; Lie 2003, 2013), although other terms for the same style of music include ‘Malaysian contemporary art music’ (Matusky and Tan 2004, 2017), ‘Malaysian art music’ (Lam 2001; Siagian 2007) and Malaysian ‘new music’ (Baes 2011). This study will use the term ‘Malaysian contemporary music’ to refer to contemporary music written by Malaysian composers that are based on European-derived⁸ performance practices. It is important to note that the word Malaysian here does not signify any particular set of musical or cultural characteristics but is merely a geographical perspective. Detailed discussion on the development of Malaysian contemporary music can be found in Chapter 1.

The Composers

Five representative composers from Malaysia, from a pool of fifteen⁹, were chosen for this study based on the following criteria:

- (i) Each composer has a well-established musical career, both within their home country of Malaysia, and also internationally;
- (ii) No known studies have been undertaken on the assimilation of cultural elements in the works of the five selected composers;

⁸ The term European-derived music is used in this study to address the difficulties associated with the term Western. Other musicologists such as Born and Hesmondhalgh share the same struggle in terminology. In their book *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, they use the term ‘Western’ to ‘denote Europe and North America’ (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 47). They further explain that, while it is important to note that the idea of ‘Western music’ does exist, there is a strong underlying bias, based on inherent Western privilege, that views European and North American music as the default type of music, and other types of music as ‘residual’ or a satellite of the Western norm (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 47). To address this problematic terminology, this study will use the term non-European. Where a specific region or country can be named, for example, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Middle East etc, the specific terms will be applied.

⁹ The fifteen composers were: Kee Yong Chong, Vivian Chua, Syed Sharir Faisal Syed Hussain, CH Loh, Chong Lim Ng, Johan Awang Othman, Ahmad Muriz Che Rose, Hardesh Singh, Tazul Tajuddin, Poh Gek Tay, Tze Siew Teh, Adeline Wong, Kah Hoe Yii, Yuzaifullah Mohammad Yusof, and Mohammad Yaziz Zakaria. This pool was collated on the basis of data collected during fieldwork trips to Malaysia and Singapore in 2013 and 2014, together with an extensive literature review.

- (iii) The composers have been highly involved in the Malaysian contemporary music scene since the late 1990s and are still currently active;
- (iv) Each composer has played a pivotal role in the development of the current Malaysian contemporary music scene;
- (v) The current locations of these composers and their willingness to participate in this research project;
- (vi) Ease of access to musical scores and recordings.

The five composers selected were Kee Yong Chong (b.1971), Chong Lim Ng (b.1972), Tazul Izan Tajuddin (b.1969), Kah Hoe Yii (b.1970), and Johan Awang Othman (b.1969). It should be noted that the gender of the composers was not one of the criteria considered during the selection process. The result, that all selected composers are male, was not a deliberate act. Undeniably though, there are more male composers (11) than female composers (4) in the pool of fifteen, which reflects the gender imbalance across the international contemporary music scene. Of the four female composers listed in the pool, only Tze Siew Teh (b.1971) and Adeline Wong (b.1975) remain highly active within the current Malaysian contemporary music scene. The former currently resides in China, making her logistically less accessible (SMCC 2017a). Despite extensive efforts, attempts to obtain musical scores by Wong that are relevant to this study have been unsuccessful. As such, while there are valid reasons why no female composers were selected, the gender imbalance within the group of five composers is acknowledged. The pool of 15 includes six composers of Malay ethnicity, eight composers of Chinese ethnicity and one composer of Indian ethnicity. The reason for this imbalance is not within the scope of this research, although it is an area of Malaysian contemporary music that requires further study.

Compositions were selected with some assistance from the composers. As the focus of this research is the innovative ways in which composers have integrated cultural elements into the compositions, the selected works were chosen as they are known to contain cultural elements. Accessibility of the musical scores and recordings was also taken into account when selecting works for this study. Table i.1 presents a list of the 29 compositions examined in this study.

Table i.1. List of the 29 compositions examined in this study

Composers	Compositions	Year Composed
Chong	<i>Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree</i> for flute (also piccolo, alto flute, Thai-gong and tam-tam), clarinet in B \flat (also bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano	2002
	<i>I Hear the Wind Calling</i> for ensemble	2003
	<i>Monodrama</i> for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic	2004
	<i>Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer</i> – for <i>sheng</i> , <i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> and 10 western instruments	2005
	<i>Shui.Mo</i> [水.墨] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (<i>erhu</i> , <i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> & <i>sheng</i>) and orchestra	2007
	<i>Yuan-He</i> [源-和] Concerto for 5 Chinese instruments and 5 western instruments	2010
	<i>Xun Feng</i> [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (<i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> , <i>dizi</i> & <i>sheng</i>) and Chinese orchestra	2013
Ng	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos</i>	2004
	<i>Xiang</i> for orchestra	2006-2007
	<i>Rimba</i> for chamber orchestra	2006-2007
	<i>Amorphous</i> for string orchestra	2009
	<i>A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest</i> for solo piano	2009
	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos II</i>	2009
	<i>Shadows</i> for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment	2011
Othman	<i>ittar</i> for chamber orchestra	2003
	<i>topeng I</i> for orchestra	2004
	<i>whose shadow would fall on</i> for trombone and piano	2011
Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i> for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra	2001
	<i>Gamelbati III</i> for string quartet	2005
	<i>Azan</i> [Call for Prayer] for mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players	2007
	<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i> [A Malay Poem IV] for violin, cello and piano	2011
	<i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i> for solo flute	2013
Yii	<i>Bayang</i> for <i>wayang kulit</i> and Chinese orchestra	2008
	<i>Gongan</i> for oboe and piano	2008
	<i>Timang Burung</i> for solo piano	2009
	<i>Wild Cursive</i> [狂草] for <i>zhongruan</i> and string trio	2009
	<i>My Spirit is Dancing!</i> for solo piano	2010
	<i>My Spirit is Chanting</i> for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions	2011
	<i>My Ears are Still Ringing</i> for flute and alto sax	2011, revised 2012

Literature Review

Malaysian contemporary music is still in its infancy, while the process of assimilation is ongoing. This means that Malaysian compositions are ideal case studies for demonstrating the process of cultural assimilation within the context of a *kebudayaan rojak* [rojak culture]. Despite the growing reputation of Malaysian contemporary music within Malaysia and internationally, there has been a lack of research into this subject. One of the few, yet important, books concerning the music of Malaysia is *The Music of Malaysia: The Classical, Folk and Syncretic Traditions*, by Patricia Matusky and Sooi Beng Tan, first published in 2004, with the second edition released in 2017. Chapter 6 of the book offers an overview of the development of Malaysian contemporary music since the middle of the 20th century. The chapter also briefly discusses several compositions by various composers such as Razak Abdul Aziz, Valerie Ross, Johan Othman, Minni Ang Kim Hui, Sooi Beng Tan, Kah Hoe Yii, Chong Lim Ng, Tazul Tajuddin, Kee Yong Chong, Adeline Wong, Hardesh Singh, and Sunetra Fernando. It highlighted the contemporary music scene, especially in the 1980s and 90s. Matusky and Tan (2017: n.p.) observed that composers during this period:

initiated the process of developing a new musical style that reflects their own personal taste and, at same time, attempts to maintain a continuity in establishing an Asian and, indeed, a Malaysian identity.

This study agrees with the observation by Matusky and Tan that Malaysian composers draw inspiration from ‘all cultures of the world’, but particularly cultures closest to their heart and home, namely Southeast Asian ‘aesthetics and sensibilities’ (Matusky and Tan 2004: 393-394; 2017: n.p.). The writers conclude that although European-derived music practices continue to influence Malaysian music, ‘the regional genre, forms, tonalities, and Asian aesthetics have become its foundation’ (Matusky and Tan 2017: n.p.). It is these ‘Asian aesthetics’ that are the focus of this study.

Similarly, Chapter 2 of Minni Ang’s 2002 book *An Introduction to Malaysian Music* lists some of the active Malaysian composers at the time of publication. Ang acknowledges that much research still needs to be carried out on individual Malaysian contemporary composers and their works (Ang 2002: 13).

Another resource of importance to this study is Volume 8 of *The Encyclopaedia of Malaysia* (2004), edited by Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof, which focuses on performing arts in Malaysia. The

section on contemporary music, pages 122 to 123, by Patricia Matusky presents a brief introduction to contemporary music, noting that Malaysian contemporary music began in the mid-20th century. This chapter also provides vital information on the development of this genre throughout the late 20th century.

Two CDs have provided important sound recordings of selected Malaysian compositions. The first CD, *Faith, Hope & Chaos: Malaysian Contemporary Music Vol 1*, released in January 2008, consists of 12 compositions by various composers including Kee Yong Chong, C.H. Loh, Chong Lim Ng, Johan Othman, Saidah Rastam, Hardesh Singh, Tazul Tajuddin, Adeline Wong, and Kah Hoe Yii. The second CD, entitled *Interweaves: 6 Works by Malaysian Women Composers*, was released in October 2016 and features works by Jessica Cho, Isabella Pek, Jyatsna Prakash, and Adeline Wong. Due to the lack of officially released recordings of Malaysian compositions, both CDs, as well as their accompanying notes, serve as vital initial points of reference for investigating Malaysian contemporary compositions.

To date, there are seven known dissertations written about Malaysian contemporary composers, by Lam (2000), Tajuddin (2002), Chan (2005), Siagian (2007), Dainal (2013), Khoo (2014) and Chong (2016). Lam's M.Sc. dissertation *Art Music Composition in Malaysia: A Focus on Three Composers*, completed at the Universiti Putra Malaysia, was among the first known literature that focused on individual composers. She documented the works of three composers – Minni Ang, Cheong Jan Chan and Valerie Ross. Lam's (2000: iii) research results indicated that:

there is yet no common direction or trend that exists in the field of art music composition in Malaysia...With the establishment of tertiary programs in music and support from government and private sector, more Malaysian art music is projected to be composed in future, leading to a trend that should slowly emerge in the field of Malaysian art music composition.

This study now argues that, in the intervening years since Lam's first publication, a common trend has emerged in the Malaysian contemporary music scene, specifically with regard to the assimilation of cultural elements within compositions by Malaysian composers.

The 2002 Ph.D. thesis *Music Compositions with Commentary: A Study of Arabesque* was completed by Tazul Tajuddin, one of the selected composers of this study, at the University of

Sussex. Neither this thesis nor its abstract is readily available. However, based on the limited information that is available, it is known that he provides discussion on the influence that Islamic geometric art has on his compositions and in particular his ‘*Arabesque*’ compositional series (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 19 February, 2013).

Chan’s 2005 Ph.D. thesis *Composing Race and Nation: Intercultural Music and Postcolonial Identities in Malaysia and Singapore*, awarded by the Australian National University, ‘examines the process of hybridity in intercultural music and its deployment as sites for the politics of identity, of both racial and national, in a cross-cultural context in contemporary Malaysia and Singapore’ (Chan 2005: ii). The study focuses on Saidah Rastam’s *Lapangan Ya-Ya-Ya*, Sunetra Fernando’s *10-sen*, Phoon Yew Tien’s *Nü Wa*, and Philip Tan’s *A White Crescent and Five White Stars*. Chan provides score analysis of the four selected works and the ways in which the different identities are embedded into the four compositions.

Siagian’s 2007 DMA thesis *Selected Solo Piano Works by Contemporary Malaysian and Indonesian Composers from 1979 to 2007: An Introduction*, completed at the University of Oklahoma, specifically focuses on solo piano works by four Malaysian composers and three Indonesian composers, though did not focus on aspects of cultural assimilation. The Malaysian subjects of Siagian’s work were Kee Yong Chong’s *Metamorphosis III* (2001), Chong Lim Ng’s *Two Preludes* (1999), Tazul Tajuddin’s *Torrent of Images* (2003-2005) and Chee-Hwa Tan’s *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1994) and *Through the Windowpane* (2005). Siagian (2007: 92-93) also questioned the composers on the future of contemporary music in Malaysia and Indonesia, and observed that:

The four Malaysian composers are somewhat more vocal. Chong makes a comparison with the more recently progressive art scene in neighboring [*sic*] Singapore and mentions the progressive and supportive attributed of the Gaudeamus contemporary music foundation in the Netherlands.

Tajuddin...seems to agree with much of what Chong is saying: “In Malaysia, serious contemporary music is new and relatively unknown. If the government and cultural institutions would be more supportive and serious about promoting contemporary music, the future [for musicians] would be better.”

Ng takes a more moderate approach, “Although there’s definitely room for improvement, today there are more opportunities for ‘new music’ here,” referring to the recent

formation of the Malaysian Philharmonic and a newly formed music society for composers.

Since then, these composers, in particular Chong and Tajuddin, have taken up the significant task of promoting, supporting and expanding the Malaysian contemporary music scene. Along with other Malaysian colleagues, they formed the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC) in 2010 and have since organised the highly successful annual Malaysian Composers Concert Series, now in its eighth year.

A relatively recent honours dissertation completed by Elvin Dainal at Universiti Teknologi MARA in 2013, *Woven Music: An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Used in Tenunan II by Tazul Izan Tajuddin*, investigated the compositional techniques used in Tajuddin's *Tenunan II*. This dissertation is especially noteworthy as the student was supervised by Tajuddin himself, and sheds light on the composer's compositional practices and approaches.

Khoo's *Selected Solo Piano Works by Contemporary Malaysian Composers: An Analysis*, completed in 2014 for her DMA degree at West Virginia University, focused on three selected compositions: Chong Lim Ng's *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* (Fragments from "Rimba"), Adeline Wong's *Paces* for solo piano and electronics, and Kah Hoe Yii's *My Spirit is Dancing!*. In her abstract, Khoo (2014) noted that:

these works show that Malaysian composers can be traditional and experimental, national and international at the same time. Most importantly, they reflect a common aspiration to incorporate and retain a certain quality or sound that defines these composers' identities and cultural origins, which is not necessarily determined by ethnicity or nationality. This is achieved by assimilating foreign knowledge and technique with local or regional influences and inspirations.

Although two of the works *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* and *My Spirit is Dancing!* in Khoo's study are also included in this study, analytical perspective differs. The pieces are selected in Khoo's study to serve as 'an introduction to the available range of solo piano literature', whereas the selection of works for this study is based on the examination of cultural assimilation.

The most recent study on Malaysian composers is the 2016 Ph.D. thesis by one of the selected composers of this study, Kee Yong Chong, awarded by the University of Huddersfield. Chong's *Multi-Layered Ethnic and Cultural Influences in My Musical Compositions* focuses on the influence of Chinese cultural and heritage on five of his compositions: *Shui.Mo* [水.墨] (2007), *Bie Ge* [別歌] (2012), *Xun Feng* [尋風] (2013), *Yun Yong* [雲湧] (2011) and *Timeless Echoes* (2010). The thesis also discussed Chong's compositional philosophy and approach to cross-cultural aesthetics.

Two of these works, *Shui.Mo* and *Xun Feng*, are also investigated in this study, albeit from an ethnomusicological perspective, which provides a different view to that of the composer. Chong's discussion of *Shui.Mo* largely concentrates on the influences of Hakka mountain songs and his nostalgic memory of the 'deep forests in Malaysia or the mountains in Southern China where [his] grandparents came from' (Chong 2016: 23), while the incorporation of Chinese folk tunes is examined in *Xun Feng*. This study, contrastingly, investigates the influence of Chinese calligraphy and painting in *Shui.Mo* and the use of Chinese orchestra and its instruments in *Xun Feng*.

Another composition discussed in both Chong's thesis and this study is *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer –*. This study considers the concept of metamorphosis, as well as the use of Chinese instruments in *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer –*, whereas the composer's thesis details his ideas of spatialisation and sonic mobility (Chong 2016: 86). While the focus of Chong's thesis is different from that of this study, it is nonetheless an extremely important reference that documents his compositional intentions and influences for these works.

Other studies related to Malaysian contemporary music include Huey Ching Chong's *The MPO Composers Forum and Its Impact on the Performance of Contemporary Western Classical Music by Malaysian Composers in Kuala Lumpur* (2009), and a 2017 journal article *String Quartets and Piano Trios by Two Malaysian Composers* by Yew Yoong Chong. Huey Ching Chong's writing provides details of the historical context for the establishment of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra Composers Forums and its impact on the Malaysian contemporary music scene, especially within the capital city, Kuala Lumpur. The more recent article by Yew Yoong Chong provides concise insights into Kee Yong Chong's compositions for string quartets, including *Huang Tu* [Yellow Dust] (1994), *Scar* (1999), *Silence Cosmos* (2005), *Inner Mirror* (2006) and *Yun Yong* [Clouds Surging] (2011), as well as Tazul

Tajuddin's *Gamelbati III* for string quartet (2005), and *Sebuah Pantun IV* for piano trio (2011). Both of the Tajuddin compositions examined in Yew Yoong Chong's article are also investigated in this study, again from the perspective of the assimilation of cultural elements in both works.

A review of the available literature reveals that there are many gaps in the research of Malaysian contemporary music and composers. This study aims to address one such gap, specifically in relation to cultural assimilation in the works of five selected Malaysian composers.

Analytical Methodology

This study uses critical ethnography and musical score analysis to examine the 29 compositions of the five selected composers. Fieldwork and interviews are a key research technique.¹⁰ Access to key figures¹¹ in the Malaysian contemporary music scene ensured that vital information could be collected concerning the development and future direction of Malaysian contemporary music. Interviews with each composer established important insights into their unique compositional methods, enabling an understanding of the motivations and inspirations behind their compositional careers and specific works. This was critical to unlocking the cultural elements assimilated into the selected works.

Fieldwork for this study included attendance at concert rehearsals and events organised by various Malaysian contemporary music societies. Such fieldwork was enlightening, as it reflected and substantiated statements made by interviewees about the broader issues of exposure, audience attendance, and the lack of quality performance musicians in the Malaysian contemporary music scene. These issues are not unique to Malaysia, but are common across many such scenes around the world. More positively, these rehearsals and events clearly displayed the continuing effort, commitment and passion that the organisers, composers and performers have for Malaysian contemporary music. Some of these events

¹⁰ Previous literature has established the validity of this approach. Such literature includes: *Fieldwork in the Ethnomusicological Past* (Bohlman 1997), *The Ethnomusicologist* (Hood 1971), *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-Three Discussions* (Nettl 2015), *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (Nettl 1964), *Towards a Mediation of Field Methods and Field Experience in Ethnomusicology* (Rice 2008), *The Ethnomusicologist and the Transmission of Tradition* (Shelemay 1996), and *Knowing Fieldwork* (Titon 2008).

¹¹ Important figures and rising stars within the field of Malaysian contemporary music, including Gerard Brophy, Jessica Cho, Kevin Field, Lena Lie, C.H. Loh, and Adeline Wong, have all been extraordinarily generous with their time, co-operation and willingness to be interviewed.

comprised not only established and upcoming Malaysian composers, but also composers within the wider Southeast Asia region, including Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. The concert rehearsals, in particular, provided insight into the ways in which each composer communicates to the performers the intentions and forces behind the work and, in return, the ways in which the performers interpret the information provided visually from the score and aurally from the composers. Critically, the fieldwork and interviews undertaken as part of this study allowed for access to selected music scores and audio recordings that would otherwise have been unavailable, including several unpublished musical scores. These primary sources are essential to the completion of this research, as critical analysis of the music scores is informed by data collected through these interviews and fieldwork.

A common feature of the musical score analysis of contemporary music is the flexibility and fluidity of the analytical method. In European-derived art music prior to the mid-20th century, significant musical elements such as key and modulations, time signature, form, and harmony are, to an extent, more easily identifiable based on composer, style/genre, and period/era. The analysis of contemporary music does not yet have a similar, established analytical framework that can be applied to this type of research. Therefore, this study used a four-stage analytical approach to the analysis of musical scores.

Firstly, recorded interviews were used to gain an understanding of the composer's background and philosophical ideas towards composition, as well as the motivations and inspirations behind individual compositions. Secondly, the audio/video recordings of compositions provided were listened to, initially without the score, taking note of any aurally distinctive features. This process was then repeated, while viewing the score and referring to the notes taken previously, now documenting any visual features. The third step was to analyse the work as a whole, considering the overall musical elements of the work including structure, key, and tempo. Finally, the score was investigated in great detail, considering, *inter alia*, harmony, chordal structure, pitch movement and selection, and symbolism.

Each work required a unique analytical approach, as the chosen works do not always share common musical traits. Each piece was analysed with an open and inquiring mind, backed by knowledge gained during fieldwork and interviews. Score excerpts are provided to support the analyses. After the critical analytical process, it was important to step back and look at the bigger picture of Malaysian contemporary music scene, and consider how these selected compositions fit within this context. It is at this point that the concept of *rojak* and cultural

mix comes into better focus. It should be noted that, inevitably, composers who have been educated in Europe, including the five composers of this study, are well-versed in European-derived musical practices. These practices merge with their locally-inspired compositional approaches. This is discussed as appropriate in the analyses of the works.

In the context of the discussions of Malaysia in the 21st century, the researcher has first-hand experience of the Malaysian multicultural society in which this music is created. Importantly, the researcher has also gained the perspective required to understand cultural practices that are different to those of the researcher's home country, as a result of having lived and been educated in Australia since 2007. This research stance and critical analytical approach is, therefore, both as an 'insider looking out' as well as 'outsider looking in' (Koskoff 1993).

Thesis Structure

The study comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 explains the historical background of the formation of Malaysia as a country, which created the conditions for cultural assimilation within the multicultural Malaysian communities. The chapter focuses on cultural assimilation, introduced at the beginning of this Introduction as the *rojak* phenomena, within the broader Malaysian context. The impact of Malaysia's long colonial history on various cultural communities resulted in the beginning of the process of assimilation, stimulated by cross-cultural interaction. Such *rojak*-ness is particularly evident in the cuisines, languages, spiritual practices, festivities and customs, cinema, and music of Malaysia, including Malaysian contemporary music. It further expands the discussion of cultural assimilation, specifically through the development of Malaysian contemporary music. The gradual changes and growth of Malaysian contemporary music from 1950 to the present are divided into four distinct time periods: 1950s to 70s, 1980s to 90s, late 1990s to 2007, and 2007 to the present.

Chapters 2 to 5 each address different cultural elements discovered in the *rojak* cultural assimilation phenomena in selected works of Malaysian contemporary composers. Chapter 2 examines the influences of Southeast Asian gamelan elements in the selected compositions, while Chapter 3 investigates other Southeast Asian elements including Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong* [Malaysian ancient theatre], *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet play] and Balinese *baris* dance. As this region includes Malaysia, it is understandable that most composers are drawn towards the local traditions, in music and beyond.

Chinese cultural elements are also important compositional inspirations amongst Malaysian composers, predominantly, but not limited to, Malaysian composers with Chinese ancestral heritage. Chapter 4 considers three Chinese Malaysian composers, Chong, Ng and Yii, who have investigated and drawn upon elements from the Chinese culture. The analytical results in this chapter highlight the use of iconic Chinese cultural elements such as Chinese calligraphy and painting, Chinese orchestra and its instruments, and Chinese philosophy.

Chapter 5 discusses cultural elements related to the spiritual practices of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Through analysis of six compositions by Ng, Tajuddin, and Othman, this chapter addresses the influences of Islamic call for prayer *azan*, Buddhist teachings of simplicity, recycle and reincarnation, and Christian symbolism. Analytical findings of this chapter illustrate the ways in which each composer embeds these spiritual practices into their works, employing compositional tools idiosyncratic to each composer.

This study concludes that the current Malaysian contemporary music trend is not homogenous, but is instead a demonstration of Othman's concept of a musical *rojak*. Through critical analysis of the selected works by the five influential Malaysian composers, each composer's approach to the assimilation of an array of cultural elements that create the musical mixture is identified, and insights into the recent developments of Malaysian contemporary music provided.

Chapter 1

Cultural Assimilation in the Malaysian Context

This chapter explores Malaysia's cultural assimilation and the ways in which this has evolved, leading Malaysia to become the highly-integrated multicultural society that it is today. During the time of the Malay Sultanates, who ruled from the 15th to 18th century, and the subsequent European colonisation in the 19th century, the vast majority of Malaysia's population comprised three main ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian, with the remaining population being European and Eurasian (Saw 2015). The different ethnic groups remained largely segregated under the British's colonial policy of 'divide and rule' (Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; and Jawan 2004). The pathway to gaining independence after World War II allowed the realisation of the important roles each ethnic group played in the formation of Malaysia. This realisation encouraged interaction and discussion between the different communities, and marked the beginning of the process of cultural assimilation. Van der Heide (2002: 21, 23) stated that:

the continually negotiated and contested cultural identities in Malaysia instead suggest a form of analysis that stresses cross-cultural and transtextual interactions. [...] Malaysia is a society crossed by lines of voluntary and forced connectedness (migration, trade, colonialism) that are expressed politically, religiously, socially and culturally. Consequently, any understanding of Malaysian culture must acknowledge its pluralist nature and not attempt to suppress those cultural forces that militate against particular versions of the nation.

This cross-cultural interaction stimulated the process of assimilation, the phenomenon whereby a group acquires traits of other society's cultures and norms. This process of assimilation is particularly evident in the cuisines, languages, spiritual practices, festivities and customs, cinema, and music of Malaysia. Nonetheless, compared to other world cultures that are rooted in long histories, such as China and Britain, Malaysia is a relatively young country. This assimilation process is, therefore, ongoing. Additionally, the pluralist nature of the country further amplifies the complication of such assimilation due to the underlying complex formation of each seemingly clear-cut major ethnic group: Malay, Chinese and Indian.

To fully appreciate the role of cultural assimilation in the context of Malaysian society, it is vital to first understand the historical and cultural formation of Malaysia. The five sections of this chapter detail key events that have directly or indirectly affected the process of cultural assimilation through the many cultural pursuits of 21st century Malaysia. The first and second sections provide an overview of the pre-colonial history of Malay, dating from the 15th century Malacca Sultanate to the colonisation by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, with attention drawn to significant pluralistic cultural and social events. The third section covers the Japanese Occupation during World War II and the subsequent return of the British to Malaya. The next section explains the efforts of the people of Malaya to obtain independence, and the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, with particular emphasis on the significant government policies regarding the negotiation of cultural identity and uniting the people of Malaysia. This is followed by a discussion of the effect of Malaysia's colonial history on a range of cultural elements in 21st century Malaysia.

1.1 The Malay Sultanate Kingdom of Malacca to the British Settlement in Penang (15th Century to 18th Century)

The genesis of modern Malaysia can be traced back to the 15th century when the Malay prince Parameswara¹² founded the Malay Sultanate Kingdom of Malacca (Malay: *Melaka*). Due to its strategic location¹³, Malacca thrived as a trading centre and flourished to become, in the words of Thome Pires, 'of such importance and profit that it seems to me it has no equal in the world' (Pires, Cortesao, and Rodrigues [1512-1515] 1944: 285). The Malacca Malay language, precursor to the official language of modern Malaysia, was used as a lingua franca during the Malacca Sultanate. Subsequently, a literary language was established in Malacca. The establishment of Malacca as an international entrepôt led to it becoming increasingly multicultural as a result of migration and marriages between international traders and locals (Clammer 1979; Tan 1994). The cosmopolitan population of Malacca, which consisted of Chinese, Javanese, Acehnese (the people from the region of Aceh, Indonesia), *Peranakan* Chinese¹⁴ and Indians, laid the foundation for modern-day multicultural Malaysia.

¹² Due to the lack of documentation, little is known about Parameswara except that he was a prince of Palembang who found refuge in Malacca after murdering the ruler of Temasik (modern-day Singapore).

¹³ Malacca is located at the narrowest part of the Malacca Straits, a major trade route of the 15th century, that is protected from monsoons and is therefore accessible in all seasons.

¹⁴ Marriages between the international traders and the local population created a new community called the *Peranakan* Chinese, also known as *Baba-Nyonya*. *Peranakan* Chinese commonly refers to the ethnic Chinese who settled in Malacca during the 15th and 16th centuries and adopted, and adapted, the local culture. They served a very important role as the communication bridge between the foreign traders and the locals, due to their

The conquests by the Portuguese in 1511 and, subsequently, by the Dutch in 1641, weakened the importance of Malacca as a trading centre due to the imposition of harsh penalties and strict restraints on international trades. Muslim traders, additionally, were dissuaded from frequenting Malacca as a result of its transformation from a Muslim port to a Christian one. The fall of Malacca saw the rise of four Malay empires: the Acehnese Empire¹⁵, the Sultanate Kingdom of Johor¹⁶, the Kingdom of Kedah¹⁷, and the Bugis¹⁸. These four Empires remained in constant conflict as they fought to dominate the archipelago (Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Hooker 2003; Ooi 2009).

The dramatic increase in wealth of the Dutch and the Malay kingdoms through trading of gold, tin and spices, which were highly sought after by the European nations, raised the interest of another European empire – the British – to be involved in the trades along the Malacca Straits. The failure of the Bencoolen¹⁹ pepper plantations further escalated the need for the British, represented by the English East India Company (EEIC), to establish a naval base in the archipelago. Their opportunity came when the Sultan of Kedah offered the British a base in return for protection from the Bugis and the Acehnese in 1771, which the British rejected, and again in 1784 due to the possibility of warfare with other colonial powers in the region. The British eventually accepted the offer and, in 1786, established an EEIC trading post, led by Captain Francis Light (1740-1794), an English country trader, on the island of Penang. The Sultan of Kedah ceded Penang to the British five years later in 1791, marking the beginning of Britain's control over the Malay Archipelago (Kennedy 1993; Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Ooi 2009).

fluency in Malay and English together with their understanding of Malay culture. While many *Peranakan* Chinese did not speak Chinese, they were proud of their Chinese ethnic identity. However, this ambiguous position began to change during the British colonisation, as they discovered, or felt, the need to be associated with either the Malay or the Chinese ethnic community at a time when assimilation between ethnic groups was not encouraged (Clammer 1979).

¹⁵ The Acehnese Empire was considered to be the heir of Malacca in terms of power and trade in the early 17th century (Baker 2000).

¹⁶ The Kingdom of Johor was the legitimate heir to Malacca as it was founded by the last Sultan of Malacca, Sultan Mahmud (Baker 2000).

¹⁷ The Kingdom of Kedah emerged around the same time as Malacca. While not as well-known as Malacca, it had a similarly cosmopolitan population due to its trading activities.

¹⁸ Bugis were an ethnic group from South Sulawesi, Indonesia

¹⁹ Bencoolen was a region, now known as Bengkulu, in Sumatra, Indonesia.

1.2 British Colonisation and the Impact on Malayan Multicultural Society (19th Century to 1941)

Despite efforts by the British to establish trading along the Malacca Straits, local merchants were forbidden to trade with the British due to a Dutch monopoly policy. An 1819 treaty between the EEIC, led by British statesman Sir Thomas Stamford Bingley Raffles (1781-1826), and Sultan Husain Shah of Johor, allowed the company to establish an outpost in Singapore. The British then declared Singapore as a free port, luring traders, labourers and craftsmen from Malacca to Singapore (Kennedy 1993; Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Hooker 2003; Ooi 2009). Inevitably, this ignited substantial tensions with the Dutch, who found that the free port status of Singapore threatened their trading business in Malacca. Following negotiations between the European powers, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of London was signed in 1824 to resolve the jurisdictional issue in the region. The treaty divided the land on each side of the Malacca Straits between Britain and the Netherlands. As a result, Bencoolen was exchanged for Malacca, and the British now controlled the three main ports of the straits – Penang, Malacca and Singapore – all of which were declared as free ports to compete with other ports in the region. A new group of territories called the Straits Settlements, administered from Penang and later Singapore, was created and a council appointed to manage them (Kennedy 1993; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Hooker 2003; Ooi 2009).

Although the British now controlled and monopolised trade in the Malay Peninsula, each Malay state was generally isolated and self-contained. While there were domestic uprisings and internal wars within each state, there was little dispute between the states themselves (Kennedy 1993). In contrast to the British-colonised Malay Peninsula, the two northern states on the island of Borneo, Sarawak and Sabah, were still under the control of private English parties: the Brooke government²⁰ and the British North Borneo Chartered Company²¹ respectively. Both states remained indirectly as British colonies until 1963, when they were included in Malaya to form Malaysia (Kennedy 1993; Baker 2000; Ooi 2009).

²⁰ The Brooke government of Sarawak was founded by Sir James Brooke (1803-1868), an English adventurer who aided in suppressing an anti-Brunei uprising. In return he was granted with the title of 'rajah' (governor) of Sarawak.

²¹ The events that led to the creation of the British North Borneo Chartered Company began in 1865, when Claude Lee Moses bought the northern half of North Borneo. The territory was then sold to businessmen Joseph W. Torrey, Thomas B. Harris and their Chinese partners and then sold again to Baron Gustav von Overbeck. Overbeck collaborated with Alfred Dent to expand the territory through a cession from the Sultan of Brunei. In 1880, Overbeck sold his interests in the land to Dent, who then combined the land parcels and founded the British North Borneo Chartered Company to manage it.

The British policy of non-involvement in the internal affairs of the Malay states, preferring to focus solely on making money, proved to be unrealistic when internal disputes²² affected commerce. This led to the 1874 Pangkor Engagement²³ which marked a crucial turning point in Anglo-Malay relations. Based on the Pangkor treaty, each Malay state implemented the British Residential system, whereby the Malay Sultans had to consult the British Resident²⁴ on all dealings, with the exception of affairs related to Malay customs and Islam. Perak was the first state to accept this system, followed by Selangor, Pahang and Sungai Ujong (modern-day Negeri Sembilan), known together as the Federated Malay States (FMS) and managed under a unified administration headquartered in Kuala Lumpur. Five other Malay states, including Perlis, Kedah, Johor, Kelantan and Terengganu, were grouped as the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). Unlike the FMS, the UMS were not rationalised under one administration (Kennedy 1993; Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Ooi 2009). The free port status and government policies of the Straits Settlement of Penang, Malacca and Singapore remained the same, where Singapore is the administrative centre. The term 'Malaya' then became commonly used to refer to the states of the Malay Peninsula, including FMS, UMS and the Straits Settlement (Kennedy 1993; Ooi 2009).

In addition to intervening in the internal affairs of the Malay states, the British also encouraged the migration of foreign workers due to growing trade and improving economies in all three ports of the Straits Settlement. The discovery of tin fields and subsequent large-scale tin-mining further increased the number of Chinese migrants, mainly miners, who came to work at the mining sites. While the high number of Chinese migrants significantly changed the balance of population in some Malay states, most had little interest in being involved in the Malay political administration, with the communities largely remaining segregated. At the end of the 19th century, the Malay Peninsula saw a rise in Indian migration to meet the need for workers in the government industry and plantation agricultural fields, primarily rubber and palm oil plantations. The Indians, too, at this stage, had little interest in the Malay political administration. This increase in migration in the final decades of the 19th century marked the

²² These disputes include the Pahang Civil War (1857-1863) between two brothers over the succession to the throne; the Sungai Ujong (1850s-1870s) and Larut (1861-1874) Wars, over control of various tin fields; the Penang Riots, where a Hokkien-Hakka-Acehnese integration collided with a Cantonese-Kedah-Malay confederation over the domination of George Town; the Klang War (1867-1873), again fought between two brothers, over the succession to the throne of Selangor.

²³ Also called 'Pangkor Treaty' or 'Treaty of Pangkor' in various sources (Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Kennedy 1993).

²⁴ The British Resident oversaw all matters of the state except those relating to Islamic and Malay traditions (Andaya and Andaya 2001).

first step towards the beginning of a multicultural society which shaped the foundation of modern-day multicultural Malaysia.

Baker (2000), Andaya and Andaya (2001), and Jawan (2004) have all argued that the British 'divide and rule' policy towards this emerging multicultural society resulted in serious economic and political inequalities. The Malays were, in the eyes of the British, considered to be lazy and unwilling to work for wages, and were therefore unsuitable to be included in the labour pool in the colonial economy (Swettenham 1907, 1921; Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001). As a result, they were limited to work in agriculture and fishing. Despite the vocational education provided by the British, the Malays found it hard to become more productive due to Islamic inheritance laws, under which lands are divided into smaller units. Their lack of sufficient resources and the lack of knowledge about the economy and market system subsequently put them in the most disadvantaged position, causing their income level to be one of the lowest in Malaya. In contrast, the Chinese migrants worked in tin mines, plantations and tax collection, particularly in the FMS and Straits Settlements. Most of the Chinese migrants settled in major mining towns, such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Penang, Singapore and Johor Bharu and, unsurprisingly, became financially successful through the highly profitable mining economy (Baker 2000). Some Indians were recruited into working in the government and private sectors, while others worked as labourers in plantation industries. Although they did not prosper like the Chinese, their essential needs were met.

During this period, the different ethnic groups remained generally segregated. The British managed the exportations of raw materials, the Malays were involved mostly in the agricultural food production, the Chinese established themselves in major cities and towns, and the Indians were generally divided between cities and plantations. There was little opportunity for the different ethnic groups to interact and integrate.

1.3 Japanese Occupation and Post-World War II British Malaya (1941 to 1957)

The Japanese invasion of Malaya in 1941, during World War II, changed the relationship between the country's ethnic communities. The invasion, in December 1941, saw battle between Japanese and British forces, with the British withdrawing from the country over the subsequent two months, leaving the Japanese as the occupying power. The three main ethnic

communities of the time, Malay, Chinese and Indian, reacted differently to the Japanese Occupation. The relationship between the Chinese and Malay before the Japanese Occupation was, broadly speaking, peaceful as they had little direct contact or interaction with each other.

The Occupation²⁵, however, changed this rapport. The existing polarisation between communities, the result of the British 'divide and rule' policy, was further enhanced due to the different allegiances and expectations about the outcome of the war, which also heightened the suspicions and mistrust between ethnic groups. At the same time, the Chinese and Indian migrants, who previously had little interest in the Malay political administration, and saw Malaya merely as a place to earn a living to support their families in China and India, were starting to view Malaya as their home. The concept of Malaya as home for the Indian and Chinese migrants began to take root at this time.

After Japan's cessation of war in 1945, the British were welcomed back by the people of Malaya, despite the British failure to protect them four years earlier. Upon returning to Malaya, the British Colonial Office developed a new policy of Malayan Union, to be implemented after order was resumed in Malaya. The policy stated three major alterations to the pre-Japanese Occupation Malaya policy:

- (i) The Malayan Union would now consist of all nine states of the FMS and UMS, as well as Penang and Malacca, while Singapore was excluded and would remain as a British colony;
- (ii) The sovereignty of the Malay Sultans would be fully transferred to the British Crown, including on issues relating to religious affairs; and
- (iii) Citizenship would be based on the concept of *jus soli*, whereby those born in Malaya would automatically have Malayan citizenship. Alongside naturalised citizens, citizens by *jus soli* would have equal rights. This proposition was the first to suggest the unification of all Malay states.

²⁵ On the one hand, perhaps as revenge, the British-trained-Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), made up of predominantly Chinese members, adopted tactics resembling those of the Japanese. They searched and ruthlessly punished people whom they regarded as Japanese collaborators. On the other hand, a minority group of Malay believed that the Japanese would lead them to independence and secure the Malays a privileged position in their independent Malaya. As a reaction to the harshness and political stance of the MPAJA, this Malay group launched attacks on the, mainly Chinese, anti-Japanese groups. In some places, the Chinese were the aggressors, while in other areas, the Malays were the assailants. The suspicion and mistrust between ethnic groups heightened as a result of the hardship and suffering during the Occupation. It also caused enmity that is believed to have lasted well into the 1960s and 1970s (Kennedy 1993; Baker 2000; Hooker 2003; Ooi 2009). Parallel to the promises made by the Japanese to the Malays, the Indians were led to believe that India would gain independence once the British were defeated (Baker 2000). The Indians, therefore, allied with the Japanese to fight against the British. However, their hopes for a better life became disillusioned when the unemployment of Indians increased among plantation workers, who were forced to build railroads from Thailand to Burma during the Occupation, leading to many deaths.

Due to the loss of their special privileged rights²⁶, this policy was strongly opposed by the Malays. This led to a highly significant event in the history of Malaya: the formation of United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in 1946. This was the first time that all Malays, including aristocrats, elites, radicals, civil servants, and Islamic leaders, were united in a political movement. After tense negotiations between the British, representatives of UMNO and representatives from different ethnic groups, the Federation of Malaya was proposed, and drafted in 1948. It adopted the proposal to create a confederation consisting of FMS, UMS, Penang and Malacca from the Straits Settlement, and excluding Singapore. A British High Commissioner would lead the federal government in Kuala Lumpur while the Malay Sultans remained as the leaders of their respective state governments. Penang and Malacca were each assigned a British Governor. The nine Sultans, two Governors and the High Commissioner met annually to discuss important issues that arose. The British Parliament gave its commitment to Malaya's Independence in April 1949, conditional upon the establishment of racial harmony, and the suppression of communism and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).

In 1954, three major political parties representing the three main ethnic groups collaborated to form the Alliance Party. It included the UMNO, who were mainly Malays, the Malayan (Malaysian) Chinese Association (MCA)²⁷ which spoke for the non-communist Chinese, and the Malayan (Malaysian) Indian Congress (MIC)²⁸ representing the Indians. The Alliance Party swept into power during the 1955 pre-independence general election, winning 51 of the 52 seats. Great effort was put into drafting the Constitution of Malaya, focusing on building national identity as well as enhancing ethnic integration, cultural assimilation and the sense of belonging. On the 31st August 1957, Tunku Abdul Rahman²⁹, Malaya's first Prime Minister, proclaimed the independence of Malaya (Kennedy 1993; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Hooker 2003; Cheah 2004; Ooi 2009). The Alliance Party, later renamed as National Front³⁰ [*Barisan Nasional*], has remained as the ruling government since gaining independence.

²⁶ The special privileged rights was an affirmative action policy by which land reservations, government employment quotas, scholarships and certain business licenses were reserved for the exclusive benefit of the Malays (Andaya and Andaya 2001).

²⁷ MCA, a non-communist Chinese-oriented party, was established in 1949 to assist newly-settled Chinese during the post-Japanese Occupation period.

²⁸ MIC was established in 1946. It initially looked to India for direction but switched its focus to Malaya/Malaysia in the 1950s, in order to represent the interests of Indians in Malaya/Malaysia.

²⁹ Tunku Abdul Rahman was a Prince of Kedah who won a scholarship to further his studies at Cambridge University. He took over leadership from Dato Onn Bin Ja'afar in 1951.

³⁰ It should be noted that the National Front of Malaysia is not related to the right wing National Front parties in Australia and Europe.

1.4 Emergence of a Malaysian Nation State and Negotiation of Malaysian Cultural Identity (1957 to present)

The achievement of independence in 1957 raised further questions about the formation of a new nation, predominantly with regard to establishing an integrated Malaya where citizens are loyal to the nation, rather than towards their own ethnic communities. This goal of ethnic integration was made more complex by the formation of Malaysia, on 16th September 1963, comprising Malaya, Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore. Provisions were included in the Federation of Malaysia whereby the indigenous populations of Sarawak and Sabah would enjoy the special privileges and, together with the Malays, were categorised as *bumiputeras*³¹ [son(s) of the soil]. As documented by Nagata (1979: 221), Malaysia's constitutional definition of Malay 'permits all Muslims [despite ethnicity]... Arabs, Pakistanis, Ceylonese... [and] aboriginal and tribal population...to qualify as Malays'.

It was also agreed that Malay would be the national language and Islam would be the official religion. The Malays, as a group, consequently epitomised a form of hybrid ethnicity. The diversity of subgroups led to multiple languages being spoken within the Malay communities. As stated by Hashim (2007: 56), 'the Austronesian speakers are the Malays in West Malaysia who speak Malay and the Kadazans of Sabah and Dayaks of Sarawak who speak Kadazan and Iban respectively'. In fact, the Malay language itself is the hybridised product of a long process of assimilation. The Malay language has various dialects arising from geographical location and sociocultural diversity, and borrows words from many other languages, including Sanskrit, Portuguese, Persian, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hindi, Dutch, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and English. Despite the official status of the Malay language, other languages, particularly the Chinese and Tamil languages, are still widely spoken throughout the respective communities. As with the Malay-speaking population, the Chinese language spoken in Malaysia is also formed by a variety of dialectal groups, including the Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, and Hainanese. The Indians are equally heterogeneous: Hashim (2007: 57) identified that the majority of Indians are 'Tamil speaking followed by the Malayalis, Telugus, Punjabis, Gujeratis and Singhalese'.

Having been a multicultural nation since the time of the Malacca Sultanate, it is inevitable that such linguistic assimilations are not restricted to a particular ethnic community. It is noted that the Chinese language spoken locally in Malaysia contains influences from the

³¹ In some literature, the term *bumiputera* is also written as *bumiputra*.

Malay and English languages. Hashim (2007: 60) observed that ‘loan words’ can be found in the ‘main languages in Malaysia’. Likewise, Malay terms are incorporated into the Tamil language used in Malaysia. This mix of languages is often known as ‘*bahasa rojak*’³² [mixed language], a hybrid pidgin that involved the main languages spoken in Malaysia, including English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil (Khoo n.d.). Examples of these *rojak* language are ‘*Mat Salleh*’, ‘*Mat Rempit*’, ‘*steamboat*’ and ‘*kiasu*’, which respectively mean ‘Caucasian’, ‘individuals who participate in illegal street racing’, ‘hotpot’ and ‘fear of failing’. The root of each word is still identifiable: the first two words, ‘*Mat Salleh*’ [Caucasian] and ‘*Mat Rempit*’ [individuals who participate in illegal street racing], are of Malay origin and are widely accepted as standard terms in Malaysia. The third word, ‘*steamboat*’ is adapted from the English language to refer to the Chinese hotpot, and the fourth, ‘*kiasu*’ [fear of failing], is of Hokkien origin and is more commonly used in informal situations.

The broader implication of the ‘special privilege’ condition in Malaysia is not as harmonious as one may infer from the assimilation of languages. Despite efforts to build a national identity prior to the independence of Malaysia, it was the special conditions for *bumiputeras*, which were included in the Federation of Malaysia, that raised ethnic consciousness in Malaysia. For example, government policies by subsequent Prime Ministers heavily emphasised the economic development of Malays. Governments set up funds to collaborate with investment companies to purchase ownerships in the name of the Malay community, where shares are only available for Malays. Racial quotas were set for entry into national institutions of higher learning. In 2001, Chinese Malaysians accounted for almost 30% of the population but it was estimated that they constituted less than 10% of student numbers at the national universities (Cohen 2001; Lee 2009). Consequently, non-Malay parents often send their children abroad to further their studies, to countries such as Australia, Britain and United States, where they receive education from more established institutions (Baker 2000). The recent trend is that these educated students do not return to Malaysia due to the better opportunities open to them overseas. These policies were executed to the detriment of other ethnic groups, which led to more racial disintegration and disorder. This tension and unrest is particularly evident in two important historical events: the withdrawal of Singapore from the

³² There is an ongoing discourse on the subject of *bahasa rojak* as a contamination and threat to the Malay language in Malaysia, while some argue that *bahasa rojak* is perhaps an expression of Malaysian cultural identity.

Federation of Malaysia in 1965³³, and the post-election riots on 13th May, 1969³⁴, in which many lives were lost.

The 13th May events led to the resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman from his role as the first Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaysia. Tun Abdul Razak³⁵ subsequently took over as Malaysia's second Prime Minister from 1970 to 1976. The ethnic disturbance of 1969 forced the government to re-evaluate its five-year Malaysian (pre-1957: Malaya) Plan. The government had hoped to achieve two aims through the Malaysian Plan: zero poverty³⁶, and the elimination of the association of certain ethnic groups with certain economical functions. In order to achieve the second aim, the Razak government, now known as *Barisan Nasional*³⁷, promoted ethnic integrity and cultural assimilation through the three main principles of their National Culture Policy: (i) the core of Malaysian national culture is based on the cultures of the people indigenous to the region; (ii) elements of other cultures can be accepted in the formation of national culture through appropriation and suitable adaptation; and (iii) Islam will be an important element of Malaysian national culture (Tan 1994; Department of Information 2012). These three values remain at the core of Malaysian national culture today.

³³ In 1965, the leader of the Singapore People's Action Party (PAP)³³, Kuan Yew Lee, decided to fight for a 'Malaysian Malaysia' as opposed to a 'Malay Malaysia', a policy which he demanded to be implemented by the UMNO-dominated Alliance government. Lee challenged the special rights and privileges of the *bumiputeras*, thus evoking a strong reaction among the privileged. This political platform also heightened the struggle for union between the non-*bumiputeras* and the *bumiputeras*. After considering the threat of possible violence, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaysia, made the decision to withdraw Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia. Despite further efforts to unite the different ethnicities in Malaysia after the withdrawal of Singapore, tensions between the groups grew, particularly after the decision to abolish Chinese-language secondary schools, a policy which threatened the survival of the Chinese heritage. Additionally, the growth of Malay political propaganda-centred literature depicting 'poor Malay' and 'rich Chinese' heightened fears among the Malays at the idea of Chinese economic dominance (Andaya and Andaya 2001; Tan 1994).

³⁴ The events of 13th May, 1969 still haunt Malaysians today. It has proved to be a watershed in modern Malaysian history (Soong 2007; Vengadesan 2008). A bloody riot erupted in the aftermath of the 1969 election. The Chinese celebration of the victory of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) ignited fear among the Malays of losing their special rights. This led to unprecedented and uncontrolled violence between the two ethnic communities. Official figures stated 196 deaths but it is strongly believed that the death toll was almost ten times more, with most of the victims being Chinese (Baker 2000; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Hooker 2003; Soong 2007; Ooi 2009). The underlying cause that triggered this riot can be traced back to British colonialism where racial segregation was firmly entrenched as 'divide and rule' government policy.

³⁵ Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein Al-Haj was born of aristocratic lineage from Pahang. Due to his contribution to building Malaysia's rural development, he is known as *Bapa Pembangunan* [Father of Development].

³⁶ Generous financial incentives were made available to Malays to encourage involvement in business. Additionally, Malays were widely recruited into all areas of government departments to meet the demands by the Malays for more share of the country's wealth (Tan 1994; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Cheah 2004; Jawan 2004).

³⁷ Barisan Nasional consists of the same three main parties as the Alliance Party: UMNO, MCA and MIC.

In 1991, Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad³⁸ introduced the 'Vision 2020' [*Wawasan 2020*] in the Sixth Malaysia Plan. He called for Malaysia to become a self-sufficient industrialised nation by the year 2020. As part of the 'Vision 2020' plan, he brought the concept of a *Bangsa Malaysia* [Malaysian Nation or Malaysian Ethnicity] into the public sphere, replacing the National Culture Policy. This policy aimed to embrace all inhabitants of Malaysia as Malaysian, irrespective of whether the person is Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Kadazandusun, Murut, Bajau or any other ethnicity. When the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* was introduced, it was defined as 'an inclusive national identity for all inhabitants of Malaysia...of all colours and creeds' and as 'people being able to identify themselves with the country by speaking *Bahasa Malaysia* [the Malay language] and accepting the Constitution' (Mohammad 1991). Malaysia, he continued, 'must be a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one '*Bangsa Malaysia*' with political loyalty and dedication to the nation' (Mohammad 1991). The Prime Minister believed that Malaysia will obtain ideal national unity when this policy is fully implemented and achieved (Asiaweek 1995; Ooi 2009). It was, therefore, surprising when Mahathir declared Malaysia as an 'Islamic state' in September 2002, contradicting his initial idea of *Bangsa Malaysia*. This statement was challenged by many critics from the opposition parties who argued that Malaysia is a secular state, with some claiming that Malaysia is emerging as a multicultural nation state (Giacchino-Baker 2000; Saravanamuttu 2004; Lim and Gomes 2009). These heated discourses continuously dominated the discussion of national unity.

In November 2007, the UMNO-led *Barisan Nasional* party, which has been in power since gaining independence, was challenged by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections, also known as *Bersih* [Clean]. *Bersih* made accusations that the Election Commission, under the Prime Minister's Department, had manipulated the electoral process, giving an unfair advantage to *Barisan Nasional*. *Bersih* demanded electoral reforms. In response to the accusation, and to regain the confidence of Malaysians, Najib Tun Razak³⁹, Malaysia's sixth Prime Minister, launched the *1Malaysia* programme in 2010, calling for stronger ethnic harmony and national unity within the multicultural society, as well as more efficient

³⁸ Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad is the longest-serving Prime Minister, from 1981 to 2003. In 1969, he was expelled from UMNO because of his ultra-Malay views and his criticism of Tunku Abdul Rahman's handling of the 13th May incident. He published *The Malay Dilemma* in 1970, detailing his opinion on the reason for Malay's disadvantages compared to other ethnic communities. He was reinstated to UMNO in 1972.

³⁹ Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak is the son of Malaysia's second Prime Minister, Tun Razak and the nephew of Malaysia's third Prime Minister, Tun Hussein Onn. He began his post as Prime Minister in 2009.

governance (Pejabat Perdana Menteri 2010). When the demands for electoral reforms from *Bersih* were not met, four more rallies were held, in 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2016. *Barisan Nasional*, nonetheless, won the 2013 election, which the opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, claimed was the ‘worst electoral fraud in our history’ (Ibrahim 2013). There was a clear demand for change, fuelled in part by allegations of unprecedented corruption by the Prime Minister, which led to the election in May 2018 being one of the most contentious in Malaysian history. Nevertheless, the result was extraordinary and highly significant, as the opposition party *Pakatan Harapan* [Alliance of Hope], led by former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir⁴⁰, won with a slim majority, thus ending the uninterrupted rule by *Barisan Nasional* since Malaysia gained independence in 1957.

1.5 Cultural Assimilation in Contemporary Malaysia

While politicians may suggest government disharmony exists between ethnic communities in Malaysia, many examples of cultural assimilation and harmonious coexistence can be found in almost every aspect of broader cultural pursuits.

Cuisine

An iconic instance of such assimilation can also be found in the cuisines of Malaysia. The Malay group is a hybrid ethnicity, and Malay cuisine, therefore, shows strong influences from the different subgroups. The most pervasive influence found in the Malay cuisine is from Indonesian. For instance, *nasi padang*⁴¹ originated from Padang city, the capital of West Sumatra, Indonesia, while *rendang*⁴² comes from the *Minangkabau* ethnic group of Indonesia. Despite variation in the place of origin, the Malay cuisine can be characterised in particular by its use of *belacan* [shrimp paste], which is found in *nasi lemak*⁴³, known by some as Malaysia’s national dish (Rules 2011), not to be confused with the *rojak* national salad in

⁴⁰ Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was Malaysia’s longest-serving Prime Minister when he retired in 2003. He later returned to public life to lead the opposition party *Pakatan Harapan* [Alliance of Hope], a coalition formed in 2015 comprising the Democratic Action Party, People’s Justice Party, National Trust Party and Malaysian United Indigenous Party. In a highly unexpected result, *Pakatan Harapan* won the May 2018 election with a majority of 113 out of 222 seats.

⁴¹ *Nasi padang* is a meal of rice served with a choice of pre-cooked dishes such as beef *rendang* (dry curry cooked with coconut milk and spices), spicy fried chicken, fish curry, and oxtail soup.

⁴² *Rendang* is a spicy meat dish.

⁴³ *Nasi lemak* is a fragrant rice dish cooked in coconut milk and *pandan* leaves [a type of tropical plant], served with chili anchovies [Malay: *sambal ikan bilis*], cucumber slices, hard boiled eggs, and roasted peanuts. It is traditionally packaged in banana leaf.

Othman's quote that forms the basis of this study. The cuisines of the Chinese and Indian communities, on the other hand, became localised, or 'Malaysianized' (Yoshino 2010: 4). The Hokkien Chinese community in Malaysia created dishes that are unique to Chinese Malaysians, such as *bak kut teh*⁴⁴ and *char kway teow*⁴⁵, while the Indian community has successfully created a new hybrid cuisine called *mamak*. A *mamak* stall serves *mamak* foods that are the results of fusion between Indian and Malay cooking style. Another hybrid cuisine found in Malaysia is the *peranakan* or *nyonya* cuisine, which blends Chinese, Malay and sometimes Portuguese influences into a unique combination.

Spiritual Practices

The multicultural and multiethnic nature of 21st century Malaysia is reflected by a variety of spiritual practices. The Malaysian composition of spiritual practices has strong associations with ethnicity and cultural background. Most Malays, for example, are Muslims due to Islamic laws that prohibit conversion to other spiritual practices. The dominant spiritual practice among Indians 'has always been Hinduism', while Chinese largely practice Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity (Saw 2015: 69-73). Such diversity in the cultural landscape is reflected in the co-existence of mosques, temples, and churches within close proximity (Koh and Ho 2009: 27-28). The majority of spiritual practices in Malaysia, however, are not indigenous to the region but were brought in through trade, colonisation, and migration. Over time, rituals and ceremonies associated with these spiritual practices, as well as their attached symbolism, became localised. Koh and Ho (2009: 27-28) note:

An interesting feature in the Singapore/Malaysia religious landscape is thus the syncretic nature of the religious practices; each religion has blended various influences from other religions to become a complex web of modified practices.

An example of such 'modified practices' is the deity *Datuk Gong*. *Datuk Gong* is a localised tutelary and territorial deity, comparable to the *Tu Di Gong* in Taiwan, *Di Zhu Gong* in China and the Malay saint worshipping *keramat*⁴⁶. *Datuk* is a Malay word, which refers to either grandfather or a person with 'commanding authority' (Hui 2011: 212). The *Datuk Gong*

⁴⁴ *Bak kut teh* is a pork rib herbal stew.

⁴⁵ *Char kway teow* is a stir-fried noodle dish.

⁴⁶ *Keramat* worshipping, according to Hui (2011: 212), 'is usually a form of saint-worship associated with the Malays'.

statue is depicted wearing the Malay *songkok*⁴⁷, *sarong*⁴⁸, *baju Melayu*⁴⁹ and decorated with iconic Malay items such as the *keris*⁵⁰ an iconic Malay sword that can be seen in the statue's right hand in Figure 1.1. The localisation of *Datuk Gong* is one of many examples of spiritual practice assimilation found in modern Malaysia.



Figure 1.1. *Datuk Gong* deity (Y Xiao Bian [Y 小编] 2016)

Festivals and Customs

The phenomenon of assimilation is also apparent in the festivities and customs of multicultural Malaysia. During *Hari Raya Aidilfitri* [Celebration Day], which marks the end of *Ramadan*⁵¹, it is customary for Malays to return to their hometown to celebrate with family and to ask for forgiveness from their parents and elders. This is called *balik kampung* [homecoming]. They also take turns to ‘open house’, where they receive and entertain Malay and non-Malay guests at home. Both the *balik kampung* and open house traditions have been adapted and adopted into the celebration of *Deepavali*⁵² and Chinese New Year. During this festive season, Malays will also hand out money in green packets or envelopes⁵³, known as *duit raya* [Celebration Money]. This practice originates from the traditional Chinese New Year custom in which children are given *ang paos* [red packets or envelopes] containing money, which symbolise good luck.

⁴⁷ *Songkok* is a type of Malay headdress. It is usually rimless with a flat top.

⁴⁸ *Sarong* is a large piece of fabric that is often wrapped around the waist.

⁴⁹ *Baju Melayu* [Malay shirt] is a traditional Malay outfit, usually worn by men.

⁵⁰ *Keris* is an iconic Malay sword with serpentine blade.

⁵¹ *Ramadan* is the Islamic holy month of fasting.

⁵² *Deepavali*, also known as the ‘festival of lights’, is a five-day Hindu celebration.

⁵³ A green packet or envelope is the Malay adaptation of the Chinese red packet. Red is used instead of green due to its association with the Islamic paradise.

Cinema and Film

Similarly, the cinema and film of Malaysia reflects the variety of influences from its multi-layered and multicultural population. The phrase *panggung wayang*, where *panggung* and *wayang* mean theatre and shadow puppet play respectively, is frequently used in reference to cinema in Malaysia (van der Heide 2002: 11). It is known that P. Ramlee⁵⁴ (1929-1973), a Malaysian film actor, director, singer, songwriter, composer and producer, coined the term *pawagam*, an acronym of *panggung*, *wayang* and *gambar* [picture], to designate the cinema. The conjunct term is particularly fitting as it brings together the two main influences on Malaysian film: ‘the “*Bangsawan*” [Malay opera] theatre tradition...and the shadow puppet theatre’ (van der Heide 2002: 11). Van der Heide (2002: 246, 248) further argues that:

the recycling of...diverse cultural materials suggest that the notion of a homogenous national cinema is constantly eroded by the heterogeneity of Malaysian film culture...Difference will always remain visible and distinct – Salleh Ben Joned suggests a *kebudayaan rojak* (salad culture) for Malaysia (Joned 1994: 56) – and never dissolves into an illusory homogeneity.

This notion of a *kebudayaan rojak* with regard to Malaysian culture echoes Othman’s *rojak* salad metaphor when discussing Malaysian contemporary music. It is, however, important to note that not all forms of culture are completely assimilated to create new hybrid outcomes. Instead, many of the core cultural elements maintain their integrity with minor adaptations to the local society, as shown in the examples of languages, cuisines and spiritual practices.

Syncretic Music

One music-related *kebudayaan rojak* example is syncretic music, also known as acculturated music. Syncretic music, as Matusky and Tan (2004: 7) describe:

developed rapidly after British intervention following exposure of the local multi-ethnic population to foreign kinds of entertainment such as the talkie, European and American operetta and vaudeville, Parsi theatre and Chinese opera that toured Malaya then. In this category of music, local elements from both folk and classical traditions are combined with foreign elements from Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese and Western music and theatrical sources.

⁵⁴ The ‘P’ in P Ramlee’s name is short for ‘Puteh’, which is his father name.

Examples of syncretic music include *dondang sayang*⁵⁵ [repartee singing], *boria*⁵⁶ [comic skits and singing] and *bangsawan*⁵⁷ [Malay opera]. Another important music-related outcome of Malaysia's cultural assimilation is Malaysian contemporary music, which is the focus of this study.

Malaysian Contemporary Music

The first recorded instances of Malaysians composing music in the European-derived art form are known to have taken place in the 1950s. Since then, Malaysian contemporary music has evolved and gradually gained recognition locally in Malaysia, as well as internationally. As leading Malaysian contemporary music musicologist C.H. Loh notes, Malaysian contemporary music is regarded as 'still in its infancy' (C.H. Loh, pers. comm. 16 January, 2013). This is particularly true when compared to other East Asian countries such as Japan and China, which now have an established contemporary music scene that is widely recognised by the international music community. The development of Malaysian contemporary music can be traced through four stages: 1950s to 70s, 1980s to 90s, late 1990s to 2007, and 2007 to the present.

⁵⁵ It is believed that there are two possible origins of *dondang sayang*: Riau, Indonesia or the Malay kingdom of Malacca. Matusky and Tan (2004: 334) explain: 'the first theory is that it originated in Penyengat (Riau), while the second train of thought is that it started in Malacca at the height of the Malay kingdom of Malacca in the 15th century...[The] old Malay text such as *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* indicate that the *dondang sayang* already existed in the 17th and 18th centuries. Since that time, this musical form has not only attracted the Malays and Straits Chinese, but also the Indian and Portuguese communities of Malacca'. In a *dondang sayang* performance, one singer sings a four-line *pantun* [Malay poem] and another singer answers with appropriate *pantun*. The performance is accompanied by a violin, two *rebana* drums [single-headed frame drums] and a knobbed gong (Ang 2002: 27; Matusky and Tan 2004: 333).

⁵⁶ *Boria*, a form of theatre, is said to have originated in Persia and was brought to the Malay Peninsula by Indian soldiers. It has since been adapted and localised by the Malays in Penang. A *boria* performance is divided into two sections: firstly a comic story or comedy sketch, followed by a song and dance section. Initially, the performance is accompanied by a band consisting of violin, *gambus* [plucked lute], *marwas* [hand drums], *tabla* a pair of drums similar to *bongos*, accordion, *gendang* [drum], cymbals and harmonica. With the growing popularity of modern genres like rock n' roll, electric guitars, drum sets, electric keyboards and synthesisers were introduced to the *boria* ensemble (Matusky and Tan 2004: 78-81).

⁵⁷ *Bangsawan* is a form of theatre that was popularised at the end of the 19th century as a result of the influence of the Parsi troupes from Bombay. Matusky and Tan (2004: 64-65) note that, in order to attract audiences from the multi-ethnic population, the *bangsawan* 'stressed a great variety of styles [where] Malay, Arab, Chinese, Indian and Western stories and tunes were performed'.

1950s to 1970s

As discussed in the previous chapter, the people of then-Malaya began working towards gaining independence from Britain after Japan's cessation of war in 1945. By 1957, Malaya's first Prime Minister was able to gain the independence of Malaya after 450 years of rule by Western powers. The long history of colonisation has, inevitably, had a profound effect on the many aspects of Malaysian life and culture, and music is no exception.

By the 1950s, many British expatriates and Malaysian composers, mainly Malay elites who had the opportunity to study music abroad, were well trained in the performance of western and local instruments, and also in the basic theory and elements of European-derived classical music. This knowledge of western classical music practices started to influence their composition styles, and began the first steps away from traditional Malaysian approaches towards a more multicultural perspective. Using 'Western models such as symphony, symphonic poem, lyric song and other forms', these composers attempted to compose music that would appeal to the wider community within the multicultural society of Malaysia (Matusky and Tan 2004: 393). 1961 saw the formation of the first orchestra in Malaysia, the Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM) Orchestra. Composers during this time including Johari Salleh (b.1940), Alfonso Soliano (1925-1990), and Gus Steyn (1927-1992), all of whom not only played in the RTM Orchestra, but also wrote arrangements of pieces and original compositions for the orchestra. Matusky and Tan (2004: 393) document that:

Alfonso Soliano, conductor of the RTM Orchestra...wrote numerous arrangements of traditional tunes such as *Dondang Sayang*, *Jingli Nona* and *Bunga Tanjung* for voice and piano. His original compositions for orchestra used *asli* [indigenous] rhythms (as in his work *Asli Abadi*) and musical elements from other ethnic groups. Kuala Lumpur-born Tan Chong Yew also wrote arrangements of local melodies for voice and piano, and from the 60s through the 80s he played piano and composed other new works for the RTM Orchestra.

Contemporary music of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s was known as 'serious music' [*muzik serioso*] (Matusky and Tan 2004: 393). Matusky and Tan discuss two composers, Johari Salleh and Gus Steyn, who experimented with the fusion of traditional art forms and the essence of European-derived compositional elements. Salleh, for instance, composed *Gurindam Gamelan* (1976) that involved both European-based orchestral instruments and traditional

gamelan instruments. Another example is the programmatic music⁵⁸ *Si-Tanggung* (1968) [The Legend of the Batu Caves] composed by Steyn, in which the composer incorporated local legends within the conventional European music ensemble. Chopyak (1987: 443) notes that the Malaysian composer B. Ortega wrote *Asli Lama Dan Baru* [Old and New *Asli* Songs] using ‘variations based on well known melodies’. Matusky and Tan (2004: 393) add:

While Western musical forms, harmony, lyrical melodies and instruments of the orchestra were essential and predominant features of the music, certain elements from Malay, Chinese and Indian music cultures lent a Southeast Asian and, in fact, a Malaysian flavor to the music of this period.

The musical activity of these composers planted the seeds for the development of a contemporary music movement in Malaysia.

1980s to 1990s

With the growth of the Malaysian economy and exposure to Western music in the 1970s, Malaysian musicians were not only able to receive formal musical education locally, but also further their musical studies abroad in the United States and Europe. Composers of this generation include Valerie Ross, Sunetra Fernando, and Razak Abdul Aziz. Upon their return to Malaysia, these composers brought home the influences of contemporary Western composers such as Schoenberg, Webern and Boulez. Their education reflects the musical trends in the US and Europe during the 80s and 90s, where particular attention was paid to techniques developed in the post-World War II music world, including serial composition, atonality, polyrhythm, new tone colours and electronic music. In addition, they embraced the musical, philosophical, and cultural elements of multiethnic Malaysia. Following their predecessors, composers during this period continued to experiment with the combination of elements from various cultures. Effectively, as Matusky and Tan (2004: 393) note, these composers initiated the ‘process of developing a new musical style’ that reflect ‘their own personal taste’ while simultaneously attempt to establish ‘an Asian and, indeed, a Malaysian identity’. Notably, Razak Abdul Aziz’s *10 Nyanian Settings* [10 Song Settings] for *soprano, alto, chorus and two pianos* (1981-1990) used the lyrics of Malay children’s nursery rhymes. The sixth song of *10 Nyanian Settings*, with the title *Nyanyi Pinjam Dandang* drew upon

⁵⁸ Programmatic music refers to music that is scored to narrate a particular scene, movement, idea, or atmosphere.

rhythmic patterns from the *wayang kulit* art form. Influences of the *makyong* can also be found in part of Aziz's work-in-progress composition *Sketch for MZ*, particularly 'the concept of cyclical gong units', vocal and instrumental parts that consist of 'microtonal interval' and 'flexible rhythms' (Matusky and Tan 2004: 394).

The music of Valerie Ross also makes reference to local musical cultures. In her compositions *Karma*, *Manu*, *Borne*, *Tatagatha* and *Serbolline*, as Lam (2001) explains:

Ross uses different kinds of notation systems: Western, *slendro*⁵⁹, graphic, numerical and Indian syllabic, to create a new genre... Ross is also renowned for merging Eastern and Western aesthetics by combining the diverse tonal temperaments of the Carnatic ensemble, the gamelan, the Cantonese opera ensemble and the traditional Indian ensemble with the Western orchestra.

Another composer who relied heavily on local motifs, as noted by Matusky (2004: 123), is the late Julia Chong (1926-2001). In her work *Rushing Waters* (1988), Julia Chong embedded her impression of the Rejang River, in the state of Sarawak. The instruments used in this composition including the *suling* [flute], the *engkerurai* [mouth organ], the *sape* [plucked lute], the *jatung utang* [xylophone], and the *engkerumong* [gong-chime] (Matusky 2004: 123).

By comparison, Minni Kim Hui Ang, another Malaysian composer based in Kuala Lumpur, wrote *Rhythm of Life* for percussion ensemble, in which the percussion instruments evoke Asian instruments as well as 'the sounds of tuned bamboo' (Matusky and Tan 2004: 397). Sooi Beng Tan, another prolific Malaysian composer during this period, has also frequently featured local cultural elements in his compositions. For instance, Tan's *Perubahan* features the:

layering of rhythms such as those of the *gendang* drums of the gamelan and *wayang kulit* as well as the Chinese *Shigu* drums. Melodies with Malay and Chinese elements played heterophonically by the various melodic instruments of the gamelan are superimposed above these interlocking rhythms within the framework of the Malay gong cycle or *gongan* [gong unit] (Matusky and Tan 2004: 397).

⁵⁹ This scale system is discussed in Chapter 2.

These compositions can be seen as the composers' 'attempts to express the assimilation of their musical experience, education and upbringing as "Malaysian", regardless of their ethnicity' (Ross 2006: 1066). Common to the major composers during this time is their global compositional outlook, drawing on Asian aesthetics and sensibilities for their music, while simultaneously further developing and showcasing compositional techniques learned and mastered during their studies abroad. This multicultural outlook of Malaysian compositions echoes Othman's metaphorical *rojak* mixture. The process of assimilation begun to take deeper root during this period.

Late 1990s to 2007

By the late 1990s, the Malaysian contemporary music scene had begun to flourish. Many important events took place during this period, including, in 1997, the formation of Malaysia's first professional orchestra: the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO). The MPO gave its inaugural performance at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (DFP) in 1998, which also marked the official opening of DFP, Malaysia's first purpose-built concert hall. These developments happened at a time when Malaysia was undergoing a period of rapid modernisation and attempting to establish itself as a self-sufficient industrialised nation in line with Vision 2020. In the same year as the opening of the DFP, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the National Stadium at National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil, the PUTRA Light Rail Transit system (LRT) and the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia were also officially established. In September of that year, the 1998 Commonwealth Games were held in Kuala Lumpur, the first time the event had been held in Asia. Malaysia was working hard to earn its place on the world stage.

This exciting period in Malaysia gave composers and musicians in the Malaysian contemporary music scene the confidence to grow and to allow the genre to develop its own identity. In 2002, the MPO presented works from several Malaysian composers: Kee Yong Chong, Sunetra Fernando, and Tazul Izan Tajuddin. This was the first time that a professional orchestra in Malaysia had commissioned works by Malaysian composers. Later that year, the Associate Conductor of the MPO, Kevin Field, established the MPO Composers Forum⁶⁰, a

⁶⁰ The MPO Composers Forum was modelled on three international events that have proven to be successful: (i) the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award in Tokyo; (ii) Australian Composers Orchestral Forum; and (iii) BBC "Masterprize" (Chong, H.C. 2009). Australian composer Gerard Brophy, Fraser Trainer from the United Kingdom and Malaysia's own Sunetra Fernando were invited to be the judges and mentors for the first MPO Composers Forum. Brophy and Trainer were both invited to return to the judging panel for the second MPO

three-year programme to discover new talent and new music by Malaysian composers, as well as to support and nurture both emerging and established Malaysian composers. The winner of this Forum then represented Malaysia to compete in the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra International Composers Award (MPOICA) in November 2004. The success of this Forum led to a second three year long Forum being held from 2005 to 2007. Both Forums have provided a platform for Malaysian composers to present their compositions, and also to meet and interact with other Malaysian composers. These events also brought together established Malaysian composers such as Kee Yong Chong, Chan Hong Loh (more commonly known as C.H. Loh) (b.1966), Chong Lim Ng, Johan Othman, Tazul Izan Tajuddin, Tze Siew Teh, Adeline Wong, Kah Hoe Yii, and Mohd Tazid Zakaria (b.1968).

2007 to the Present

The MPO Forums were discontinued in 2007 due to scheduling and financial pressures, and were replaced by the MPO *Forumplus*, for specially selected composers from previous Forums who did not qualify for the final. Two *Forumplus* events were held, in 2010 and 2011. Unlike the previous Forums, the *Forumplus* was not a competition and its participation was by invitation only. It aimed to provide an opportunity for composers to refine their skills and expand their musical careers. The Forums and *Forumplus* events acted as catalysts for the growth and recognition of Malaysian contemporary music, both within Malaysia and internationally.

Since 2007, three musical societies have been established by various Malaysian composers and musicologists: the Malaysian Composers Collective, the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers, and the Classical Music Society Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The Malaysian Composers Collective (MCC) was formed in 2007 by Malaysian contemporary music activists C.H. Loh and Hardesh Singh to promote Malaysian contemporary music. The MCC released the first CD anthology of Malaysian contemporary compositions, entitled *Faith, Hope & Chaos*, in 2008. In 2009, the MCC began working with the Asian Composers League (ACL)⁶¹, an organisation that is active across Asia, and has since been a key player in

Composers Forum, while another established Malaysian composer, Saidah Rastam, was the third judge and mentor.

⁶¹ The ACL is 'the most vibrant and active contemporary music organization in the Asia-Pacific region today. It was established in 1973 by leading composers from Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong and Korea' (Asian Composers League n.d.).

promoting not only Malaysian contemporary music, but also contemporary music within the Asian region.

The MCC's involvement with the ACL has brought Malaysian contemporary music to the international stage through the achievements of several young MCC composers. Jessica Cho made Malaysian history in 2011 by winning third prize at the ACL Young Composers Competition in Taiwan. Ainolnaim Azizol participated in the 2013 ACL Young Composers Competition in Singapore, and won second prize in the 2014 ACL Young Composers Competition in Tokyo. Sayyid Shafiee represented Malaysia at the 2015 ACL Young Composers Competition in the Philippines, and Raja Mohamad Alif represented Malaysia at the 2016 ACL Young Composers Competition in Vietnam.

To increase accessibility to Malaysian music, in 2013 the MCC launched the first digital library of Malaysian composers. The library contains over 150 compositions by Malaysian composers, as well as key 20th century works by Bartok, Ligeti, Stockhausen, Ferneyhough, Xenakis and many others. In October 2016, the MCC launched *Interweaves*, a CD anthology of six works by four female composers: Jessica Cho, Isabella Pek, Jyotsna Prakash, and Adeline Wong.⁶²

In 2010, the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC) was formed by Malaysian composers Kee Yong Chong, Kah Hoe Yii and Tazul Tajuddin. Quoting directly from its website (SMCC 2017b), the society aims to:

- [i] unite the contemporary music communities in Malaysia, promote Malaysian contemporary music by Malaysian composers;
- [ii] work closely with educational bodies to arouse interest in contemporary music especially among young people;
- [iii] represent and achieve recognition for Malaysian contemporary music communities in the local and international music circles and;
- [iv] serve as a platform for musical exchanges among contemporary music societies from all over the world.

⁶² More information about MCC and the two CD anthologies can be found on their website <http://aclmalaysia.blogspot.com.au> or through their Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/malaysiancomposerscollective>

Their main performances include the Malaysian Composers Concert Series, SoundBridge and Malaysian Voices concert series, all held annually. Through fieldwork undertaken for this study, it has been found that SMCC is the most active group in the organisation of local and regional contemporary music events. SMCC events include concerts and masterclasses that involve established and young composers across the Southeast Asian region. In more recent years, composers from outside the Southeast Asian region have been included in their events, from countries including Germany, China, Switzerland, Japan, Australia and the USA. For example, the October 2017 SMCC SoundBridge event in Malaysia involved regional and international musicians and composers including Jonas Baes (Philippines), Jean-David Caillouët (France), Kee Yong Chong (Malaysia), Dieter Mack (Germany), Koji Nakano (Japan), Zou Xiang Ping (China), Otto Sidharta (Indonesia), Tazul Tajuddin (Malaysia), Kah Hoe Yii (Malaysia), and many more (SMCC 2017c).

The Classical Music Society Selangor and Kuala Lumpur (CMSMalaysia) was also founded in 2010. They ‘promote multicultural exchange through classical music via various instruments’ (CMSMalaysia n.d.). Unlike the two previously-mentioned societies, which concentrate more on the contemporary music area, the CMSMalaysia focuses on the promotion of performance of European-derived art music by local and international musicians in Malaysia.

With the aid of these and other musical societies and activities within the region, a younger generation of Malaysian composers has gradually emerged. They include Ainolnaim Azizol (b.1987), Hong Da Chin, Jessica Cho (b.1987), Jun Yan Chow, Jun Yi Chow (b.1987), Sayyid Shafiee (b.1987), and Zi Hua Tan (b.1987). In recent years, some have had successes on the international stage, at events such as the annual Asian Composer League (ACL) Young Composers Award and the Young Composers Southeast Asia competition organised by the Goethe-Institut.

Due to the links between the younger generation of composers and the musical societies, especially the MCC and SMCC, many of these composers are influenced, directly or indirectly, by the current leading Malaysian composers including Kee Yong Chong, Kah Hoe Yii, and Tazul Tajuddin. The musical languages of the young composers are avant-garde and simultaneously multicultural as they incorporate local flavours and textures into their compositions. In the past seven years, the compositional trend in Malaysia, particularly at SMCC events, is heading in a more multimedia and multi-disciplinary direction whereby

compositions involve not only musicians, but also other artists including dancers, calligraphers, and painters.

Some gaps in research have been identified on Malaysian composers and compositions ranging from the beginning of Malaysian contemporary music in the 1950s to 2014. It is impossible to address every aspect of Malaysian contemporary music. Therefore, this study focuses on five selected influential composers who are currently active in the contemporary music scene: Chong, Ng, Othman, Tajuddin and Yii. Biographies and list of works by these composers can be found in Appendix 1.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the history of Malaysia, and in particular the pre-colonial and colonial periods, can be seen as the foundation of modern Malaysian multicultural society. Recognising the challenges posed by the co-existence of various cultural groups, government policies were created and implemented to encourage unity among Malaysians. The people of Malaysia, rather than seeing other cultural groups as threats to their own existence, used the pluralist nature of the society to their advantage by assimilating and creating *rojak* cultural outcomes that are unique to 21st century Malaysia. The process of cultural assimilation can be seen in the development of various cultural pursuits, including Malaysian contemporary music. Since the emergence of the Malaysian contemporary music genre in the 1950s, the adaptation of cultural elements in compositions has been common practice among Malaysian composers. This intercultural trend continued to flourish among the Malaysian composers throughout subsequent decades.

Chapters 2 to 5 of this study investigate the ways in which five active and established Malaysian composers have incorporated cultural elements into their European-based compositional approaches. The study investigates cultural elements chosen by the Malaysian composers and discusses the ways in which the composers have embedded these elements into their works. Using Othman's *rojak* metaphor, the study identifies and analyses the constituent cultural elements and the ways in which they have been combined and assimilated to create unique sonic outputs.

Chapter 2

Southeast Asian Cultural Elements: Gamelan

Chapter 1 of this study examined the process of voluntary cultural assimilation that led to Malaysia becoming a multicultural society, with particular emphasis on the development of Malaysian contemporary music. Chapters 2 to 5 investigate the ways in which selected composers embed various cultural elements into their compositions, demonstrating how a single composition may often have been inspired by multiple cultural sources. This mix of inspiration and influences, once again, is linked to the idea of *rojak*. Chapters 2 and 3 consider cultural elements from Southeast Asia, the region that has most influenced Malaysian composers and their compositions. The elements that have directly or indirectly inspired or been assimilated into the works of the selected compositions include gamelan, the traditional Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong* [ancient Malay theatre form], *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet], and Balinese *baris* dance. Due to the substantial influence of gamelan in Malaysian compositions, Chapter 2 focuses on the assimilation of gamelan elements and Chapter 3 on traditional Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong*, *wayang kulit* and Balinese *baris* dance.

2.1 Gamelan

A gamelan is a traditional musical ensemble from Indonesia predominantly consisting of pitched bronze percussion instruments that are played by hand and/or mallets. Gamelan owes its status as a major influence on the global contemporary music scene to the renowned French composer Claude Debussy. Works such as ‘*Sirènes*’ from *Nocturnes* (1899) and ‘*Pagodes*’ from *Estampes* (1903) demonstrate Debussy’s keen interest in the gamelan since hearing the small but complete gamelan orchestra that performed at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, and subsequently the full ensemble at the 1900 Exposition Universelle. Hugh (1997: 2) observed that:

[The] characteristics of gamelan music interested Debussy: its freedom from rules of functional harmony, its free forms, unrelated to those of European music, the fascinating timbre of the percussive instruments, the layered texture, free from the European rules of

counterpoint. Most important, it is clear that Debussy was keenly interested in gamelan music, since he was thinking and writing about it many years after hearing the gamelan.

Since the ‘discovery’ of gamelan music by Debussy, the Indonesian traditional music ensemble has intrigued and inspired many composers of the European music tradition, including Bela Bartok, Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Lou Harrison, Olivier Messiaen, and Erik Satie. Harrison’s fascination with the gamelan, for example, is apparent in his construction of an ‘American gamelan’ with his partner William Colvig, which includes:

a set of metallophones tuned to a pure D major scale and built from materials easy to procure (e.g. steel conduit tubing, aluminium slabs, and stacked tin cans as resonators). To these instruments they added galvanized garbage cans and cut-off oxygen tanks struck with baseball bats, thus integrating Indonesian sounds, junk materials, the percussion ensemble and just intonation (Miller and Hanson n.d.).

Harrison wrote three compositions for this ensemble including *Young Caesar* (1971), *La Koro Sutro* (1972) and *Suite* for violin and American Gamelan (1974). Another composer who is intrigued by the gamelan is Messiaen. The influence of the sound texture of the Balinese gamelan Messiaen heard at the Exposition Coloniale in Paris in 1931 is evident in the tuned percussion used in his orchestra for *Trois petites liturgies de la présence divine* [Three Small Liturgies of the Divine Presence] (1943-1944). Cage’s use of prepared piano where objects are placed inside a piano to alter the timbre of the note when struck, emulating the percussive yet metallic sonic effects of the gamelan, is exemplified in his *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano. Taking into consideration the popularity of the gamelan among contemporary composers, it is, thus, understandable that the gamelan is highly respected and appreciated by Malaysian composers, in view of their close cultural and geographic proximity to Indonesia.

All five composers who are the subjects of this study, Chong, Ng, Othman, Tajuddin and Yii, have written works that are influenced by the gamelan. Matusky and Tan (2004: 393) suggest that ‘experiments with the fusion of gamelan instruments and a Western orchestra’ can be seen from the first developmental stage of Malaysian contemporary music between the 1950s and 1970s, and that this experimentation ‘led to pieces such as *Gurindam Gamelan* [1976] by Johari Salleh’. Other known works with gamelan influence by Malaysian composers are shown in Table 2.1. However, due to the lack of literature about Malaysian contemporary music, some further details for some of the works, such as the year of composition, the

instrument and genre for which the work is composed, are unknown (Lam 2001; Macy 2002; Seneviratne 2003; Chan 2005; Philip 2005).

Table 2.1. List of works with gamelan influence.

Composers	Works
Razak Abdul-Aziz	<i>Maria Zaitun</i> , a chamber opera for 9 voices, 6 violins, 3 violas, 3 violoncellos, 2 double basses, harp, piano 1, piano 2/celesta, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone/glockenspiel, and percussions (2004)
Minni Ang Kim Huai	<i>Irama Gamelan Kyai Pranaja</i>
Sunetra Fernando	<i>Wayang</i> , for chamber orchestra and gamelan (2002)
	<i>Three Pieces for Scorpion Orchid</i>
	<i>Sembuh Sudah</i> , for Malaysian gamelan with additional instruments and singers
	<i>10-sen</i> , for mixed gamelan, <i>rebab</i> and vocal ensemble
Saidah Rastam	<i>M! The Opera</i> (2005)
Ahmed Muriz Che Rose	<i>Desir Angin Cina Selatan</i> , for gamelan, flute and percussion (2009)
Valerie Ross	<i>Borne</i> , for cross-media or multimedia presentation involving music, dance-drama and film
Sooi Beng Tan	<i>Perubahan</i> (1998)
Suhaimi Mohd. Zain ⁶³	<i>Suasana</i> (1999), which also combines elements from <i>mak yong</i> , <i>wayang kulit</i> , and Malay poem

Table 2.2 presents a list of ten selected compositions, by the five selected composers, which are influenced by gamelan music.

Table 2.2. Works influenced by gamelan and composed by the five selected composers of this study.

Cultural elements	Composers	Selected works
Gamelan	Chong	<i>Monodrama</i> for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic (2004)
	Ng	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos</i> (2004)
		<i>Shadows</i> for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment (2011)
	Othman	<i>ittar</i> for chamber orchestra (2003)
		<i>topeng I</i> for orchestra (2004)
		<i>whose shadow would fall on</i> for trombone and piano (2011)
	Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i> for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra (2001)
		<i>Gamelbati III</i> for string quartet (2005)
		<i>Azan</i> [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007)
		<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i> for violin, cello and piano (2011)
Yii	<i>Timang Burung</i> for solo piano (2009)	

⁶³ Suhaimi Mohd. Zain (b.1958), more famously known as *Pak Ngah*, is a Malaysian composer and producer. Although he has composed contemporary music, he is better known for his pop songs written for pop singers Sharifah Aini and Siti Nurhaliza. Zain is not included in this study as he is not currently active within the Malaysian contemporary music scene, a prerequisite for the selection of composers for this study.

The subject matter of gamelan influences on Malaysian composers deserves a full in-depth study on its own to be undertaken in the future, encompassing compositions from the 1950s to the current year.

The gamelan gets its name 'from the low Javanese word *gamel*, which refers to a type of hammer, like a blacksmith's hammer. The name 'gamelan' actually refers only to the instruments themselves, which are predominantly percussion' Lindsay (1992: 10). Historically, gamelan was only performed at formal rituals such as wedding receptions, temple events, and village ceremonies and celebrations. In modern days, although gamelan music retains some of its traditional functions, such as accompanying *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet play], religious rituals and performances for the royal family, it is also performed as concert music at social and cultural gatherings to welcome guests and audiences. Due to its increasing popularity and exposure outside of Indonesia, gamelan music is also commonly used as a tourist attraction and in performances at 'cultural shows' in Indonesia (Sumarsam n.d.: 23; See, Yee-Seer n.d.).

There are two principal styles of gamelan music in Indonesia: Balinese and Javanese. The main difference between the two is that Balinese music is strictly composed, with minimal room for improvisation, while the Javanese gamelan musicians have more scope for improvisation. When discussing improvisation in the gamelan context, it is important to note that the meaning is not precisely the same as the Western understanding of improvisation. Deschênes (2002) describes improvisation of the gamelan as 'more in the sense of being able to develop, embellish and "improve" a piece as it is being performed. Yet, musicians are not allowed to go beyond certain traditional rules'. Another key difference between Balinese and Javanese gamelan is the characteristics of the music performed. Balinese gamelan music tends to be more flamboyant and dramatic, with abrupt changes in tempo and dynamic, whereas Javanese gamelan music is less ostentatious, more subtle and mysterious.

Gamelan has spread beyond Indonesia, both due to the migration of musicians into Indonesia from elsewhere, as well as the migration of Indonesian musicians to other countries, resulting in new gamelan styles, such as the Gamelan *Melayu* [Malay Gamelan]. The Gamelan *Melayu* comprises fewer instruments than its Indonesian predecessor, and is strongly linked to the *joget gamelan*, a music and dance developed in the Malay Sultanate during the 18th century. A basic Gamelan *Melayu* has between seven and ten instruments, compared to the twenty-

instrument ensemble of a basic Indonesian gamelan (Lindsay 1992: 10; Matusky and Tan 2004: 108-111; Matusky and Noor 2004: 90).

Instruments used across the different gamelan styles can be divided into three broad categories: the phrasing-making instruments, the loud instruments and the soft instruments. The phrasing-making instruments are *gong*, *siyem*, *kempul* (small hanging gong), *kenong* (large kettle horizontal gong), *ketuk* or *kethuk* (small, slightly flatter horizontal gong) and *kempyang* (set of two horizontal gongs). The loud-playing instruments include *saron* (metal xylophone or metallophone), *bonang* (double row of bronze kettles on horizontal frame), and *kendang*, *kendhang* or *gendang* (hourglass-shaped drum). The soft instruments are *slentem* or *slenthem* (metallophone with thin bronze bars suspended over bamboo resonating tubes), *gender* (similar to the *slentem* but with more keys), *gambang* (xylophone-like instrument with wooden bars laid over a wooden frame), *kesi* (small hand-held cymbals, struck together), *celempung* (plucked zither) and *siter* (smaller version of *celempung*), *suling* or *seruling* (bamboo flute played vertically), *rebab* (two-stringed bowed instrument), and *singing* (Sumarsam n.d.: 2; Lindsay 1992: 10-35; Titon 1992: 235; Miller and Williams 2008: 225).

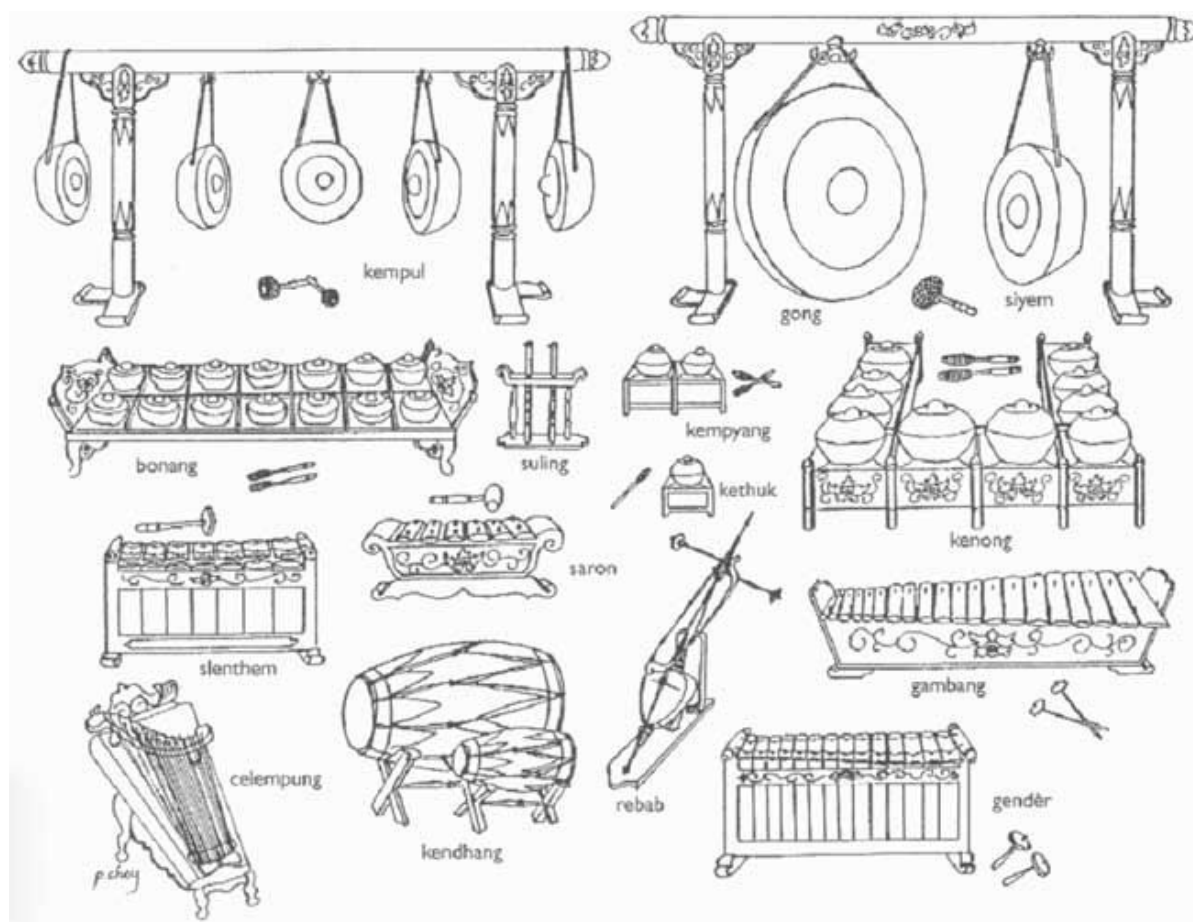


Figure 2.1. Instruments of the gamelan (Titon 1992: 235)

The organisation and structure of gamelan music can be divided according to three basic concepts: ‘the polyphonic layering of melodic lines, the cyclic structure of the music, and the ability of the melodic lines to expand and contract’ (Lindsay 1992: 47). The first concept deals with the interrelationship and interactions between the different instruments, resulting in a proportionate layering of sound. Sumarsam (n.d.: 6) agrees with Lindsay, stating that ‘the feeling of unity, communality or totality’ is the ‘most important concept of the gamelan ensemble’ and that ‘the melody of a single instrument cannot be conceived as separable from the whole sound of the ensemble’. The second concept refers to the fact that gamelan music is usually based on a repeated *gong* cycle, while the other instruments will layer their parts on top of the *gong* cycle, within certain constraints that depend upon the type of gamelan. Lindsay (1992: 53) emphasised that this cyclical phenomenon, ‘rather than a single linear progression of a piece of music from the beginning to the end’, is fundamental to gamelan music.

The third and final concept further emphasises the importance of layering and the interactions between musicians within a gamelan ensemble. A gamelan musician must learn to understand this wholeness of sound when performing, and must also develop a great awareness of the interlocking relationships between the different instruments that creates the unique sonic event of any gamelan performance. This relationship is explained by Lindsay (1992: 53) as follows:

[I]n very simplified form, [the phenomenon of expansion and contraction] refers to the proportion of notes played on the *saron* and *slentem* in relation to the number of notes played on the elaborating instruments...The faster the *saron* line is played, the closer the *saron* notes are together, and the less time for filling in by the other instruments. The slower the *saron* line, the further apart the *saron* notes become, and the more opportunity there is for the doubling and quadrupling filling-in by the elaborating instruments.

The interconnection between the instruments can be viewed as ‘collective virtuosity’, a concept describing the performance of a work, usually consisting of challenging musical language, that requires a heightened level of artistic teamwork between instrumentalists. This collectivity is not exclusive to gamelan music, but is also an important quality in European-derived performance practices. However, in most of the 11 selected compositions, the composers have explicitly acknowledged the reference to gamelan music. It is, therefore, with

the understanding that ‘collective virtuosity’ is a shared feature with European-derived music that this study continues its investigations.

2.1.1 Chong

Monodrama for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic (2004)

Monodrama for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic was commissioned by Spectra Ensemble and premiered at Transit New Music Festival 2004, STUK Concert Hall, Leuven, Belgium on 23 October 2004. Chong dedicated this work to oboist Piet Van Bockstael and Filip Rathé, the conductor of Spectra Ensemble. This work was selected to be included in the CD anthology of the Malaysian Composers Collective discussed in Chapter 1: *Faith, Hope & Chaos*.

Monodrama consists of 14 continuous sections from Rehearsal Figures A to M. From a broader analytical perspective, *Monodrama* can be divided into three large sections: section 1 from the beginning to Rehearsal Figure D; section 2, which begins at Rehearsal Figure E (bar 34, 3’11” of Track 1); and section 3 from Rehearsal Figure G to the end (bar 77, 4’26” of Track 1). In the first and third sections, the layering of various tone colours created by different instruments with diverse performance techniques facilitates a continuously shifting timbral sonic effect. Contrastingly, the second section presents a brisk solo oboe part accompanied by intense and dramatic rhythmic figures in the ensemble, which can be heard from 3’11” of Track 1.

For Chong, the assimilation of the gamelan and the European-based musical idiom is primarily in the sonic events within his work. Unlike his contemporaries who draw inspiration from the notation, performance practices, concepts and instrumentation, Chong’s *Monodrama* fabricates a highly intricate sound world intended to ‘create and transform the unique contradiction and an amalgamation of the eastern and the western musical worlds’ (Chong 2004: n.p.). In his programme notes, Chong further explains his sound spatialisation strategy where instruments are distributed across the stage while loudspeakers are disposed around the audience to create ‘a mobility of difference [*sic*] sounds during the performance’ as well as different ‘layers and depth of the acoustic sound space’ (Chong 2004: n.p.). An instrumental layout plan (Figure 2.2) has been created by Chong to explain his desired placement and movement of instruments and audio equipments.

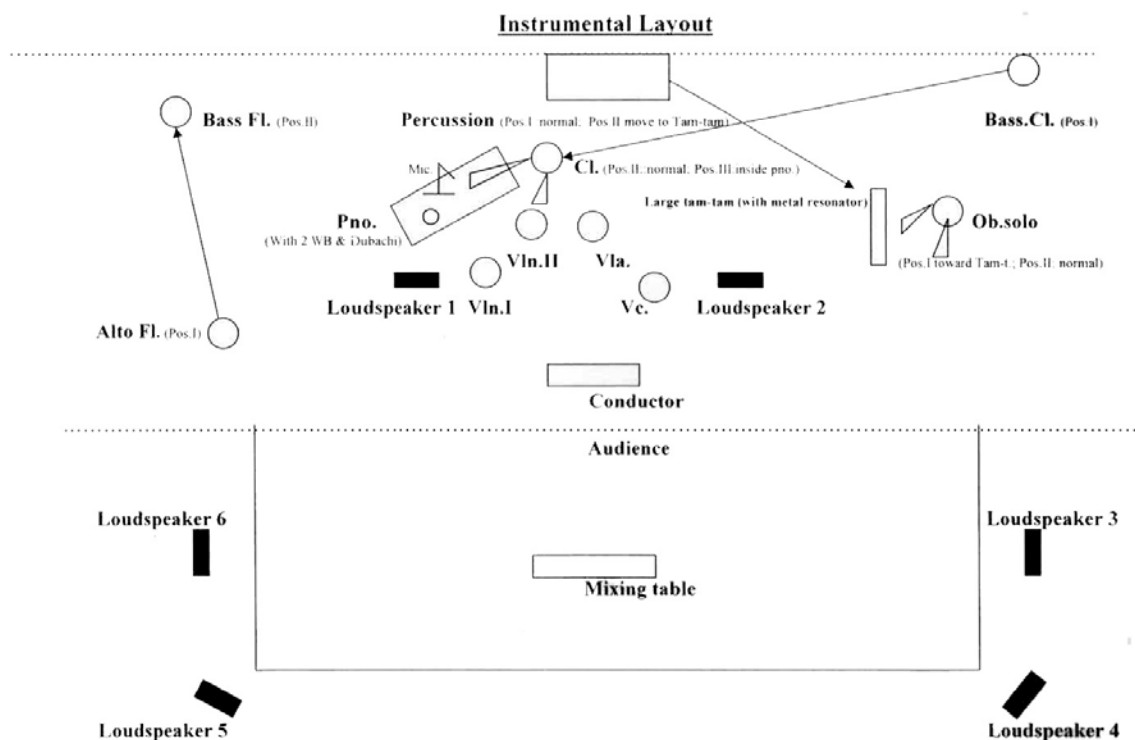


Figure 2.2. Chong – *Monodrama* instrumental layout (Chong 2004: n.p.)

While the placement and movement of instruments and audio equipments is not directly inspired by gamelan music, it serves as an important element in creating Chong’s ideal surround-sound experience for the performance of *Monodrama*. As this instrumental layout is relatively straightforward and does not involve moving musicians off the stage or backstage, the plan can be easily transferred and executed at different performance venues to maintain the composer’s auditory aspiration. This is likely to be an extraordinarily important consideration when constructing his work, to ensure and maintain the integrity of the desired sonic experience.

To extend the sonic possibilities of the ensemble, the oboist is also required to play the tam-tam and the pianist to play two wood blocks and Japanese bowl bell (*dubachi*). All musicians are also instructed to rhythmically whisper specific letters or ‘shh’, as can be seen in Figure 2.3, which adds another aural dimension to the work.

Figure 2.3. Chong – *Monodrama*, bars 142 to 146 (Chong 2004: 29)

Monodrama uses seven sound samples as the underlying sound fabric of this work, which is perhaps the most direct and obvious reference made to the gamelan. The composer was unable to provide the recording of the sound samples used. The first of the seven sound samples, however, can be clearly heard in Track 1. This provides a good indication of what the other six sound samples may have sounded like. In his programme note to *Monodrama*, Chong (2004: n.p.) discusses the use of a sound sample of the *rebab* (two-stringed bowed instrument, see Figure 2.1):

Firstly, I focused on the sound sample of Gamelan bow-string instrument “Rebab” as main feature sound materials in the electronic part. Secondly, I used Oboe solo to imitate the sound of Gamelan oboe-like double reed instrument “Serunai”. These two main figures versus and compromise each other; with the inherent virtuosic nature of the western instruments, electronic and the Asian musical instrument sounds and aesthetic. It creates and transforms the unique of contradiction and an amalgamation of the eastern and the western musical worlds.

The analytical approach for this work, therefore, has two aims: firstly to examine the *rebab* sound samples and the ways in which Chong has composed *Monodrama* to echo the *rebab*,

and secondly to study the solo oboe part to reveal his approach for imitating the *serunai* (an aerophone instrument, shown in Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4. *Serunai*, double-reed aerophone used in gamelan (Aizat n.d.)

Monodrama begins with the first sound sample, unaccompanied, for 30 seconds before the entrance of the oboe and piano parts. The first sound sample consists of a solo *rebab* melody, which is subsequently joined by the percussion and discreet male singing in the background at about the 28th second. The *rebab* performance in the opening sound sample has a distinctly drone-like, nasal sound quality with a narrow melodic line, which is the uniquely recognisable sound of the *rebab*. The melodic line is embellished with ornaments, changes in timbre, particularly when a note is held, and a wide range of dynamics through the use of crescendo and diminuendo. All of these characteristics can be found in the oboe melodic line of *Monodrama* (Figure 2.5).

Monodrama
for Oboe solo, ensemble & electronic


Kee-Yong CHONG (*1971)

Figure 2.5. Chong – *Monodrama*, oboe bars 1 to 6 (Chong 2004: 1)

Despite being contained within a narrow pitch range, the main feature of this oboe part is the varying of timbre and ornamentations on the F# note, which eventually elevates to C# in bar 6. Additionally, Chong creates a variety of tone colours in this oboe line by including a timbral trill figure in the first bar, alternating between harmonics (notated as °), multiphonics (M), normal finger or single pitch interjection (N), and glissando by changing embouchure (emb. gliss). Furthermore, this oboe melodic line also includes ornamentation such as acciaccatura, appoggiatura, internal trills, and irregular tremolos, as seen in Figure 2.5

(Redgate and Archbold n.d.). Alongside repeated changes in dynamic, which occur either gradually or abruptly, these features suggest a resemblance between Chong's oboe part and the *rebab* in the sound sample. These *rebab*-like qualities are found in the parts for other instruments throughout the first and third sections of the work; for example, in bars 10 to 12 of the string section, in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6. Chong – *Monodrama*, strings bars 10 to 12 (Chong 2004: 2)

The string section in Figure 2.6 features narrow melodic line embellished with glissando, intense vibrato (notated as M.V), tremolos and extreme dynamic range over a few bars, which are all features reminiscent of the *rebab* sound sample. The double stops in the string section offer an extra level of similarity between the traditional two-stringed bowed instrument and the strings, particularly with the incremental increase in bow pressure symbolised by . This creates a nasal drone-like sound, similar to the sound of the *rebab* in the first 30 seconds of the piece (refer to 1'20" in Track 1).

Other examples of timbral variation are found in the parts of bass clarinet (Figure 2.7), alto flute (Figure 2.8), B \flat clarinet (Figure 2.9), and bass flute (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.7. Chong – *Monodrama*, bass clarinet, bar 12 (Chong 2004: 2)



Figure 2.8. Chong – *Monodrama*, alto flute, bars 31 to 32 (Chong 2004: 7)

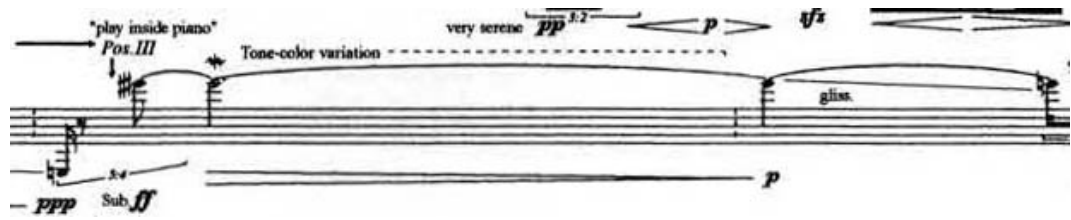


Figure 2.9. Chong – *Monodrama*, clarinet in B \flat , bars 103 to 104 (Chong 2004: 21)



Figure 2.10. Chong – *Monodrama*, bass flute, bars 119 to 120 (Chong 2004: 25)

Unlike in the first and third sections, Chong does not include any extended technique to vary timbre in the middle section. Rather, the wind, percussion (four bongos and bass drum), piano and string parts offers a robust rhythmic accompaniment for the solo oboe (Figure 2.11).

The prevailing theatrical characteristic of this section bears a strong resemblance to the Balinese gamelan. According to Tenzer (1998: 11-12):

Emanating perpetually from communities all over the island of Bali, its sonorities sail over the ricefields on clear nights, showering the air with brilliant cascades of metallic sound, lonely whispering melodies, *grandiose and clangorous marches*, *virtuosic rhythms*, and breathtaking crescendos. Animated with the sounds of drums, flutes and gongs, it is a compelling experience that *persists in the mind's ear long after its pulsations fade*.

The ethereal music of the gamelan is sustained with an esthetic that prizes beautiful melody and a refined sense of formal design. This is not a music characterized by the sweeping emotions of romanticism; rather it is detailed, secure in constructions, and *full of insistent rhythms* and elegant patterns. [*Emphasis added*]

10

Figure 2.11. Chong – *Monodrama*, bars 44 to 49 (Chong 2004: 10)

Tenzer’s text and Chong’s rhythmic section in *Monodrama* have one common theme: rhythmic virtuosity. Such rhythmic virtuosity, additionally, is perhaps associated with traditional Balinese dances and theatrical forms, in which the gamelan is used as accompaniment (Kartomi 1980: 128-129). Indeed, Chong’s rhythmic central section, as Loh (2008) describes in the accompanying programme note to *Faith, Hope & Chaos*, is ‘extraordinary’ and ‘truly memorable’ which ‘persists in the mind’s ear long after its pulsations fade’ (Tenzer 1988: 11).

This section now examines Chong’s intention for solo oboe to mimic the gamelan *serunai*. The *serunai* can be used as a solo instrument, but is most commonly used as part of the *wayang kulit* ensemble, and on rare occasions appears in gamelan ensemble (Miller and Williams 2008: 388; Zahari 2013: 29). There are multiple types of *serunai*, including free-reed, double-reed, and quadruple-reed *serunai*. The traditional instrument is often delegated to produce long ‘melismatic passages...embellished with melodic ornaments’ (Matusky and Tan 2004: 31). The choice of the oboe to mimic the *serunai* is fitting. The oboe, like the *serunai*, is a double-reed wind instrument, and the sound produced by both instruments is recognisably nasal and piercing (Burgess and Haynes 2004: 202). The role of the *serunai* is often

associated with carrying dense and ornamented voice-like melodic lines as either a solo instrument or within an ensemble (Matusky and Tan 2004). The oboe part in *Monodrama* has a solo role, a deliberate choice made by the composer to mirror the solo role often played by the *serunai*. The ornamented melodies of the oboe solo are often marked with *dolciss.* (*dolcissimo*), *molto espr.* (*molto espressivo*), and *cantabile*. The composer’s intention, thus, is apparent: to recreate the melismatic and embellished lines of the *serunai*.



Figure 2.12. Chong – *Monodrama*, oboe solo, bars 84 to 91 (Chong 2004: 17-18)

Through the use of rhythmic virtuosity and timbre of the oboe, Chong effectively assimilates aspects of gamelan, namely theatricality in rhythm and the *serunai*, into *Monodrama*. The next composer, Ng, employs a different compositional strategy to negotiate aspects of gamelan such as instrumentation, concepts of collectiveness, performance techniques, and scale and pitch motifs.

2.1.2 Ng

Three Sketches for Two Pianos (2004)

Like many Malaysian composers, Ng’s music cannot escape the magical allure of the gamelan. In his seductive *Three Sketches* they hide in the inner layers that exudes [*sic*] hints of gongs and local scales, like the scent of distant blooms afloat in the breeze. Says Ng, “These sketches are a mixture of South-East Asian (gamelan) and western influence. They are tiny little pieces to express my love of nature, my country, and simply the exploration of the natural sound worlds of the piano that I adore.”

(Loh 2008 from programme notes to *Faith, Hope & Chaos*)

Ng's *Three Sketches for Two Pianos* (hereafter: *Three Sketches*), composed in 2004, was chosen to be included in the *Faith, Hope & Chaos*⁶⁴. More than merely showcasing Loh's appreciation for *Three Sketches*, the above quote confirms that the work is inspired by gamelan.

On the first listening, it is clear that *Three Sketches* (Track 2) contains much of the percussive and shimmering sound quality of the gamelan, as suggested by Loh as 'hints of gongs' (Loh 2008). This is particularly enhanced by loud clusters and low-register notes played *sfff* (Figure 2.13) creating a wide spectrum of overtones and beat frequencies, which is a recognisable aural characteristic of the gamelan bronze percussion. The effect of the overtone, as a result of sympathetic resonance, is also the highlighting feature in the second sketch, in which the pianist is required to silently depress keys and play the same note an octave higher, marked *sfff* (Figure 2.14). Shimmering metallic sound resonates through the tremolo (Figure 2.13) while the repeated notes in the third sketch (Figure 2.15) echo the gamelan *bonang* and *saron*.

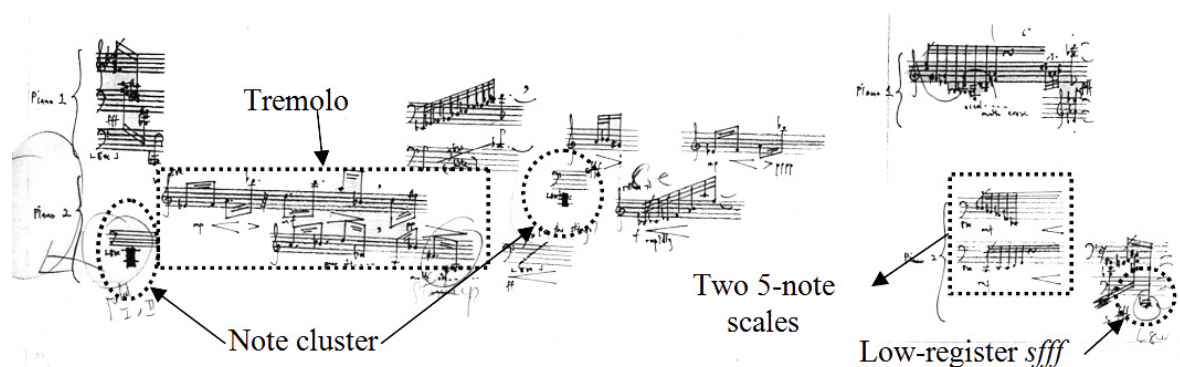


Figure 2.13. Ng – *Three Sketches for Two Pianos*, first sketch excerpt (Ng 2004: 1)

The 'local scales' Loh refers to are the 7-note and 5-note scales reminiscent of the *pelog* and *slendro* scales used in gamelan performances. The whole work is loosely based on a 7-note scale that does not conform to European-based intervallic patterns: E \flat F F \sharp A B \flat C D. At times, Ng can be seen to be juxtaposing two 5-note scales against each other (Figure 2.13). It is this use of unconventional scales that adds 'local' flavouring in *Three Sketches*.

⁶⁴ *Faith, Hope & Chaos* is the first CD anthology of Malaysian contemporary compositions released by MCC. See Chapter 1 for further details.

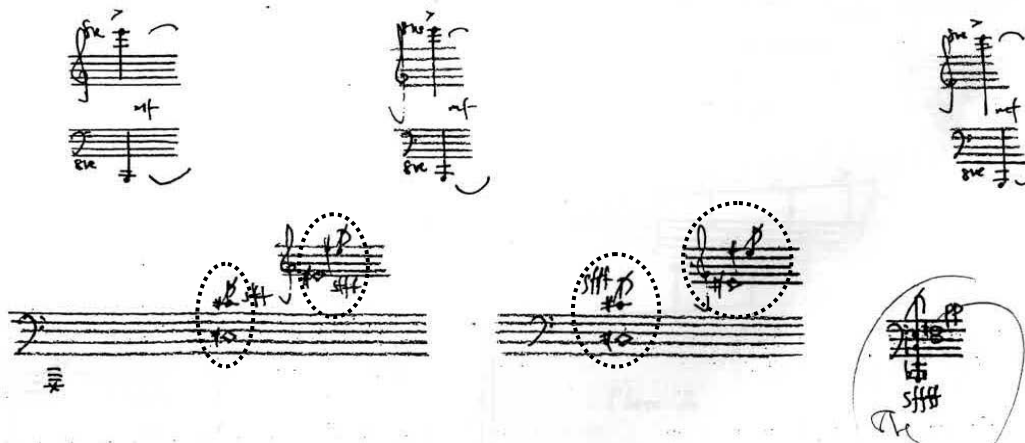


Figure 2.14. Ng – *Three Sketches for Two Pianos*, second sketch excerpt (Ng 2004: 2)

The interlocked heterophonic lines seen in the third sketch (Figure 2.15) appear to be inspired by the idea of ensemble collectiveness of the gamelan. Pitch analysis of the third sketch reveals that the underlying pitch motif of the section is B \flat E \flat F A D C \flat D B \flat F D \flat . This motif is manipulated through octave displacements as well as fragmentations of the last 5 notes of the 10-note motif: C \flat D B \flat F D \flat , throughout the third sketch (examples marked in Figure 2.15).

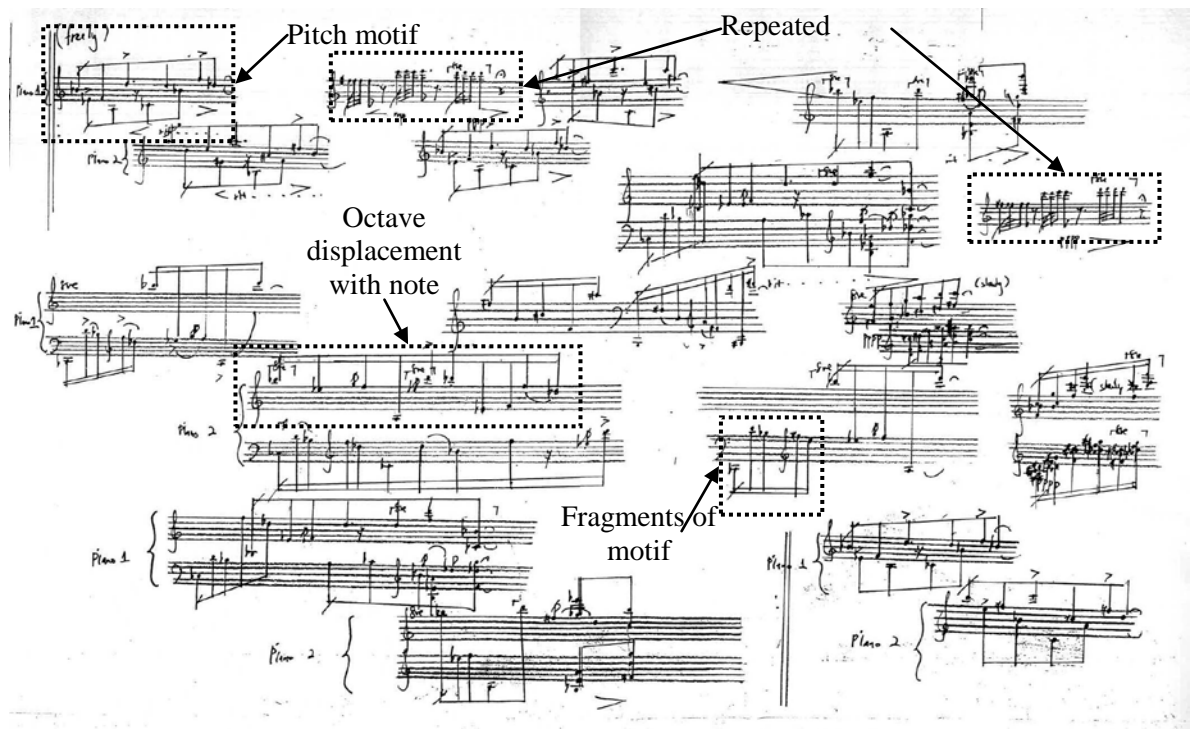


Figure 2.15. Ng – *Three Sketches for Two Pianos*, third sketch excerpt (Ng 2004: 3)

In addition to creating timbral effects that are reminiscent of the gamelan sonority, Ng negotiates elements of gamelan through instrumentation, ensemble collectiveness, and performance techniques, as examined in the next selected work.

***Shadows* for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment (2011)**

Ng's 2011 work, *Shadows*, is written for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment. The subtitle of the work differs at various events. While promoting their President's Concert in 2012, the Chopin Society Malaysia listed the work as "'*Shadows*' – scored for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment' on their website (Persatuan Chopin Malaysia 2012). Other subtitles include 'for piano and *gongs*, *bonang* and *gendang*' and 'for piano, gamelan, Malay percussion' on the MCC website (Loh 2013; Malaysian Composers.com 2014), and 'for piano and Malay traditional instruments' in the programme notes by the Brunei Music Society (2014). Based on the score, it is known that *Shadows* is written for piano, *gendang*, *bonang*, three *gongs*, a pair of *kesi* and *Tok Dalang* [master puppeteers and story teller in traditional *wayang kulit* shadow puppetry]. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the subtitle from the Chopin Society Malaysia is used, as it best describes the instrumentation of the work.

On the surface, the influence of gamelan is apparent through the instruments used: *gendang*, *bonang*, *gongs*, and *kesi* are core instruments in the performance of gamelan music, as previously discussed. Additionally, the title of the work *Shadows* and the use of *Tok Dalang*, expose the influence of *wayang kulit*, another cultural element from the Southeast Asian region, which are discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

In his composition, Ng has taken into consideration the nature of the gamelan performer, where improvisation and collectiveness are crucial characteristics of the traditional ensemble. He has also shown awareness that some performers of the traditional instruments may not be able to read European-derived music notation. The score of *Shadows* thus serves to provide a broad structural map with loose instruction to all instruments. Throughout the construction of the score, even for the piano part, which has the most written notation and instructions, Ng predominantly requests that the musicians 'ad-lib', '[play] spontaneously' and 'improvise' (Figure 2.16).

Figure 2.16. Ng – *Shadows*, Rehearsal Figure B (Ng 2011: n.p.)

It is clear that many of the performance decisions are required to be made as a collective group, resulting in collective virtuosity. There is no ‘star’ of the work but rather it is the cross-cultural instrumentation and sound that is of interest to the composer. It is understood that collectivity is not unique to gamelan music, but is also used in European-derived musical practice across ensemble performances. However Ng has explicitly stated that gamelan is a source of inspiration for *Shadows* (Chong Lim Ng, pers. comm. 28 January, 2013). Therefore it is with this understanding that the composer makes reference to gamelan ensemble collectiveness in his scoring technique for *Shadows*.

Vertical dotted lines are drawn in Ng’s score to indicate alignments of musical figures between the different instruments. In his conversation with musicologist Loh (2013), the composer Ng explained that:

My piano part is organized to fit the gamelan musicians’ improvisation, so before we started I talked to them about the rhythms and characters I had in mind, and I let them have a lot of freedom in the piece, I had to explain the structure during the rehearsal – there are only a few written notes, so I talked about the atmosphere, the space...And they did a great job. Each time we play the piece it’s different.

The emphasis on giving musicians ‘a lot of freedom’, as will be discovered with subsequent analyses of Ng’s compositions, has been identified as Ng’s signature scoring technique. Ng approaches *Shadows* with a great deal of flexibility towards the end sonic effect of the work, and respects the collective improvisatory nature of gamelan performers. He has allowed for this improvisational flexibility by the way *Shadows* is scored with musical figure boxes, many of which instruct the musicians to play ‘ad-lib’. Rehearsal Figure E (Figure 2.17) is unconventional in terms of score presentation and performers’ expectation to allow for this improvisational flexibility.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Rehearsal Figure E. At the top, it is labeled '[E] Distort/Atmospheric/(especially rich textures)'. The score is divided into several sections:

- Piano:** The upper section contains piano accompaniment with various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. It includes several boxed-in sections with arrows pointing to specific parts of the score.
- Vocal:** The lower section contains vocal lines with lyrics and performance instructions. The lyrics include:
 - Malay Traditional:** "melayu kate (Vita) sing/playing with dramatic effect & words on stage. (expression) rumour & gesture"
 - Berany:** "at 16 (P) irregularly/improvise spontaneously" followed by musical notation and the instruction "free (rubato) (with wobbles & figure)".
 - Violin & 3 Gong:** "Violin at 16" followed by musical notation and the instruction "Group" with a circled 'x'.

The score is characterized by horizontal lines and various performance markings, reflecting the composer's emphasis on improvisational flexibility.

Figure 2.17. Ng – *Shadows*, Rehearsal Figure E (Ng 2011: n.p.)

The musicians are entrusted with the task of not only creating their own section, guided by the composer’s prescribed musical motifs, but also of agreeing amongst themselves the overall sound effect they want to produce as an ensemble. Certainly, thinking of the ensemble as a whole is not unique to Ng’s work. However, while most ensemble compositions are written with vertical collectively markings, for example bar lines and the vertical alignment of notations, indicating where the composer expects the phrases to ‘meet’, this is not the case with *Shadows*. The lines in *Shadows* are horizontal. Negotiating the vertical lines is the responsibility of the musicians. Such flexibility unquestionably echoes the duties of gamelan

musicians in producing a different performance each time the work is brought to the stage, based on minimal prescribed musical figures.

In addition to the instrumentation and presentation of the musical score, the influence of the gamelan is also apparent in the way in which Ng has composed the piano part. To be able to truly create an aural outcome that successfully balances and assimilates the traditional gamelan instruments and a distinctively European-derived sound from the piano, various performance techniques are included in the latter part to produce the desired tone. An example of this is shown in Figure 2.18, where the pianist is required to produce a ‘gong-like’ tone.

Figure 2.18. Ng – *Shadows*, Rehearsal Figure A (Ng 2011: n.p.)

Another of Ng’s endeavours to create gamelan sonority through the piano is the use of ascending clusters that reflect the shimmering effect of the gamelan *bonang* (Figure 2.19).

Producing sounds that complement the gamelan instruments by playing directly on the strings inside the piano (Figure 2.20) is another example of the composer’s effort to unite the sound of the distinct instruments involved.

All of these interesting sonorities can be heard in the rehearsal recording⁶⁵ of the piece. The gamelan player in the online video, Susan Sarah John⁶⁶, remarks that the work is ‘simple but challenging’ and that ‘the most simplest [*sic*] things are the most challenging’ (Malaysian Composers TV 2013). She further states that *Shadows* is ‘the most interesting piece’ she has played that ‘combines Western and non-Western instruments’ (Malaysian Composers TV 2013). Loh (2013) takes this praise a step further, describing *Shadows* as a ‘mini masterpiece and a major milestone in composing for gamelan in Western-based music’.

Ng’s unconventional scoring techniques for both *Shadows* and *Three Sketches*, in particular the loose relationship and structure between instruments, note clusters, rapid acciaccatura figures, and the use of boxed musical materials with or without directional arrows, bring to mind compositional approaches of composers in the 1950s and 1960s namely in Feldman’s *Intermission 6* for two pianos (1953), Stockhausen *Klavierstück XI* (1956), Boulez’s *Third Piano Sonata* (1958), and Ligeti’s *Three Pieces for Two Pianos* (1976). The influence of these or similar developments in European-derived music may have found their way into Ng’s musical language through his education in Europe, both as a pianist and as a composer.

Based on the analysis of *Shadows* and *Three Sketches* presented in this chapter, it is clear that Ng’s compositional strategy to embed aspects of gamelan involves instrumentation, concepts of collectiveness, performance techniques, and scale and pitch motif.

2.1.3 Othman

Othman is an eclectic composer with a broad range of interests spanning religion, traditional music, literature and philosophy, all of which are reflected in his creative outputs. His view of Malaysian contemporary music as a reflection of *rojak* is, indeed, a reflection of his own compositions. Analyses in subsequent sections focus on the influence of gamelan in three compositions: *ittar* for chamber orchestra (2003), *topeng I* for orchestra (2004), and *whose shadow would fall on* (2011). Othman also embeds other spiritual influences including Hindu and Buddhist mythology, which are discussed in this chapter, and Christianity, which is investigated in Chapter 5.

⁶⁵ See <https://youtu.be/wcX189J0JL0>

⁶⁶ Susan Sarah John is a Malaysian composer and arranger.

The three works by Othman examined in this study include traces of Lindsay’s three essential concepts for the structure and organisation of gamelan music: the polyphonic layering of melodic lines, the cyclic structure of the music, and the ability of the melodic lines to expand and contract. The composer himself denied that the works are directly influenced or inspired by gamelan music. He did, however, concede that, given the widespread influence of and ease of access to gamelan music, particularly living and being actively involved in the music scene in Malaysia, it is possible that gamelan music may have indirectly stimulated his creative process. Instead, he cited the circle of life as inspiration for his cyclical compositional approach, reflecting the idea that every time a life cycle returns, it is the same but different. Othman further explained that this life cycle concept is extracted from the great Sanskrit epic Mahabharata, more specifically Lord *Shiva*⁶⁷, in the form of *Nataraja*, the Lord of Dance (Figure 2.21) (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013).



Figure 2.21. *Nataraja* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art n.d.)

Nataraja, as shown in the image, has four arms and is encircled in flames representing consciousness and the manifest universe. The dance symbolises the cosmic cycles of creation and destruction, as well as the daily rhythm of birth and death. This concept of ‘same but

⁶⁷ *Shiva* is ‘worshipped in many guises. He is *Nataraja*, the Lord of the Dance, whose dance is the process of the universe itself. He is the ultimate *guru*, the model for the yogi-ascetic. He brings *Moksha* (release) to those who trust in him. There are literally thousands of myths associated with this important manifestation of Hindu godhead. Many of the myths are associated with the various forms of his consort, the Goddess, that is, embodiments of *Shiva Shakti*. These include the terrifying goddesses *Kali* and *Durga*, as well as the beneficent daughter of the *Mountain*, *Parvati*, the mother of the popular elephant-headed god, *Ganesh*’ (Leeming 2005).

different' in the return of life cycles is clearly reflected through *ittar*, *topeng I*, and *whose shadow would fall on*.

***ittar* for chamber orchestra (2003)**

The work title *ittar* is an Urdu and Hindu word that, alongside its alternative 'attar', means 'a perfume or essential oil obtained from flowers or petals, especially of damask roses' (Macquarie Dictionary 2017). Othman explained how his abstract representation of the word *ittar* in his work evokes the way in which the smell of perfume, and particularly a delicate scent such as rose, comes and goes swiftly. The experiencing of the scent, although brief, has a long-lasting effect on an individual. The composer compared the experience of a musical work like *ittar* to the smelling of a perfume, with the experience creating a change in the mind of the listeners (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013). To musically represent such an experience, Othman intentionally begins and ends the work softly and delicately, to convey the scent of a perfume appearing and then disappearing.

The title *ittar* also reflects Othman's interest in Farid Ud-Din Attar (c.1142-c.1220), commonly known as Attar of Nishapur, a Persian Sufi poet, now regarded as one of the greatest Sufi poets, whose mystical verse had immense influence on later Persian poetry, such as that of Jalal al-Din Rumi. In particular, Othman became highly intrigued by Attar's poem *The Conference of the Birds* while composing *ittar* in 2003. A later section of this chapter investigates the influence of *The Conference of the Birds* on Othman's *whose shadow would fall on*.

In *ittar*, Othman layers a melodic line over two instruments, oboe and clarinet. Although not identical to the basic gamelan polyphonic layering of multiple melodic lines, the sonic results created by Othman often evokes the unique static, heterophonic sound experience of a gamelan performance. The musical figures played by both duos are clearly cyclical, with both containing minor expansion and contractions. Figure 2.22 shows the opening figure played by oboe and clarinet from *ittar*. Dotted lines indicate the end of one pitch cycle and the start of the next.

The image shows a musical score for Oboe and Clarinet in Bb, covering bars 1 to 15. The score is in 4/4 time and marked 'mp delicato'. It consists of two staves for each instrument. Vertical dotted lines indicate pitch cycles. A box labeled 'A' is placed above the Oboe staff at bar 5.

Figure 2.22. Othman – *ittar*, oboe and clarinet parts, bars 1 to 15 (Othman 2003: 1-3)
Vertical dotted lines indicate pitch cycles.

The musical figure is based on a 17-note (Figure 2.23) melody that is discovered via compaction of both melodic lines of the oboe and clarinet parts. It should be noted that no distinction is made between notes of the same name, that is the pitch class A represents all As irrespective of register.

The image shows a single staff of music in treble clef, representing the 17-note melodic cycle of Othman - ittar, first statement. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6.

Figure 2.23. Othman – *ittar* melodic cycle, first statement

This melodic line is repeated 15 times after the first statement, reflecting the cyclical nature of gamelan music. Each repetition contains minor changes, a decision which closely mirrors the gamelan concept of expansion and contraction. Table 2.3, on the next page, summarises the 16 cycles of Othman's melody in *ittar*, from bars 1 to 26.

This cyclical concept is again employed between bars 30 and 47, in the parts for the first and second violins. Instead of inserting cycles within pitches, the cyclical pattern appears in the rhythm. Analysis reveals that two rhythmic patterns are used in this section, shown in Figure 2.24 as A and B.

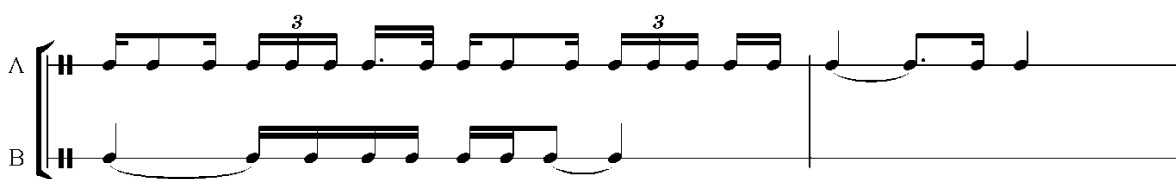


Figure 2.24. Othman – *ittar* rhythmic patterns

Both rhythmic patterns are used in the parts for the first and second violins. Fragments and minor alterations to each pattern are used occasionally. The composer also adds extra rhythmic figures, such as repeated demi-semiquavers, to break up the cycles, as seen in Figure 2.25. The demi-semiquavers build towards a section characterised by highly energised string sections playing quick demi-semiquavers and semiquavers.

The rhythmic cycle begins by closely following the initial rhythmic pattern, eventually becoming more fragmented with some minor alternations made to pattern A. As the work progresses, more and more extra rhythmic figures are added in between cycles. The layering of two rhythmic patterns in the cycle, together with the gradual fragmentation and addition of rhythmic figures, are reminiscent of the fundamental gamelan characteristics of layering and allowing the rhythmic lines to expand and contract. This rhythmic characteristic of expansion and contraction as Othman stated in the same interview, is also inspired by Messiaen's compositional approach that draws upon Indian *deci-tala* rhythmic formulas (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013).

Table 2.3. Othman – breakdown of *ittar* melodic cycle

1	A	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C	C	E	B \flat		A	F		C	E		B \flat		C	
2	A	B \flat	A	A				B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
3	A	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
4	A	B \flat	A	A	C	C		B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F		E	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
																		C				C	B \flat	
5	A B \flat		A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F			E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
6	A	B \flat	A	A	C B \sharp			B \sharp	B \sharp		B \flat	E			A	F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
7	A B \sharp	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	B \sharp F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
8	A	B \flat	A		C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E B \sharp	B \flat A		A	F		C	E		B \flat		C	
9	A	B \sharp	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat	B \flat	A	F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
10	A	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
11	A	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F	F	C	E		B \flat	B \flat B \sharp	C B \sharp	
12	A	B \flat	A	A	C	C		B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat E	A B \flat	A F			C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	C
13	A	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	C	C	E	B \flat		A	F		C	E B \flat		B \flat	B \flat	C	
14	A C	B \flat	A	A	B \flat	C		B \sharp	B \sharp	C		E	B \flat		A	F		C	E		B \flat	B \flat	C	
15	A	B \flat	A	A	A	C	C B \sharp	B \sharp	B \sharp	C E		E	B \flat A		A			C	E		B \flat		C	B \flat
16	A	B \flat	A	A	C			B \sharp	B \sharp	B \sharp C	C E	E	B \flat		A	F		C F	E C	E	B \flat	B \flat	C	

The figure displays a musical score for Violin I and Violin II, covering bars 30 to 47. The score is organized into seven systems, each with a Violin I (Vln I) and Violin II (Vln II) staff. The time signature is 4/4.

- System 1 (Bar 30):** Violin I plays "Pattern A fragment" and "Pattern A". Violin II plays "Pattern B".
- System 2 (Bar 31):** Violin I plays "Extra rhythmic figure Pattern B". Violin II plays "Pattern B".
- System 3 (Bar 32):** Violin I plays "Pattern B fragment". Violin II plays "Pattern A fragment".
- System 4 (Bar 33):** Violin I plays "Extra rhythmic figure". Violin II plays "Pattern B".
- System 5 (Bar 34):** Violin I plays "Pattern A with alteration", "Extra rhythmic figure", and "Pattern B fragment". Violin II plays "Extra rhythmic figure" and "Pattern A fragment".
- System 6 (Bar 35):** Violin I plays "Pattern A fragment", "Extra rhythmic figure", and "Extra rhythmic figure". Violin II plays "Extra rhythmic figure with alteration" and "Extra rhythmic figure".
- System 7 (Bar 36):** Violin I plays "Extra rhythmic figure" and "Extra rhythmic figure". Violin II plays "Extra rhythmic figure" and "Extra rhythmic figure".

Throughout the score, various rhythmic patterns are indicated with brackets and labels, including triplets (marked with '3') and a sextuplet (marked with '6').

Figure 2.25. Othman – *ittar* rhythmic cycle, bars 30 to 47

topeng I for orchestra (2004)

topeng I for orchestra (Track 4) was composed for, and premiered by, the MPO Forum for Composers and MPO in 2004. The work was dedicated to the late violist Georgina Grosvenor (1975-2003). Analyses of Othman's compositional tribute to Grosvenor are presented in Chapter 5.

Topeng is a Malay word meaning mask, and Othman has stated that this title was chosen for two reasons (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013). Firstly, the title of the work is used as a metaphor to convey the way in which a composer is shielded behind the mask he creates through his musical composition. This mask is the facade that the composer wants the world to see. Secondly, masks are common features of legends and myths in many cultures across the world. It is, therefore, perhaps unsurprising that *topeng I* is based on one such legend, specifically the Garuda legend, one of many Hindu and Buddhist mythologies that has captivated the composer's imagination. The story of Garuda's⁶⁸ birth and deeds is told in the first book of the great Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*.

The assimilation of gamelan element, specifically its cyclic and heterophonic characteristics, is found in the cyclical structure and polyphonic texture in *topeng I*. Similar to his approach in *ittar*, the composer continues his investigation of polyphonic layering of melodic lines in *topeng I*. The intriguing heterophonic texture discovered in *ittar*, however, is considerably more complex in *topeng I*. In this work, Othman combines both pitch and rhythmic cycles within the first and second violins parts (Figure 2.26).

As shown in Figure 2.26, the cycle begins in bar 50 (Rehearsal Figure B). Rather than using rhythmic and pitch cycles separately, the composer combines both aspects in this work. The initial pitch cycle is based on 8 notes: D G A E \flat D B \flat C B \sharp . This cycle is then repeated 10 times between the violin parts, marked with dotted lines in Figure 2.26 with each cycle containing one modification, as highlighted in Table 2.4.

⁶⁸ Johnson (2014) describes Garuda as 'a mythical creature, hatched from an egg, with a man's body and the beak and talons of a bird of prey. He is associated with the sun's rays, and is famous for his serpent-destroying power. Various stories are told to account for this antipathy to the *nāgas*, including his defeat of the two giant snakes guarding Indra's heavenly *amṛta*. Garuda needs to steal the *amṛta* in order to free his mother, Vinatā, who has been imprisoned by the mother of the *nāgas*, her sister Kadrū. Various stories also connect Garuda with emeralds, the touch of which is popularly supposed to act as an antidote to snakebites. Garuda pillars (*garuḍastambhas*) erected in front of a number of temples in the early centuries BCE provide evidence of Garuda's role in the first detectable Bhāgavata cults, a connection with Viṣṇu which is confirmed in numerous Purāṇic myths, where he acts as the god's *vāhana* ('vehicle'). In this role he has been a popular subject for sculptures connected with Vaiṣṇava worship of all kinds'.

The image shows a musical score for two violins (Vln I and Vln II) in rehearsal figure B, bars 50 to 68. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The dynamics are marked 'mf sempre'. The score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many triplets and various accidentals. Vertical dashed lines indicate specific points in the music.

Figure 2.26. Othman – *topeng I*, Rehearsal Figure B bars 50 to 68

It should be noted that in the first statement of the pitch cycle, the note D, marked with an asterisk, appears in the second violin part but is excluded in the first violin part. However, the subsequent cyclical pattern suggests that it is part of the 8-note pitch cycle. Othman first states his pitch cycle in full, and then gradually modifies them in an orderly approach that is strongly reminiscent of the phase-shift compositional process made famous by American

Table 2.4. Othman – *topeng I*, pitch cycle in Rehearsal Figure B

Rehearsal Letter B								
1	D	G	A	E \flat	D*	B \flat	C	B \sharp
2	D	G	A	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	C	B \sharp
3	E \flat	G	A	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	C	B \sharp
4	E \flat	D	A	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	C	B \sharp
5	E \flat	D	G	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	C	B \sharp
6	E \flat	D	G	A	E \sharp	B \flat	C	B \sharp
7	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	B \flat	C	B \sharp
8	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \sharp	C	B \sharp
9	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	B \sharp
10	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	C
11	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \sharp	B \flat	C

composer Steve Reich. Interestingly, Reich was influenced by his study of gamelan, especially Balinese, as he writes in his *Postscript to a Brief Study of Balinese and African Music* (1973) (Reich 2002). Given Othman's denial that his compositional approach is directly influenced by the gamelan, its similarity to Reich's phase-shift process, which contains traces of gamelan influences, further affirms the assumption of indirect gamelan influence in Othman's cyclic approach. This phase-shift technique is found, for instance, in the modification made to the first note of the 3rd cycle, the second note of the 4th cycle, the third note of the 5th cycle, and in each subsequent cycle following this same pattern. At the 11th cycle, he restates the new pitch cycle. In addition to its similarity to the phase-shift concept, the cyclical nature of this work once again reaffirms the influence of gamelan characteristics in Othman's work.

As Table 2.5 shows, after the 11th cycle and restatement of the new pitch cycle (see cycle 11 in Table 2.4), the second violin then repeats this 8-note cycle 30 times. It is clear that Othman's alterations to the pitch cycle are methodical. Of particular interest is the fact that the composer selects the 'altered' notes to form the pitch cycle itself. To illustrate this, it is necessary to isolate the 'altered' pitches from the 13th statement onwards: B \sharp E \flat D G A E \flat E \sharp B \flat C // B \sharp E \flat D G A E \flat E \sharp B \flat C // B \sharp E \flat D G // A G D E \flat . This links with an idea Othman raised in an interview in which he expresses his fascination of the idea of 'mirror within mirror' (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013), a parallel concept to his adaptation of 'cycle within cycle' in *topeng I*.

Table 2.5. Othman – *topeng I*, Violin II pitch cycle from bars 70 to 111

Rehearsal Letter C																	
12	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	C	28	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	B \flat
13	B \natural	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	C	29	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural
14	B \natural	E \flat	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	C	30	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	E \flat	A	E \natural
15	B \natural	E \flat	D	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	C	31	B \flat	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural
16	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	C	32	B \flat	C	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural
17	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \natural	B \flat	C	33	B \flat	C	B \natural	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural
18	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	B \flat	C	34	B \flat	C	B \natural	E \flat	G	A	E \flat	E \natural
19	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	C	35	B \flat	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	A	E \flat	E \natural
20	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	36	B \flat	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	E \flat	E \natural
21	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	B \flat (5 bars of rest)								
22	C	E \flat	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	37	G	D	E \flat	B \natural	C	B \flat	E \flat	E \natural
23	C	B \natural	D	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	38	A	D	E \flat	B \natural	C	B \flat	E \natural	E \flat
24	C	B \natural	E \flat	G	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	39	A	G	E \flat	B \natural	C	B \flat	E \natural	E \flat
25	C	B \flat	E \flat	D	A	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	40	A	G	D	B \natural	C	B \flat	E \natural	E \flat
26	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	E \flat	E \natural	B \flat	41	A	G	D	E \flat	B \flat	C	B \flat	D \flat
27	C	B \natural	E \flat	D	G	A	E \natural	B \flat									

In the first violin’s part, Othman inserts a different pitch cycle after the 11th statement, as shown in Table 2.4. Unlike the short, 8-note initial pitch cycle, the first violin now plays a 16-note cycle: B \flat D D B \natural G F \sharp A E E \flat B \flat E \natural A B \flat E \flat C D \flat .

Table 2.6. Othman – *topeng I*, Violin I pitch cycle from bars 69 to 93

Rehearsal Letter C (Violin I)																
1	B \flat	D		B \natural	G	F \sharp	A	E	E \flat	B \flat	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat	C	D \flat
2	B \natural	D	D	B \natural	G	F \sharp	A	E	E \flat	B \flat	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat	C	D \flat
3	B \natural	D	E \flat	B \flat	G	F \sharp	A	E	E \flat	B \flat	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat	C	C \sharp
4	B \natural	D	E \flat	B \flat	D	B \natural	A	E	E \flat	B \flat	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat		C \sharp
5	B \natural	D	E \flat	B \flat	D \flat	B \natural	G	F \sharp	E \flat	B \flat	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat	C	C \sharp
6	B \natural	D	E \flat	B \flat	D \natural	B \natural	G	G \flat	E \flat	E \natural	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat	C	C \sharp
7	B \natural	D	E \flat	B \flat	D \natural	B \natural	G	F \sharp	A	E \natural	E \natural	B \flat	B \flat	E \flat	C	C \sharp
8	B \natural	D	E \flat	B \flat	D \flat	B \natural	G	F \sharp	A	E \natural	E \flat	B \flat	B \flat	A	C	C \sharp
9	D	B \natural	B \flat	E \flat	B \natural	D \natural	F \sharp	G	E \natural	A	B \flat	E \flat	A	E \natural	E \flat	C
10	D	B \natural	B \flat	E \flat	B \natural	D \natural	F \sharp	G		A	B \flat	E \flat	A	E \natural	E \flat	B \flat

Akin to *ittar*, rhythmic cycles are also found in *topeng I*. Instead of an isolated rhythmic cycle section similar to that found in *ittar*, in *topeng I* Othman embeds his rhythmic cycles within the pitch cycles of the two violins from bars 50 to 117, as can be seen in Figure 2.27.

The image displays a musical score for two violins, numbered 1 through 19. Each line represents a measure. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are frequent rests and accents. A prominent feature is the use of triplets, indicated by a bracket with the number '3' above the notes. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with a double bar line at the beginning of each measure.

Figure 2.27. Othman – *topeng I*, Violins I and II rhythm cycles from bars 50 to 117

The composer first presents his full rhythmic cycle, and then subsequently removes one beat from each cycle, again in a phase-shift manner. As can be seen from Figure 2.27, the first minim is deleted in the 2nd cycle, and is instead replaced with a single crotchet rest. The second rhythmic figure (4 semiquavers) is excluded in the 3rd cycle, the third musical figure (2 semiquavers and quaver) is omitted in the 4th cycle, and so on. The final rhythmic figure (dotted quaver and semiquaver) of the 11th cycle has been altered to a quaver, semiquaver rest, and semiquaver. Interestingly, the 12th and 13th cycles are identical to one another, as the composer slightly breaks the cycle here. Instead of omitting the final figure (dotted quaver and semiquaver) in the 13th cycle, Othman excludes the same pairs of quavers, as in the 12th cycle. As there are 13 rhythmic figures in this motif, the composer returns to stating the full cycle after the 13th cycle. At this point, the cycle begins once more, this time shifting by one beat; in other words, instead of entering on the first beat of the bar, the 15th cycle commences on the second beat.

This intricate pitch and rhythmic cycle continues in the first and second violin parts. The violins are joined by the first and second flutes in Rehearsal Figure H, and the first and second bassoons in Rehearsal Figure J, with their own rhythmic and pitch cycles. This is followed by a quasi-string quartet section in Rehearsal Figure K where the pitch and rhythmic cycles end.

Analysis of *topeng I*, thus far, reveals Othman's polyphonic layering of rhythmic and pitch cycles, which are comparably more complex and intricate than that of *ittar*. Such layering, once again, affirms the connection to gamelan music. Unlike the rhythmic fragmentation found in *ittar*, however, there is a clear phase-shift pattern in the cycles of *topeng I*.

As previously discussed, gamelan music is typified by three main elements, as stated by Lindsay (1992: 47): 'the polyphonic layering of melodic lines, the cyclic structure of the music, and the ability of the melodic lines to expand and contract'. Analyses of both of Othman's works show that, whether consciously or unconsciously, Othman has used all three of these traits of gamelan music in his compositions. The polyphonic texture can be seen in the layering of melodic lines in the two violins of *topeng I* and the oboe and clarinet, as well as the two violins in *ittar*. This melodic layering involves Othman's self-derived cyclical approach, which echoes the gamelan cyclic structure, and the expansion and contraction of rhythm and pitch, as discussed.

This cyclic compositional tool is also found in Othman's other works, including *topeng II* (2007) for 18 performers, *Neutral Space* (2009) for solo piano, and *whose shadow would fall on* for clarinet and piano (2011).

***whose shadow would fall on* for trombone and piano (2011)**

Othman's 2011 composition, *whose shadow would fall on* for trombone and piano (Track 5), dedicated to trombonist Dirk Amrein and pianist Jürg Henneberger, serves as a case study of Othman's assimilation of gamelan cultural elements, as well as the influence of Sufi poem and pitch cells made famous by Schoenberg. Such co-existence of multiple cultural elements confirms Othman's *rojak* metaphor for contemporary music. It is important to note that the composer, however, revised this work for clarinet and piano in the same year, and it is this revised version that the study considers. Nonetheless, Othman confirms that the musical material remains largely similar, with minor adjustments made for the trombone and clarinet parts (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 8 October, 2013). This study therefore focuses on analyses of the piano part, which is consistent across both versions.

The title of Othman's '*whose shadow would fall on*' is a direct reference to the Homa bird from the poem *The Conference of the Birds* [*Mantiq al-Tayr*] by Attar of Nishapur.⁶⁹ Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* [*Mantiq al-Tayr*] is considered a 'masterpiece' that illustrates 'the quest of Sufism' (Harvey 2001: vii; Kamada 2010). The synopsis is provided by Kamada (2010):

The birds assemble to select a king so that they can live more harmoniously. Among them, the hoopoe, who was the ambassador sent by Sulaiman to the Queen of Sheba, considers the Simurgh, or a Persian mythical bird, which lives behind Mount Qaf, to be the most worthy of this title. When the other birds make excuses to avoid making a decision, the hoopoe answers each bird satisfactorily by telling anecdotes, and when they complain about the severity and harshness of the journey to Mount Qaf, the hoopoe tries to persuade them. Finally, the hoopoe succeeds in convincing the birds to undertake the journey to meet the Simurgh. The birds strive to traverse seven valleys: quest, love, gnosis, contentment, unity, wonder, and poverty. Finally, only thirty birds reach the abode of the Simurgh, and there each one sees his/her reflection in the celestial bird.

⁶⁹ Othman has a deep fascination with Attar of Nishapur, who wrote the Sufi poem *The Conference of the Birds*. The composer's first attempt in mediating aspects of this literature is through his first opera, completed in 2009, which shares the same title as the poem: *Conference of the Birds*. It is not, however, within the scope of this study to examine this opera.

Thus, thirty birds see the Simurgh as none other than themselves. In this way, they finally achieve self-annihilation. This story is an allegorical work illustrating the quest of Sufism; the birds are a metaphor for men who pursue the Sufi path of God, the hoopoe for the pir, the Simurgh for the Divine, and the birds' journey the Sufi path.

Amongst the birds to be convinced to undertake the journey is the Homa⁷⁰. It is said in *The Conference of the Birds* that those whom the Homa's shadow touches will be crowned king. The title of Othman's *whose shadow would fall on* is a direct reference to the Homa bird from Attar's poem.

Othman again employs his signature phase-shift cyclical approach, which is strongly reminiscent and reflective of the gamelan cyclic structure, as revealed in the analyses of *ittar* and *topeng I*, in the pitch organisation of *whose shadow would fall on*. Unlike the two previous works, where the compositional method is employed in rhythmic and melodic lines, Othman creates a cycle in *whose shadow would fall on* using 4-note harmonic cells. Therefore, in order to understand the ways Othman employs his cyclical approach for his pitch organisation in *whose shadow would fall on*, it is necessary to first analyse these harmonic cells.

The use of cells was made famous by Schoenberg. A cell 'is a small collection of pitches (typically three or four) which, together with transformations and perhaps with other cells, forms the melodic/harmonic basis for a work' (Turek 2007: 714). The two cells employed in *whose shadows would fall on* are: 0 5 6 9 and 0 4 6 9 (Figure 2.28). The numbers are obtained by assigning the number zero to the lowest pitch, then listing the numbers of semitones between this pitch and each successive pitch.



Figure 2.28. Pitch cells in *whose shadows would fall on*

Figure 2.29 and Table 2.8 exemplify the formation of each chord.

⁷⁰ Huma, or Homa, is 'a mythical bird similar to the phoenix, supposed to bring luck to any person over whom it hovers on its restless flights' (Speake and LaFlaur 1999).

Figure 2.29. Othman – *whose shadows would fall on*, bar 1 (Othman 2011: 1)

Table 2.8. Analysis of pitch cell in bar 1 of *whose shadows would fall on*

Chord number (see Figure 8)	Chord notes	Pitch cell
1	E A B \flat D \flat	0 5 6 9
2	E \flat G A C	0 4 6 9
3	G C D \flat E	0 5 6 9
4	B \flat E \flat E \sharp G	0 5 6 9
5	F B \flat B \sharp D	0 5 6 9
6	A D \flat E \flat G \flat	0 4 6 9
7	F B \flat B \sharp D	0 5 6 9
8	E A B \flat D \flat	0 5 6 9
9	D \flat G \flat G \sharp B \flat	0 5 6 9
10	D G A \flat B	0 5 6 9
11	A D \flat D \sharp F	0 5 6 9
12	C E G \flat A	0 4 6 9
13	D \flat G C E (displacement of G C D \flat E)	0 5 6 9
14	G \flat C F A (displacement of C F G \flat A)	0 5 6 9
15	G \flat B \flat C E \flat	0 4 6 9
16	F A B D	0 4 6 9
17	B E \flat F A \flat	0 4 6 9

Further examination confirms that all of the piano part is indeed constructed based on the two pitch cells, occasionally manipulated with displacements (see chords 12 and 13).

Using this basic harmonic cell structure, Othman creates the first statement of his cycle beginning on the last quaver of bar 4. The complete cycle consists of nine chords that are fully stated in the first cycle. One, or occasionally more than one, chord is then removed in every subsequent cycle, as follows: (i) the first chord in the second cycle, (ii) the second chord in the third cycle, (iii) the third chord in the fourth cycle, (iv) the fourth chord in the fifth cycle, (v) the fifth chord in the sixth cycle, (vi) the first and sixth chords in the seventh cycle, (vii) the first and seventh chords in the eighth cycle, (viii) the fourth and eighth chords in the ninth cycle, (ix) the ninth chord in the tenth cycle.

All 9 chords are reinstated in the 11th cycle. The 12th, 13th and 14th cycles are more relaxed in their chordal arrangements, with the introduction of chords which is still constructed with either of the two pitch cells seen in Figure 2.28. In some cycles, chords are repeated, doubled and altered to provide sonic variations. For example, in the 6th cycle, the 9th chord is repeated multiple times, while notes of the 3rd chord are doubled in the 5th and 11th cycles. New chords based on one of the two pitch cells can be observed in the 7th and 9th cycles. It is also noted that some notes are altered, such as in the 7th, 12th, and 13th cycles. The final cycle presents the only chord in *whose shadow would fall on* that is not based on the pitch cells identified. Othman explains ‘the symbolic association of [the constantly varying cycles] is to reflect the ongoing cycle the mystical bird repeats [in] its selection of a king by way of its shadow’ (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013). This brings the composition full circle, not only to the reference to the Homa bird in Attar’s Sufi poem, but also gamelan cyclic structure and, as previously noted, life cycles symbolises by the *Nataraja* (see Figure 2.21).

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Figure 2.30 displays seven staves of musical notation, numbered 8 through 14, representing a pitch cycle in the piano part of the composition 'whose shadow would fall on' by Othman. Each staff shows a sequence of chords with various annotations such as 'new', '3(doubling)', and '(altered F)'. The notation includes treble clefs, key signatures with flats, and rhythmic values.

Figure 2.30. Othman – *whose shadow would fall on*, pitch cycle in piano part

Othman’s compositions examined in this study — *ittar*, *topeng I* and *whose shadow would fall on* — are all examples of compositions that typify the *rojak* phenomenon. Each work displays the assimilation of several cultural elements through multiple compositional methods. Among them are Othman’s signature cyclical approach (pitch and rhythm), work title, pitch cell, and heterophonic texture, all of which remain identifiable even as they are combined to create compositions that are both recognisably composed by Othman but are also profoundly important and beautiful compositions within the context of Malaysian music.

2.1.4 Tajuddin

***Tenunan II* for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra (2001)**

The next three sections consider three gamelan-influenced works by Tajuddin, namely *Tenunan II*, *Gamelbati III*, and *Sebuah Pantun IV*, which have been chosen as case studies to showcase Tajuddin's approach to embedding gamelan elements into his compositions. Some of Tajuddin's methods of embedding gamelan music are similar to those of Othman and Ng, in particular instrumentation, scale, and the layering of sound, while also presenting an approach that is uniquely his own, called gamelan numbering. In *Tenunan II*, two musical aspects – musical material and instrumentation – are found to contain traces of gamelan. This researcher's analysis of *Tenunan II* was published in *Malaysian Music Journal* in 2014.⁷¹

Tenunan II (Track 6), dedicated to Iannis Xenakis⁷², was composed in 2001 for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra. It won the first prize in the prestigious Japanese Toru Takemitsu Composition Award in 2002, and was premiered by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Ken Takaseki, at the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award. The sole judge Joji Yuasa commented that 'among the finalists [of the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award 2002], there is a Malaysian and I am very surprised and grateful to find such a high quality composer from the country' (Tajuddin n.d.). In 2003, *Tenunan II* was performed by the Carnegie Philharmonic Orchestra, under the baton of Juan Pablo Izquierdo, at the Carnegie Music Hall, Pittsburgh. In 2007, the British section of the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM) selected this work to be performed at the 2007 ISCM-Asian Composer League (ACL) World Music Days in Hong Kong.

In *Tenunan II*, the composer's intention of weaving together cultural aspects such as Islamic arabesque, *batik*, and gamelan sonority is evident. In his programme notes to the musical score, Tajuddin (2001: n.p.) states that:

⁷¹ The author's analysis of *Tenunan II* was published in *Malaysian Music Journal* (2014) 3/1: 15-36. It is, therefore, important to note that parts of the following discussion are extracted from the journal article. The published article highlights the ways in which Tajuddin mediates multiple cultural elements, including gamelan, *batik* pattern, and Islamic geometrical art, through compositional strategies. See <http://mmj.upsi.edu.my/images/Vol3No1/peck_jin_gan.pdf>

⁷² Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001) is a 'French composer of Greek parentage. He belonged to the pioneering generation of composers who revolutionised 20th-century music after World War II. With the ardour of an outsider to academic musical life, he was one of the first to replace traditional musical thinking with radical new concepts of sound composition. His musical language had a strong influence on many younger composers in and outside of Europe, but it remained singular for its uncompromising harshness and conceptual rigour' (Hoffmann n.d.).

Tenunan is a Malay word meaning weave. It is visually related to woven and printed patterns of textiles (particularly from Malaysia and Indonesia), [which are known as batik]. Even though technically batik is not woven, conceptually the piece [*Tenunan II*] is conceived as weaving which happens in the notation, in the process of composing and sound organization of one sound to another.

This section investigates gamelan cultural elements as found in *Tenunan II*, while the elements of Islamic arabesque, *tenunan* [weave] and *batik*⁷³ that are embedded in Tajuddin's work will be discussed in later sections. In particular, it will consider the way in which the composer incorporates elements of gamelan music in the musical articulation and instrumentation of *Tenunan II*.

Tenunan II is divided in 14 sections, with each of the 14 sections comprising seven bars. The first beat of each displays an aggressive *tutti* vertical attack (Figure 2.31). In his programme notes, Tajuddin (2001: n.p.) explains that the vertical attacks at the beginning of each section are an expression of the word *kebyar*, related to the *Gamelan Gong Kebyar*⁷⁴, which means to flare up suddenly. The explosiveness and aggressiveness of this vertical attack is further enhanced by the *sforzando* (*sfz*), together with the short note length of the semiquaver. This attack gives the work a sense of pulse. The *tutti* aggressive figure at the beginning of each section can be considered as a 'major' pulse. Within each section, celeste, flute and percussion play another aggressive short note attack on the first beat of each bar, as circled in Figure 2.31, which can be seen as a 'minor' pulse. The explosive *tutti* attacks are accompanied by highly intense and unpredictable passages, mainly led by the string orchestra. This string accompaniment also contains elements of gamelan music, which is further discussed in the next section.

⁷³ *Batik* is a cloth that is traditionally made using a manual wax-resist dyeing technique.

⁷⁴ *Gamelan Gong Kebyar* is a genre of Balinese gamelan music.

PI *As if at night, dream in a state of floating* *Tenunan II* Tazul I. Tajuddin

Always play delicately, lightly

Flute: *vigorous attack*, *gentler attack, lightly*

Glockenspiel: *[hard mallet] vigorous attack*, *[soft mallet] gentler attack, lightly*

Vibraphone: *[hard mallet] vigorous attack*, *[soft mallet] gentler attack, lightly*

Percussion: *[Bass Drum] vigorous attack*, *gentler attack, lightly*

Celesta: *vigorous attack*, *gentler attack, lightly*

Piano: *vigorous attack*, *next note event, follow the arrow*, *note ties continue, follow the arrow*

(Solo) Violin 1: *pizz.*, *pizz. arco sul ponti.*

Violin 2: *pizz.*

Violin 3: *pizz.*

Violin 4: *pizz. arco sul ponti.*

Violin 5: *pizz.*

Violin 6: *pizz. arco sul ponti.*

Viola 1: *pizz.*

Viola 2: *pizz.*

Viola 3: *pizz. arco sul ponti.*

Viola 4: *pizz.*

Viola 5: *pizz. arco sul ponti.*

Violoncello 1: *arco sul tasto*, *mf*, *gliss.*

Violoncello 2: *arco sul tasto*, *mf*, *gliss.*

Violoncello 3: *pizz. arco*, *mf*, *pizz. arco sul tasto normale*

Violoncello 4: *pizz. arco*, *mf*

Double bass 1: *pizz. arco*, *mf*, *pizz. arco sul tasto normale*

Double bass 2: *pizz. arco*, *mf*

Double bass 3: *pizz. arco*, *mf*

Tempo: ♩ = 40

Time signatures: 4/4, 7/4, 3/4

Figure 2.31. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, bars 1 to 3 (Tajuddin 2001: 1)

Considered as a whole, the instrumentation of *Tenunan II* resembles Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, Sz. 106, which also includes a piano. Nevertheless, Tajuddin has stated in an interview that the selection of instruments in *Tenunan II* was not based on Bartok's well-known work (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 3 October, 2013). Instead, these instruments were selected to create a sound reminiscent to the sonority of a gamelan ensemble. Tajuddin frequently writes in his programme notes that his compositions are sound-based compositions. To understand this 'sound' that Tajuddin refers to, Coaldrake's four components of tonal colour is applied (Coaldrake 2012).

Research undertaken by Coaldrake on ways to describe timbre, particularly on the *koto*, a Japanese zither, provides a framework for considering tonal colour. Her research on the four components of tonal colour allows for better understanding of the timbral characteristic of a single tone. The four components of tonal colour are: (i) instrument; (ii) performance/performer; (iii) sensory experience; and (iv) cultural interpretation.

Each component can be adapted and interpreted respectively, for the purpose of this study, as: (i) quality of sound characteristic of the instrument; (ii) performance practices; (iii) sonic effect; and (iv) cultural context of both the instrument and its sonic effect. It should be noted that Coaldrake's framework focuses on the analysis of tonal colour, with emphasis on the performance and performer. It is therefore necessary for the purpose of this research to expand the framework slightly to include compositional approach and technique as part of the second component. Table 2.9 has been created based on Coaldrake's four components of tonal colour as a guide to the analysis of Tajuddin's instrumentation in *Tenunan II*.

The concept of sound 'layering' is an important principle in gamelan music. In *Tenunan II*, Tajuddin relies heavily on the string orchestra to create this layering of sound. The work starts with low strings and gradually adds higher strings, increasing the texture and intensity of the work. The composer has chosen to use percussive instruments and piano, as the role of percussion in the gamelan orchestra is extremely important. As discussed earlier, certain percussion instruments in gamelan ensemble are called 'phrase-making' instruments (Lindsay 1992: 10). They are responsible for creating the pulse structure within a performance. The percussion instruments in *Tenunan II* play a similar role. They are assigned to play a short attack note on the first beat of each bar, creating pulses throughout. The flute is chosen for its

Table 2.9. Tajuddin - Instrumentation of *Tenunan II* according to the Four Components of Tonal Colour (Coaldrake 2012)

Four components of tonal colour	Instrumentation of <i>Tenunan II</i>		
(i) Instrument: Quality of sound characteristic of instrument	String orchestra	Celeste, piano and percussions	Flute
(ii) Performance /performer [compositional approach and technique]	Starts with low strings and gradually adds in with higher strings	Short attack note on the first beat of each bar	Quick explosive, highly elaborated melodic figure at the beginning of each section
(iii) Sensory experience: Sonic effect	Increase in texture and intensity	Create pulse	Marks the importance of the beat
(iv) Cultural interpretation: Cultural context of instruments and sonic effect	Reflect the principle of sound 'layering' in gamelan music	'Phrase-making' instruments of gamelan ensemble	Has a similar sonority to <i>suling</i> or <i>seruling</i> (an end-blown bamboo flute), and carries the melodies in gamelan music

sonority, which is quite similar to the *suling* or *seruling* (an end-blown bamboo flute) used in gamelan. The flute carries a quick explosive and highly-elaborated melodic figure at the beginning of each section. It also helps to mark the importance of the beat. This role is akin to that of the *suling* or *seruling*, which are used to carry the melodies in gamelan music.

In addition to provoking sonority of gamelan through his composition, Tajuddin has made reference to the spiritual side of gamelan music through instrumentation. The explosive *tutti* attacks that create pulses in *Tenunan II* are accompanied by highly intense and unpredictable string passages. Tajuddin (2001: n.p.) compared this string passage 'to the feeling of floating like being in a state of constant flux, either static or chaotic, and unstable', which he intends to provoke 'spiritual transcendentalism' and 'spiritual dimensions'. To achieve this effect, the performers are instructed to play 'as if at night, dream in a state of floating' (see Figure 2.31). The link between gamelan and Tajuddin's notion of 'spiritual transcendentalism and dimensions' in *Tenunan II* is examined from two perspectives. The first is the connection to the origin of the gamelan. According to Weiss (2008), it is believed that the gamelan:

was created in Saka era 167 (c. 230 CE) by Sang Hyang Guru, the god who ruled as king of all Java from a palace on the Maendra mountains in Medangkamulan (now Mount Lawu). He needed a signal to summon the gods, and thus invented the gong. For more complex messages, he invented two other gongs, thus forming the original gamelan set.

The second perspective relates to the gamelan's social function. Kartomi and Mendonca (n.d.) noted that gamelan 'have traditionally been used to accompany religious rites and dances which have survived from pre-Muslim times (before about the 15th century CE)...The gamelan's main function is still to accompany ceremonial or religious rituals'. It is, therefore, reasonable to imagine that Tajuddin's string passage in *Tenunan II* is written to emulate the spiritual link to the gamelan ensemble in its original and social functions, which are strongly associated with religious rituals and ceremonies.

***Gamelbati III* for string quartet (2005)**

Gamelbati III for string quartet (Track 7) was written for the prestigious Lutoslawski Composition Competition in 2005, in memory of Witold Lutoslawski, in which it won first prize. Tajuddin (2005: n.p.) included fairly detailed remarks preceding the actual music score, explaining the term '*gamelbati*':

'Gamelbati' is a word to describe my concept of integrating two different elements, which are the Western and Eastern music. The word derived from gamelan, '*gamel*' means 'to hammer' or perhaps in this context 'to play' or 'to strike'. The word '*bati*' is a Malay/Indonesian word meaning united. In a more complex situation it could also be used to describe an integration of elements which becomes one component or texture: '*sebati*'... In this composition all elements are integrated to become one sound fabric or sound texture. Also I use '*bati*' as a short form for the words '*barat*' and '*timur*' (Malay/Indonesian) meaning West and East.

Tajuddin (2005: n.p.). was clear that his compositional approach is centralised around the idea of integration, or assimilation. In particular, he expressed that 'there are two main sources of inspiration for my work in general: one is Indo-Malay culture, and the other, Islamic architectural and geometrical art'. This further supports the core argument of this study, that Malaysian composers like Tajuddin intentionally compose music that incorporates local flavours within their European-derived compositional framework.

Tajuddin himself has specified gamelan as the most significant source of inspiration for *Gamelbati III*. This is evident not only in the title, but also in the programme notes to the

music, in which he named *Andhong-andhong gendhing pelog pathet nem* (Figure 2.32) as the basis of his ‘note series’ in this work (Tajuddin 2005: n.p.):

The piece [*Gamelbati III*] is constructed around 7 series of notes (based on *Andhong-andhong gendhing pelog pathet nem*; a Javanese gamelan traditional piece) and 7 series of numbers. These series of notes and numbers are distributed throughout the piece and are woven and connected to 7 sections. Each of these sections consists of a further 7 small sections... These small sections are like a series of small patterns which are connected to each other like broken tiles being placed next to each other.

**Andhong-Andhong, Gendhing,
kethuk 2 kerep, pelog pathet nem
(1).**

buka:
35 6111 3312 .165 1216G

mérong:

t	t	N
[33.. 6532 .165 1216		
55.. 5535 .653 2321		
55.. 5535 .654 2126		
33.. 6532 .165 1216G]		

ngelik:

t	t	N
11.. 3216 3565 3212		
11.. 3216 3565 3212		
55.. 5535 6654 2126		
33.. 6532 .165 1216G].		

t	t	N
[2321 3216 2321 3216		
..6. 2321 3253 6532		
.5.3 .5.2 .5.3 .5.2		
.33. 3635 1612 3216G]		

Figure 2.32. *Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, kethuk 2 kerep, pelog pathet nem (1)* (Becker and Feinstein 1988: 62)

Analysis of *Gamelbati III* now focuses on decoding the gamelan numbers as notes in this work. The woven and mosaic-like components from the traditional crafts of weaving and *batik* will be investigated in Chapter 3. The analysis of gamelan numbering in *Gamelbati III* mainly focuses on the first note of each slurred grouping in the first violin part. In addition,

analysis has revealed that gamelan numbers are only employed in sections with gamelan sectional headings such as ‘*buka*’, ‘*merong*’,⁷⁵ and ‘*ngelik*’,⁷⁶ (Figure 2.32).

As shown in Figure 2.32, the gamelan notation is based on a cipher system, in which pitches are numbered in what would be recognised as scale degree numbers in the European-derived musical theory, one through seven. There are two main tuning or scale systems in gamelan music: *slendro* and *pelog* scales. The *slendro* scale consists of five roughly equidistant intervals within the octave, commonly represented by the numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. The *pelog* scale has seven uneven intervals within the octave, using all numbers from 1 to 7 (Lindsay: 72). As the title suggests, Figure 2.32 is written in the *pelog* scale. This is further confirmed by the inclusion of the fourth scale degree (number 4) which is not commonly used in the *slendro* scale. In this instance, however, the seventh scale degree (number 7) is not used. This gamelan numbering system carries significant weight with regard to how *Gamelbati III*, *Azan*, and *Sebuah Pantun IV* are composed, particularly in pitch selection and structure. The analysis method employed here is where notes are deciphered into gamelan numbers based on the *pelog* scale presented in Figure 2.33.

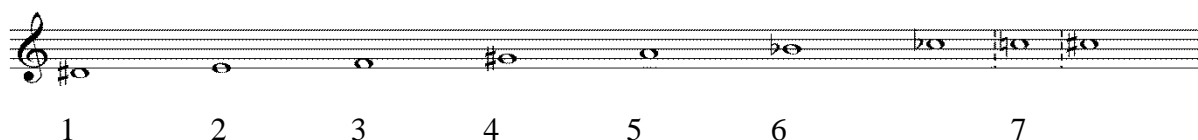


Figure 2.33. *Pelog* scale

Interviews conducted with Tajuddin revealed that, while living in the United Kingdom, the composer was exposed to several gamelan performing groups, and the one with which he was mostly closely affiliated used a specific *pelog* scale: D# E F G# A Bb Cb/C#/C# (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 19 February, 2013). A detailed analysis of the pitches of *Gamelbati III* disclosed the ways in which Tajuddin incorporates another aspect of gamelan into his work. To understand Tajuddin’s unique compositional method, the pitches must be decoded into

⁷⁵ Yampolsky *et al.* (n.d.) explains, ‘*mérong* and *inggah* sections are not usually performed as separate entities, but are played in relatively fixed pairs to constitute *gendhing*, the longer compositions in the Central Javanese repertory. Some *inggah* sections are firmly bound to a particular *mérong*, whereas others may be ‘borrowed’ to play with another *mérong*. *Gendhing* may also have transitional sections (*umpak inggah*) played between the *mérong* and *inggah* or *sesegan* sections played as a rapid conclusion after the *inggah*’.

⁷⁶ Yampolsky *et al.* (n.d.) explains, ‘many pieces feature the distinctive, high-register *lik* or *ngelik* section that contrasts with the basic section of the piece, sometimes called *umpak*. The *lik* may be an integral part of the piece, played at every iteration, or an auxiliary section that is played once or not at all, depending on circumstances and the leaders’ decisions’.

numbers. Firstly, each note in the *pelog* scale mentioned is given their corresponding numbers in Figure 2.33.

The *buka* and one of each *ngelik* and *merong* sections further illuminate Tajuddin’s ‘gamelan numbers’ approach towards incorporating gamelan elements into his music. Decoding the ‘*buka*’ is relatively straightforward, as presented in Figure 2.34.

Gamelbati III
for string quartet

Based on Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, pelog pathet nem

Tazul Izan Tajuddin

(♩ = 46)
buka (opening): freely and decoratively

Violin I

Violoncello

mp

arco normale

mp

arco normale

(plus with one finger)

Figure 2.34. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, bar 1 (Tajuddin 2005: 1)

As noted previously, this analytical approach considers pitch classes; for example, pitch class F represents all Fs across different registers. The result is the string of numbers 3 5 6 1 1 1 3 3 1 2 1 6 5 1 2 1 6 (Figure 2.34); this sequence is an exact match to the *buka* phrase of *Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, kethuk 2 kerep, pelog pathet nem (1)* (Figure 2.32).

Applying the same analytical approach gives the skeletal pitch structure of the first violin as shown:

(merong:)
bars 32 to 44

3 3 (6 5 3 2) 1 6 5 1 2 1 6 5 5 5(5b) 5 6 5 3 2 3 2 1

bars 98 to 103

(5 5 5 3 5) 6 5 4 2 1 2 6 3 3 (6) 5 3 2 1 6 (5 1 2 1 6)

Figure 2.35. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, bars 32 to 44 and bars 98 to 103 summarised and decoded

Between bars 44 and 98, Tajuddin has not employed any specific gamelan numbers, and therefore these bars do not feature in this analysis. The spaces in between notes are attempts to present empty bars or rests as accurately as possible. Comparing these decoded numbers to the actual *merong* section from the gamelan piece, it is clear that the composer's approach is fairly flexible, as the numbers are not completely coded into the pitches. The bracketed numbers (Figure 2.35) show areas where the gamelan numbers are not found in the first violin part. Such incompleteness in the encoding of the numbers is also found in the *ngelik* section. As *ngelik* is relatively long, this study focuses on the decoded analysis for bars 106 to 160.

(ngelik:
bars 106 to 160)

<1> 1 1 3 2 1 6 3 5 6 5 3 2 1 2 1 (11321) 6 3 5 (653212)

(55) 5 5 3 5 6 6 (542126) (336) 5 3 2 1 (65) 1 2 (16)

5 5 3 5 6 6 5 4 2 1 2 6 3 3 6 5 3 2 1 6 5 1 2 1 6 1 1

3 2 1 6 3 5 6 5 3 2 1 2 *1 6 5 1 2 1 6*

Figure 2.36. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, bars 106 to 160 summarised and decoded

The first note <1> is an additional number not found in the *Andhong-andhong*, *Gendhing*, *kethuk 2 kerep*, *pelog pathet nem (1) ngelik* section. The numbers in brackets, for example (5 5), are numbers from *Andhong-andhong*, *Gendhing*, *kethuk 2 kerep*, *pelog pathet nem (1)* that have not been translated into pitches in *Gamelbati III*. A comparison between the analytical results and the *ngelik* section from *Andhong-andhong*, *Gendhing*, *kethuk 2 kerep*, *pelog pathet nem (1)* reveals many similarities (see Table 2.10).

The first four lines from *Gamelbati III* are comparable to the gamelan *ngelik* section. Tajuddin then revisits lines 3 and 4 from the gamelan *ngelik* section, as pointed out by the

arrows in Table 2.10. The last two lines of *Gamelbati* in Table 2.10 use the exact numbers from the first line and the final seven numbers from the gamelan *ngelik* section respectively.

The first four lines from *Gamelbati III* are comparable to the gamelan *ngelik* section. Tajuddin then revisits lines 3 and 4 from the gamelan *ngelik* section, as pointed out by the arrows in Table 2.10. The last two lines of *Gamelbati* in Table 2.10 use the exact numbers from the first line and the final seven numbers from the gamelan *ngelik* section respectively.

Table 2.10. Comparison between *ngelik* section from *Andhong-andhong*, *Gendhing*, *kethuk 2 kerep*, *pelog pathet nem (1)* and *Gamelbati III*

<i>Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, kethuk 2 kerep, pelog pathet nem (1) ngelik section</i>	<i>Gamelbati III</i>
11.. 3216 3565 3212	<1> 11 3216 3565 3212
11.. 3216 3565 3212	1 (11321) 6 35(65 3212)
55.. 5535 6654 2126	(55) 5535 66(54 2126)
33.. 6532 .165 1216G	(33 6)532 1(65) 12(16)
	5535 6654 2126
	33 6532 165 1216
	11 3216 3565 3212
	165 1216

Consistent with the analysis of the *merong* section of Tajuddin’s work, the composer takes a less strict approach to embedding the complete gamelan numbers into this music. Applying similar decoding analytical method, gamelan numbers are also found in the next two works to be investigated, *Azan* and *Sebuah Pantun IV*.

***Azan* [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007)**

Azan was composed in 2007, for the Guildford International Musical Festival 2007 (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 28 October, 2017; Guildford International Music Festival 2007; Tajuddin 2007: n.p.). The work is composed for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone, and 3 sound sculpture players. It contains eight continuous sections. The ‘call for prayer’ here refers to the Islamic practice *azan* [call for prayer]. This assimilation of this Islamic spiritual practice is examined in Chapter 5. The ‘sound sculpture’ mentioned makes reference to sound

sculptures created by Derek Shiel⁷⁷ for his ensemble Sculpted Sound. Although written for three sound sculpture players, the performance of this work is photographed to have five players, as seen in Figure 2.37.



Figure 2.37. Performance of Tajuddin’s *Azan* at the ‘Sculpted Sound: Inter-Faith Concert’ as part of the Guildford International Musical Festival 2007 (Sculpted Sound n.d.c)

The sound sculptures employed, as shown in Figure 2.37, appear to be made of metal. They ‘comprise a variety of timbres rather than pitch, as in the work of Cage or Varese in the West and *Gamelan* or Tibetan sacred music in the East [*emphasis added*]’ (Sculpted Sound n.d.b). The sonic result of performing on these sculptures, by hitting them with beaters of different

⁷⁷ Derek Shiel is a ‘painter, sculptor and writer’ who has been ‘developing links between the visual arts and music’. He is the founder and Artistic Director of the ensemble Sculpted Sound, in which he is the ‘maker of the sound sculptures’ (Sculpted Sound n.d.a).

sizes and by bowing them, as observed in the performance photograph, is one that is reminiscent that of the gamelan metallic timbre (listen to Track 8).

The link between *Azan* and the gamelan, in addition to its timbre, is also found in the pitch and time structures. In the programme note to *Azan*, the composer stated explicitly that the work is ‘based on a gamelan traditional piece called “*Budheng-budheng*” using *pelog* (mode) *pathet nem*’ (Tajuddin 2007: n.p.). The gamelan piece Tajuddin referred to is *Budheng-budheng, Gendhing, kethuk 2 awis, minggah kethuk 4, pelog pathet nem (1)* (hereafter: *budheng-budheng*) (Figure 2.38).

Budheng-budheng, Gendhing, kethuk 2 awis, minggah kethuk 4, pelog pathet lima (1)

buka: 3 .5.6 .565 .5.6 .5.4 .2.4 2121N/G

mérong:

	t		t	N
[..12	3565	..56	. 532
	..13	.21.	6.21	6535
	.6.3	5635	33..	1232
	..13	.21.	6.21	6535
	.6.3	5635	33..	1232
	..13	.21.	6.21	6535
+	33..	33..	3356	.535
	..56	.5.4	.2.4	2121G]

Figure 2.38. Excerpt from *Budheng-budheng, Gendhing, kethuk 2 awis, minggah kethuk 4, pelog pathet nem (1)* (Becker and Feinstein 1988: 97).

In *Azan* these gamelan numbers are embedded at two levels: time structure and pitch. As seen in Figure 2.39 *Azan* does not have conventional bars. Instead it has time structure on the top of each line. The numbers represent the number of beats in accordance with the metronome marking provided: for example, in section 1, the number 3 symbolises three beats at q= 60-70, number 5 five beats at q= 60-70, and number 6 six beats at q= 60-70, and so forth.

It is observed that there are several pauses between the numbers. These pauses correspond with ‘.’ from *Budheng-budheng* in Figure 2.38. For example, replacing the ‘.’ in the *buka* section (3 .5.6 .565 .5.6 .5.4 .2.4 2121) of *Budheng-budheng* with \frown , results in: 3 \frown 5 \frown 6 \frown 565 \frown 5 \frown 6 \frown 5 \frown 4 \frown 2 \frown 4 2121. This is strikingly similar to that the time structure of section 1 in *Azan* (Figure 2.39).

When applying this coding method in reverse for section 2 (Figure 2.40), that is, replacing the \curvearrowright in its time structure with ‘.’, the outcome is: . 3 3565 . 56 . 532 . 4 . 3 6 . 35, which is comparable to the *mérong* section from *Budheng-budheng*. Table 2.11 shows a comparison between this series of numbers and the first two lines of the *mérong* section from *Budheng-budheng*.

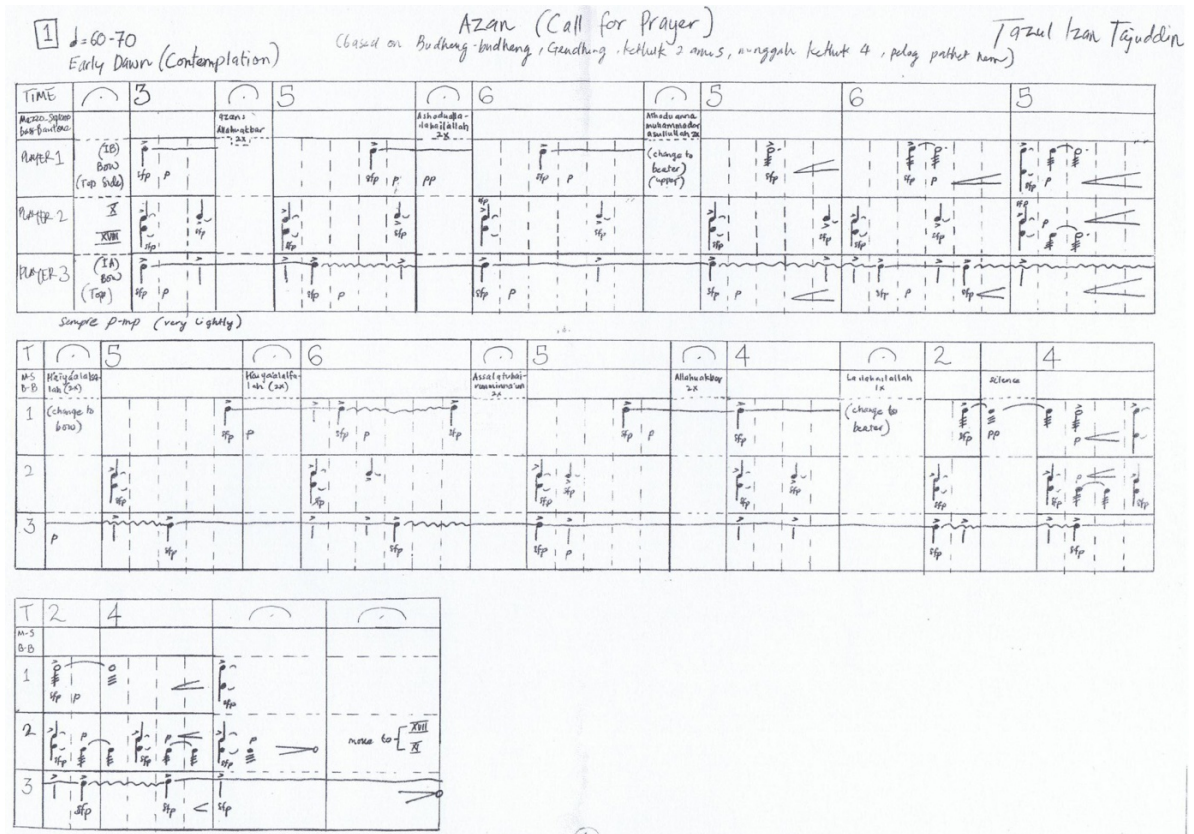


Figure 2.39. Tajuddin – Azan, section 1 (Tajuddin 2007: 1)

2] \downarrow ca. 70-80
Sunrise (calm, meditatively)

The musical score is handwritten and consists of three systems. The first system includes parts for VOICES, PLAYER 1 (IB), PLAYER 2, and PLAYER 3 (IA). The second system includes parts for VOICES, 1, 2, and 3. The third system includes parts for 1, 2, and 3. The score features various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (fp, mp, sfz). A small diagram at the bottom left shows a staff with notes and a box containing the text 'move to [II] (Prime 5)' and 'move to II'.

Figure 2.40. Tajuddin – *Azan*, section 2 (Tajuddin 2007: 2)

Table 2.11. Comparison of gamelan numbers between Tajuddin’s *Azan*, section 2 and *Budheng-budheng*

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8
<i>Budheng-budheng, m é r o n g</i>	..12	3565	..56	.532	..13	.21.	6.	21
Tajuddin’s <i>Azan</i> , section 2	.3	3565	.56	.532	.4	.3	6.	35

The comparison shows strong similarities between the two sets of numbers. In some cases, two numbers from *Budheng-budheng* are added together to form one single number in *Azan*. For example, in the first column, numbers 1 and 2 in *Budheng-budheng* are added to become number 3 in *Azan*; numbers 1 and 3 in the fifth column become number 4; and numbers 2 and 1 in the sixth column become number 3. Such compositional practice is found throughout the time structure of *Azan*.

As previously noted, the pitches of *Azan*, and in particular the mezzo soprano melodic lines, are also assimilated with gamelan numbers. Applying the same gamelan numbers obtained in Figure 2.33, the mezzo soprano part from section 2 is decoded in Figure 2.41. It is revealed

that these numbers are consistent with numbers from the first four lines of the *mérong* section (Figure. 2.38).

Figure 2.41. Tajuddin – *Azan*, section 2, mezzo soprano part decoded

Such assimilation of gamelan numbers is found in the mezzo soprano part throughout *Azan* as well as in the work to be discussed in the next section, *Sebuah Pantun IV*.

***Sebuah Pantun IV* for violin, cello and piano (2011)**

Sebuah Pantun IV [A Malay Poem IV] for violin, cello and piano is dedicated to both the composer Evis Sammoutis and the Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, who gave its premiere in Nicosia, Cyprus in 2011. The audio recording of this work, performed by the Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, is listed as Track 9. In the programme notes preceding the score of *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Tajuddin (2011: n.p.) states that ‘*Sebuah Pantun IV* is written using gamelan numbering, with the numbers being transformed into sounds and notes in trio’. As documented in the analysis of *Gamelbati III*, the gamelan numbering Tajuddin mentions is the notation of gamelan music. Figure 2.42 is *Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, kethuk 2 kerep, minggah kethuk 4, pelog pathet lima (1)*, which is the source of inspiration for *Sebuah Pantun IV*.

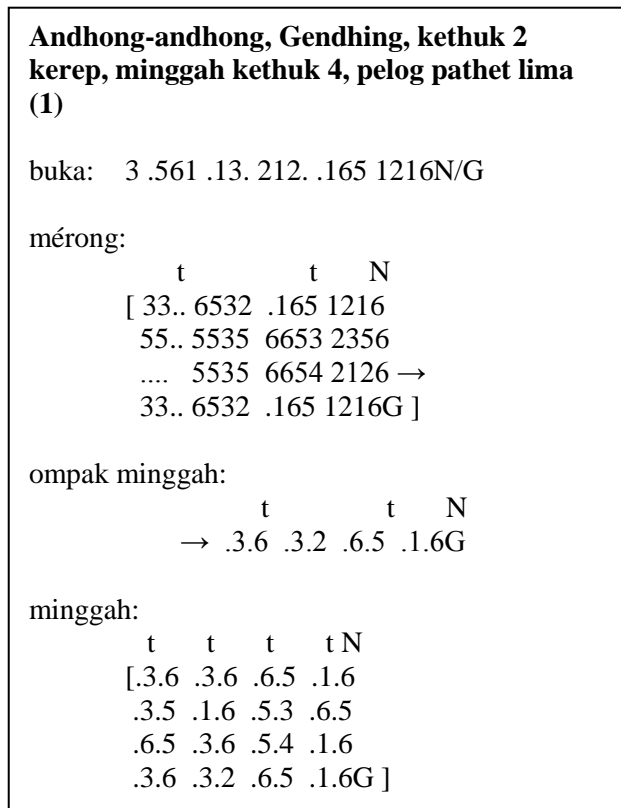


Figure 2.42. *Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, kethuk 2 kerep, minggah kethuk 4, pelog pathet lima (1)* (Becker and Feinstein 1988: 61-62).

In addition to the gamelan numbers, the composer also takes into consideration the letters ‘t’ and ‘N or G’, which represent the musical beat of *kethuk*, and the end of a *kenong* or *gong* phrase in gamelan music respectively. Throughout *Sebuah Pantun IV*, the letter ‘t’ is represented by either ‘screeching’ or ‘behind the bridge’ musical figure in this work, such as in bars 6 and 11 of verse 1, respectively (Figure 2.43). However, Tajuddin would occasionally disregard the letter ‘t’ and did not include any musical figure to represent it.

Conversely, ‘scratch tone’, indicated by the thick black horizontal line in the music as in bar 4 (see Figure 2.44), symbolises the letters N and/or G notated the gamelan piece *Andhong-andhong, Gendhing, kethuk 2 kerep, minggah kethuk 4, pelog pathet lima (1)* seen in Figure 2.42. Figure 2.44 presents the gamelan number analysis on the first four bars of the violin and cello parts of *Sebuah Pantun IV*.

With the same analytical approach to the pitches in Figure 2.44, Figure 2.45 presents the gamelan numbers that Tajuddin has incorporated in Verse 1 of *Sebuah Pantun IV*.

Figure 2.43. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, verse 1 bars 6 and 11a (Tajuddin 2011: 2, 4)

Figure 2.44. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, verse 1 bars 1 to 4 (Tajuddin 2011: 2).

Verse 1

'buka'

Scratch tone

'merong'

"Screech"

Scratch tone

"Behind the bridge"

Scratch tone

3 5 6 # 1 1 3 3 2 1 2 1 6 5 1 2 1 6 N

3 3 t 6 5 3 2 1 6 5 1 2 1 6 N

5 5 5 5 3 5 6 6 5 3 2 3 6 [5] t

5 5 3 5 6 6 5 4 2 1 2 6

3 3 6 5 3 3[2] 1 5 5 1 3[2] 1 6 N

Figure 2.45. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, verse 1 decoded

It is, again, important to note that the pitches are summarised without concern for the actual pitch register in which it was composed, as the purpose is to illustrate how to decode the pitches into gamelan numbers. Comparing the numbers here to the gamelan *buka* section of Figure 2.42, it is clear that the pitches of verse 1 from *Sebuah Pantun IV* correspond with the *buka* numbers of *Andhong-andhong*, *Gendhing*, *kethuk 2 kerep*, *minggah kethuk 4*, *pelog pathet lima (1)*. In fact, the entirety of verses 1 and 2 of *Sebuah Pantun IV* are based on this gamelan work. Verse 1, as presented, uses the numbers from the *buka* and *merong* sections (Figure 2.42), while verse 2, as shown in Figure 2.46, uses the numbers from the *ompak minggah* and *minggah* sections (Figure 2.42).

Figure 2.46. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, pitch skeleton of verse 2

It is clear, when compared to the gamelan numbers of Figure 2.42, that the pitch skeleton of verses 1 and 2 of *Sebuah Pantun IV* corresponds closely to *Andhong-andhong*, *Gendhing*, *kethuk 2 kerep*, *minggah kethuk 4*, *pelog pathet lima (1)*. Verses 3 and 4, meanwhile, apply numbers from a different gamelan work, called *Aja Lamis*, *Lagu*, *pelog*, *pathet nem (23)* (Figure 2.47).

Aja Lamis, Lagu, pélog, pathet nem (23).

buka: 235 6216G }
 3132 3635G } x2
 31323 5613216G

 N N N N
 [2321 6523G
 1235 6321G
 2321 6523G
 1235 2126G
 2523 5253G
 5621 2645G
 2321 6523G
 1235 2126G]

Figure 2.47. *Aja Lamis, Lagu, pelog, pathet nem (23)* (Becker and Feinstein 1988: 60)

Again, *Aja Lamis, Lagu, pelog, pathet nem (23)* is written in *pelog* scale and, as with the previous gamelan work, the seventh scale degree is not used. Employing the same analytical method applied to *Gamelbati III* and verses 1 and 2 of *Sebuah Pantun IV*, the decoded pitches of verse 3 in *Sebuah Pantun IV* are:

Verse 3

2 3 5 6 2 1 5 3 1 3 2 3 6 3 5

3 1 3 2 3 5 6 1 3 2 1 5 2 3 2 1 6 5 2 3

Figure 2.48. *Tajuddin – Sebuah Pantun IV, verse 3* decoded

When compared to *Aja Lamis, Lagu, pelog, pathet nem (23)*, it is clear that Tajuddin’s pitches are almost identical, with the exception of two notes, circled above. Pitches of verse 4 continue the gamelan numberings established in verse 3.

Based on analysis of *Sebuah Pantun IV*, completed six years after *Gamelbati III*, and four years after *Azan*, it appears that the composer has continued to develop his gamelan numbers compositional method, and has become more skilful in inserting these gamelan numbers into

his works. This gamelan numbers compositional method is exercised in all of the works in both the *Sebuah Pantun* and *Gamelbati* series.

The four Tajuddin works investigated in this chapter display the composer's vision in mediating gamelan cultural elements in his European-derived compositional tools. *Tenunan II*, Tajuddin's earlier work, embeds gamelan sonority in its instrumentation, timbre and structure, while his unique gamelan numbering method is evident in the time structure, pitch and musical material employed in *Gamelbati III*, *Azan*, and *Sebuah Pantun IV*. *Azan* is further examined in Chapter 5 for its assimilation of Islamic spiritual practice.

2.1.5 Yii

***Timang Burung* for solo piano (2009)**

Written for the 'world's first-ever Commonwealth Pianorama' held in 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago (Cox 2009: 1), Yii's *Timang Burung* [the act of dandling a bird] for solo piano is a short, one-minute piano work inspired by 'traditional Malay Gamelan dance music'. With the same title as '*Timang Burung*', it is one of the most popular tunes in Malay Gamelan dance music repertoire' (Yii 2009a). Iena (2014) states that:

the song *Timang Burung* is an elementary song taught to gamelan instrumentalists using the concept of 'Generis Expression' [Expressiveness]. Gamelan musicians usually begin learning this song based on the following notation,

- 5 5 2	3 2 3 5	- 3 5 6	5 3 2 5
- 5 5 2	3 2 3 5	- 3 5 6	5 3 2 3
- 3 2 1	1 2 3 1	3 2 1 1	5 6 i 5
- 2 2 3	6 5 3 2	3 2 1 1	5 5 3 5

Timang Burung is very popular and can be considered as a compulsory song to be performed at weddings and religious events [translated by Peck Jin Gan].

In a similar manner to Tajuddin's adaptation of the gamelan numbering system, the pitch organisation of *Timang Burung* is loosely based around the gamelan notation of a gamelan piece with the same title, '*Timang Burung*'. However, unlike Tajuddin who bases his pitch organisation on an actual gamelan set, Yii loosely applies the Chinese concept of numbered

musical notation that is widely used in music publication in China. The Chinese numbered musical notation is similar to that of the gamelan cipher system, where each number represents a note within a scale. The difference between the two systems is that the gamelan numbers correspond to the *pelog* and *slendro* scales. The intervals between the notes of both gamelan scales vary from one gamelan ensemble to another, as different gamelan ensembles have different set of pitches, whereas the Chinese numbers always correspond to the diatonic major scale. For example, in F major, 1=F, 2=G, 3=A, 4=B \flat , 5=C, 6=D, 7=E and 8=F. In G major, 1=G, 2=A, 3=B, 4=C, 5=D, 6=E, 7=F \sharp and 8=G. Analysis of Yii's *Timang Burung* indicates that the work is mainly in C major, which gives the corresponding pitches as follows:

Table 2.12. C major Chinese cipher system and corresponding pitch

Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Corresponding pitch	C	D	E	F	G	A	B

Pitch analysis of a score excerpt from Yii's *Timang Burung* (Figure 2.49) reveals the correlation between the numbers of Table 2.12 and the gamelan score of *Timang Burung*. Another aspect to note in Figure 2.49 is the '*poco rubato*' marking at the beginning of the score. The composer may have been encouraged by the expressive nature of the traditional *Timang Burung* and therefore instructed the work to be performed with *rubato*.

Timang Burung

for Commonwealth Pianorama

Yii Kah Hoe

Poco Rubato (♩ = c. 72)

Piano

mp, mf, sfz, p, molto, mp, mf, p, (depressed silently and secure by pedal II), ped.I, ped.II

mp, mf, sfz, p, molto, mp, pp, (as before), ped.I, ped.II

5 sfz, pp, mp, f, molto, mp, sfz, mp, ped.I, ped.II

Figure 2.49. Yii – *Timang Burung*, bars 1 to 6 (Yii 2009a: 1)

Table 2.13 links the circled notes with their associated cipher number. It is noted that a strong and direct correlation exists between the pitch in Yii's *Timang Burung* and the gamelan piece *Timang Burung*.

Table 2.13. Pitch analysis of Yii's *Timang Burung* from bars 1 to 3

Bar 1	G	G	D	E	D	E	G		
	5	5	2	3	2	3	5		
Bar 3	E	G	A	G	E	D	E	A	
	3	5	6	5	3	2	3	6	
Bar 4	E	D	C						
	3	2	1						
Bar 5	D	E	G	C	G	C	D	E	G
	2	3	5	1	5	1	2	3	5

The numbers in bar 1 (5 5 2 3 2 3 5) and bar 3 (3 5 6 5 3 2 3 6) are virtually identical to the first line of the gamelan *Timang Burung*, | - 5 5 2 | 3 2 3 5 | - 3 5 6 | 5 3 2 5 |, with the exception of the last number, which is 6 in Yii's *Timang Burung*, compared to 5 in the source. The numbers in bars 4 and 5, however, bear little resemblance to the original source. One could possibly suggest a connection between the numbers 3 2 1 in bar 4, and the beginning of line 3 of the original source cited. It is, nonetheless, notable that the pitches used in bars 4 and 5 are limited to within the C diatonic major scale, despite not making direct reference to the gamelan numbers of *Timang Burung*.

Aural analysis of *Timang Burung* suggests that Yii appreciates the unique sonic effect created by the Indonesian ensemble as much as his peers, Tajuddin and Ng. As previously discussed, Ng's approach involved incorporating various extended techniques such as gong-like tones and the shimmering effect of the *bonang*. The *fortissimo* bass clef note clusters in bar 18 (Figure 2.50) and desire to achieve a 'distinctive metallic effect' in bar 22 (Figure 2.51) of *Timang Burung* suggest that Yii may also be attempting to realise the gong-like drone and shimmering sonority of the gamelan.

Figure 2.50 shows a musical score for piano and bass. The piano part (top two staves) begins at bar 18 with a dynamic marking of *sffz*. The bass part (bottom two staves) also starts at bar 18 with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The piano part features a series of sixteenth-note patterns, while the bass part has a more rhythmic accompaniment. A circled *ff* marking is present in the bass part, with the label "ped.I" below it.

Figure 2.50. Yii – *Timang Burung*, bar 18 (Yii 2009a: 3)

Figure 2.51 shows a musical score for piano and bass. The piano part (top two staves) begins at bar 21 with a dynamic marking of *fff espr.*. The bass part (bottom two staves) starts at bar 21 with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The piano part features a series of sixteenth-note patterns, while the bass part has a more rhythmic accompaniment. A circled note in the piano part is marked with a footnote: "* placed metal rulers laid over the strings (around middle C) near the damper to produce a distinctive metallic effect."

Figure 2.51. Yii – *Timang Burung*, bars 21 to 23 (Yii 2009a: 3)

In addition to the composer’s effect in creating sonic events that resemble that of the gamelan, Yii’s constant change of dynamic and his use of dynamic extremities (*pp* and *fff*) produce a highly ostentatious and theatrical work. This echoes the essence of Balinese gamelan music, which tends to be flamboyant and dramatic, a similarity that can be seen in the online performance⁷⁸ of the piece.

⁷⁸ A video recording of this work, performed by pianist Noritaka Ito at SEGi College Subang Jaya, Malaysia, can be found on YouTube at https://youtu.be/jpiPd5U_Ir8.

2.2 Conclusion

The diversity of gamelan aspects incorporated in nine selected works, using an array of compositional approaches has been examined in this chapter. The selected works contain strong percussion, and demonstrate ‘the polyphonic layering of melodic lines, the cyclic structure of the music, and the ability of the melodic [and rhythmic] lines to expand and contract’ required to meet Lindsay’s (1992:10) definition of gamelan. However, beyond this base similarity, the composers have used a wide array of different instruments and techniques to create the desired sound, such as work title, pitch, rhythm, instrumentation, structure, and sonority. In doing so, each composer devises their own unique compositional strategies. Chong’s musical language that focuses heavily on tone colour, Ng’s highly flexible scoring technique, Othman’s cyclical compositional tool, Tajuddin’s gamelan-numbers strategy, and Yii’s combination of gamelan notation and Chinese cipher system, all demonstrate that the concept of *rojak* that is clearly evident within these compositions. Each different gamelan component can be seen individually while being simultaneously combined to create the endless possibilities of *rojak* mixtures with just this single cultural element.

As has been demonstrated, Malaysian composers embed aspects of gamelan in their creative writing using similar elements of music, such as work title, pitch, rhythm, instrumentation, structure and sonority yet, in doing so, each composer devises their own unique compositional strategies. Chong’s musical language that focuses heavily on timbre, Ng’s highly flexible scoring technique, Othman’s cyclical compositional tool, Tajuddin’s ‘gamelan-numbers’ strategy, and Yii’s combination of gamelan notation and Chinese cipher system have all emerged in Chapter 2. These discoveries pave the way for subsequent analyses.

Table 2.14 summarises the different aspects of gamelan assimilated in the selected works studied. The subject matter of gamelan influences on Malaysian composers deserves a full study on its own to be undertaken in the future, encompassing compositions from the 1950s to the current year.

Table 2.14. Gamelan elements assimilated in selected works

Composers	Selected works	Gamelan elements
Chong	<i>Monodrama</i> for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Rebab</i> performance features - Rhythmic virtuosity - Instrumentation
Ng	Three Sketches for Two Pianos (2004) <i>Shadows</i> for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gamelan sonority - Instrumentation - Idea of collectiveness
Othman	<i>ittar</i> for chamber orchestra (2003) <i>topeng I</i> for orchestra (2004) <i>whose shadow would fall in</i> (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polyphonic later of melodic lines - Cyclic structure - Ability of melodic lines to expand and contract
Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i> for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra (2001) <i>Gamelbati III</i> for string quartet (2005) <i>Azan</i> [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007) <i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i> for violin, cello and piano (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Musical material - Instrumentation - Gamelan number
Yii	<i>Timang Burung</i> for solo piano (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gamelan number - Unique sonic effect

Chapter 3 furthers the examination of other Southeast Asian cultural elements employed in the works of the selected composers, including Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong*, *wayang kulit*, Balinese *baris* dance, and the concept of ‘*tenunan*’ [weave] and *batik*.

Chapter 3

Southeast Asian Cultural Elements: Malay Poem *Pantun*, *Mak Yong*, *Wayang Kulit*, Balinese *Baris* Dance and *Batik* Weaving

Chapter 3 continues the investigation into the ways in which Malaysian composers incorporate Southeast Asian cultural elements other than gamelan into their creative works. These elements include traditional Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong* [ancient Malay theatre form], *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet], Balinese *baris* dance, and the concept of ‘*tenunan*’ [weave] and *batik*. Table 3.1 lists the selected works to be investigated in this chapter and their source of inspiration.

Table 3.1. List of selected works to be investigated in Chapter 3

Cultural elements	Composers	Selected works
Malay poem <i>pantun</i>	Chong	<i>Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree</i> (2002) (version I: flute (also piccolo, alto flute, Thai-gong and tam-tam), clarinet in B ♭ (also bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano) and (version II: for flute (also piccolo and alto flute), clarinet in B ♭ (also bass clarinet), violin, cello, piano and percussion)
	Tajuddin	<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i> for violin, cello and piano (2011) <i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i> for solo flute (2013)
<i>Mak yong</i>	Yii	<i>My Spirit is Chanting</i> for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions (2011)
<i>Wayang kulit</i>	Yii	<i>Gongan</i> for oboe and piano (2008) <i>Bayang</i> for <i>wayang kulit</i> and Chinese orchestra (2008)
Balinese <i>baris</i> dance	Yii	<i>My Spirit is Dancing!</i> for solo piano (2010)
The Concept of ‘ <i>Tenunan</i> ’ (Weave) and <i>Batik</i>	Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i> for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra (2001)
		<i>Gamelbati III</i> for string quartet (2005)

3.1 Malay Poem *Pantun*

The *pantun* is a popular Malay traditional poetic form unique to the Malay culture, and can be recited, sung or spoken, for different social occasions (Matusky and Chopyak 2011: 242; McDaniel 1994: 302). A *pantun* has an even number of lines, between two and eight, with the

most commonly used structure being the quatrain *pantun* with an ‘a-b-a-b’ rhyming pattern. The first half functions as preamble, also known as *pembayang*, to the second half, which carries the message (Malay: *maksud*) of the *pantun*. The two halves may seem to be unrelated to each other. Nevertheless, as Matusky and Pugh-Kitingan (2004: 20) emphasise:

in terms of the structure of a *pantun*...the *pembayang* is vital, as it establishes the rhyme scheme. The essence of a *pantun*, however, is contained in the *maksud*. This is the part that conveys the intention of the *pantun* reciter. This is not a firm rule...and *pantun* do exist in which all four lines are connected in terms of the development of an idea.

[Here is an example of a marriage proposal *pantun*:]

Burung kenari cantik memikat	Captivating indeed is the peacock’s beauty
Pandai memukau para hartawan	Charming the hearts of the wealthy
Datang kemari membawa hajat	With a burning desire in our hearts we come
Ingin memikat bunga di taman	To pluck the blushing rose in your garden

3.1.1 Chong

***Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree* for flute (also piccolo, alto flute, Thai-gong and tam-tam), clarinet in B \flat (also bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano (2002)**

Chong cites Malay poetry as the inspiration for his composition *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree* (2002). The work, for flute (also piccolo, alto flute, Thai-gong and tam-tam), clarinet in B \flat (also bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano, was commissioned by and dedicated to the Brussels chamber music group Het Collectief. Chong arranged a second version, this time for flute (also piccolo and alto flute), clarinet in B \flat (also bass clarinet), violin, cello, piano and added a percussion section, but without Thai-gong and tam-tam, ‘especially for the concert “OOST WEST in het MIM” [East West in the Musical Instruments Museum (MIM)]’ which ‘was performed by Kamermuziekensemble van Koninklijk Conversatorium [*sic*] Brussel’ (Chong 2002: n.p.). The composer (2002: n.p.) writes:

Long time ago, I read a poem “*Balade Terbunuhnya Beringin Tua Di Sebuah Bandaraya*” [a ballad mourning the murder of an old banyan tree in a city] by a

Malaysian poet Dato Dr. Usman Awang, and this poem let me keep thinking of what the civilization brought effort to us, and in the same time it also destroy so much things from us! I'm very afraid of losing our tradition, our culture, our language, our environment, our planet...etc, because of the unavoidable idea of development and improvement of life.

The poem Chong refers to is as follow:

“Balade Terbunuhnya Beringin Tua Di Sebuah Bandaraya” by Dato Dr. Usman Awang
(A ballad mourning the murder of an old Banyan tree in the city)

Fragmen from the poem:	Translation:
~ Sampai sekarang, tiap senjakala lembayung petang Dengarlah suara Beringin mengucapkan pesan:	To this day, when twilight graces the sky You can hear the old banyan tree's farewell
Selamat tinggal, selamat tinggal wahai awan Selamat tinggal matahari selamat tinggal bulan Selamat tinggal kupu-kupu sayang Selamat tinggal wahai burung-burung bersarang Selamat tinggal anak-anak bermain riang	Goodbye, goodbye cloud Goodbye sun, goodbye moon Goodbye dear butterflies Goodbye nesting birds Goodbye frolicking children
Namaku Beringin pohon tua yang terbang dimusuhi oleh rancangan bernama Pembangunan	It was old Banyan tree cast inside By an enemy called Development

Figure 3.1. *Balade Terbunuhnya Beringin Tua Di Sebuah Bandaraya* [A Ballad Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree in a City] by Dato Dr. Usman Awang (Chong 2002: n.p.)

Chong (2002: n.p.) further explains that ‘in the Buddhist idiom the Banyan tree represent [*sic*] a consciousness of intelligence and consciousness of way’. The juxtaposition of Malay poetry and Buddhist idiom in a single work echoes Othman’s *rojak* metaphor once again.

The word ‘*dimusushi*’ [enemy] in the last line provides a strong, almost violent contrast to the rest of the poem, with its romantic and melancholic undertones. In addition to his voiced concerns about ‘losing our tradition... culture... language... environment... planet’, the conflict between hostility, romance and melancholy helps to shape the aural characteristic of Chong’s *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree* (hereafter *Mourning*). Dissonant piano clusters at the beginning (Track 10) unveil an unsettling tone to the work. It is soon joined by the violin and cello bowing *sul ponticello*, with crescendo and increasing bow pressure, creating a nasal and harsh sonic effect to further emphasise the haunting atmosphere set by the piano (Figure 3.2).

"Mourning the Murder of an old Banyan tree"

Dedicated to "Het Collectief" ensemble

A

$\frac{4}{8}$ ♩ = c.54 5
8

* Depress the keys silently
** Chromatic cluster
*** Gradually release the cluster

Figure 3.2. Chong – *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, bars 1 to 4 (Chong 2002: 1)

The fiery mood gradually fades away with the arrival of a significant melodic line in bar 11 in the clarinet in B \flat part (Figure 3.3). It is presented here in its simplest form.

Figure 3.3. Chong – *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, bars 11 to 19 (Chong 2002: 2-3)

This melody appears again at bars 81 and 109 in the clarinet in B \flat part. The melody is now elaborated in terms of notes and ornaments. The former is marked *lontano*, *ppp pochiss.* (*pianississimo pochissimo*), *molto espres. e dolente*, and *rubato* (Figure 3.4); while the latter is marked *ppp* and *molto espres.* (Figure 3.5).

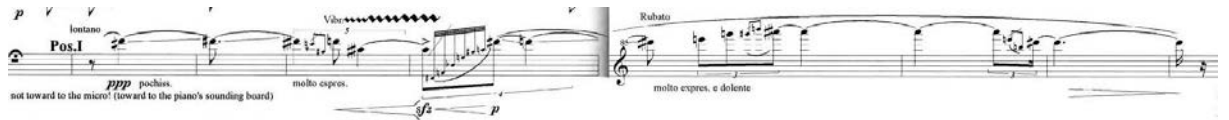


Figure 3.4. Chong – *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, bars 81 to 88 (Chong 2002: 16-17)



Figure 3.5. Chong – *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, bars 109 to 116 (Chong 2002: 21-22)

The final iteration of the melody happens at bar 129 approaching the end of the work in the bass clarinet part. It is marked *f cantabile legato* with the direction to ‘try to imitate the melody play [*sic*] on Cl part bar 81-87’ (Chong 2002: 24). As seen in Figure 3.6, only the skeletal structure of the melody remains, making it almost unrecognisable. It is likely that this mournful, melancholic and distant melodic figure symbolises the mourning of the fading, damaged banyan tree and, along with it, the ‘tradition, culture, language and planet’.

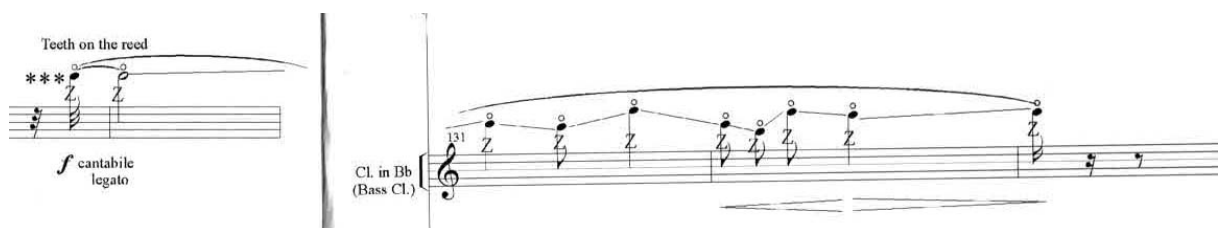


Figure 3.6. Chong – *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, bars 129 to 133 (Chong 2002: 24-25)

The composition following the first melodic statement, which alternates between eerie and melancholic and intense, loud phrases, provides another link between the music and the poem. The distinctive characteristic of the phrases is not only obvious when listening to the music, but also apparent visually on the score, as seen in Figure 3.7. Undoubtedly, Chong’s

contrasting musical statements are intended to resonate with the harsh yet melancholic expression in Awang's poem.

C Intenso

Fl. (Picc.)

Perc. varn. II (Tamtam) (or Fl. varn. I)

Cl. in Bb

Pno

Vln.

Vc.

Tempo rubato

Intenso

Senza tempo (5/8)

* E.S.P. = Estremamente ponticello
 ** Muted sound, the strings are to be muted at the bridge, but are to be played with the key.
 *** Synchronisation of beat.

-7-

Figure 3.7. Chong – *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, bars 11 to 15 (Chong 2002: 6-7)

Tajuddin is the only other Malaysian composer that this study has identified who is inspired by the *pantun*. Matusky and Tan (2004: 398) propose that Malay poem elements can be found in Zain's *Suasana*, which also contains traces of gamelan. However, due to a lack of available literature, it was decided that an analytical investigation of Zain's music to illustrate his compositional approach for the assimilation was impossible within the scope of this study. One of the objectives of this study is to provoke ethnomusicological interest in Malaysian composers and compositions leading to more research being conducted in this field.

3.1.2 Tajuddin

Sebuah Pantun IV for violin, cello and piano (2011)

Tajuddin incorporates such *pembayang-maksud* type *pantun* structure in his *Sebuah Pantun* [A Malay Poem] series beginning in 2003. It is also noted that Maurice Ravel, in the second movement *Pantoum* of his *Piano Trio in A minor* (1914), applied the *pantun* structure where musical strands correspond with the *pembayang-maksud* relationship (Newbould 1975). Although Tajuddin's *Sebuah Pantun* series is not linked to or inspired by Ravel's approach, it is nonetheless worth noting other precedents of the assimilation of *pantun* structure into musical compositions.

The first piece of the series, *Sebuah Pantun* (2003) commissioned by Thalia Myers for Spectrum 4 Project and published by ABRSM/Oxford University Press, was written for solo piano. The next work of the series, *Sebuah Pantun II* for solo violin, was not produced until 7 years later, in 2009. *Sebuah Pantun III* (2010) for guitar quartet received 'repertoire honorary mentioned in the Carl von Ossietzky International Composition Competition (Germany)' (Tajuddin n.d.). *Sebuah Pantun IV* for violin, cello and piano was composed in 2011. *Sebuah Pantun V* (2012) is scored for mezzo-soprano, clarinet, cello and piano. *Sebuah Pantun VI* is written for oboe and piano in 2013. The most current work of the series is *Sebuah Pantun VII* (2013) for solo flute. The fourth and seventh works of the series are used as case studies to illustrate the ways in which Tajuddin incorporates the *pantun* structure into his works.

Sebuah Pantun IV was investigated in Chapter 2 for its assimilation of gamelan numbers. In this section, *Sebuah Pantun IV*, along with the next selected work *Sebuah Pantun VII*, unequivocally illustrate Tajuddin's engagement with his personal and Malay cultural roots, in

this case in the form of the *pantun*, and also with his European-derived aesthetics, compositional strategies and extended techniques. Such cross-cultural compositional practice is core to Tajuddin's creative world, as shown by the title of his website⁷⁹: 'The Mediation of East and West', where 'East' refers to his Malay cultural roots and 'West' refers to his European-derived musical aesthetics. In *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Tajuddin mediates elements from both cultures through the structure and musical materials of this composition.

The structure of *Sebuah Pantun IV* is a reflection of the *pantun* form. It should be noted that despite being inspired by the *pantun*, there are no words in this composition and there is no reference in Tajuddin's programme notes to suggest that he was inspired by any particular existing *pantun*. The composer, however, identifies four continuous sections as 'verse 1, 2, 3, and 4'. The four verses of this piece have been arranged by Tajuddin in the order of verse 1, 3, 2 and 4. The first half of the piece (verses 1 and 3) is the *pembayang*, while the second half (verses 2 and 4) represents the *maksud* of the *pantun*. This *pembayang-maksud* relationship between the two halves is created through contrasting tempo and characteristics of each section. Verses 1 and 3 are to be played intensely and dramatically, at about 106 and 96 crotchet beats per minute respectively, while verses 2 and 4 are to be played flowingly, at around 76 and 56 crotchet beats per minute respectively. Verse 1 is given the marking of 'Buka [Opening]: intense, aggressive but delicately with drama' and verse 3 is marked 'still intense, dramatic'. Conversely, the composer indicates for verses 2 and 4 to be played 'decoratively, flowingly' and 'flowingly' respectively (Tajuddin 2011: 7, 10). The contrasting characteristic of intensity versus flowingly clearly reflects the *pembayang-maksud* relationship of a traditional *pantun*, in which the two halves seem unrelated to each other. Musically, the contrasting characters allow for the first half to be considered as a structural upbeat leading towards the second half, which can be regarded as a structural downbeat to the composition.

To further juxtapose this *pembayang-maksud* relationship, Tajuddin approaches the two halves distinctly and differently in terms of musical materials. Various instrumental extended techniques, such as continuous *glissandi* and boxed repetitive set notes are applied in the strings to create less structured phrases in the first half (verses 1 and 3), as can be seen in Figures 3.8 and 3.9.

⁷⁹ See <http://www.tazultajuddin.com/index.htm>.

Sebuah Pantun IV
for Violin, Cello and Piano

Tazul Tajuddin

VERSE I
♩ = ca. 106 Buka: intense, aggressive but delicately with drama

Scordatura:
I = C
II = G
III = C
IV = E

Figure 3.8. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Event Numbers 1 to 2 (Tajuddin 2011: 2)

VERSE 3
♩ = ca. 96 still intense, dramatic

Figure 3.9. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Event Numbers 19 to 21 (Tajuddin 2011: 5)

As indicated in the boxed text in Figure 3.8, Tajuddin encourages the performers to ‘play the passage and the rhythmic patterns loosely...arpeggios and tremolos repetition must be play [sic] fast, intensely and dramatic’. This results in an aural experience that is quite chaotic in nature as there are only a few occasions where all players are required to ‘meet’ and attack a specific note together, as indicated by numbered vertical dotted lines, in which Tajuddin refers to as ‘Event Numbers’. At Event Number 21, the composer, in addition to stating ‘scratch tone’ above the staff, draws a thick black line to indicate the same sonic effect.

In contrast, the second half (verses 2 and 4) employs definite notes and is rhythmically structured. There is a significant increase in the dotted vertical lines or Event Numbers used throughout verse 2. This device gives the performers a better understanding of where all instruments are expected to attack a note simultaneously within the highly complex rhythmic structure of the work. It also creates the impression of downbeats, thus providing the illusion of some sort of time structure (Figure 3.10).

More Event Numbers are used in Figure 3.10 than in Figures 3.8 and 3.9, which aurally provides a clearer sense of pulse throughout verse 2. This feeling of a pulse becomes stronger and more noticeable in verse 4. One could almost insert a 9/4 time signature with a fermata on the last note for each line of verse 4 (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.10 shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln), Viola (Vc.), and Piano (Pno). The score is divided into measures 34 through 43. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = \text{ca.76}$ decoratively, flowingly. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'snap pizz.', 'arco', 'pluck', 'sffz', 'mf', 'f', 'ff', 'mp', 'sfp', and 'naïl piz.'. The score is divided into measures 34 through 43, with specific annotations for measures 36, 38, and 39. A tempo marking $\text{♩} = \text{ca.76}$ decoratively, flowingly is present at the beginning. The score includes dynamic markings, articulation marks, and performance techniques like 'behind the bridge' and 'in random direction up, down around the indicated pitch'.

Figure 3.10. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Event Numbers 34 to 43 (Tajuddin 2011: 7)

VERSE 4
♩ = ca. 56 flowingly

The figure shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln), Viola (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score is for 'VERSE 4' and covers Event Numbers 73 to 74. The tempo is marked as 'ca. 56 flowingly'. The Vln part starts with a dynamic of *mf* and features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vc. part starts with a dynamic of *f* and has a similar melodic line. The Pno. part starts with a dynamic of *mf* and features a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and accents. The score ends with a 'scratch tone' and a dynamic of *sfz*.

Figure 3.11. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Event Numbers 73 to 74 (Tajuddin 2011: 10)

From Figure 3.11, it is easy to locate the crotchet beats between Event Numbers 73 and 74, particularly in the piano part. Unlike the other verses of *Sebuah Pantun IV*, Tajuddin allows verse 4 to have a clear crotchet pulse. It is noticeable that verses 2 and 4 do not have repetitive boxed arpeggios and tremolos with *glissandi*, in contrast to verses 1 and 3. Instead, definite notes are used in verses 2 and 4, further enhancing the contrasting *pembayang-maksud* relationship between the two halves of the work.

***Sebuah Pantun VII* for solo flute (2013)**

Sebuah Pantun VII for solo flute is the most recent work within the ‘*Sebuah Pantun*’ series. It was written and premiered at the 2013 SoundBridge Festival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia by Daiske Kino-Shita. As with *Sebuah Pantun IV*, *Sebuah Pantun VII*⁸⁰ was inspired by the Malay traditional poem *pantun*, which is seen through analysis of its structure and musical materials. A comparison of both works shows striking similarities in Tajuddin’s compositional approach, especially with respect to the structural and musical materials aspects, which appear to be consistent throughout his ‘*Sebuah Pantun*’ series. Unlike *Sebuah Pantun IV*, for which no specific *pantun* is mentioned, the musical score of *Sebuah Pantun VII* is preceded by a two-lined *pantun* by the Malaysian poet laureate A. Samad Said (Tajuddin 2013: 2):

⁸⁰ A recording of this work, performed by Daiske Kino-Shita, can be found on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/lwlTMXMP70A>.

*Berkhayal membernih,
Berfikir menjernih.*

Imagination does conceive,
Thought gives clarity.

Table 3.2 provides a direct comparison of the two works.

Table 3.2. Comparison of structure, verses and tempo between *Sebuah Pantun IV* and *Sebuah Pantun VII*

	<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i>	<i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i>
Structure	4 continuous sections	4 continuous sections
Order of verses	1, 3, 2, 4	1, 2, 3, 4
Tempo		
Verse 1/ Verse 1	♩=ca. 106 Buka: intense, aggressive but delicately with drama	♩=ca. 106 continuous sound always blur, un-focus, preferably with multiphonic tendencies always florid, flowingly
Verse 3/ Verse 2	♩=ca. 96 still intense, dramatic	♩=ca. 96 still intense, dramatic
Verse 2/ Verse 3	♩=ca. 76 decoratively, flowingly	♩=ca. 76 decoratively, flowingly
Verse 4/ Verse 4	♩=ca. 56 flowingly	♩=ca. 56 flowingly

Sebuah Pantun VII, like *Sebuah Pantun IV*, has four continuous sections labelled as verses 1, 2, 3 and 4. However, instead of being arranged in the order of verses 1, 3, 2 and 4, as in the 2011 work, *Sebuah Pantun VII* has its verses in ascending order: verses 1, 2, 3 and 4. Conversations with the composer, undertaken as part of the fieldwork for this research, revealed that despite the different ordering of the verses, the first half of the work, like the *pantun*, is the *pembayang* to the *maksud* section that is delivered by the second half of the work (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 19 February, 2013). In other words, the first half is the preamble (*pembayang*) and the second half carries the message (*maksud*) as illustrated in analysis of *Sebuah Pantun IV*.

The tempi of the verses are identical between the two works, with all the corresponding verses having the same tempo markings. Another similarity is the use of a ‘snap pizzicato’ at the beginning of an Event Number. In *Sebuah Pantun IV*, this snap pizzicato musical figure, as shown in Event Numbers 1, 2 and 19 in Figures 3.8 and 3.9, is indicated by Tajuddin (2011: n.p.) in the performance instructions to be played ‘like Bartokian pizzicato’. He included similar notation in *Sebuah Pantun VII*, in which the flautist is directed to play ‘slap tongue or (pizz effect) non-pitch’ (Figure 3.12).

Sebuah Pantun VII
for Flute

VERSE 1
♩ = ca. 106

1 play passage 1 and the rhythmic patterns loosely until passage 2. tremolos repetition must be played fast, intensely and dramatic. This is played similar in passage 2,3,4

Tazul Tajuddin

Flute

3 pizz. eff. w.t. similar

4 s.t. pizz. eff. w.t. flutter tongue f.t.

Figure 3.12. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun VII*, Event Numbers 1 to 4 (Tajuddin 2013: 2)

The most notable difference between the two pieces is the instructions given in verse 1. Verse 1 of *Sebuah Pantun IV*, as discussed previously, is marked with ‘*Buka: intense, aggressive but delicately with drama*’. In contrast, verse 1 of *Sebuah Pantun VII* contains the instruction ‘continuous sound always blur, un-focus, preferably with multiphonic tendencies always florid, flowingly’. The resultant sonic events, due to the distinctive instructions between the two, are quite different. Aurally, the earlier work is more intense, with a slightly eerie feel due to the constantly fluctuating high-pitched string sections. The piano part of *Sebuah Pantun IV* creates a sense of urgency and dramatic atmosphere which further intensifies verse 1 as a whole. Conversely, in *Sebuah Pantun VII*, the flautist is asked to produce ‘whistle tone/non-pitch more air’ (Figure 3.12) which provides a sparse, airy, and out-of-focus aural experience. The latter work, due to the instruction to play ‘un-focus’ [*sic*], does not have the urgency of the former composition. The ‘blurry’ effect in verse 1 of *Sebuah Pantun VII* gradually fades away, with the notes in verse 2 becoming much clearer and focused, an effect that continues in the second half of the work in verses 3 and 4.

The characteristic of moving from ‘blurry’ to more ‘in-focus’ effect can be seen as a reflection of the *pantun* form. In a previous quote by Matusky and Pugh-Kitingan (2004: 20), it is mentioned that ‘*pantun* do exist in which all four lines are connected in terms of the development of an idea’. This ‘development of idea’ parallels Tajuddin’s compositional intention in *Sebuah Pantun VII*, in which he starts off with a fuzzy and muddled motif, as

reflected by the ethereal and unfocused nature of the music in verses 1 and 2, and then develops this initial distortion into a firmer musical idea through verses 3 and 4. As in *Sebuah Pantun IV*, the second half of *Sebuah Pantun VII* presents a more constant pulse-like feeling due to the increased use of Event Numbers (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun VII*, Event Numbers 34 to 43 (Tajuddin 2013: 4)

Each Event Number in Figure 3.13 begins with an accented *sfz* note which provides an emphasised pulse throughout verse 3. Verse 4 (Figure 3.14), in common with its corresponding verse in *Sebuah Pantun IV*, has a sense of a 9/4 time signature, with a fermata on the last beat.

Figure 3.14. Tajuddin – *Sebuah Pantun VII*, Event Numbers 73 to 76 (Tajuddin 2013: 5)

Based on analyses of *Sebuah Pantun IV* and *Sebuah Pantun VII* it is clear that Tajuddin incorporates his Malay cultural roots, in this case the *pantun*, into his European-derived compositional approach by including various extended performance techniques. The titles, structures and contrasting musical materials employed in both *Sebuah Pantun IV* and *Sebuah Pantun VII* are examples of the way in which a Malaysian composer, in this case Tajuddin, inserts cultural elements in his music.

Malay poetry, particularly in the form of the *pantun*, is an important element of Malaysian culture. The *pantun* is the most popular literary expression of Malay culture, and permeates society and social functions at all levels. As this section has demonstrated, both Tajuddin and Chong allude to, and draw inspiration from, Malay poetry in their compositions. Tajuddin, in particular, has been shown to be influenced by the *pantun*, especially stylistically, in terms of structure and content. It is, however, important to remember that the works by Tajuddin and Chong investigated here also make reference to other cultural elements such as gamelan and Buddhist ideology. Malaysian poetry, specifically *pantun*, is only one cultural element in Othman's metaphorical *rojak*.

3.2 *Mak Yong*

Yii trained as an ethnomusicologist with a specialisation in traditional and folk music of the Southeast Asia region, and in an interview (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 15 January, 2013) expressed a great appreciation and understanding of the *mak yong* theatre form. His 2011 composition *My Spirit is Chanting*, for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions, draws inspiration from *mak yong* which is the focus of this section.



Figure 3.15. Performance of *Mak Yong Raja Besar Ho Gading* (Zulkernain 2013)

Mak yong, or *mak yung*, is an ancient theatre form originating from Malaysia's Malay communities, specifically from the state of Kelantan. The art form combines acting, vocal and instrumental music, gestural expression, and elaborate costumes (Figure 3.15) and, as stated by Matusky and Chopyak (2011: 226), is 'possibly the oldest' and 'the most elaborated of the dance-dramas'. Many of the entertaining stories performed in *mak yong* derive from Kelantan-Patani legends and oral myths. Most stories, therefore, are performed in the Kelantan-Patani Malay dialect (Mohamad 2012: 458). Additionally, *mak yong* is closely related to the traditional healing practices, called the *main puteri*. *Mak yong* was given royal patronage by the court of Kelantan sultanate in the early 20th century (Matusky and Chopyak 2011: 226). Due to the many opportunities for *mak yong* practices and performances in the royal court, aspects of the art form, including its costumes, music, and dance, were refined significantly. However, the royal patronage of *mak yong* ceased around the 1920s (Matusky and Tan 2004: 35), and consequently, the number of skilled *mak yong* performers and musicians declined drastically. *Mak yong* was one of a number of traditional art forms, also including *wayang kulit* [shadow puppet play] and *menora* [Malay folk dance], that were banned by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party in 1991 due to their Hindu/Buddhist roots, which pre-date the Islamisation of the country. Many believed that the tradition would face extinction until UNESCO declared *mak yong* one of the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' in 2005 (UNESCO 2005). Since UNESCO's recognition, there have been many efforts to preserve *mak yong* beyond the state of Kelantan, through tertiary music education, *mak yong* conferences within the Southeast Asia region, and the creation of more performance opportunities.

It is perhaps due to the banning of *mak yong* that relatively few Malaysian works are inspired by this exceptional art form. Matusky and Tan (2004: 398) suggest that Zain's *Suasana* 'juxtaposes excerpts of Kelantanese *wayang kulit* and *makyung*, *keroncong* tunes and *kompang/rebana* rhythms and gamelan melodies. The different excerpts are linked by a Malay poem about the "atmosphere" or "mood" as the title suggests'. As *Suasana* was composed for the gamelan concert 'Rhythm in Bronze' in 1999 (Utusan Online 1999), it would, therefore, appear that the practice of assimilation of various cultural elements to create a sonic *rojak* has existed in Malaysian contemporary music since at least the late 1990s.

The music of *mak yong* theatre is usually performed by a small traditional orchestra consisting of a pair of *tetawak* gongs (Figure 3.16), together with a pair of *gendang* drums and a *rebab*, both of which are also found in gamelan ensembles. Other instruments, including

the *serunai* (Chapter 2, Figure 2.4), *canang* (a pair of small gongs commonly used in *wayang kulit* Kelantan) and *geduk* drum (a short, barrel-shaped drum, that is stroked with a pair of mallets) (Figure 3.17), are occasionally borrowed from other traditional ensembles for special purposes, such as in dance pieces called *Tari Ragam* and *Lagu Berjalan* (Matusky and Tan 2004: 38; Zahari, *et.al.* 2011: 20-23).

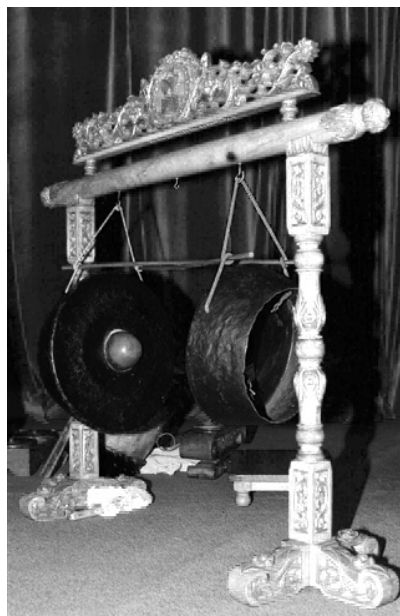


Figure 3.16. *Tetawak* gongs (Universiti Sains Malaysia 2010)



Figure 3.17. *Geduk* and *canang* (Yusof 2004d: 67)

Matusky and Tan (2004: 37) explain that ‘the *mak yong* performance begins with an opening ceremony called the *Buka Panggung* [opening of the stage] with prayers, food offerings and the consecration of the musical instruments and other items’. After the opening ritual, several pieces are played, prior to the beginning of the story. Each of these pieces has their own

specific functions, such as to welcome the audiences, to introduce the performers, and to pay homage to the instrument *rebab* [bowed lute] (Matusky 2015). Among these pieces is one of the most important parts of a *mak yong* performance: the *Menghadap Rebab* [paying homage to the *rebab*]. As suggested by its title, the piece salutes the musical instrument *rebab*, a two-stringed bowed lute instrument, illustrated in Figure 3.18.



Figure 3.18. K.P.H. Notoprojo, a famous Indonesian *rebab* player (Willemsen n.d.)

Following the *rebab* piece, two pieces entitled *Sedayung Makyong* and *Sedayung Pakyong* are then performed, to introduce the *mak yong* and *pak yong* [the king] characters. Each *mak yong* story, according to Matusky and Tan (2004: 37), is completed over multiple nights and, although the story continues each night, the same opening song and dance pieces are performed every night.

Yii has several compositions that have obviously drawn inspiration from this precious art form, including *Menghadap Rebab* for erhu, *rebab* and mixed orchestra (2006), and *Buka Panggung* for Chinese orchestra (2009). However, it is *My Spirit is Chanting* for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions (2011) that will be the focus of this study due to the availability of musical score and recordings.

3.2.1 Yii

***My Spirit is Chanting* for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions (2011)**

Yii acknowledged that *My Spirit is Chanting*, composed in 2011 for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions, is inspired by the *mak yong* repertoire *Kesah Barat* or *Kisah Barat* (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 15 January, 2013). As this dance-drama is an oral tradition, written scores and lyrics of *mak yong* are rare, a situation made worse by the ban imposed on this genre, which has resulted in considerable scarcity of resources on performances of *mak yong* by important performers. As this lack of accessible sources extends to the source of inspiration of *My Spirit is Chanting*, making a fair comparison between *Kesah Barat* and *My Spirit is Chanting* is almost impossible. Nonetheless, analysis of the work has revealed that Yii negotiates cultural elements from *mak yong* into aspects of *My Spirit is Chanting* through its title, structure, timbre, melodic line, and ornamentation.

As mentioned previously, the genre is performed for ritual purposes related to healing practices, which commonly involved chanting. The title of the work *My Spirit is Chanting* therefore makes reference to the source of inspiration. In the programme notes to the score of *My Spirit is Chanting* (Yii 2011c: n.p.), the composer explains that:

This is my impression of *Makyong*...and its function as ritual theatre associated with healing purpose and involving with trance dancing and spirit possession. However, this piece is not intended as an imitation of the *Makyong*.

Despite claiming that the work is not an imitation of *mak yong*, there are some aspects of this composition that clearly draw on characteristics of *mak yong*, including part of its structure. *My Spirit is Chanting* can be divided into three main sections: prelude, middle (Figures A to D) and recapitulation (Figure E). The five-bar prelude section makes obvious reference to features in the opening (*Buka Panggung*) of a *mak yong* performance through the specific performance instructions given and material used.

The composer has asked for the piece to be played ‘*Spiritual, poco rubato*’ (Figure 3.19). Yii explains (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 15 January, 2013) that he wants the performers to treat the performance as a religious event and to burn some incense to invoke the reminiscence of the *Buka Panggung* ritual of a *mak yong* performance.

My Spirit is Chanting

for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions

Spiritual, poco rubato ♩ = 48

The musical score is arranged in three staves. The top staff is for Soprano, the middle for Bass Clarinet, and the bottom for Percussion. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is 'Spiritual, poco rubato' with a quarter note equal to 48 beats. The Soprano part is mostly silent. The Bass Clarinet part begins with a long held note, followed by a highly ornamented melodic line with various dynamics and articulations. The Percussion part includes a suspended cymbal (L) and a triangle stick.

Figure 3.19. Yii – *My Spirit is Chanting*, bars 1 to 3 (Yii 2011c: 1)

As observed in Figure 3.19, the composer begins the piece with a silence, perhaps after an incense burning ritual. If the incense ritual is performed, it is imaginable that the silent atmosphere would feel sacred, and somewhat mystical and spiritual. The bass clarinet subsequently breaks the silence with a long held note, followed by a narrow but highly ornamented melodic line, which is then joined by the suspended cymbal. As can be seen from Figure 3.19, there are many dynamic and articulation instructions in the three opening bars of the bass clarinet line. These detailed performance directions are found throughout the entire work. The narrow ranged and highly ornamented bass clarinet part, coupled with detailed performance instructions, suggests that the composer is trying to evoke the timbre of a *rebab*. Unlike the *Menghadap Rebab* section of *mak yong*, which is performed by the entire ensemble to salute the *rebab*, Yii makes the quasi-*rebab* solo bass clarinet line a key feature in the opening of *My Spirit is Chanting*. In both instances, the *rebab* is the heart of this section. It is interesting to note that another composer, Chong, as discussed in the previous section, has also attempted to echo the *rebab* by having narrow and ornamented melodic lines, while also allowing the timbre of the *rebab* to dominate *Monodrama* by manipulating tone colours in different instruments. It is known that Chong and Yii are good friends and work together in the SMCC to promote Malaysian contemporary music. Yii's more recent compositions, after 2010, often resonate with Chong's compositional style in terms of notation, performance instructions and spatial intervention (to displace musicians during performances). It is likely that Chong may have inspired Yii in these creative practices.

The melodic line of *My Spirit is Chanting* is very narrow in range, and highly ornamented, particularly in the parts for the soprano and bass clarinet. This attribute is undoubtedly a reflection of the melodic lines of the *rebab* and voice in *mak yong*. Ornamentations used in a *mak yong* performance, in contrast to those used in European performance practices, serve as

a tool for the expression of the performers' inner spirit and emotions. To allow for the flexibility of such expression, Yii writes in his performance notes (2011c: n.p.):

all acciaccaturas or grace notes are to be sounded prior to the associated specified rhythms to which they are attached. The duration of these notes is left to the discretion of the performers and should be determined by context/pitch. The tempo is flexible; the players need not play precisely throughout the piece.

In the score of *My Spirit is Chanting*, Yii not only uses the notation of grace notes in the conventional way, where the grace note is applied before a note (Figure 3.19), but also inserts the grace notes after a note, as can be seen in the last bar of Figure 3.20.

The figure shows a musical score for three parts: Soprano (Sop.), B. Cl., and Percussion (Perc.). The Soprano part has lyrics: e u a e i ah! e i e i a m e i e i u æ. It includes dynamic markings such as ppp, mf, sfz, mp, and p, along with performance instructions like 'molto vibr.', '(1/4 up)', 'whistled sound', and 'far away!'. The B. Cl. part includes markings like pppp, enter imperceptibly, mp, sfz, p sub., and timbre var. The Percussion part includes markings like pp, mp, p, mf, slow vibr., dead stroke, and Ped. The score is numbered 2 at the top left and 15 at the start of the Soprano line.

Figure 3.20. Yii – *My Spirit is Chanting*, bars 15 to 18 (Yii 2011c: 2)

When listening to the performance of *My Spirit is Chanting* (Track 11) it is noticeable that the emphasis is mostly given to the grace notes and that the duration of ornaments varies. As noted previously, the composer wishes the performers to perform the piece in a religious and spiritual manner. The flexibility in rhythm and time gives the performers an opportunity for the expression of such spiritual emotions, similar to the ones expressed in *mak yong* performances.

The narrow melodic range not only leads to the increase in ornamentation in a *mak yong* performance, but also allows performers more freedom and scope to create different timbral effects that make the melody lines more expressive. Yii's purpose for having a variety of timbres is to evoke the rich tone colour in the music of *mak yong*. Yii experiments with tone colour on two levels in *My Spirit is Chanting*. Firstly, he manipulates the different timbral effects of each individual instrument. Secondly, he extends his exploration of timbral effect to the ensemble as a whole.

In the soprano section, no actual lyrics are used. Instead, Yii uses vocalisation of individual letters, mainly vowels with a few consonants (Figure 3.20). In the same score excerpt, the composer has inserted comprehensive performance instructions in terms of dynamic, articulations, ornamentations and different sonic effects to change the colour of the voice. Such detailed instructions are not limited to the voice section. Yii specifically requests the bass clarinetist to create timbre variation, as shown in bar 17 of Figure 3.20. Similarly, in the percussion section, the percussionist is asked to bow the vibraphone, play with slow vibration and use a dead stroke. All of these performance instructions are designed to create a diverse timbral experience.

Yii’s experimentation with tone colour also takes effect across all instruments as a collective entity. Figure 3.21 presents an example of the extension of timbre across instruments.

Figure 3.21. Yii – *My Spirit is Chanting*, bars 4 to 7 (Yii 2011c: 1)

The bass clarinet part is the ideal place to begin a consideration of timbre. It begins with a *pianissimo* E (sounding pitch) on the last beat of bar 4, with instructions to play *senza vibrato* on the note with timbre variation in the next bar. Yii then asks for the bass clarinet player to exit the long held E note with *pppp* to very subtly pass the note on to the soprano. Again, the soprano enters very quietly on the E note and then crescendo to *mp* before fading away. Yii uses the consonant ‘m’ and a few vowels to create timbral variations in the soprano part. Following the soprano’s discreet exit, the *arco* vibraphone arrives unobtrusively, increasing its volume to *mp* then retreats quietly again. This compositional technique, whereby the composer creates apparently seamless notes that are rich in timbre across different instruments, is used frequently throughout this work.

As demonstrated in this section, Yii presents his ‘impression of *mak yong*’ using four areas that resonate with this unique art form: title; structure, particularly chanting; a narrow melodic line with strong ornamentation; and tone colour. The title and character markings at the beginning of the work make direct connection to the spiritual characteristics of *mak yong*, where chanting is involved in traditional healing practices. The structure of the work, especially the opening prelude, displays the composer’s plan to reflect the *Buka Panggung* and *Menghadap Rebab* ritual of *mak yong* performances. The narrow but highly ornamented melodic lines of *My Spirit is Chanting* is undoubtedly a signature characteristic of *mak yong* music. Finally, Yii’s experimentation with tonal colour expresses the rich timbral variation found in the source of inspiration. This work is not composed to imitate *mak yong*, as the composer makes clear, but compositional aspects of *My Spirit is Chanting* exhibit the strong influence of the traditional genre upon this work.

Aside from the cited compositions by Yii, there are only two other known works that also allude to *mak yong*; Abdul Aziz’s *Sketch for MZ* and Zain’s *Suasana* (Matusky and Tan 2004: 395, 398). The former was said to be a ‘work in progress’ when the Matusky and Tan book was published in 2004, and a current search returns no results. The latter work, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, is also linked to elements extracted from another Southeast Asian art form – the *wayang kulit*.

3.3 *Wayang Kulit*

Imagine yourself in the warm and humid climate of Malaysia; let’s say in a small town in the state of Kedah...You’re enjoying easy conversation with friends [at a road side cafe table], when the not-so-distant music from a gamelan orchestra reaches your ears, alerting you to the fact that a shadow puppet show will soon be starting...Knowing there is no rush you casually follow the music to the clearing in the town, where a delivery truck has its large side door replaced with a muslin shadow screen. Inside the vehicle, now a shadow puppet stage, the musicians are beating their drums, gongs and metal clappers, and the *serunai* player is blowing a hypnotic melody that seems to snake through the crowd, snaring its audience. Seated behind the screen, the *dalang* [puppeteer] is readying his shadow puppets for the evening’s performance...He softly recites his requisite prayers, incantations and blessings, ending with a gesture of *baka*, touching his thumb to the roof of his mouth and then to his puppets. Finally he is ready to summon gods, heroes and

demons alike from the supernatural world to bring their struggles and triumphs to life in this play of shadows (Osnes 2010:7).

‘Welcome to the Malaysian *wayang kulit*,’ says Osnes (2010: 7). There is much to learn about the performance practices of the *wayang kulit* (hereafter *wayang*) from the description of a *wayang* performance in a small Malaysian town. It is a community event that happens in a casual and informal atmosphere. The performance does not have a fixed stage or concert hall, but wherever a temporary stage can be set up with enough audience space suffices as a performance venue. It is religious and exposes that the villagers believe in the supernatural world. In Osnes’ description, the shadow puppet show is accompanied by the gamelan, although this is not always the case. The *dalang* [puppeteer] plays a central role in the ritual prior to the actual performance, and is a key individual in the actual performance, with his role of summoning gods, heroes and demons and bringing them to life in *wayang*. Osnes (2010: 7) continues:

The Malaysian wayang is largely a popular form of entertainment that seeks to engage its audience with [dips into raucous humor and ascents to moments of sublime beauty] as devised plots that branch out from the Indian epic tales, or modernized elements...to enhance the general appeal. Even the Malaysian puppets themselves are a bit rougher than their Javanese counterparts...Yet, from this emerges an undeniable vitality that connects to the very rhythm of life in the village. The fact that the form is less precious and static allows it to anticipate and respond in lively fashion to changes in its audience’s expectations.

The classical style of *wayang* predominantly derives its story-telling repertoire from Indian epic tales: the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. In more recent times, as Osnes observes, these stories have been modernised and probably localised to convey the daily life of the villages.

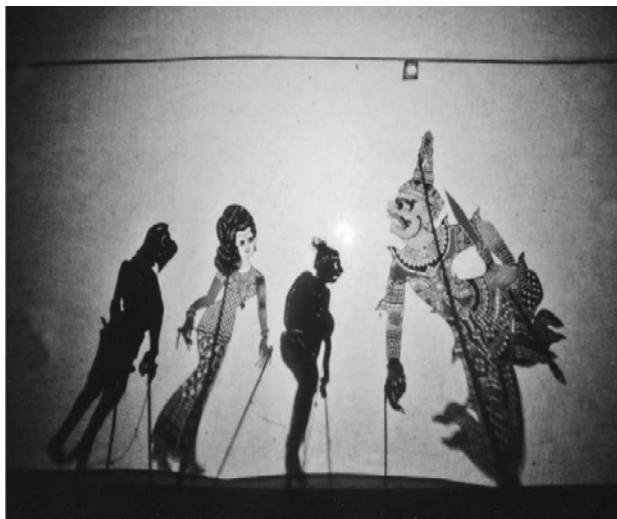


Figure 3.22. *Wayang kulit* (Osnes 2010: 8)

The most well-known form of *wayang* is undoubtedly the Indonesian Javanese *wayang kulit*, recognised by UNESCO as an ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity’ in 2003 (UNESCO 2003). However, as this study’s focus is on the influences on Malaysian composers, it will concentrate on the four different forms of *wayang* found in Malaysia: (i) *Wayang Kulit Kelantan*⁸¹ (also referred to as *Wayang Kulit Siam*), (ii) *Wayang Kulit Jawa* (also known as *Wayang Kulit Purwa*), (iii) *Wayang Kulit Gedek*, and (iv) *Wayang Kulit Melayu*.

The first form of *wayang* is the most popular and widespread form, and primarily exists in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, and formerly in Perak and Pahang. The second form of *wayang* is found in Johor; the third in the northern states of Perlis, Kedah, and Kelantan; and the final form is commonly found in the palaces of Kelantan and Kedah (Matusky and Tan 2004: 16-19; Yousof 2004a: 24). Table 3.3 briefly compares the different forms of *wayang* in Malaysia. To fully describe and explain each *wayang* style is an immense task that is outside the scope of this study. Instead, this section will provide a brief overview of the art form, focusing on the most popular style of *wayang*, the *Wayang Kulit Kelantan*.

⁸¹ A short compiled example of *Wayang Kulit Kelantan* can be heard at <https://youtu.be/Lkt7JDo3qZE>.

Table 3.3. Summary of the four *wayang* styles found in Malaysia

	<i>Wayang Kulit Kelantan</i>	<i>Wayang Kulit Jawa</i>	<i>Wayang Kulit Gedek</i>	<i>Wayang Kulit Melayu</i>
Origins	Kelantan	Indonesia	Southern Thailand	Indonesia
Stories	Tales and stories from the <i>Ramayana</i> epic	Tales and stories from the <i>Mahabharata</i> epic	Tales and stories from the <i>Ramayana</i> epic	Tales and stories from the <i>Mahabharata</i> epic
Musical accompaniment	Gamelan ensemble of about 8 to 10 musicians	Javanese gamelan ensemble	Gamelan ensemble, bowed stringed instruments, <i>pi Jawa</i> (quadruple reed shawn), <i>saw oo</i> and <i>saw duang</i> (bowed lutes)	Gamelan ensemble, <i>mong</i> (single knobbed horizontal gong)

The trunk or main stories of the Kelantan *wayang* are based on *Hikayat Maharaja Wana* [The Stories of Maharaja Wana] and *Hikayat Seri Rama* [The Stories of Seri Rama], two major Malay literary adaptations of the *Ramayana* epic ‘into a Muslim work for a Muslim audience’, van der Heide suggests (2002: 55). The stories narrate tales of Prince Rama’s quest to rescue his wife Sita, who was abducted by Ravana (King of Lanka, who has ten heads and 20 arms). In addition to the trunk stories, localisation of the *Ramayana* results in extension of *Ramayana* tales called ‘*cerita ranting*’ [branch stories]. These generally consist of stories about later and/or minor adventures of Seri Rama and other characters including their offspring (British Library n.d.; Yousof 2004b: 29; Yousof 2005: 297). Yousof (2004b: 29) explains, ‘a large number of branch stories has existed for generations, handed down from *dalang* to *dalang* through the oral tradition. Practising *dalang* continue to creatively expand the *ranting* repertoire to this day’.

The accompanying gamelan ensemble for the Kelantan shadow play consists of between seven and ten musicians. Instruments used (Figure 3.23) are *serunai*; three idiophones: pairs of *tetawak*, *canang* and *kesi*; and six membranophones: *gedumbak ibu* [mother, larger in size] and *anak* [child, smaller in size], *gendang ibu* and *anak*, and *geduk ibu* and *anak* (Matusky and Tan 2004: 20-24; Yousof 2004c: 27; JKKN n.d.). As discussed in Chapter 2, the gamelan repertoire is predominantly polyphonic and heterophonic in texture. Each piece has at least three vital layers of musical components: the melodic lines performed by the *dalang* or the *serunai*; the drum rhythmic patterns; and the gong unit played by the bronze instruments (Matusky and Tan 2004: 25).

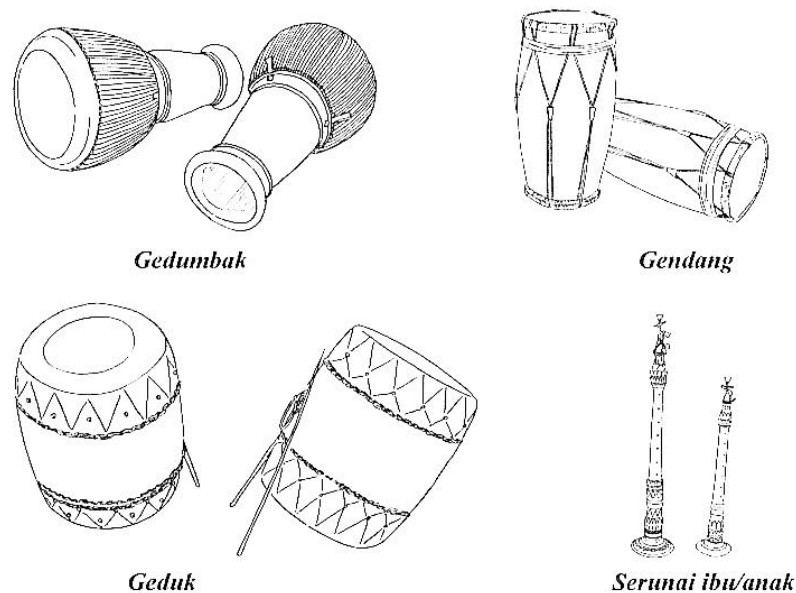


Figure 3.23. *Wayang kulit* ensemble (Matusky and Tan 2004: 24)

The performance practice of the *wayang kulit* is similar to that of the *mak yong* pre-performance rituals. A traditional performance of the *wayang* is done over several nights. Prior to the performance, on the first night the *dalang* will perform the *Buka Panggung* ritual by burning incense and offering food to other ‘worldly beings’ (Matusky and Tan 2004: 19). Yousof (2004c: 27) states that this ritual is performed ‘as a form of salute to the teachers and spirits, and to prevent attacks by malevolent and disgruntled spirits. It is also believed to enhance the puppeteer’s standing in his community and to ensure a successful performance’. This is followed by a prologue performed by a young puppeteer, called *dalang muda*, to attract a crowd and to set the atmosphere for the upcoming shadow play. When the *dalang muda* is replaced by the master puppeteer, *lagu tukar dalang* [changing of the puppeteer song] is performed by the ensemble to indicate the change. Each night, the performance lasts for about three to four hours (Matusky and Tan 2004: 20; Yousof 2004c: 27).

A literature review has identified six Malaysian compositions with influences from *wayang kulit*, as shown in Table 3.4, two of which are composed by Yii, one of the selected composers for this study. As the other four compositions are composed by Malaysian composers who are not focuses of this study, therefore are beyond the scope of this research.

Table 3.4. List of works with gamelan influences from *wayang kulit*

Composers	Works
Razak Abdul-Aziz	Sixth piece ‘ <i>Nyanyi Pinjam Dandang</i> ’ [song about borrowing a boiler] from <i>10 Nyanian Settings</i> [10 songs settings] for soprano, alto, Chorus and two pianos (1981-90)
Suhaimi Mohd. Zain	<i>Suasana</i> ⁸² (1999)
Sunetra Fernando	<i>Wayang</i> for chamber ensemble and gamelan (2002)
Adeline Wong	<i>Empunya yang Beroleh Sita Dewi</i> for orchestra and <i>wayang kulit</i> ensemble (2007)
Kah Hoe Yii	<i>Gongan</i> for oboe and piano (2008)
	<i>Bayang</i> for <i>wayang kulit</i> and Chinese orchestra (2008)

3.3.1 Yii

***Gongan* for oboe and piano (2008)**

Yii’s educational background and experience in traditional music in Malaysia make it reasonable to assume his awareness and understanding of the *wayang kulit* art form. *Gongan* for oboe and piano was composed in 2008, and is the first of two works by Yii to be analysed here for their incorporation of *wayang kulit*. *Gongan* was commissioned by and dedicated to oboist Keri McCarthy. In his programme notes to the musical score, Yii (2008a: ii) writes that the work ‘is inspired by musical form of Wayang Kulit (Malay shadow puppet)...However, this piece is not intended as an imitation of the musical form of Wayang Kulit.’ He makes a similar statement in a previously analysed work *My Spirit is Chanting*, but analysis of that work provides compelling resemblances to *mak yong*. It is perhaps not the intention of the composer for the work to replicate the source of inspiration. However, many identifiable elements of the art form do undeniably appear in the compositions, as can be seen in the analysis of *Gongan*.

The title *Gongan* is a term commonly employed in traditional music of Malaysia and within the Southeast Asia region. It refers to cyclical time or gong unit, which acts like an *ostinato*, a more familiar term to European-derived music. Matusky and Tan (2004: 10) describe *gongan* as:

a special type of colotomic⁸³ unit that consists of a cyclical temporal/rhythmic pattern, which is repeated and marked by the lowest-pitched gong of an ensemble, usually the

⁸² Due to the lack of literature and information, instrumentation for *Suasana* is unknown.

tetawak ibu [lowest gong tone]. This gong unit is divided binarily (based on multiples of two), and is based on a 2-beat stress unit with the strongest stress on beat 2. Each gong unit is tied to the next gong unit at the sound of the lowest gong tone or *tetawak ibu*.

Figure 3.24 shows examples of 8-beat, 16-beat and 32-beat *gongan*.

Beats: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

8-beat gong unit

16-beat gong unit

32-beat gong unit from the piece *Hulubalang*

Figure 3.24. The 8-, 16- and 32-beat gongan (Matusky and Tan 2004: 26-28)

As the title of Yii's composition implies, this *ostinato* unit found in *wayang* performances is a crucial underlying element in Yii's *Gongan*. For instance, a trill-like quaver figure is found from bars 5 to 20 and bars 26 to 35 in the piano part (Figure 3.25). In addition to serving as an *ostinato*, this trill-like figure strongly resembles the music of *wayang* as heard in the YouTube recording⁸⁴ of an example of *Wayang Kulit Kelantan*, in which a major 2nd trill is featured at the start of the recording.

⁸³ Colotomic structure is defined by Grove Music Online as 'a term adopted by the ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst in his work on the gamelan music of Java and Bali, to describe the phrase structure of the *gendhing* [piece]. Each major section of a *gendhing* begins and ends on a gong beat and is further subdivided into subsections and phrases by several other single-note instruments of the gong type; their function is to mark the skeletal melody (adapted and played by the metallophones in unison) at regular metric periods' (Grove Music Online n.d.). The Encyclopædia Britannica adds that 'for instance, a musical unit of 16 measures may be marked by four instruments: a small gong striking once every odd-numbered measure; a larger gong striking each 4th, 8th, 12th, and 16th measure; another gong striking each 6th, 10th, and 14th; and the large *gong ageng* sounding in the 16th' (Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica (1998)).

⁸⁴ A short compiled example of *Wayang Kulit Kelantan* can be heard at <https://youtu.be/Lkt7JDo3qZE>

Gongan

for Oboe and Piano
Dedicated to McCarthy, Keri

Yii Kah Hoe

Senza Tempo

PI. sempre

- * Completely silent about 30" then gradually insert oboe into piano.
- ** The glass rod will produce a percussive, "jangling" sound. Alternatively, placed metal rulers laid over the strings near the damper to produce a distinctive metallic effect.
- *** Start the next bar when the resonant sounds are almost inaudible.

5

away from piano

* Kesi is metal percussion instrument of Malays shadow puppet (wayang kulit). It looks like small Chinese cymbal.

8

Figure 3.25. Yii – *Gongan*, bars 1 to 11 (Yii 2008a: 1)

This trill figure continues in the same instrument at bar 36 in semiquaver. Simultaneously, Yii brings in an 8-quaver *gongan* figure (Figure 3.26) in the left hand piano part to layer with the semiquaver trill (Figure 3.27).

Figure 3.26 shows that the 8-quaver *gongan* alternates the third quaver between C# and Bb with each cycle. Both cyclical units (the trill-like and 8-quaver figures) temporarily conclude at bar 57. The semiquaver trill-like *ostinato* eventually returns at bar 66. The oboe part takes over the *ostinato* briefly at bar 81, handing it back to the piano part at bar 84. A new musical figure is initiated in bar 86 to replace the ongoing trill (Figure 3.28) through the right hand piano part.

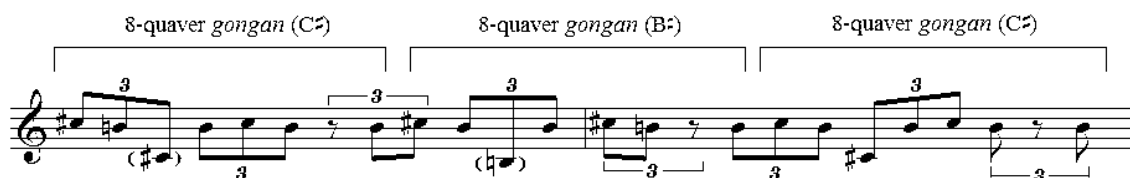


Figure 3.26. 8-quaver figure in Yii's *Gongan* bar 36

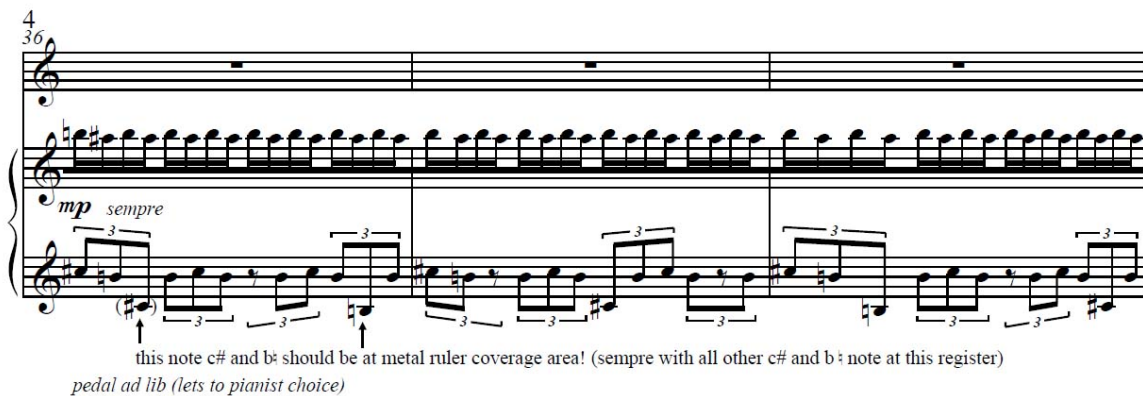


Figure 3.27. Yii – *Gongan*, bars 36 to 38 (Yii 2008a: 4)

86 *ff espr.* *mp* pointing bell to audience-----

88 *f* *mf* tone var. *mp* senza ped.

90 *sfz* *mp* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

PI. (gradually release pedal)

Figure 3.28. Yii – *Gongan*, bars 86 to 91 (Yii 2008a: 9)

Bar 90 (Figure 3.28) sees the introduction of another cyclical pattern in the oboe part, layered over the piano *ostinato*. This new figure is then transferred to the piano part in bar 98. In bars 118 and 119, the trill-like *ostinato* figure is reintroduced briefly. Another semiquaver cycle begins in the piano part at bar 142. The oboe part here consists of some sequences, although these are not consistent enough to be considered an *ostinato*; it does, however, bear a strong resemblance to the aforementioned trill-like figure, with some octave displacements (Figure 3.29). The work ends with the trill-like quaver figure that is present at the start of the work. These examples demonstrate the strong influence of *wayang gongan* structure in Yii’s *Gongan*.

Figure 3.29. Yii – *Gongan*, bars 141 to 144 (Yii 2008a: 16)

In addition to the fundamental *ostinato* figures that dominate the work, Yii also applies other elements of *wayang* in *Gongan*, including performance instructions, both musically and extra-musically, and instrumentation. It appears that Yii’s intention is to bring to mind the auditory, and visual in some instances, experiences and sonic events of *wayang* performances through his compositional strategies.

The first instruction to be discussed is that ‘the performer should play ritually (like trance) and focusing on their inner experience or visions’ (Yii 2008a: ii). Echoing rituals of *wayang* and its content, which involves other ‘worldly beings’ (Matusky and Tan 2004: 19), the musicians of *Gongan* are encouraged to explore their inner spirituality, and play as if they are in a trance. It seems likely that the middle virtuosic section, and the gradual and slow movement of the oboist from playing towards the piano to facing the audience (Figures 3.25 and 3.28), together with Yii’s instruction to the oboist not to move (Figure 3.30) are designed to portray a mystical, spiritual and trance-like state of mind.

Figure 3.30. Yii – *Gongan*, bars 185 to 189 (Yii 2008a: 19)

The instruments selected for this work, oboe and piano, are mainly dictated by the commissioning individual. However, it is apparent that the use of oboe in Yii’s *Gongan*, as discussed in the previous analysis of Chong’s *Monodrama* where the oboe part is scored to evoke the sonority of the gamelan double-reed wind instrument *serunai*, aims to mimic the melismatic, nasal and piercing sound quality of the leading *wayang* instrument, the *serunai*. In the case of *Gongan*, the oboe is also used to impersonate the melismatic and nasal *dalang*’s singing. The melodic lines of the oboe in *Gongan*, akin to that of the *dalang* and the *serunai*, are narrow in range.

Gongan begins with a single note, B \flat . As the work progresses, neighbouring notes C, B \sharp , C \sharp , D \sharp , E and F are subsequently introduced in this order. The limited pitch range is supplemented by octave displacements and a variety of timbre. This is evident in bars 14 to 20 (Figure 3.31), in which the oboe melodic line is a single note C. The wide array of timbres produced by the *serunai* is emulated by the oboe using a variety of techniques instructed by the score, including: ornaments, both before and after a note; multiphonics (marked ‘M’ in the score); different type of accents; articulation of vowels to modify timbre; teeth on reed; Aeolian sound and varying this sound by changing the position of the lips as if saying ‘shh’; air tone; humming; and changing speed of vibrato (Figure 3.31).

----- (P.II.) -----

- * Diaphragmatic accents.
- ** Multiphonic based on note given.

----- (P.II.) -----

- * Articulate the indicated vowels to obtain a modification of timbre of the note.
- ** Modulate the aeolian sound opening and closing the lips. (with speech sound "shh")
- *** Without pitch, must be blown very sharply with no contact between lips and mouthpiece.

----- (P.II.) -----

Figure 3.31. Yii – Gongan, bars 12 to 23 (Yii 2008a: 2)

In addition to providing the majority of the driving *ostinato/gongan* unit, the piano part is written to imitate the percussive sound in a *wayang* ensemble. The pianist is asked to place either a glass rod⁸⁵ or a metal ruler over the strings of middle C, C# and B \natural , to produce ‘a percussive, “jangling” sound’ or ‘a distinctive metallic effect’ respectively (Yii 2008a: 1). Yii specifies that the purpose of this is to imitate the *kesi*, a metal percussive instrument (see the instructions in Figure 3.25).

In the same score excerpt, it is seen that the pianist silently depresses C \natural and B \flat in the bass clef sustained by the pedal. This augments the overtones of subsequent C \natural and B \flat notes being played. The emphasis of overtone is, as previously mentioned, an idiosyncratic feature of the bronze percussion accompanying *wayang*. To prolong this overtone effect of the silently depressed notes, and perhaps to also create a different quality of sound, the pianist is asked to *pizz.* (*pizzicato*) the strings of the C \natural and B \flat notes as marked, and then ‘lightly touch vibrating string with finger nail’, as seen in Figure 3.25 (Yii 2008a: 1). In addition to mimicking the percussive timbre using extended techniques, the pianist is also instructed to ‘wear ring across right hand’s fingers’ in bar 35. The pianist, Tomoko Honda, in a recording of this work⁸⁶ is seen at 3’36” to loop small metallic bells across her right fingers. At bar 36, as stated before, her right hand makes a trill-like figure, which is undoubtedly a deliberate and clever strategy by the composer to ring the bells using the wrist twisting action required by the pianist to play the trills for the next minute and a half. By adding the ringing of metallic bells, the composer brings the auditory effect of *Gongan* even closer to the *wayang kulit* source of inspiration. Another instance where the metallic sound quality of the *wayang* ensemble is imitated occurs when the pianist plays *glissando* inside of the piano at bars 169 and 171⁸⁷ (Figure 3.32).

⁸⁵ This glass rod technique was pioneered by George Crumb in his *Vox Balaenae* (1971), where a glass rod is placed over the piano strings to create a percussive ‘jangling’ sonic effect (Keller 2011: 152).

⁸⁶ This video <<https://youtu.be/aEzEkBhw7tY>> is recorded in 2010 at the premiere of *My Spirit if Dancing* at the Thailand International Composers Festival in Bangkok, performed by dedicatee and pianist Tomoko Honda.

⁸⁷ At 10’27” of the above YouTube recording.

168 → voice only -----, ord.

p *sfz* *mf* *p* *pp*

i o i o i o i o i o i

air tone

mp

inside piano

pp *gliss. ad lib* *ppp*

mp *p*

PI. sempre

gliss. ad lib

mp *p*

♩ = c.52
pizz.

Figure 3.32. Yii – *Gongan*, bars 168 to 175 (Yii 2008a: 18)

When listening to the recording of *Gongan*, one significant trait that stands out is the elasticity in tempo throughout the work. The underlying *ostinato* seems to serve as a flexible accompaniment. Although the trills are played in a relatively strict and even manner, the oboe part gives the impression of highly improvised melodic lines. The performance, however, certainly cannot be accomplished without detailed rehearsal and advanced ensemble musicianship. The juxtaposition of improvisational and rehearsed characteristics of *Gongan* reveals striking similarities to the performance practices of both *wayang* and gamelan ensembles.

Using the title, instrumentation, musical material and performance instructions, Yii successfully constructs a work that is highly comparable to features of the *wayang*. Another of Yii's work which also draws upon *wayang* elements is *Bayang*, to be analysed in the next section.

***Bayang* for wayang kulit and Chinese orchestra (2008)**

Composed in 2008, *Bayang* for wayang kulit and Chinese orchestra was commissioned by the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. It was premiered on 28th of November in the same year under the baton of Tsung Yeh, who is also the dedicatee of the work. Yii (2008b: n.p.), in his programme note to *Bayang*, states that ‘the idea of combination between wayang kulit ensemble and Chinese orchestra is come [*sic*] from Mr. Tsung Yeh’. The challenge when combining ensembles from different cultures, as Yii (2008b: n.p.) notes, is to not ‘lose the native expression and original characteristics of musical instruments from these two orchestras’. The multicultural nature of this work, drawing elements from the wayang kulit and Chinese orchestra, reflects and supports Othman’s *rojak* metaphor in which identifiable constituent parts are put together to form a unique totality. The Chinese orchestra element will be discussed in Chapter 4, with this section focusing on the wayang component of *Bayang*. A video recording of the premiere can be found in Track 12, featuring the Singapore Chinese Orchestra and Istamuzika Music Group, which perform on the wayang ensemble, conducted by Yeh.

The title *Bayang* is a Malay word for ‘shadow’. This is clearly a direct reference to the shadow puppet theatre that serves as a substantial influence for the composition of this work. As can be seen at the start of the video (Track 12), the *dalang* walks amongst the audience carrying a small receptacle with burning incense, simultaneously reciting verses as he would in the *Buka Panggung* ceremony prior to a wayang performance. The *dalang* is accompanied by two *gaoyin sheng* [soprano *sheng*: a Chinese mouth-blown free reed instrument], also walking among the audience. Both *sheng* play the note A (A440) in succession (Figure 3.33).

The figure shows a musical score for the Gaoyin Sheng instrument in the first bar of the piece. It features two staves, G. Sh. I and G. Sh. II. G. Sh. I starts at 'Pos. 1' and moves to 'Pos. 2' as indicated by a dashed line and the instruction 'walks slowly toward pos.2 when dalang begins to move'. The music is marked 'pppp enter imperceptibly' and 'I sempre'. A note A440 is indicated. G. Sh. II starts at 'Pos. 1' and is marked 'II pppp enter imperceptibly' and 'II sempre'. The score is marked '(cont)' at the end.

Figure 3.33. Yii – *Bayang*, bar 1 (Yii 2008b: 1)

As all three gradually move towards the stage into their designated positions, as instructed by Yii, the dark stage lights up and the conductor takes his position at the stand. The section

following this is an unconventional, even peculiar, one. It involves an organised tuning of the orchestra, just as a western orchestra would before the entrance of the conductor. The A note that has been played by the two *gaoyin sheng* becomes the tuning pitch. Beginning with the plucked and struck strings section, the orchestra tunes. This is followed by the bowed string section, and then the wind section. The tuning event is considered part of the performance in *Bayang* and each section's respective entrance is guided by the conductor, in a manner more traditionally seen for the entrance of a section or instrument in the middle of a work.

Two instances when the Chinese orchestra musicians are asked to do something out of their ordinary performance practices are at Rehearsal Figure I in *Bayang* at bar 234 (Figure 3.34), and Rehearsal Figure L at bar 288 (Figure 3.35).

Figure 3.34. Yii – *Bayang*, bars 232 to 237 (Yii 2008b: 48)

In the first score excerpt, as shown in Figure 3.34, ‘screaming, howling, shouting while playing!’ is marked in the parts for percussion parts as well as the *wayang* ensemble. This vocal addition to the loud and accented percussion rhythm augments the tension of war between Seri Rama’s and Ratu Pacar Baha’s kingdoms that is being portrayed by the puppets on the shadow screen.

48

285 Separation, senza tempo

Bar 289: (mouth close) pppp poco a poco cresc. (humming, without instrument, in any octave) take breaths imperceptibly

Bar 290: (mouth close) pppp poco a poco cresc. (humming, without instrument, in any octave) take breaths imperceptibly

Bar 289: (g. sh II) One Sheng I walks slowly towards place D (refer to setting layout 3)

Bar 290: s.vite ppp

Bar 289: (mouth close) pppp poco a poco cresc. (humming, without instrument, in any octave)

Bar 290: (mouth close) pppp poco a poco cresc. (humming, without instrument, in any octave)

Figure 3.35. Yii – *Bayang*, bars 285 to 290 (Yii 2008b: 38)

The musicians are, again, asked to provide vocal elements to the work in the second score excerpt, Figure 3.35. This time the wind players are to hum ‘m’ with their mouth closed, ‘without instrument, in any octave’. They are then joined by plucked and struck strings eight bars later, and bowed strings a further three bars after that. At different stages, the humming musicians change their humming to ‘hu’ with their mouths slightly open, and subsequently completely open when singing ‘ah’. This humming and singing section coincides with the ‘separation’ scene of the *wayang* story, setting a melancholic and ethereal atmosphere for the scene.

Analysis of *Bayang* also reveals a melodic motif, as marked in Figure 3.36, first introduced at bar 39 by wind instruments *diyin sheng* [bass *sheng*], *zhongyin* and *chizhongyin suona* [alto and tenor *suona*, a Chinese double reeded horn], and *zhongyin* and *diyin guan* [alto and bass *guan*, a Chinese double reed wind instrument].

This motif is also found in the bowed strings section. It remains the only melodic motif until the *wayang kulit* section at bar 166 (about 10’10” of the video). After the introduction of the *wayang kulit* ensemble, Yii abandons this melodic motif and assigns the Chinese orchestra with mainly accompaniment and atmosphere-setting roles.

As noted in the preceding paragraph, the *wayang kulit* ensemble is introduced at bar 166. The ensemble here includes the *dalang*, *gendang anak cum serunai*, *gendang ibu*, *geduk*, *kesi cum canang* and gong. Although a written score specifying scenes with accompanying rhythm is provided, the ensemble does not follow the prescribed score or order of scenes faithfully

during the performance. The score is continuous. The actual performance, as seen in the video, however, consists of sections where the *dalang* recites solo, without the accompaniment of the *wayang* ensemble. Revisions made to the *wayang* section are believed to have Yii's approval: he can be seen in the video clip of the first performance, when Yeh invites him to the stage, and it is thus reasonable to assume that he had attended rehearsal for the premiere, where Yeh and the *dalang* would likely have consulted him about the adjustments made.

Figure 3.36. Yii – *Bayang*, bars 38 to 40 (Yii 2008b: 7)

The *wayang* ensemble in *Bayang* tells the story of Lak Juna, son of Seri Rama, and Tuan Puteri Melor Sekuntum, entitled ‘*Bunga Bukan Sekuntum?*’ [Flower is not just a Stalk?]. Figure 3.37 presents the synopsis, which is included as accompanying notes to the score.

Synopsis:

Bunga Bukan Sekuntum?

“Flower is not just a stalk?”

Raden Lakjuna and Raden Lak Palembang, sons of Seri Rama were sent to study under Tok Maharisi Mata Api at Wak Tujuh Kedi Beremas. At the same time, Ratu Gelang Gemita sent her daughter, Tuan Puteri Melor Sekuntum who was engaged to the son of Ratu Pacar Baha to study under the same master as well.

Raden Lakjuna met Tuan Puteri Melor Sekuntum when they were studying at Wak Tujuh Kedi Beremas. When they had completed their studies, Menteri Ratu Gelang Gemita came to welcome Tuan Puteri Melor Sekuntum back to her father’s kingdom but she refused. Instead, she wanted to follow Raden Lakjuna back to Siu Sia Mendara Pura Kingdom. Menteri Ratu Gelang Gemita informed this to Ratu Gelang Gemita. The news of Tuan Puteri Melor Sekuntum falling in love with Raden Lakjuna had travelled to Ratu Pacar Baha.

A war began between Seri Rama and Ratu Pacar Baha’s kingdoms. When the Pacar Baha Kingdom was nearly defeated by Seri Rama’s kingdom, Tok Maharisi Mata Api appeared, he requested two kingdoms to negotiate for a solution. After negotiations, Raden Lakjuna agreed to return Tuan Puteri Melor Sekuntum to Ratu Pacar Alam, son of Ratu Pacar Baha.

but.....

Figure 3.37. Yii – *Bayang*, synopsis (Yii 2008b: n.p.)

Analysis of two of Yii’s compositions, *Gongan* for oboe and piano (2008) and *Bayang* for *wayang kulit* and Chinese orchestra (2008) has been undertaken in this section. It has been demonstrated that Yii negotiates *wayang* cultural elements through title, instrumentation, including the use of an actual *wayang* ensemble, performance practices and techniques, musical material, and instructions into his compositions. In *Bayang*, ‘ingredients’ from another culture, namely the Chinese orchestra, are also apparent. Coupled with the *wayang* element, an original *rojak* composition is created. In both works, some cultural elements are readily identifiable, while others can only be recognised with sufficient knowledge of the culture employed, in this case the *wayang* art form.

The next section analyses yet another of Yii’s compositions: *My Spirit is Dancing!*. It draws influence from the Balinese *baris* dance through title, performance instructions, and choice of register and timbre.

3.4 Balinese *Baris* Dance



Figure 3.38. A *baris* dancer (Kamera Budaya 2016)

Baris is one of the most important ritual warrior dances of Bali. The word *baris* is derived from the Malay word *bebarisan*, which means line or file formation. According to Bandem (1975: 259), ‘it refers to the ancient Balinese soldiers who were used by *radja-radja*, the Balinese kings, to protect their kingdom in times of disturbance’. The *baris* dance, therefore, is usually performed by men. The dance movements stress the firmness and steadiness of the dancer’s footsteps to depict the patriotism of warriors prior to war. The costume worn is vibrant, colourful and decorative. The *baris* dance is usually accompanied by a traditional Balinese gamelan gong ensemble.

Yii, during an interview in 2013, revealed that he adored the culture of Bali and had travelled to the island annually during the past few years (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 15 January, 2013). Among the cultural activities he has experienced in Bali, he was particularly drawn towards the Balinese *baris* dance. It was this dance that inspired Yii’s 2010 composition *My Spirit is Dancing!* for solo piano. Considerable research has failed to uncover any other Malaysian works that make reference to the *baris* dance: it would appear that this element is, thus far, exclusive to *My Spirit is Dancing!*.

3.4.1 Yii

My Spirit is Dancing! for solo piano (2010)

My Spirit is Dancing! is composed in 2010 for solo piano and is dedicated to pianist Tomoko Honda. There are three main ways by which Yii mediates cultural elements from Balinese *baris* dance into this work: selection of the title, performance instructions, and choice of register and timbre.

The title of this work, *My Spirit is Dancing!*, makes direct reference to its source of inspiration, the *baris* dance. The title is found to be particularly fitting after analysing the next compositional element of *My Spirit is Dancing!*: performance instructions. Yii includes specific performance instructions to add local flavours to this composition by mimicking the *baris* dancer. However, it should be noted that the work is not based on one specific *baris* performance. Instead, it is based on the composer's experience as an audience member at *baris* performances and his imagination of *baris* movements embedded into a musical performance.

Firstly, the composer asks for bells to be tied to the wrists and ankles of the pianist, as stated in Figure 3.39. The purpose of this is to create a ringing sound when playing, moving or stamping feet to imitate the firm foot stamping of the *baris* dancer.

- * Tied Dancing bells (like Indian dancing bell - Ghungaroo) around the ankles and wrists of pianist.
- ** Play on air; without touching the key above at the note(s) indicated.

Figure 3.39. Yii – *My Spirit is Dancing!* (Yii 2010b: 1)

Secondly, the pianist is required not only to play on the keys and inside the piano, but also to play 'on air' or 'off key' throughout the work (Figure 3.40).

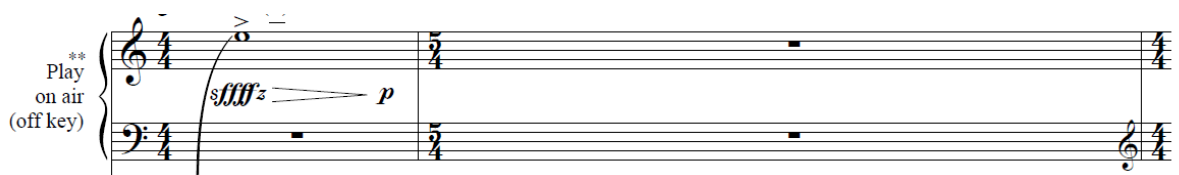


Figure 3.40. Yii – *My Spirit is Dancing!* – play on air (off key), bars 1 to 2 (Yii 2010b: 1)

By playing in the air, the pianist’s hand movements emulate the movements of *baris* dancers. Although the composer specifies the notes to be ‘played’ off the piano, the performer has, to an extent, some freedom in the ways he or she carries out these ‘off key’ movements⁸⁸. The videos in the footnote show that the two pianists execute the ‘off key’ movements differently from one another. This can be seen in the section towards the end of the piece where the pianist needs to play ‘off key’ from bars 70 to 76. When compared to Lauda’s performance, Honda’s finger action stays quite low to the keys of the piano and looks as though she is ‘pressing’ the notes written on the page. Lauda, contrastingly, performs this section more like a dance, with her hands and fingers high above the piano keys, and is not seen to be ‘pressing’ notes.

In his efforts to create the dramatic effect found in many *baris* dances, Yii (2010b: 1, 7) includes specific performance directions such as ‘stamping feet onto the ground and shaking ankles to create sounds’ (Figure 3.41), ‘don’t move!’ (Figure 3.42), ‘meditation’ (Figure 3.43), and ‘wait until resonant sound completely inaudible!’ (Figure 3.44).

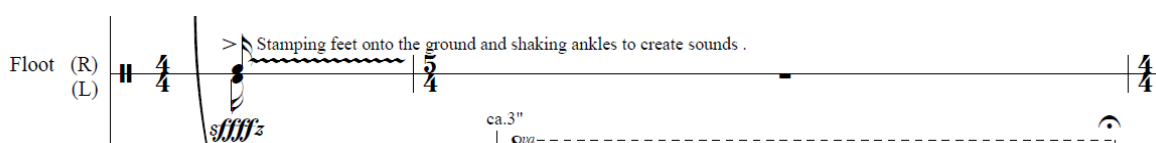


Figure 3.41. Yii – *My Spirit is Dancing!* – foot, bars 1 to 2 (Yii 2010b: 1)



Figure 3.42. Yii – *My Spirit is Dancing!* – bars 3 to 4 (Yii 2010b: 1)

⁸⁸ The dance-like movements can be seen on YouTube videos <https://youtu.be/qIUUfJiEYiQ> and <https://youtu.be/2t3FY2syAA8>, performed by Tomoko Honda and Yuty Lauda respectively.

Meditation

The image shows a musical score for the 'Meditation' section of 'My Spirit is Dancing!'. It consists of two staves, both labeled 'On key'. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music starts at bar 39 with a series of dotted quarter notes on a single pitch. Above the first few notes are small triangles, and a dashed line above the staff is labeled '8va'. Below the first staff, the instruction 'improvise! keep the tempo steady!' is written. The bottom staff continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. At the end of the section, there is a wavy line indicating a repeat, with the instruction 'continue repeating ca. 45"'. The dynamic marking 'ppppp sempre non espress.' is written below the staves.

Figure 3.43. Yii – *My Spirit is Dancing!* – bars 39 to 40 (Yii 2010b: 7)

The image shows a musical score for bars 41 to 44 of 'My Spirit is Dancing!'. It consists of two staves, both labeled 'On key'. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a series of slurs over the notes, indicating a crescendo. The dynamic marking 'poco a poco cresc. et espr.' is written below the first staff. The bottom staff continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. At the end of the section, there is a wavy line indicating a repeat, with the instruction 'wait until resonant sound completely inaudible!'. The dynamic marking 'fff' is written below the staves. The instruction 'gradually press down ped. 1' is written below the staves, with an arrow pointing to the pedal symbol.

Figure 3.44. Yii – *My Spirit is Dancing!* – bars 41 to 44 (Yii 2010b: 7)

As a result of these performance instructions, the pianist can be seen ‘dancing’ dramatically like a *baris* dancer while performing this piece. Other movements that may be observed, depending on the pianist’s personal choices, include dramatic page turning flourishes and sudden pauses with the pianist staring directly towards the audience. Yii confirmed that these performance decisions are decided through discussion between the performer and the composer to optimise the dramatic potential of this composition (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 15 January, 2013).

Yii’s third approach for mediating cultural elements is through his choice of register and timbre. The range of pitch used in *My Spirit is Dancing!* lingers around the middle to higher register of the piano, a choice of register which reflects Yii’s intention to evoke the general timbre of the gamelan gong ensemble that usually accompanies *Baris* dance performances. Most instruments in gamelan gong have a medium to high pitch range, with the exception of the largest gong, called *gong gede*. The use of extended techniques, such as playing inside the piano and muting the string while playing on the key, create percussive sounds which are also related to the traditional gamelan ensemble, which is made up predominantly of percussive instruments.

As reflected in the title, performance instructions and choice of register and timbre, *My Spirit is Dancing!* draws heavily upon the dramatic characteristics of *baris* dance and the timbre and the sound of a gamelan ensemble that accompanies the dance. While the composer has not directly noted the source of inspiration on the score of *My Spirit is Dancing!*, pianists should be able to make the obvious connection between the title of the work and the unconventional performance instruction in the score, which is to ‘dance’ when performing.

3.5 The Concept of *Tenunan* [Weave] and *Batik*

This section documents two traditional crafts of Malaysia, weavings and *batik*⁸⁹. Both crafts, although they do not share much common ground, are sources of inspiration to Tajuddin’s *Tenunan II* and *Gamelbati III*. The two works have been previously analysed in this research for their incorporation of gamelan (Chapter 2) revealing the ways in which Tajuddin mediates aspects of gamelan through musical material, instrumentation, gamelan numbering and sectional headings. This section will discuss Tajuddin’s incorporation of the traditional crafts *tenunan* and *batik* into *Tenunan II* and *Gamelbati III*.

Malaysian batik, originating from Indonesia, is ‘a generic term referring to a process of decorating and dyeing fabric by making use of a wax-resist technique’ (Ros 2014). It is a ‘state-protected industry’ and is widely promoted by the Malaysian government as a ‘national symbol’ (Leigh 2002: 94, 100). Because the patterns on batik are produced by dyeing and hand drawing rather than weaving, batik artists enjoy great artistic freedom in their designs (Figure 3.45).

Malaysian weaving refers to the art of *anyaman* (see Figure 3.46), which Yousof (2016): defines as:

the art of weaving screwpine (*mengkuang*), *pandanus* (*pandan*) leaves or other materials to create items of utility as well as of decorative values...Among the most important items resulting from this art of craft are mats (*tikar*) and food covers (*tudung saji*)...The process of mat weaving, which goes through several phases, requires diligence, concentration as well as expertise in the creation of patterns (*ragi* or *kelarai*) in the design (*corak*).

⁸⁹ *Batik* is a cloth that is traditionally made using a manual wax-resistant dyeing technique.



Figure 3.45. *Batik* patterns (Andira 2011; Asia-Art.net 2008).



Figure 3.46. *Anyaman* (Kurniawati 2016; Malaysian Times 2013)

Tajuddin has described his weaving- and *batik*-inspired approach as a ‘pattern-based compositional strategy’ (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 19 February, 2013). In addition to the influences from the Malay handicrafts, Tajuddin acknowledged that similar strategies employed by the Western composers Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001), a major figure in electronic music who was particularly known for his self-derived compositional method called ‘Stochastic Music’⁹⁰, and Morton Feldman, who composed music based on evolving

⁹⁰ Xenakis was born in Romania to Greek parents and was educated as a civil engineer at the Athens Polytechnic. He was active in the anti-fascist resistance during the war and escaped to Paris in 1947. Largely self-taught in music, he came to the attention of Messiaen, with whom he studied in 1950-51 at the Conservatoire de Paris. To earn a living, Xenakis worked in Le Corbusier’s studio, ‘at first as an engineer, but gradually playing a greater part in architectural design’ (Hoffmann n.d.). He designed, among other buildings, the Phillips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels Exposition Universelle. By this time, Xenakis was also beginning to gain recognition as a composer and he eventually abandoned engineering and concentrated on music. His first published work, *Metastasis* (1953-54) for orchestra, embodies a connection between mathematical probability theory and music, which laid the foundation for his entire musical career. Xenakis (1972: 8) called this compositional technique ‘Stochastic Music’. ‘Stochastic’ is a term borrowed from the theory of probability, and broadly describes a random probability. Stochastic music, according to Xenakis (1972: 8), is where ‘the laws of the calculus of probabilities entered composition through musical necessity’. It is characterised by homogeneity, guided indeterminism and where aspects of music, including pitch, timbre, and dynamic, are subordinated to the laws of probability (Xenakis 1972: 13-14 and 38-39). Due to the need for a vast amount of calculations, the use of computers with pre-set algorithms is fundamental to automate and accelerate the many stochastic operations

patterns⁹¹, have also inspired his pattern-based compositional approach (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 19 February, 2013).

The pattern-based compositional techniques and strategies developed by Xenakis and Feldman have collectively inspired Tajuddin to develop his own pattern-based compositional strategy that is based on weaving patterns of *batik* and gamelan numbers. Akin to Xenakis and Feldman, Tajuddin's ultimate goal is to embed his chosen sources of pattern into his compositions. Tajuddin, however, has included an extra layer of purpose to his compositional strategy, which is to mediate elements from multiple cultures, specifically Malay weaving and *batik*, creating a successful assimilation of cultural elements, as can be seen in *Tenunan II*.

3.5.1 Tajuddin

***Tenunan II* for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra (2001)**

Tenunan II was examined in Chapter 2 for Tajuddin's incorporation of gamelan sonority through instrumentation. Analysis of the work in this section uncovers Tajuddin's negotiation of Malay weave and *batik* elements through structure, time signature, pitch and rhythmic organisations, and ornamentation.

The structure of *Tenunan II* has been designed to weave together cultural elements from *batik* pattern, Islamic geometric art and gamelan music. Overall, the structure of the work is inspired by *batik* patterns similar to those shown in Figure 3.45. Nonetheless, *Tenunan II* is not based on any specific *batik* pattern, but the concept of weaving together elements to produce a final product. At first sight, *batik* pattern seen in Figure 3.45 may appear to be

needed to produce a composition. Specific examples of stochastic processes applied to the works of Xenakis include: the kinetic theory of gases in *Pithoprakta* (1955-56) for string orchestra; Poisson distribution in *Achorripsis* (1956-57) for 21 instruments; Markov chains in *Analogique A* (1958-58) for string orchestra; and game theory in *Strategie* (1962) for two orchestras. Xenakis (1972: 9 and 16) gave additional examples of stochastic events, including 'natural events such as the collision of hail or rain with hard surfaces, or the song of cicadas in a summer field, ... the sonic phenomena of a political crowd of dozens or hundreds of thousands of people, ... the concept of entropy'.

⁹¹ Feldman is another composer who has assimilated extramusical Asian cultural elements into his music. Feldman's connection to Asian cultures grows from his collection of Central Asian and Middle Eastern rugs, stating that 'rugs have prompted me in my recent music to think of a disproportionate symmetry, in which a symmetrically staggered rhythmic series is used: 4:3, 6:5, 8:7, etc., as the point of departure' (Feldman 1981: 91). Sani's analysis of Feldman's *Piano and String Quartet* clearly illustrated the visual connection between rug patterns and his composition (Sani 2000), noting the ways in which Feldman 'weaves' together the durational layer of *Piano and String Quartet*, imitating the alternating square pattern on rugs of Turkish origin.

constructed by identical small pattern tiles, yet upon closer examination, it is possible to detect slight variations in colour, shape and size.

This *batik* pattern is adapted into the 14 sections of *Tenunan II*, where each section is seen as a pattern tile. When all 14 small patterns or sections (named here as PI, PII, PIII, PIV and so on, through to PXIV) are placed together, a complete pattern resembling *batik* pattern is formed (Figure 3.47). As with the *batik* example in Figure 3.45, all of the sections of *Tenunan II* are similar to one another, yet have variations in time signature, and rhythmic and pitch organisations, which will be studied next.

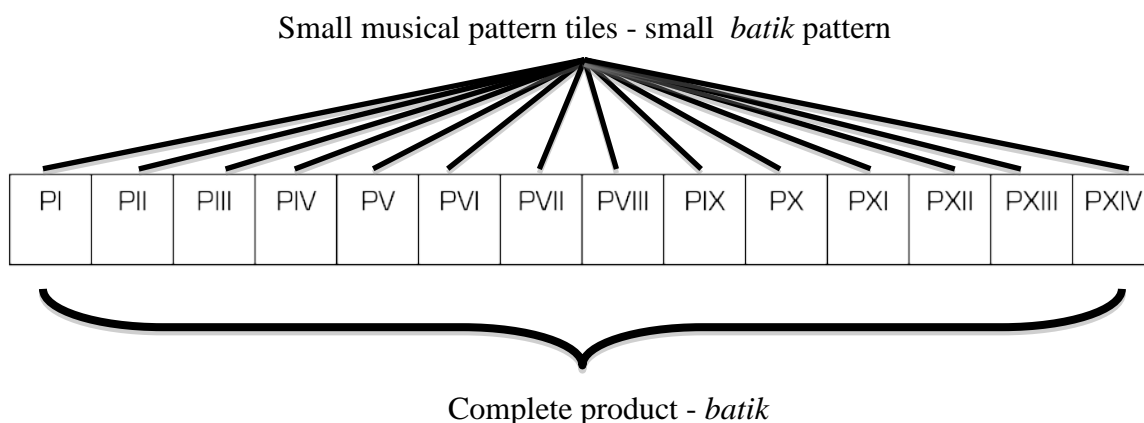


Figure 3.47. The 14-section structure of *Tenunan II* resembles a *batik* pattern (adapted from Dainal, 2013: 30).

Time signature organisation is one of the most important compositional strategies used by Tajuddin to transform the concept of *tenunan* [weave] into musical ideas. As mentioned, the work comprises 14 sections. There are seven bars within each section. The first seven sections (PI to PVII) each have their own set of seven time signatures, which is repeated in sections PVIII to PXIV, as shown in Figure 3.48.

Closer analysis of the time signature organisation, as presented in Figure 3.49, reveals that the composer circulates the time signatures, creating a weave horizontally, vertically and diagonally. This displays the composer's effort in integrating non-European-derived elements, such as *batik* weave, with the time signature, which is a common notational convention used in European-based compositions. The time signature organisation reaffirms that each section is a pattern tile that is carefully designed to contribute towards the final product.

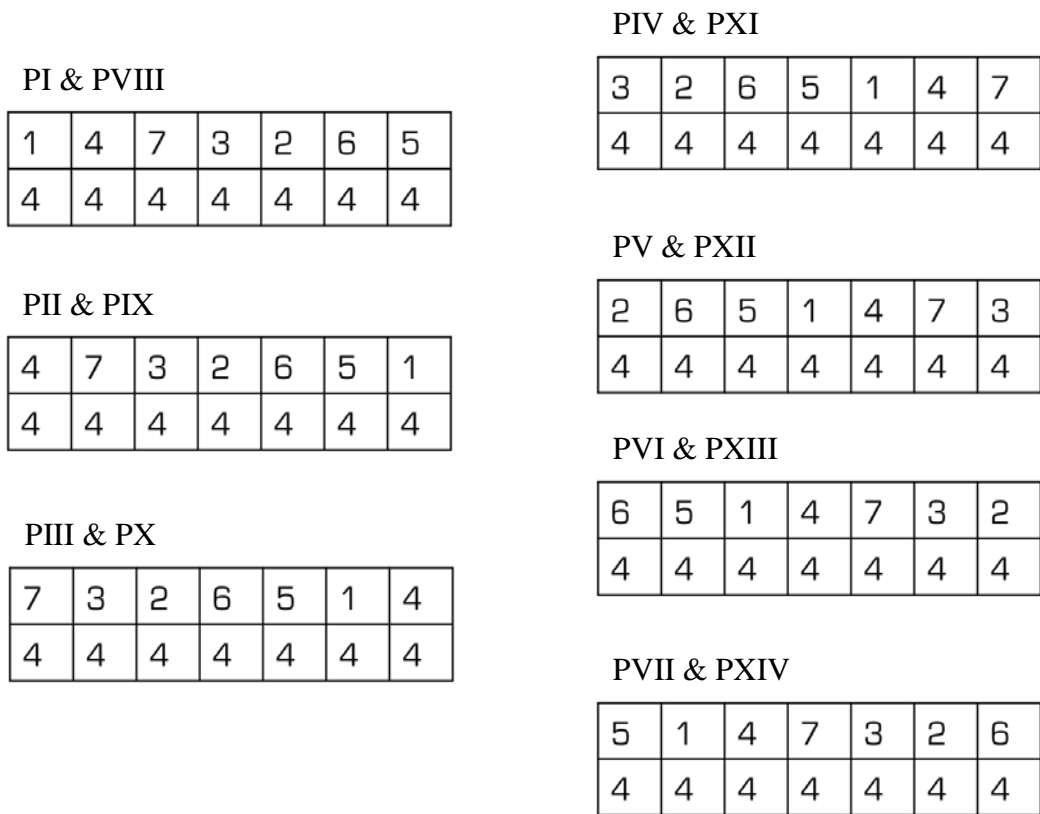


Figure 3.48. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, time signature organisation

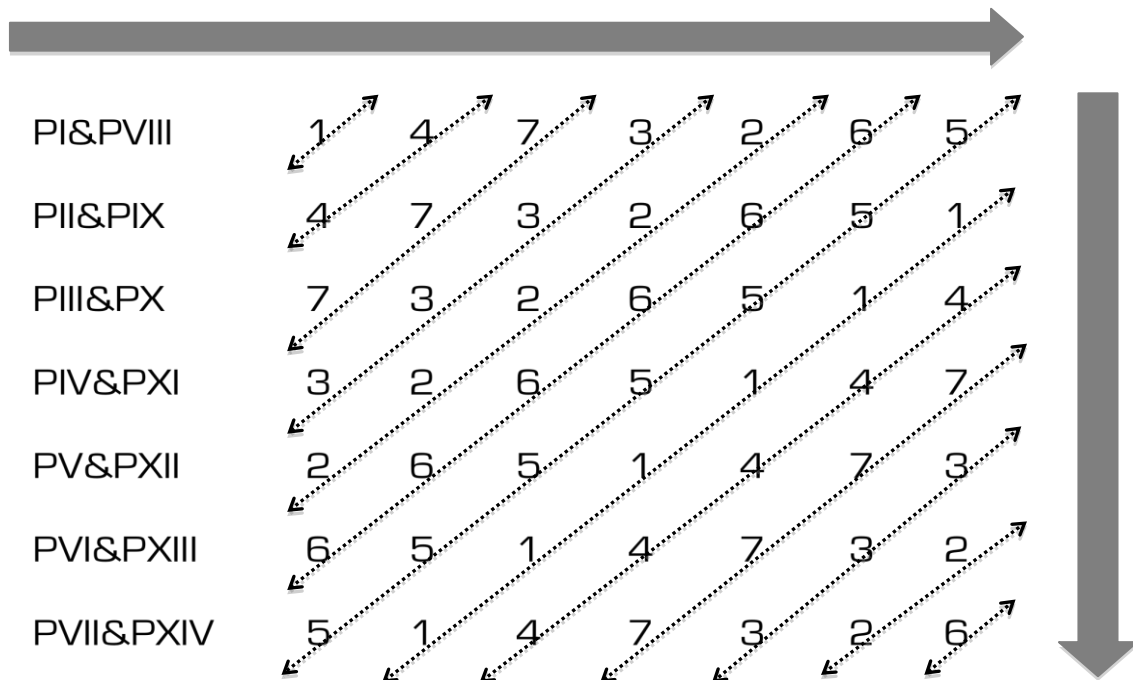


Figure 3.49. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, woven pattern of time signature

Expanding on the idea of the same but different in *batik* weaving, Tajuddin carefully organises the rhythm of each bar using various rhythmic patterns in *Tenunan II*. Tajuddin described his rhythmic pattern of *Tenunan II* by quoting Australian musicologist Richard Toop (1945-2007): as ‘a mercurial mosaic in which half a dozen elements constantly recur, but almost always in slightly varied form – the same but not the same, a whirling stasis’ (Dainal 2013: 22). Figure 3.50 shows the skeletal rhythmic structure of PI and PVIII while Figure 3.51 PII and PIX. The reason these sections were chosen for rhythmic analysis is based on the weaving time signature organisation shown in Figure 3.48: PI and PVIII share the same set of time signatures $\frac{1}{4} \frac{4}{4} \frac{7}{4} \frac{3}{4} \frac{2}{4} \frac{6}{4} \frac{5}{4}$, and PII and PIX $\frac{4}{4} \frac{7}{4} \frac{3}{4} \frac{2}{4} \frac{6}{4} \frac{5}{4}$.



Figure 3.50. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, rhythmic structure of PI and PVIII

When comparing bars with the same time signature in PI and PVIII, it is apparent that the basic structure is similar, albeit with some variations. The first bars of PI and PVIII are very similar in that they both have two semiquavers with hemidemisemiquavers to make up the rest of the bar. The only difference between the two is that the second to last demisemiquaver of PI is replaced by two demisemiquavers in PVIII. The second bars of PI and PVIII, again, have similar rhythmic grouping. In PVII, the second crotchet beat is now a crotchet instead of the quaver and two semiquavers grouping found in PI. The third and fourth crotchet beats, however, see an increase in rhythmic force where Tajuddin replaces the quavers and semiquavers in PI with two demisemiquavers and 28 hemidemisemiquavers. Simultaneously, the composer boosts the complexity of the rhythm in PVIII by occasionally adding rhythmic counterparts as can be seen in the second, third, fourth, fifth and seventh bars of PVIII in Figure 3.50. The same approach is applied in PII and PIX (Figure 3.51).

Figure 3.51 shows similar approaches to Figure 3.50, where the composer adds extra rhythmic layers in PIX to create rhythmic complexity. This is highlighted when the composer adds a second rhythmic counterpart, in the last bar of PIX. Nonetheless, the rhythmic grouping of each bar in PVIII and PIX remains comparable to its corresponding bar in PI and PII. This echoes the batik weaving pattern, in which every small pattern looks similar to the next but closer examination reveals minor variations. It is also noted that the rhythmic structures of PVIII and PXI, both from the second half of *Tenunan II*, are more complex than the rhythmic structures of PI and PII. The complexity of rhythm in PVIII and PIX can be interpreted as the incorporation of ornaments to embellish the initial rhythmic structure of PI and PII. Such ornamentation brings in another cultural element familiar to the composer: Islamic geometric art and design.

Tajuddin has expressed his fascination with Islamic geometric art on various occasions, including in his Ph.D. dissertation⁹², his *Arabesque* compositional series, and also in his programme notes to the *Tenunan* series. The increased complexity of rhythm in PVIII and PIX can be considered a reflection of the geometric ornamentation of Islamic art where there is a 'remarkable amount of freedom in its repetition and complexity' (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2004). Such flexibility allows for growth as well as the inclusion of other types of

⁹² Tajuddin's Ph.D. was completed at the University of Sussex in 2002, with a thesis titled 'Music compositions with commentary: a study of Arabesque' (Tajuddin 2002).

The musical score is divided into two main sections: PII and PIX. PII is shown in the first two systems, and PIX is shown in the remaining five systems. Each system consists of multiple staves representing different instruments or voices. The time signatures are complex, often changing within a system. Melodic lines are marked with various rhythmic notations, including brackets and slurs, indicating specific rhythmic patterns and groupings.

System 1 (PII): Top staff in 4/4, then 7/4, then 3/4, then 2/4. Middle and bottom staves in 2/4, 6/4, 5/4, and 1/4.

System 2 (PIX): Top staff in 4/4, then 7/4. Middle and bottom staves in 7/4.

System 3: Top staff in 3/4, then 2/4, then 6/4. Middle and bottom staves in 3/4, 2/4, and 6/4.

System 4: Top staff in 6/4. Middle and bottom staves in 6/4.

System 5: Top staff in 5/4, then 1/4. Middle and bottom staves in 5/4, 1/4, and 7/6.

Figure 3.51. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, rhythmic structure of PII and PIX

ornamentations such as stylised floral and calligraphy (Bonner 2017: 1). The Metropolitan Museum of Art identifies three basic characteristics of this geometric art: (i) Islamic geometric designs consist of small repeated patterns⁹³; (ii) the patterns can be seen as foreground and background patterns, although not always easily distinguished from one another⁹⁴; and (iii) geometric ornamentation and arrangement of patterns is complex⁹⁵ (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2004: 10-11).

Tajuddin's use of complex rhythm to ornament his initial rhythmic motif in *Tenunan II* (Figure 3.50) echoes the highly intricate Islamic geometrical patterns used to expand the basic pattern arrangement. This description fits perfectly well with describing Islamic geometric art as it is 'the same but not the same', where each basic pattern is repeated with slight variation, more commonly known as ornamentation.

Further investigation on the assimilation of Islamic art in *Tenunan II* reveals Tajuddin's incorporation of *dafqah*, an important characteristic of Islamic arabesque. The term arabesque 'was coined in the early nineteenth century following Napoleon's famed expedition in Egypt...*Arabesque* simply means "in the Arab fashion" in French' (Department of Islamic Art 2001). Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi, an expert on Islamic art and music, explains the concept of *dafqah* or 'outpouring' as 'a periodic "launch" at the end of an arabesque section. As each arabesque pattern on an Islamic art work is grasped and understood, the spectator feels an emotional release in this success and in the completion of the unit' (1975: 19). Tajuddin (2001: n.p.) states in the accompanying note to *Tenunan II* that 'at the end of each pattern, there is an outpouring (*dafqah*); a very quick gesture end every section'. This gesture Tajuddin refers to is the 7:4 demisemi-quavers figures circled in Figures 3.52 and 3.53. This outburst, or *dafqah*, is further intensified by the *crescendo* instructed across all instruments, as can be heard in Track 6.

⁹³ 'The simple forms of the circle, square, and straight line are the basis of the patterns. These elements are combined, duplicated, interlaced, and arranged in intricate combinations. Most patterns are typically based on one of two types of grid – one composed of equilateral triangles, the other of squares. A third type of grid, composed of hexagons, is a variation on the triangular schema' (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2004: 10-11).

⁹⁴ 'The placement of pattern upon pattern serves to flatten the space, and there is no attempt to create depth...Sometimes it is impossible to distinguish between foreground and backgrounds. Some geometric designs are created by fitting all the polygonal shapes together like the pieces of a puzzle, leaving no gaps and, therefore requiring no spatial interplay between foreground and background' (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2004: 11).

⁹⁵ Geometric ornamentation in Islamic art offers significant degree of freedom. 'The complex arrangements and combinations and elements are infinitely expandable; the frame surrounding a pattern appears to be arbitrary and the basic arrangement sometimes provides a unit from which the rest of the design can be both predicted and projected' (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2004: 11).

Figure 3.52. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, bars 42 to 43 (Tajuddin 2001: 18)

56 5 25 $\frac{4}{4}$

The score is for a full orchestra and includes the following parts:

- Fl. (Flute)
- Glock. (Glockenspiel)
- Vib. (Vibraphone)
- Perc. (Percussion)
- Cel. (Celesta)
- Pno. (Piano)
- Vln 1 (Violin 1)
- Vln 2 (Violin 2)
- Vln 3 (Violin 3)
- Vln 4 (Violin 4)
- Vln 5 (Violin 5)
- Vln 6 (Violin 6)
- Vla 1 (Viola 1)
- Vla 2 (Viola 2)
- Vla 3 (Viola 3)
- Vla 4 (Viola 4)
- Vla 5 (Viola 5)
- Vc. 1 (Violoncello 1)
- Vc. 2 (Violoncello 2)
- Vc. 3 (Violoncello 3)
- Vc. 4 (Violoncello 4)
- Db. 1 (Double Bass 1)
- Db. 2 (Double Bass 2)
- Db. 3 (Double Bass 3)

Key markings and techniques include:

- sfc* (sforzando)
- mf* (mezzo-forte)
- f* (forte)
- arco sul tasto* (arco sul tasto)
- gliss.* (glissando)
- pizz.* (pizzicato)
- arco sul ponti.* (arco sul ponti)

The score features complex textures with multiple layers of notes and rests, particularly in the string section. A dashed box highlights the string section from bar 56 to the end of the page.

Figure 3.53. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, bar 56 (Tajuddin 2001: 25)

The concept of weave permeates the pitch organisation of the work. Tajuddin disclosed that *Tenunan II* is set to a 7-note series (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 3 October, 2013), and analysis of this 7-note series reveals that it is, in fact, based on the word *tenunan*. Each letter from A to Z is set to an ascending chromatic scale, where the letter A is the note A below middle-C. Figure 3.54 shows that, by progressing upwards by a semitone for each letter, the letter Z arrives at the A# two octaves above middle-C.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#

Figure 3.54. Each letter from A to Z is set to pitches

Based on this, the word *tenunan* will form the following 7-note series – E C# A# F A# A A# (Figure 3.55). A 5-note chord is then formed with these notes. This 7-note series and the intervals used in the chord formed are the key to unlocking Tajuddin’s clever arrangement of pitches in *Tenunan II*.

The musical notation shows a treble clef staff with a 7-note series: E (quarter), C# (quarter), A# (quarter), F (quarter), A# (quarter), A (quarter), and A# (quarter). Below the staff, the notes are labeled with the letters T, E, N, U, N, A, N. A 5-note chord is formed from these notes, consisting of E, C#, A#, F, and A#.

Figure 3.55. The 7-note series formed using the word *tenunan* and the 5-note chord formed using these notes.

This 7-note series is then rearranged by the composer in ascending order, from the lowest note to the highest, to form a 7-note scale (Figure 3.56).



Figure 3.56. Rearranged ascending scale based on the 7-note series formed by the word *tenunan*

The composer assigns each note in the scale with a chord based on the intervallic constructions of the chord shown in Figure 3.55, which are major 3rd, major 6th, diminished 5th, and minor 2nd. In ascending order, each chord is named chord i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi and vii (Figure 3.57).

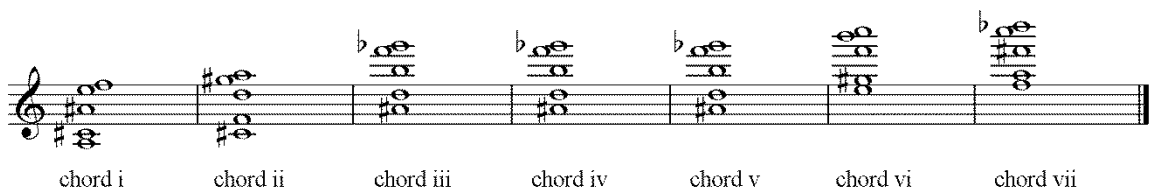


Figure 3.57. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, chords i to vii

The composer does not stop here, but takes the chords one step further and transposes them, creating a set of 7 new chords (Figure 3.58).

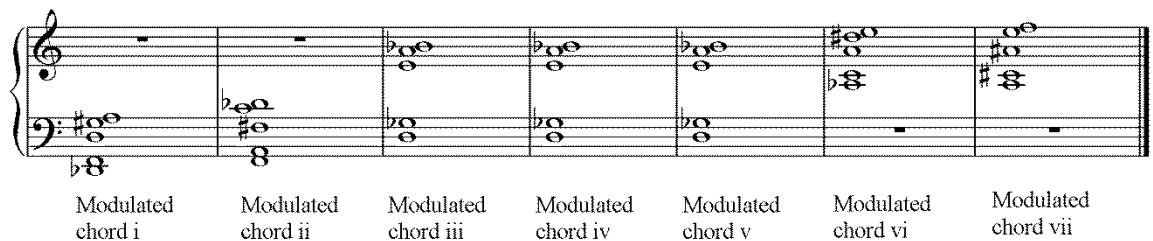


Figure 3.58. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, transposed chords i to vii

It is noted that the transposed chords iii, iv and v have been slightly altered. Instead of an augmented octave, the interval between the lowest and middle note is now a major 9th. Tajuddin organises the transpositions in such a way that the highest notes of each chord (A D \flat B \flat B \flat B \flat E F) are the same as the 7-note scale he has created using the word *tenunan*. Tajuddin then distributes each of the 14 chords he has created into each of the 14 sections of *Tenunan II*. PI to PVII, therefore, consist of notes from transposed chords i to vii respectively,

while PVIII to PXIV comprise notes from chords i to vii respectively. Within the section, each instrument in the string orchestra, with a few exceptions, is given a note from the chord to play throughout the section (Table 3.5). Again, this compositional strategy enhances the concept in which each section is a *batik* pattern tile. When placed together, they form a complete *batik* product.

Table 3.5. *Tenunan II* Note Distribution for String Orchestra from PI to PVII, based on the Modulated Chords

	PI	PII	PIII	PIV	PV	PVI	PVII
Violin 1	D	F#	A	G ♭	D	D#	F
Violin 2	F	A	G ♭	E	G ♭	C	A
Violin 3	D ♭	F	E	D	B ♭	E	E
Violin 4	A	C#	D	B ♭	A	D#	E
Violin 5	G#	C	B ♭	A	B ♭	E	-
Violin 6	D	F#	A	G ♭	A	D#	-
Viola 1	F	A	G ♭	E	E	C	A#
Viola 2	D ♭	F	E	D	G ♭	C	C#
Viola 3	A	C#	D	B ♭	E	A	A#
Viola 4	G#	C	B ♭	A	E	A	-
Viola 5	D	F#	B ♭	E	G ♭	A ♭	C#
Violoncello 1	D	A	A	G ♭	D	A ♭	A
Violoncello 2	D ♭	F	E	D	E	C	A
Violoncello 3	A	C#	A	B ♭	B ♭	A	A#
Violoncello 4	G#	C	E	A	D	A ♭	C#
Double bass 1	D	F#	D	G ♭	E	C	A
Double bass 2	F	A	G ♭	E	B ♭	A	A#
Double bass 3	D ♭	F	D	D	D	A ♭	C#

In most *batik* patterns, one can find decorative motifs or patterns between or within the main pattern tiles. Tajuddin observed this concept of decoration in *batik* and embedded it in *Tenunan II* using decorative musical figures, as shown in Figure 3.59. These decorative figures are only found in parts of the work, and serve as ornamentation that creates interest in the music outside of the systematically planned structure.

Figure 3.59. Tajuddin – *Tenunan II*, bars 88 to 89 (Tajuddin 2001: 43)

Tenunan II has been demonstrated to encompass multiple cultural elements, including gamelan, the concept of weave and *batik*, and Islamic geometric art. This work has the essential characteristic of the *rojak*, in which the final dish is made up of various identifiable constituent ingredients. The multifaceted quality displayed in *Tenunan II* can be found across Tajuddin’s creative oeuvre, although each composition contains a different set of cultural ingredients and qualities, as can be seen through the analyses of *Sebuah Pantun IV*, *Sebuah Pantun VII*, and *Gamelbati III*.

Using the concept of weave, Tajuddin has successfully created a pattern-based compositional strategy that intertwines together cultural elements from *batik* and Malay weaving. This is achieved through five compositional components: (i) structure, (ii) time signature, (iii) pitch, (iv) rhythmic organisation, and (v) ornamentation. This section will now consider *Gamelbati III* for string quartet, to further examine the compositional tools that Tajuddin employs to negotiate multiple cultural elements.

***Gamelbati III* (2006) for String Quartet**

Gamelbati III begins with a Violin I solo *buka* [opening] section and concludes with a *tutup* [end] section, where a similar Violin I solo figure is accompanied by sustained notes in the cello part. In addition to the literal meaning of both Malay words, the term *buka* is also commonly used in gamelan music, referring to the introduction of a *gendhing* [gamelan musical composition]. In between *buka* and *tutup*, *Gamelbati III* consists of seven sections, named S1, S2, S3 and so on, each containing seven smaller sections, referred to as i, through vii. Akin to *Tenunan II*, the structure of *Gamelbati III* reflects the idea of *batik* pattern and tiling. Each section act as a broken tile placed one beside another to create a complete product, as illustrated in Figure 3.60.

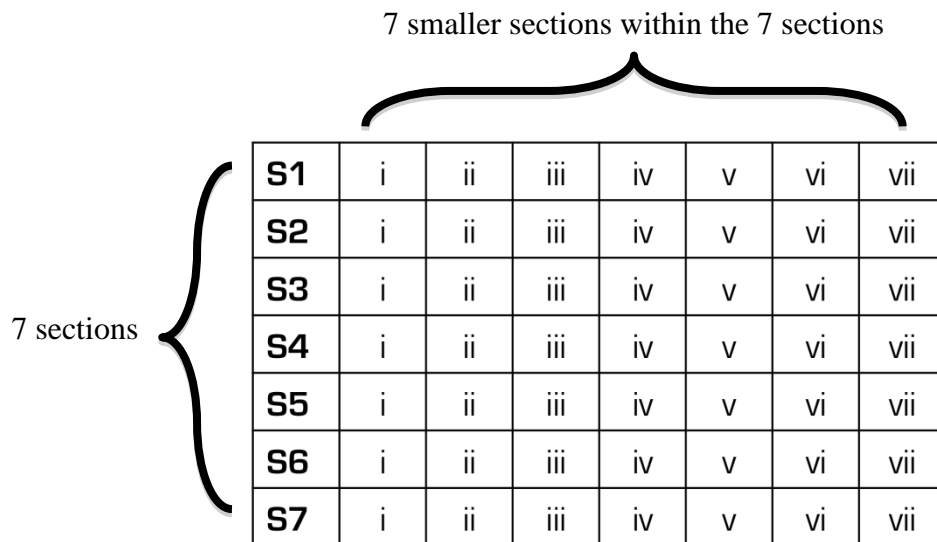


Figure 3.60. The 7-section structure of *Gamelbati III* resembles *batik* pattern and tiling

In *Gamelbati III*, Tajuddin has also inserted gamelan-related technical terms including *merong* and *ngelik*⁹⁶. The former refers to the first movement of a *gendhing*, while the latter is often associated with melodic movement that leads to an upper register section of a gamelan composition (Perlman 2004: 223-224; Drummond 2013: 9, 11). It has been found that the word *merong* appears in S1 twice and three times in S4, while *ngelik* is used three times in S2 and four times in S5. An analytical study of the structure of *Gamelbati III* reveals that usage of the terms is related to the pitch organisation of the work according to specific gamelan work *Andhong-andhong gendhing pelog pathet nem*⁹⁷.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 2 for discussion of these terms.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 2.

Tajuddin has refined his time signature organisational strategy since composing *Tenunan II*. The core weaving principles displayed in *Tenunan II* can still be found, although now used with more flexibility in *Gamelbati III*. Like *Tenunan II*, *Gamelbati III* is constructed with a set of seven time signatures. Taking his initial idea one step further, three of the seven time signatures have been subdivided. For example, 6/8 is subdivided into two 3/8s, 7/8 into 4/8 and 3/8, while 5/8 into 3/8 and 2/8, as presented in Figure 3.61.

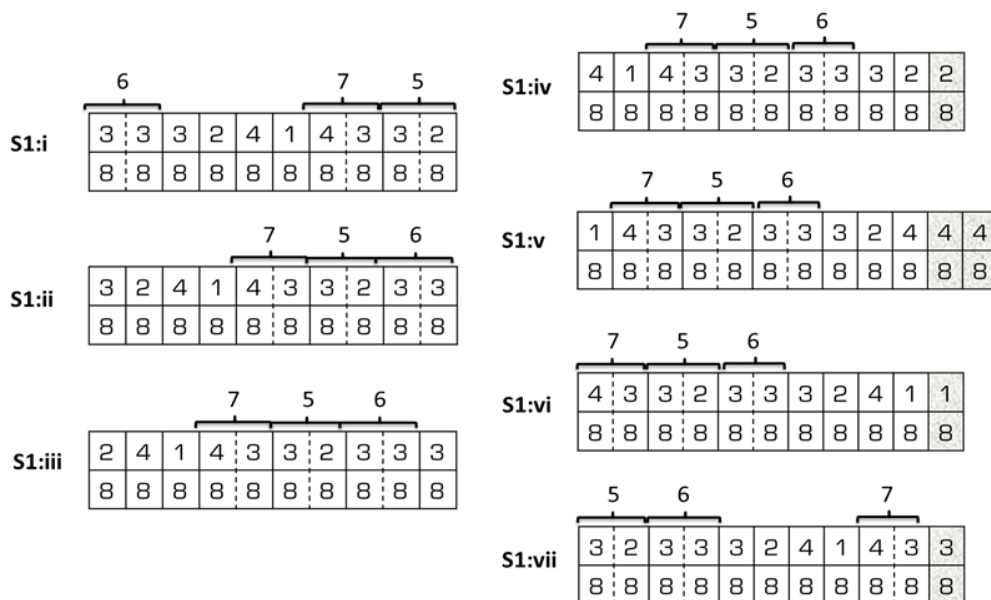


Figure 3.61. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, time signature organisation of Section 1

In addition to the subdivision of time signatures, Tajuddin has also added extra bars at the end of some small sections, including S1: iv, v, vi and vii, as highlighted in Figure 3.61. In this extra bar, the composer duplicates the time signature from the bar preceding it. With the exception of S1: i, ii and iii, every small section of the work is comprised of one extra bar, or occasionally two extra bars. Another expansion made to this weaving pattern is the note value used. The time signatures of S1, S2, S5 and S6 are based on quavers, while S3, S4 and S7 are based on crotchets. In addition to the change in the note value used, Tajuddin has altered the subdivision of 5/4 to become 2/4 and 3/4, compared to the 3/8 and 2/8 seen in Figure 3.61. Figure 3.62 provides the time signatures of S4 as an example of sections based on crotchets.

Excluding the extra bar of each small section, the top numbers of the time signatures, which represent the number of beats, is formed based on a set of 7 numbers: 6, 3, 2, 4, 1, 7, 5. This set of numbers, as with the time signature organisation of *Tenunan II* (Figure 3.49), is circulated horizontally, vertically and diagonally, presenting a woven pattern (Figure 3.63).

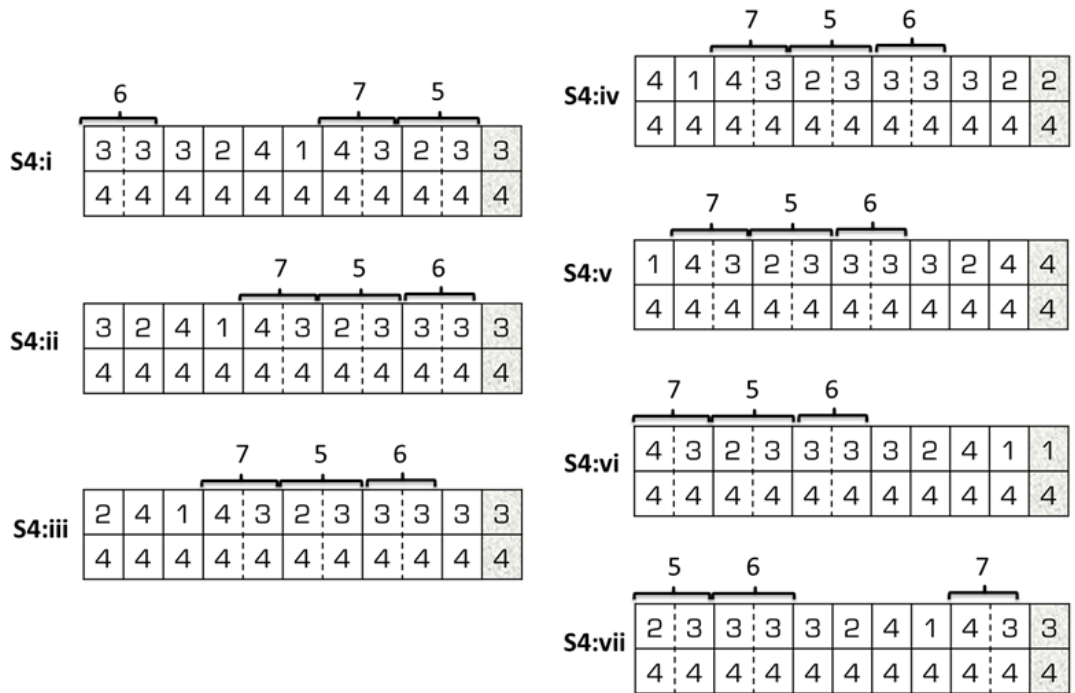


Figure 3.62. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, time signature organisation of Section 4

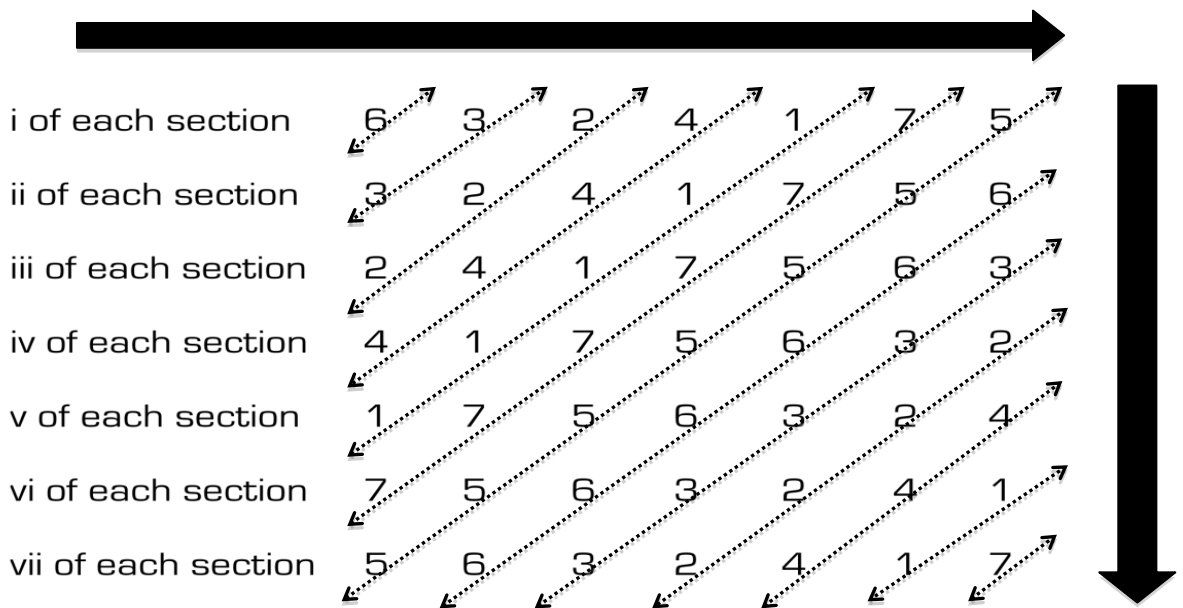


Figure 3.63. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, woven pattern of time signature

Unlike *Tenunan II*, which has a more rigid time signature pattern, this analysis demonstrates that *Gamelbati III* has more flexibility in its pattern organisation, yet is still based on the core idea of a woven pattern.

As with most *batik* patterns, ornamentation is a basic decorative element. In *Gamelbati III*, chromatic gestures and intervals of 2nd (Figure 3.64) are used as decorations and embellishments. These ornamentations support and add layers of sonority to the Javanese gamelan traditional framework carried by Violin I.



Figure 3.64. Tajuddin – *Gamelbati III*, cello from S1: ii bar 22 to S1: iii bar 28 (Tajuddin 2005: 1)

Tajuddin makes use of three compositional tools, structure, time signature organisation, and ornamentations, to successfully incorporate elements of Malay weaving and *batik* pattern into *Gamelbati III*. Since composing *Tenunan II* in 2001, the composer’s preferred pattern-based compositional strategy has matured, something that is especially noticeable through his time signature organisations. One element that allows Tajuddin to distinguish himself from the pattern-based approach of Xenakis and Feldman is his conscious and deliberate attempts to assimilate his European-derived compositional tools with local flavours from Indonesia and Malaysia.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways in which five Malaysian composers: Chong, Ng, Othman, Tajuddin, and Yii, assimilate the Southeast Asian cultural elements of Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong*, *wayang kulit*, Balinese *baris* dance, and traditional weavings and *batik* into selected works. Using various compositional approaches such as title, instrumentation, pitch selection, performance techniques and practices, distinctive characteristic of specific art forms, and extra-musical performance instructions, the composers strive to find innovative ways to embed aspects of Southeast Asian culture into their works. Analyses in this chapter have demonstrated a highly multicultural flavour within the Malaysian contemporary music scene. It has been shown that although they all draw from the same inspirational sources of music and art, each composer develops their own adaptation and interpretation of the art form.

The composers, in many subtle ways, negotiate external source influences such as Malay poem, *mak yong* and *wayang kulit* through timbre and the different instrumental timbre possibilities created by extended techniques. Chong in *Mourning* juxtaposes melancholic and harsh musical material to mirror the contrasting tone of Awang's poem, while Tajuddin employs opposing musical materials in *Sebuah Pantun IV* and *Sebuah Pantun VII* to reflect the *pembayang-maksud* [preamble-meaning] relationship of the *pantun*. In *My Spirit is Chanting*, Yii creates variations of timbre to mimic the voice of *mak yong*, while in *Gongan*, the oboe is scored to evoke the sonority of the *serunai*. Adopting a more programmatic approach, Yii assimilates dance movements of the Balinese *baris* dance and war scenes through his scoring techniques in *My Spirit is Dancing!* and *Bayang* respectively. The concept of *tenunan* and *batik*, conversely, inspired Tajuddin in developing his own 'pattern-based compositional strategy', as seen in *Tenunan II* and *Gamelbati III*. Through the assimilation of Southeast Asian cultural elements, the five composers have effectively complemented their European-derived musical language with local flavours, resulting in their idiosyncratic *rojak* mixtures.

Chapter 4

Chinese Cultural Elements

Previous chapters have demonstrated how all composers selected for this study have incorporated elements from Southeast Asian cultures into their works. In this chapter, analysis of works by Chong, Ng, and Yii adds to the understanding of Malaysian contemporary composition by considering the assimilation of Chinese cultural elements, such as calligraphy and painting, Chinese orchestra and its instruments, and Chinese philosophies, into their creative oeuvres as an illustration of Malaysian contemporary music as *rojak*. The number of Malaysian compositions that contain Chinese cultural elements is rapidly growing, particularly led by Chong and Yii, and the selected works analysed in this chapter should serve as an overview of this emerging repertoire among Malaysian composers.

The exploration and use of East Asian cultural elements is not confined to Malaysian composers. Influential Asian composers who are mediators of East Asian and Western elements, including Chou, Tan Dun, Miki, Takemitsu, and Yun continue to develop their own idiosyncratic ideas and compositional strategies for the assimilation of the two cultures.

Burton (n.d.) describes Japanese composer Takemitsu's music as a reflection of 'Japanese aesthetic in its avoidance of regular rhythms, fast tempos, symmetrical forms, and strongly contrasting blocks of sound, in favour of a slowly and organically unfolding flow suggested by mediation, dreams, landscape, weather, the elements, and the seasons'. Takemitsu's later works, including *Rain Coming* (1982) and *How Slow the Wind* (1991), display a more philosophical approach to the assimilation of Japanese culture, namely the Japanese garden. The composer states that he writes 'music by placing objects in [his] musical garden, just the way objects are placed in a Japanese garden' (Crory 1996: 37 cited in Knight 2006: 9). Similar to Takemitsu's compositional approach, Tan Dun's assimilation of his native Chinese culture is philosophical. Lee (n.d.) notes Tan's *Orchestral Theatre* series as emblematic of the composer's aim to 'restore music's place "as an integral part of spiritual life, as ritual, as shared participation" through the "dramatic medium" of the orchestra'. *Eight Colors for String Quartet* (1986-1988) further typifies Tan's incorporation of Chinese elements, as Lau (2004: 28) explains, through 'suggestiveness and evocation' where the composer 'recreat[es]...the timbre borrowed from Peking opera and Buddhist chanting'. The music of Korean composer Yun is grounded spiritually in Taoist Philosophy, where the music is

connected to the ‘natural universe’, as exemplified in *Sori* (1988), which reflects the ‘ideas surrounding birth and death’ and the principle of *yin* and *yang* (Lee 2017: 15, 17).

Takemitsu has written multiple works that include traditional Japanese instruments, among which are *November Steps* (1967) for *biwa*, *shakuhachi* and orchestra and *In an Autumn Garden* (1973) for *gagaku* orchestra. Both are considered ‘landmark’ (Everett 2004: 18) and ‘breakthrough’ (Hutchinson 2016: 120) compositions featuring Japanese traditional instruments. Another Japanese composer who has written for traditional Japanese instruments is Miki, one of the founders of the Pro Musica Nipponia in 1964. He is particularly known for his engagement with traditional Japanese music and instruments in his European-derived musical language (Kanazawa n.d.). *Concerto Requiem* (1981), ‘one of his most important works’, according to Coaldrake (2013: 69), is ‘scored for twenty-one-string *koto* and an ensemble of nineteen Japanese string, wind and percussion instruments, employing both western and Japanese contemporary compositional practices to create hybrid music with a distinct Japanese sensibility’. Contrastingly, Yun’s *Piri* (1971) for solo oboe, although not written for a traditional instrument, transfers ‘pitch bending and buzzing sounds, gestures of the Korean double reed instrument *piri*’ onto the oboe (Everett 2004: 18). This echoes the ‘transplant’ compositional strategy Everett has identified. Works of similar ‘transplant’ by other composers include Chou’s *Willow Are New* (1957), where the performance techniques of the Chinese zither *qin* are transplanted onto the piano, and Takemitsu’s *Itinerant* for flute (1989), where one finds the Japanese concept of *ma* and also reference to *shakuhachi* [Japanese end-blown flute] performance practice (Everett 2004: 18; Robinson 2011: 63-78).

Another example of an East Asian composer incorporating East Asian cultural elements into his work is the Chinese-American composer Chou, who created his own compositional strategy ‘variable modes’, also known as ‘mutable modes’ or ‘*pien* modes’, based on the *I Ching*. The term ‘variable modes’ refers to the essential scale modes that are translated from the trigrams of the *I-Ching*. Chou’s later works, from 1960 onwards, including *Metaphors* (1960), *Cursive* (1963), *Pien* (1966), *Echoes from the Gorge* (1989), *Windswept Peaks* (1990), and *Clouds* (1996), ‘differ from one another in musical content, formal layout, or structural organization, [although] they are all related by the same set of fundamental operations’, that is Chou’s own ‘variable modes’ (Lai 2004: 148).

Composers of non-Asian backgrounds, such as John Cage and Lou Harrison, have also incorporated East Asian sensibilities and idioms into their compositions. In the same way as

Chou does, Cage creates his self-derived chance-based compositional strategy based on the *I Ching*, as seen in his ‘monumental’ piano work *Music of Changes* in 1951 where 26 charts of 64 cells, eight columns by eight rows, relate to the *I Ching* 64 hexagram (Pritchett 1996: 78). Each cell represents an element. To decide on an element from a chart, the composer tosses three coins to obtain a hexagram. He then consults the *I Ching* for a number, leading him to the corresponding cell in his chart.

Harrison’s *Young Caesar* displays traits of Chinese opera, including ‘recitative with precise pitches but free rhythm, and specific percussive interjections using woodblocks and claves in patterns resembling those in Chinese opera’ (Miller and Lieberman 2010: 56). In addition to the gamelan inspired works, the influence of Korean music and instruments is also seen in *Pacifika Rondo* (1963) for a mixed ensemble of Asian and Western instruments, *Moogunkhwa: Sharon Rose, A New Song in the Old Style* (1961) for Korean traditional orchestra and *Nova Odo* (1961-1963) for male chorus, reciting chorus, *pak*, seven *piris*, and orchestra (Alves and Campbell 2017; Killick 2016; Miller and Hanson n.d.; Miller and Lieberman 2010).

This chapter examines three Chinese cultural elements: Chinese calligraphy and painting; the Chinese orchestra and its instruments; and Chinese philosophy (see Table 4.1). Each cultural element is introduced, and an analysis of selected Malaysian works that have been inspired or shaped by that element, demonstrated through compositional methods including title, instrumentation, and timbre, is then presented.

Table 4.1. Selected Malaysian contemporary works with Chinese cultural elements

Cultural elements	Composers	Selected works
Chinese calligraphy and painting	Chong	<i>I Hear the Wind Calling</i> for ensemble (13 players) (2003)
		<i>Shui.Mo</i> [水.墨] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (<i>erhu</i> , <i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> & <i>sheng</i>) and orchestra (2007)
	Yii	<i>Wild Cursive</i> [狂草] for <i>zhongruan</i> and string trio (2009)
		<i>My Ears are Still Ringing</i> for flute and alto sax (2011, revised 2012)
Chinese orchestra and its instruments	Chong	<i>Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer</i> – for <i>sheng</i> , <i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> and 10 western instruments (2005)
		<i>Xun Feng</i> [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (<i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> , <i>dizi</i> & <i>sheng</i>) and Chinese orchestra (2013)
	Yii	<i>Bayang</i> for <i>wayang kulit</i> and Chinese orchestra (2008)
Chinese philosophy	Chong	<i>Yuan-He</i> [源-和] Concerto for 5 Chinese instruments and 5 western instruments (2010)
	Ng	<i>Amorphous</i> for string orchestra (2009)

4.1 Chinese Calligraphy and Painting

Calligraphy, or the art of writing, was the visual art form prized above all others in traditional China. The genres of painting and calligraphy emerged simultaneously, sharing identical tools — namely, brush and ink. Yet calligraphy was revered as a fine art long before painting; indeed, it was not until the Song dynasty [960-1127], when painting became closely allied with calligraphy in aim, form, and technique, that painting shed its status as mere craft and joined the higher ranks of the fine arts (Delbanco 2008).

Calligraphy and, to a lesser extent, painting are the pinnacle of Chinese historical art forms. While extended discussion of these revered cultural elements is outside the scope of this study, the importance of the aesthetic brushwork in both calligraphy and painting cannot be ignored. It is these aesthetics that have intrigued and inspired many composers. Wen-Chung Chou, the Asian-American composer, states that Chinese calligraphy is the ‘mother of all Chinese art form’ across the ‘artistic genres’ that he has considered, as Chinese calligraphy comprises all the basic principles of Chinese art form (Chou 1986: 74, as cited in Lai 2009: 32). Everett (2007: 569-570) further explains that Chou, as a calligrapher, has transformed ‘the combinatorial sequence of calligraphic strokes’ to evoke a ‘living image’ and created compositional approaches that link ‘symbolic, iconic and kinaesthetic attributes of Chinese calligraphy’ with ‘musical gestures and formal design’.

In any discussion of Chinese calligraphy and painting, an understanding of Chinese characters, words and poetry is critical. In a Chinese context, words and characters do not necessarily refer to the same thing. A word may comprise multiple characters, and a character may form a word on its own or be part of a word. Written words have played a central role in Chinese imperial history as scholars assume important positions in government, social hierarchy and culture. In addition to its importance in Chinese culture, the visual form of Chinese characters is highly idiosyncratic. Chinese does not have an alphabet or phonetic system but is logographic, meaning that written characters may refer to words or phrases. To understand an average piece of Chinese text, between 2400 and 3000 characters need to be learned, with each character usually learned rote through writing and rewriting. An additional complexity is the assumed knowledge required to understand characters in Chinese calligraphies and paintings as they do not always have fixed and straightforward meaning (Chiang 1974; Matthews and Matthes 2014: 5-6; Liu 1966: 8-19). An example is the word *sheng* [生]. As Liu (1966: 2) explains, ‘this word, used as a verb, could mean: to live, to give birth to, to be born; as a noun: life, young man, student; as an adjective: alive, raw, strange, innate, natural, lively’. This eccentric fluidity benefits the poets, who may also be calligraphers and painters, when expressing sentiments and ideas. Delbanco (2008) notes that a written character does not only ‘denote specific meanings’, but ‘its very form should reveal itself to be a moral exemplar, as well as a manifestation of the energy of the human body and the vitality of nature itself’. It is this ‘manifestation of the energy of the human body and the vitality of nature’ that dictates the aesthetic elements of brush strokes applied in Chinese calligraphy and painting. The brush is considered an extension of the calligrapher’s arm. The physical gestures generated by the manipulation of the brush are not simply physical movement but a revelation of the calligrapher’s ‘impulsiveness, restraint, elegance, rebelliousness’ (Delbanco 2008).

According to Kwo (1981: 56-73), there are four aesthetic components to be considered: form, line, space-consciousness and composition. In common usage, form is the shape and structure of items and things in the world surrounding us. In art, however, form is the medium to express thoughts and emotions and the aesthetic quality of the artist. The idea of form as an expressive tool is evident in aspects of Chinese culture. An example of this is the circular architectural form of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. The circle shape, together with the word circle, refers not only to its geometrical form, but also symbolises ‘completeness, fulfilment, or successful conclusion’ (Kwo 1981: 56). Kwo adds that the circular roof lines of the Temple of Heaven signifies the feeling of ‘dignity, sacredness, and the fullness of life’

and the ‘general arrow shape pointing towards heaven arouses the sense of religious worship’ (Kwo 1981: 57). Such reflection of form is central to Chinese calligraphy and painting. As previously mentioned, the concept of ‘nature’ plays a significant role in calligraphy and painting. In Chinese painting, each dot and stroke represents objects observed in nature (dots: falling stone, tiger’s claw, eagle’s beak; strokes: nail-head, rat’s tail, axe-cut). In Chinese calligraphy the forms of the characters are unique to the style, personality, and disposition of the calligraphers. Kwo gives multiple examples of how personalities are displayed through the artist’s brushstrokes, even within the same school or style of calligraphy. A ‘heavy and fleshy’ writing exposes the artist’s ‘righteous character’; the writing of an artist who is known to have a ‘free character’ is ‘less rigid...in structure as well as in composition’ (Kwo 1981: 58).

The second aesthetic is line. Line defines form. A dot and a line serve the same function in Chinese calligraphy and painting, which is to create form. The essence of both Chinese calligraphy and painting is the ‘vitality’ and ‘energy’ in the brushwork. The means of injecting life and energy into a stroke are *li* [力] [vigorous strength] and *qi* or *ch’i* [气] [vital energy] (Kwo 1981: 62-65). Figure 4.1 is an example of the combination of (a) *li* and (b) *qi* in Chinese painting and calligraphy. The bamboo in Figure 4.1(a) is a bamboo with *li* and *qi* or, in Chinese brush-work specific terms, ‘bone structure’. It has been dramatised with the application of *li* and *qi*, resulting in a stronger and more forceful-looking bamboo. Contrast this with Figure 4.1(b), which portrays a bamboo with no *li* or *qi*, making it look lifeless and rigid.



Figure 4.1. Examples of bamboo with and without bone treatment (Kwo 1981: 64)

Figure 4.2 illustrates the use of the two means in Chinese calligraphy: *qi* and *li*. On first impression, the character appears to consist of five different lines, including dots, as shown in Figure 4.2(b). The actual flow of *li* and *qi* is revealed in Figure 4.2(c), which reveals that the character is actually completed in one breath (*qi*) with different levels of strength. The artist intensifies the pressure on the paper to create a line or dot, and lessens the pressure to complete it. Between the end of one line or dot and the beginning of the next, the artist releases all pressure but still maintains the ‘one breath’ *qi* action towards the next ‘attack point’. With the understanding of the *qi* and *li* of this character, a re-examination of Figure 4.2(a) should allow the reader to sense the direction of the stroke, or *qi*, intended by the artist. This character, therefore, is now ‘alive’ (Kwo 1981: 62-65).

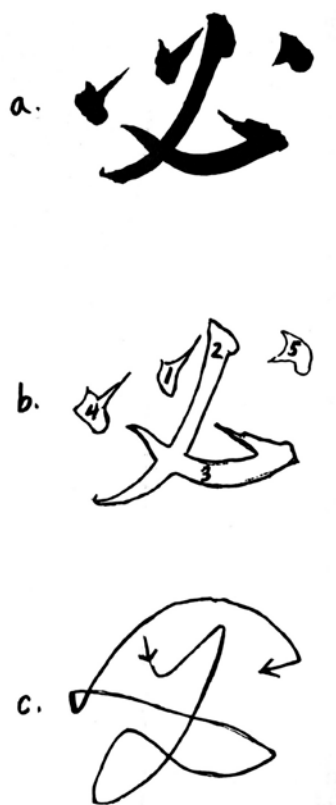


Figure 4.2. ‘The illustration of “*Ch’i*” and “*Li*” qualities of the character “*Pi*”: (a) the character “*Pi*”; (b) the sequence of its strokes; and (c) the flow of the strokes, i.e. “*Ch’i*” (Kwo 1981: 64)

The next aesthetic is space-consciousness. Light and shadow, created by line *li* and *qi*, suggest spatial structure in Chinese calligraphy and painting. The concept of suggestion is an important one in calligraphy and painting. When done well, the art should evoke space and depth. An excellent example of such technique is the painting of a fish by Zhu Da (cs. 1626-1705), the well known Chinese painter and calligrapher of the late Ming and early Qing dynasty (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3. A painting of fish by Zhu Da (Lizzi 2012)

There are only a few brush strokes on the paper to depict the fish, yet the well-executed lines suggest the existence of water in the space around the fish. Kwo (1981:66) explains:

[T]he ch'i expressed in calligraphy is an essential means of creating the atmosphere of space, for space is the stage upon which all action and movement takes place...If each column [of calligraphy] is properly composed, one may see the harmonious unity, just as one sees the continuous movement of the wave on a lake or the swaying branches and leaves in a tree before a wind...The realm of a piece of painting or calligraphy actually transcend reality. It exists in the mind's eye as an imaginative space.

The concept of space-consciousness, therefore, lies in the power of suggestion and the imagination of both artist and viewer.

The fourth and final aesthetic is composition. In Chinese calligraphy and painting, composition is the organisation of elements to form a cohesive design. Six essential compositional principles are listed by Kwo (1981: 69): (i) host-and-guests concept; (ii) depth or perspective; (iii) *mi* [密] (density) and *shu* [疏] (looseness); (iv) *yin* [阴] (dark) and *yang* [阳] (light); (v) space; and (vi) balance. The major form in a composition or piece of art is referred to as the host, while the guest plays a secondary role to balance and supplement the main interest. The second principle, depth or perspective, is defined by the 'idealistic' and 'suprarealistic' concept of perspective. The artist imbues his or her art with more than can be

seen by the naked eye. The third composition principle, *mi* and *shu*, can be interpreted as density or solidity (*mi*), and looseness or hollowness (*shu*). An effective composition requires a strong contrasting *mi* and *shu* arrangement to the impression of depth; it must be neither too dense, nor too loose. The next principle, *yin* and *yang*, is a familiar Chinese concept in the western world. The *yin* represents ‘dark’ (and also ‘earth, mother, moon, water’) while the *yang* symbolises ‘light’ (and also ‘father, sun, emperor, fire, gold’). In a similar way to light and shadow, *yin* and *yang* accentuate the three-dimensional shape of the depicted object. Just as the component of silence or rest is vital to a musical work, the element of ‘space’ or ‘void’ (the fifth principal) is essential in Chinese calligraphy and painting. This void is also known as the ‘negative’ space. Its significance varies depending on the subject being depicted. For example, in a painting of fish, such as the one by Zhu Da seen in Figure 4.3, it may signify water; in other paintings it could signify the air or wind in which the leaves live and move, or in a depiction of a bird, it may represent the sky. This concept of space is both suggestive and imaginative. The final principle, balance, is characterised by asymmetry in Chinese art. A good piece of Chinese art should contain a good balance of *mi* and *shu*, *yin* and *yang*, host and guest, foreground and background. In summary, effective calligraphy and painting begins with lines and dots concerning the important *li* and *qi*, which create form. This form is depicted onto a space that requires conscious balancing of the compositional components of host and guest, depth or perspective, *mi* and *shu*, *yin* and *yang* (Kwo 1984: 69-73).

To investigate the ways in which Malaysian composers encompass elements of Chinese calligraphy and painting into their works, four selected compositions by Chong and Yii will be used as case studies for analysis: Chong’s *I Hear the Wind Calling* for ensemble (13 players) (2003) and *Shui.Mo* [水.墨] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*erhu*, *pipa*, *guzheng* & *sheng*) and orchestra (2007); and Yii’s *Wild Cursive* [狂草] for *zhongruan* and string trio (2009) and *My Ears are Still Ringing* for flute and alto sax (2011).

4.1.1 Chong

***I Hear the Wind Calling* for ensemble (13 players) (2003)**

I Hear the Wind Calling for ensemble (13 players) (Track 13) was written in 2003 for the first MPO Forum for Malaysian Composers and was dedicated to Chong’s parents. The work was composed during Chong’s stay in La Chaux De Fonds, ‘a little town on the mountain in

Switzerland’ where the composer ‘was deeply moved by the nature scene where [he] heard the wind passing through the snowy landscape’ (Chong 2003: n.p.). The 13 instruments involved are: oboe, trombone, percussion, double bass, harp, trumpet in C, piano, violin I, violin II, viola, cello, flute and clarinet in B ♭. The concept of *qi* [vital energy] is fundamental to any analysis of Chong’s *I Hear the Wind Calling*. Chong states in the programme note to *I Hear the Wind Calling*:

For long time, I interest [*sic*] in music, literature, poem, painting and calligraphy of the ancient Tang Dynasty has prompted me to experiment with “the abstract form – *Qi* of the Chinese calligraphy and ink painting to present the image of wind in this composition. I interprets [*sic*] the tranquillity and movement of the wind in this piece as an abstract space, where every point and line, bright and dark, strong and weak, silence and action were influenced and transformed each other, it shows an esoteric feeling of space and the inherent power of the counters unification like the nature (Chong 2003: n.p.).

As seen in Figure 4.4, the flautist and clarinetist are placed off stage in Chong’s attempt to recreate the Swiss ‘snowy “soundscape” from different directions and depth inside of the concert hall’ (Chong 2003: n.p.). The positioning of the two woodwind instruments, instead of brass or string instruments, off stage on either side of the hall is intended to evoke the feeling of surround sound and, in particular, the sound of the ‘wind calling’.

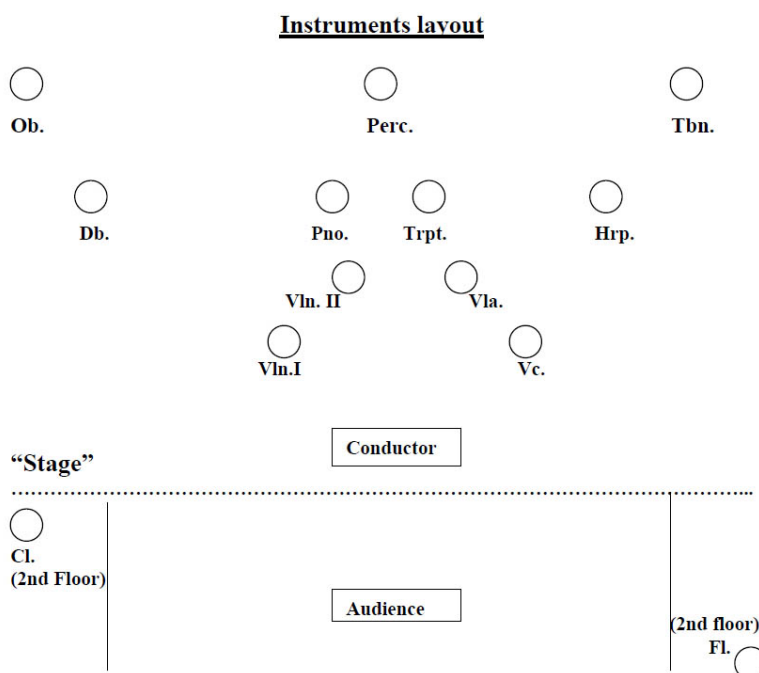


Figure 4.4. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling* instruments layout (Chong 2003: n.p.)

The opening five bars of *I Hear the Wind Calling* set the atmosphere of the piece. The work begins (Figure 4.5) with the off stage flute playing a long ‘aeolian-sound’ note. Aeolian sound, also called air sound or breath sound, is ‘a sound that is produced as if by the wind. This effect is achieved by creating a breathy sound with or without tone’ (Maclagan 2009: 3). The flautist is joined by the clarinetist, also playing an air sound.

* Depress the cluster silently.
 ** Combine the playing pitch with more air sound, but it don't mean toneless!
 *** Trill the harmonic with the fundamental note rapidly.

Figure 4.5. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, flute and clarinet, bars 1 to 3 (Chong 2003: 1)

The airy and wind-like tones of the flute and clarinet parts not only echo the work’s title *I Hear the Wind Calling*, but also make reference to the *qi* that Chong experiments with in this work: *qi*, in addition to meaning ‘vital energy’, can also be translated as ‘air’ and ‘breath’, this is reflective of the Aeolian/air/breath sound of the opening notes seen in Figure 4.5.

In the opening bars, the pianist silently depresses clustered notes, which are held by the middle *sostenuto* pedal (marked P.II)⁹⁸ as seen in Figure 4.6. By sustaining, albeit silently, the note cluster in the lower register of the piano, when subsequent notes are played (in bar 3, Figure 4.6) the harmonics of the sustained note clusters are awakened. The effect is to remind listeners of background rustling sounds in the Swiss snowy mountains created by wind, animals, and trees.

⁹⁸ The *sostenuto* pedal is the middle piano pedal. ‘This operates an apparatus which catches any dampers at the moment they are raised and maintains those particular dampers in their raised position until the pedal is released: thus one may play a note or chord and allow it to continue sounding whilst passing on to some succession of notes or chords which, whilst each compatible with the note or chord held over, are incompatible with one another’ (Scholes 1991: 792-793).

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Harp, Trumpet in C, and Piano. The Harp part is in the top system, with notes E³, F[#]3, G³, A³ in the treble clef and B², C³, D³ in the bass clef. The Trumpet in C part is in the middle system. The Piano part is in the bottom system, with a semi-arpeggiated figure in the third beat of bar 3. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. Pedal markings P.I. and P.II are present.

Figure 4.6. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, harp, trumpet and piano, bars 1 to 3 (Chong 2003: 1)

In addition to the resonating, and echo-like effect created by the *sostenuto* pedal, an echo effect is produced in the harp and piano parts (Figure 4.6). Although the echoing piano part does not exactly replicate the harp figure, the semi-*arpeggiation* figure from lower to higher registers in the third beat of bar 3 of the piano part creates a loose echo effect similar to the gestural figure of the harp played on the first beat of the same bar. Coupled with the damper pedal⁹⁹, marked P.I, and the note clusters held by the *sostenuto* pedal prior, this semi-*arpeggiation* creates an enriching resonance of harmonics.

Such echo-like effect is also found in the harp, flute and clarinet parts in bars 5 and 6 shown in Figure 4.7. The circled flute and clarinet parts play the exact same notes of the circled harp figure in Aeolian-sound, once again mimicking the mountain echoes and ‘wind’ effect of the Swiss landscape. This echo effect is further enhanced by the positioning of the flute and clarinet off stage, calling to mind the multi-directional return of echoes in the mountains.

⁹⁹ The damper pedal, the furthest right pedal on the piano, ‘removes the whole series of dampers from the strings...The consequences of this complete removal are twofold: firstly, any note one may play is given a longer duration, irrespectively [*sic*] of whether the finger remains on the key...and, secondly, the whole of the strings of the instrument are made available for sympathetic resonance’ (Scholes 1991: 792).

* gliss. with artificial harm., in which the upper finger is constantly moving and thus creating a rich sound with vividly varying pitches, instead of one gliding pitch

Figure 4.7. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bars 4 to 6 (Chong 2003: 2)

A similar call-and-response echo effect is also heard in bar 19 between the oboe and trumpet parts (Figure 4.8). The trumpet, played with a ‘straight mute’, defined by Scholes (1991: 668) as ‘a silencer or partial silencer’ repeats fragments of the oboe’s melody. Although not off stage like the flute and clarinet, the oboe and trumpet are at opposite sides on stage, as shown in Figure 4.4, which furthers the composer’s creation of the impression of multi-directional surround sound, as in the town on the Swiss mountain.

Figure 4.8. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bar 19 (Chong 2003: 7)

In addition to placing the flute and clarinet off stage, Chong uses the mute, marked ‘*lontano*’, in the trombone and trumpet parts, ‘to [create] great distance of echo’ (Figure 4.9) (Scholes 1991: 580; Chong 2003: 13). This once again demonstrates the composer’s aspiration to recreate the mountain echoes he heard during his stay in the Swiss mountains.

Figure 4.9. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bars 37 to 40 (Chong 2003: 13)

A similar approach is applied in the viola part of bar 46 (Figure 4.10) where it is prescribed ‘solo melody from far away’ (Chong 2003: 15).

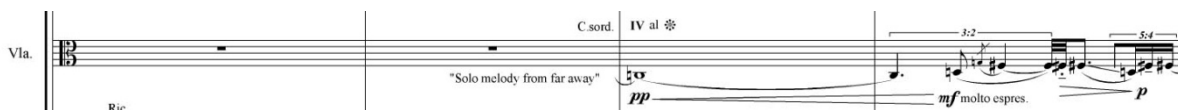


Figure 4.10. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bars 44 to 47 (Chong 2003: 15)

The second compositional technique used by Chong to incorporate Chinese calligraphy and painting element is Aeolian-sound. Aeolian-sound is used at the start of *I Hear the Wind Calling* to make reference to the concept of *qi* in Chinese calligraphy and painting. This Aeolian-sound is not heard again after the opening bars until bar 21, one bar before Rehearsal Figure C (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bars 21 to 23 (Chong 2003: 8)

Here the flute part not only plays the Aeolian-sound that mimics the wind or *qi*, but Chong has also instructed the flautist to whisper specific letters into the flute (Chong 2003: 8). The composer writes: ‘whisper the given [phonemes] or words (as English) into the instrument in the rhythm indicated whilst simultaneously playing the pitches and other events as marked. The playing note will not be [maintained] throughout the passage, because of the interruption by the whispering text’ (Chong 2003: 8). The effect of whispering into the instrument is used as a compositional approach by Chong to combine the concept of *qi* and the wind aspect into his work. A few bars later (bars 26, 29 and 31), a more direct reference to the title of the work, and the composer’s experience staying on the Swiss mountain, is made in the flute part through the whispering of the words ‘I hear the wind s r k’ (Figure 4.12), ‘the wind I hear’ (Figure 4.13), and ‘the wind calling’ (Figure 4.14).

whispering into the fl.: I hear the wind s r k

Figure 4.12. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bar 26 (Chong 2003: 9)

the wind I hear

Figure 4.13. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bar 29 (Chong 2003: 10)

C.vibr. non flutt. (Aeolian-sound) morendo

ppp the wind 5:4 cal - ling

Figure 4.14. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bars 31 to 32 (Chong 2003: 11)

This Aeolian-sound is almost exclusively used by the two off-stage instruments, flute and clarinet, and is not found in other on-stage instruments, with the exception of one occasion in bar 23 of the trumpet part (Figure 4.15).

S.sord. Flutt. mp

** Air sound with indefinite pitch.

Figure 4.15. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling*, bar 23 (Chong 2003: 8)

The trumpeter is directed to produce ‘air sound with indefinite pitch’ with the flutter-tonguing¹⁰⁰ technique marked ‘Flutt’ (Chong 2003: 8). As with its off-stage woodwind counterparts, the aim is to produce an airy sound imitating not only the wind, but also *qi*.

Chong assigns every note with gradually changing dynamics throughout *I Hear the Wind Calling*, reflecting the concepts of *li* and *qi* in Chinese calligraphy and painting introduced at the beginning of this section, in which the continual flow of *qi* injects life into Chinese calligraphy and painting. The *crescendos* and *diminuendos* in Chong’s *I Hear the Wind Calling* resonate with the increasing and decreasing pressure (*li*) of the Chinese brush strokes. As *li* is closely connected with *qi*, thus an increase in *li* indicates a swell of *qi* flow, and a decrease in *li* corresponds with a reduction of *qi* flow.

Just as the application of *qi* and variation of *li* in Chinese calligraphy and painting provide balance (*yin* and *yang*, and *mi* and *shu*) to Chinese artwork, the ‘movement of the wind’ in Chong’s composition can be interpreted in such a way that the flow or *qi* (or as Chong referred to as the ‘abstract space’) is the balancing force to ‘point and line’ (dot and line), ‘bright and dark’ (*yang* and *yin*), ‘strong and weak’ (*li*) and ‘silence and action’ (*shu* and *mi*) (Chong 2003: n.p.). ‘Strong’ (or ‘*yang*’) music motif is met with a ‘weak’ (or ‘*yin*’) response, as illustrated in Figure 4.7 (*yang*: harp figure; *yin*: flute and clarinet Aeolian-sound figure) and Figure 4.8 (*yang*: oboe melody; *yin*: muted trumpet fragment). The opposing ‘strong and weak’ concept can also be applied to the dynamic of the work.

The music written for these four instruments uses their strategic placement to full advantage in creating echo effects that are deeply evocative of the wind resonating through the Swiss mountains. The position of the flute and clarinet on each side of the hall (off the stage), together with the placement of the oboe and trombone at each back corner of the stage, offers the maximum surround sound experience.

Analysis of Chong’s *I Hear the Wind Calling* has uncovered parallels and references to aesthetic qualities of Chinese calligraphy and painting, such as the depth or perspective (positioning of instruments), *yin* and *yang* (melody and echo). However, this is not the only

¹⁰⁰ Flutter-tonguing is ‘a purring sound produced by allowing the airflow to rapidly flutter (or roll) the tip of the tongue or the uvula while playing a note. Neither type of flutter-tonguing is really “tonguing” in the usual sense of the word. Tonguing involves the releasing of the airstream using the tongue as the valve; the tongue actively controls the airflow. Flutter-tonguing is just the opposite: The airflow, in a way, in controlling the tongue’ (Maclagan 2009: 71).

cultural elements found in *I Hear the Wind Calling*. Chong reinvented this work into his 2005 *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* – which is discussed further in Chapter 4.2.1. The juxtaposition of multiple cultural elements within one work further confirms Othman’s observation of the *rojak* where various constituent parts are combined to form the national dish.

***Shui.Mo* [水.墨] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*erhu*, *pipa*, *guzheng* & *sheng*) and orchestra (2007)**

Chong’s exploration of Chinese art form continues in his next work, *Shui.Mo*, which also draws inspiration from Chinese calligraphy and painting. *Shui.Mo* [水.墨] is a two-movement concerto for four Chinese instruments: *erhu* (bowed lute, see Figure 4.33), *pipa* (plucked lute, see Figure 4.34), *guzheng* (zither, see Figure 4.34) and *sheng* (mouth blown instrument, see Figure 4.35), and western orchestra. It is unusual in that, while movements are commonly disconnected in sound, the two movements in *Shui.Mo* are connected and continuous. The uninterrupted movements reflect the fluid nature of the *xingshu* script, in which the brush leaves the paper less often. *Shui.Mo* was commissioned by The Symphony Orchestra of Flanders, Belgium, and was subsequently premiered at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels on 24 January 2008 by the Dragon Ensemble (Berlin) together with the commissioning Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Jonas Alber. The two Chinese characters in the title 水 and 墨 are translated as ‘water’ and ‘ink’. When combined, the two characters form the Chinese word 水墨, which commonly refers to Chinese painting. Chong has indicated that he was inspired by Chinese painting when composing this work (Kee Yong Chong, pers. comm. 2 October, 2013). In his dissertation, the composer discussed the sound and setting of *Shui.Mo* as a reminder of the ‘deep forests in Malaysia or the mountains in Southern China where [his] grandparents came from and where the sounds of human inhabitants counterpoint with the sound of nature on a daily basis’ (Chong 2016: 23). He then offers a concise overview of the work, accompanied by four score excerpts. The focus of this analysis, the incorporation of Chinese calligraphy and painting elements, provides a different analytical viewpoint on *Shui.Mo* to that of the composer.

As noted, *Shui.Mo* comprises two movements. The first, titled *Shui Wen* [水纹] (Ripples of Water), is dedicated to the Chinese-American composer Wen-Chung Chou. By combining the first character of the work title *shui* with Chou’s first name *wen* the title of the first movement

Shui Wen was created. The second movement, titled *Mo Yun* [墨韵] (Charm of the Ink), is dedicated to the late Korean composer Isang Yun (Chong 2007: vi-viii), and the creation of the title of the first movement was named by combining the second character in the work title *Mo* with Yun's family name (Chong 2007: vi). Both Chou and Yun are leading composers who are known mediators of Asian and Western musical elements. By making reference to both Chou and Yun, Chong skilfully sets the expectation for *Shui.Mo* to assimilate elements from Asian and Western cultures.

Chong reveals that the titles have great meaning for him. In Chinese calligraphy, the balance of ink and water plays a major role in producing high quality calligraphy writing. The calligrapher creates variation of shading based on the quantity of ink and water that the brush is allowed to take up. Chong applies and emphasises this balancing principle of ink and water through the integration of Chinese solo instruments with the Western orchestra in *Shui.Mo*. The composer intends them to merge as 'western ink with Chinese water' and 'Chinese ink with western water' (Chong 2007: vi).

Chong (2007: vi) lists six specific goals he wishes to achieve through *Shui.Mo*:

- [i] Provide a new approach and concept to the philosophical exchange between eastern and western cultures,
- [ii] Create a new musical language that can be identified as the interaction between eastern and western musical materials,
- [iii] Encourage a kind of multicultural musical performing art, at the same time enhancing the intrinsic understanding of what is *multi-cultural* and multi-disciplinary exchange between musicians and audiences,
- [iv] Encourage creativity and innovation in all art forms founded on a thorough knowledge of one's own heritage as well as a *measured assimilation of ideas from other cultures*,
- [v] Cultural understanding should be recognized as a prerequisite for international collaboration, and
- [vi] The reciprocal stimulation of tone qualities, material and techniques and – at a deeper level – cultural heritage creates challenging works [*emphasis added*].

Chong's compositional goals for *Shui.Mo* are precisely in line with the focus of this study which is to examine the creative and innovative ways Malaysian composers use ideas and components from different cultures in musical compositions. In *Shui.Mo*, these components are Chinese calligraphy and painting, as evidenced by the composition title, and the

influences of the two dedicatees, Chou and Yun. While Chinese calligraphy and painting have already been discussed, it is essential to understand the essence of Chou's and Yun's compositional approaches in order to be able to identify precisely what Chong has drawn from the dedicatees and has incorporated in *Shui.Mo*.

Chou's later works are largely based on his self-invented 'variable modes' derived from the *I-Ching*. It is also known that Chou views Chinese calligraphy as the 'mother of all Chinese art forms'. Everett (2007: 570) explains that 'as a calligrapher, Chou has developed compositional techniques that correlate the symbolic¹⁰¹, iconic¹⁰² and kinesthetic¹⁰³ attributes of Chinese calligraphy with musical gestures and formal design'. The associations established between 'calligraphic forms and principles and musical gestures', are isolated and discussed with respect to five distinctive attributes: 'compound movement of the initial brushstroke; continuous motion between strokes; parallel brushstrokes; change in speed and density of strokes; and topography of gestural movement' (Everett 2007: 577). It is thus understood that Chou's application of Chinese calligraphy in his musical compositions focuses on the gestures and, to an extent, *qi* [vital energy] and *li* [strength and pressure] of the calligraphic brushstrokes.

In contrast to Chou, Yun's music draws heavily on music of the Korean cultures and the Taoist concept of *yin* and *yang*. His compositional technique focuses on the idea of *Hauptton* and *Hauptklang* which, as discussed earlier in this chapter, are part of standard German theoretical terminology: *Hauptton* is used as tonic, while *Hauptklang*, as tonic chord (Kim 2004: 252). Park (2014: 8) describes this technique as one in which a tone or tone group is embellished by its surrounding tone, forming the 'compositional backbone' of the creative output. In Yun's own words:

In European music, tones come to life when they are connected. In this case, each individual tone is relatively abstract. In Korean music, on the other hand, each individual

¹⁰¹ The symbolic attribute refers to Chou's approach 'for balancing control and freedom' in incorporating variable modes (refers to the essential scale modes that are translated from the trigrams of the *I-Ching*) to correspond with Chou's techniques where the composer 'transforms the brushstrokes from the standard form to a more fluid and continuous style'. Just as a calligrapher creates a piece of calligraphy to provoke specific sensations and images amongst the viewers, Chou produces a work where performers transform notations into 'a succession of sonic entities' which contains 'expression and meaning' (Everett 2007: 570).

¹⁰² The iconic attribute refers to Chou's musical gestures in his compositions with embodies specific calligraphic brushstrokes.

¹⁰³ The kinaesthetic attribute, as described by Everett (2007: 570), is 'the choreography of gestures'. Chou conceives the passing of musical gestures from one instrument to another as transference of calligraphic stroke patterns.

tone has its own life. These Korean tones are often seen as flexible brushstrokes in contrast to inflexible pen drawings. From the moment when it begins to sound, each tone goes through alterations until the sound disappears. That is, each tone is decorated with appoggiatura, anticipation, vibration, glissando and dynamic alteration. Particularly, the natural vibrato of each tone is consciously used as a means of imagery. As for the tone pitch, the change in a tone is considered part of the expression list of one tone in terms of decoration change, not a tune that makes a melody (Sparrer 1977: 92, as cited in Park 2014: 8).

Park (2014: 9) notes that this concept of *Hauptton* is also featured in ancient Chinese music, which has had influential roles on Korean music. Chou's 1968 article *Single Tones as Musical Entities: An Approach to Structured Deviations in Tonal Characteristics* specifically noted that composers are becomingly increasingly detailed with prescription of timbre and sound to be created in their scores. This encouraged Chou (1968: 92) to discuss the seven 'traditionally acceptable physical characteristics of a single tone'.¹⁰⁴

This study now turns to a closer analysis of Chong's *Shui.Mo*. The composer, in his 2016 dissertation, acknowledges the influence of Chinese art forms including calligraphy, painting and poetry in his compositional approaches. More specifically in *Shui.Mo*, the union of Chinese instruments and the orchestra is the conceptualisation of 'water and ink in calligraphy' (Chong 2016: 21-23). Despite acknowledging the influence of Chinese calligraphy, Chong does not provide an analysis of calligraphic influences in *Shui.Mo* in his dissertation, but in the accompanying notes to *Shui.Mo*, he includes Chou's calligraphies of the titles of the two movements *Shui Wen* [水纹] (Ripples of Water) (Figure 4.16) and *Mo Yun* [墨韵] (Charm of the Ink) (Figure 4.17).

¹⁰⁴ The seven traditionally acceptable physical characteristics of single tones are: (i) attack and decay of a tone; (ii) steady state; (iii) state; (iv) timbre; (v) intensity; (vi) durational organisations; and (vii) directional characteristics (Chou 1968: 92-97).

First movement:
水紋 "Shui Wen" (Ripples of water)
Dedicated to Maestro Chou Wen-Chung



Figure 4.16. Chou's Calligraphy: *Shui Wen* (Chong 2007: vii)

Second movement:
墨韻 "Mo Yun" (Charm of the ink)
In the memory of Maestro Yun Isang



Figure 4.17. Chou's Calligraphy: *Mo Yun* (Chong 2007: viii)

These two calligraphy examples are done in the ‘fluid, running style’ known as *xingshu* [行书], or semi-cursive script (Everett 2007: 571; Cultural China n.d.b). *Xingshu*, a less rigid derivation of the more structured *kaishu* [楷书] (regular script), is stylised by its less angular, more rounded characters. In this less-restrictive calligraphic style, the brush strokes are faster and do not leave the paper as often as the *kaishu* (Kwo 1981: 39; Cultural China n.d.b). Everett’s examination of calligraphy applied in Chou’s later musical works reveals that *xingshu* is the script most frequently used by the composer, and that this has the greatest influence on his musical gestures (Everett 2007). The inclusion of Chou’s *xingshu* calligraphies in the accompanying notes to *Shui.Mo* prepares the listener to expect a fluid and more rounded sonic experience for the work.

The first movement is characterised by long held notes by various instruments. Every beat after the first note has at least one instrument that is sustaining one or more notes, echoing the fluidity of the *xingshu* calligraphy that inspired the composition. Although not as directly programmatic as Chou’s calligraphy-inspired works (see Everett 2007: 571-574, 578-582) where brush strokes can be visualised through aspects of the score, the first movement of *Shui.Mo* reflects the continual *qi* that is essential to Chinese calligraphy. The flow of *qi*, represented by the continuity of sound in *Shui.Mo*, varies in intensity, speed and strength (Track 14), all of which are important aspects of the Chinese art form.

A rippling effect, as the title of the movement Ripples of Water suggests, is heard throughout the movement, and is especially evident at the beginning of the movement. This effect is the result of glissando and the sustained harmonic notes of the strings following the *marcato* (loud and short accent) notes played by the celeste, bassoon, and harp parts (Figure 4.18).

This rippling effect is further enhanced by Chong’s placement of instruments around the audience (Figure 4.19). Such placement of instruments has been identified in works such as *Monodrama* and *I Hear the Wind Calling*. The composer himself acknowledged that he has implemented ‘the ideas of mobility and spatialisation’ in ‘most of [his] compositions’ since 2005 (Chong 2016: 22). It is understood that his childhood experience based in a ‘rustic environment’ has inspired him to reconstruct a ‘three-dimensional listening experience’, providing different sonic perspectives to that of conventional concerts (Chong 2016: 22).¹⁰⁵

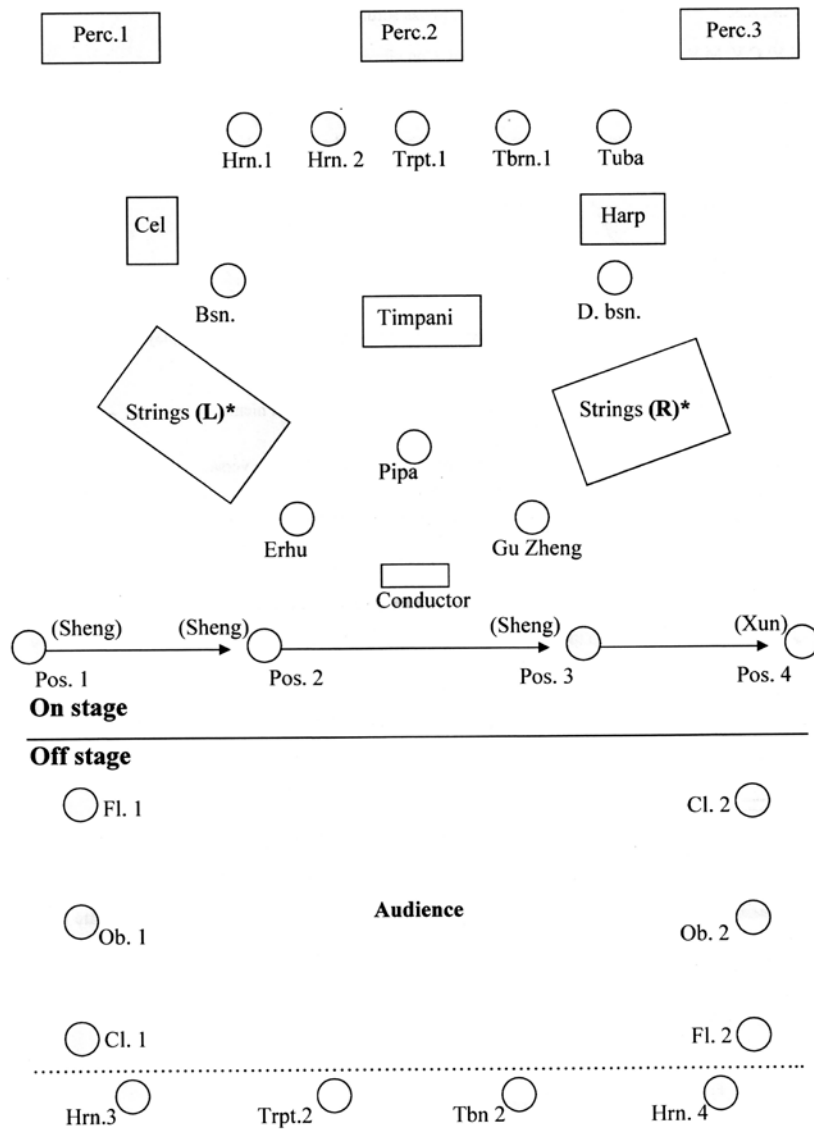
¹⁰⁵ Some examples of other compositions by Chong with instrument displacements include *I Hear the Wind Calling* for ensemble (2003) (Figure 4.4), *Endless Whispering* for 27-reed soprano *sheng*, *gayageum* and *koto* (2007), *Ocean’s Pulse* for 4 Chinese drummers, off-stage *dizi*, and flute soloists with chamber orchestra (2007),

The image shows a page of a musical score for the first movement of Chong's *Shui.Mo*. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are Celesta, Bassoon, Harp, Double Bassoon, Timpani, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The score is filled with musical notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key performance instructions include 'enter imperceptibly', 'dolciss', 'poco', 'with soft mallets', and 'Seagull effect'. The score is for bars 1 to 5.

Figure 4.18. Chong – *Shui.Mo*, first movement bars 1 to 5 (Chong 2007: 1)

Yuan-Liu [源一流] (Origin-Stream) for traditional 27-reed soprano sheng, 2 pianos and 2 percussionists (2009), *Bie Ge* [別歌] (Song of Farewell) for boy soprano, soprano sheng, choir in 4 groups and 6 percussionists (2012), *Xun Feng* [尋風] (Seeking the Wind) Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*pipa*, *guzheng*, *dizi* and *sheng*) and Chinese orchestra (2013), *Hak.Qin* [客.情] for *sanxian*, *guzheng* voice and Chinese orchestra with pre-recorded audio (2013), and *Yuan.Yun* [源.韻] for *piri/saenghwang*, *gayageum*, *sheng*, *guzheng*, clarinet, violin and percussion (2017).

Seating arrangement



* Both strings sections (R & L) should be apart as far as possible!

** Off stage groups can be placed in different floor.

Figure 4.19. Chong – *Shui.Mo*, seating layout (Chong 2007: iii)

The second movement, Charm of the Ink, while still containing long sustained notes, has an aurally unique 32-bar section that is much more active than the rest of the work (Figure 4.20). The fast paced semiquavers wind section is layered over the more static strings. To add to the aural complexity, Chong employs a larger than usual percussion section, with a marimba (percussionist 3), 3 bongos each for percussionist 1 and timpanist, giving 6 bongos in total, and 3 slit drums (log drums) for percussionist 2. The explosive overlapping entrances of the

percussion instruments, as seen in Figure 4.20, can only be found in this section. The use of a large percussion section is one of the distinctive traits of early works composed by Yun between 1959 and 1965 (Fraker 2009: 11), further evidence of Yun's influence on Chong's compositional style.

The second movement, an excerpt from which can be seen in Figure 4.20, also echoes the dualistic anagram of Taoism, *yin* and *yang*, which is found in many of Yun's works. The rapid figuration of the wind sections expresses the *yang* and the more static strings the *yin*. The dualism of the loud/soft dynamic of the percussion and the winds can also be interpreted as *yang* and *yin*.

The influence of the Chinese concept of *qi*, another important aspect of Chinese calligraphy and painting, can be seen in the writing for the four soloists. The extensive use of glissando, vibrato, tremolo and timbral variation in the four solo instruments appears to be the composer's exploration of the concept of vital energy, which varies in the brush strokes of Chinese calligraphy and painting.

C *Make energetic*

-Shui Mo (2nd Movt.) pg 25-

Figure 4.20. Chong – *Shui.Mo*, second movement bars 16 to 23 (Chong 2007: 25)

Shui.Mo is written as a concerto, featuring *erhu*, *pipa*, *guzheng* and *sheng* as solo instruments. In the case of *Shui.Mo*, the sonic qualities of the four Chinese instruments are naturally distinctive from the orchestra. Instead of plainly augmenting the sonic effect of these instruments as would be normal in a concerto, the composer balances the unique sound of these instruments with the orchestra, without losing their recognisable Asiatic timbres. This results in a subtle and tasteful display of the soloists. An example of this can be seen in the first introduction of the *sheng*, an instrument widely known by its piercing and nasal tone (Figure 4.21). To adjust the audiences' ears to the nasal tone of the Chinese mouth organ, Chong includes multiphonics in the wind parts, which sound similar to the *sheng*, a few bars before bringing in the *sheng* very quietly, marked 'enter softly, *pp*' (Chong 2007: 3). During the entrance of the *sheng*, the flute, oboe, harp, celeste, trombone and percussion create distraction by playing a short staccato *sffz* semiquaver.

This is one of many examples where Chong carefully mediates Chinese cultural element, in this case the timbre of the *sheng*, through his European-derived compositional tools such as the western instruments and extended techniques. It again illustrates the sophisticated ways Chong mediates elements of Chinese calligraphy and painting, influences of Chou and Yun as well as the western musical idioms of the western orchestra.

Another composer who incorporates aspects of Chinese calligraphy and painting into his compositions is Yii. Two works, *Wild Cursive* and *My Ears are Still Ringing* are now discussed.

The image displays a page of a musical score for the first movement of 'Shui Mo'. The score is arranged in a system of staves, with various instruments and voices indicated on the left. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *f*, and *sfz*. There are also performance instructions in Chinese characters, such as '用柔和的呼吸' (use soft breathing) and '用柔和的呼吸 (只吹出声音)' (use soft breathing (only blowing sound)). The score is divided into measures, with bar numbers 14 to 19 indicated on the left. The bottom of the page features the title '-Shui Mo (1st Movt) pg 3-' and a small graphic element.

Figure 4.21. Chong – *Shui.Mo*, first movement bars 14 to 19 (Chong 2007: 3)

4.1.2 Yii

Wild Cursive [狂草] for *zhongruan* and string trio (2009)

Wild Cursive [狂草] for *zhongruan* and string trio (violin, viola and cello)¹⁰⁶ was composed in 2009 to be performed in the inaugural KL Contemporary Music Festival in the same year. The title of the work makes direct reference to a type of Chinese calligraphy style 'wild cursive'. Asian-American composer, Chou, also wrote a work entitled *Cursive*, for flute and piano in 1963, which is 'influenced by 'wild' cursive script (a style of calligraphy writing)' (Lee 2012: 12). *Cursive* is Chou's 'attempts to express in music the Cursive script (or *caoshu*) or Chinese calligraphy, of which the 'joined strokes and rounded angles result in expressive and contrasting curves and loops' (Chou 1965: 2, as cited in Lai 2009:117). Although Yii does not make reference to Chou's work in *Wild Cursive*, it is believed that Chou's *Cursive* is known to the Malaysian composer and may have indirectly influenced the writing of *Wild Cursive*.

In 2011, Yii reworked the score for a slightly different ensemble: vibraphone and string trio for the 'Malaysian Voices' concert in Toronto, Canada, curated by Kee Yong Chong¹⁰⁷. Arguably, the substitution of vibraphone for *zhongruan* produces a less effective result, as the overly-ringing tone of the vibraphone is neither able to accurately portray the *qi* or *li* of Chinese brushwork, nor the free gesture of wild cursive calligraphy style. *Wild Cursive* loses its aural spark and essence with the elimination of the distinctive plucked string sound provided by the *zhongruan*. In accompanying notes to both versions of *Wild Cursive*, Yii (2009b: n.p.; 2011c: n.p.) states 'this piece is after *Wild Cursive* for *zhongruan*, Chinese string trio (*gaohu*, *erhu* and *zhonghu*)'. As discussed previously, the bowed string instruments (*gaohu*, *erhu* and *zhonghu*) can be considered as counterparts to the violin and viola. Thus, unlike the substitution of *zhongruan* with *vibraphone* in the 2011 version, it is believed that the adaptation of string trio in the 2009 edition maintains Yii's sonic desire in expressing the influence of wild cursive calligraphy.

An effective calligraphy displays uninterrupted flow of energy, coupled with appropriate variation of strength in its brush strokes. The result is balanced in compositional terms: darkness and light, solidity and hollow, space-consciousness and depth and perspective. The

¹⁰⁶ *Wild Cursive* [狂草] can be seen at <https://youtu.be/QMyPSH3OWZI>.

¹⁰⁷ This concert can be seen at <https://youtu.be/IqhYCLmjS0s>

invention and expansion of cursive writing in China happened later than the development of other forms of Chinese calligraphy. With the increasing interest in aesthetics, cursive calligraphy styles became the main means through which calligraphers could express their individuality (Barnes *et al* 2008: 50). Wild cursive is the most unconstrained and boldest form of cursive writing in Chinese calligraphy. Unlike other Chinese calligraphy writing styles, there is no strict guideline as to how to write in the cursive style, and therefore each calligrapher has their own distinct ways of approaching the style. Cursive calligraphy, Li (2010: 147) explains, is described as ‘ink dancing on paper’ and has been compared to ‘powerful, dramatic music’, which ‘communicated great energy, power, and speed’. Two of the most prominent cursive calligraphers are Zhang Xu [张旭] (ca. 658-747) and Huai Su [怀素] (ca. 825 –ca. 785) of the Tang dynasty.

Yii (2009b: n.p.) writes in his programme notes to *Wild Cursive* that the cursive calligraphy of the famous Chinese calligrapher Huai Su, whose calligraphic style inspired the dagger dancing of Lady Gongsun¹⁰⁸, is the source of inspiration for this work. Figure 4.22 is an example of Huai Su’s wild cursive calligraphy.

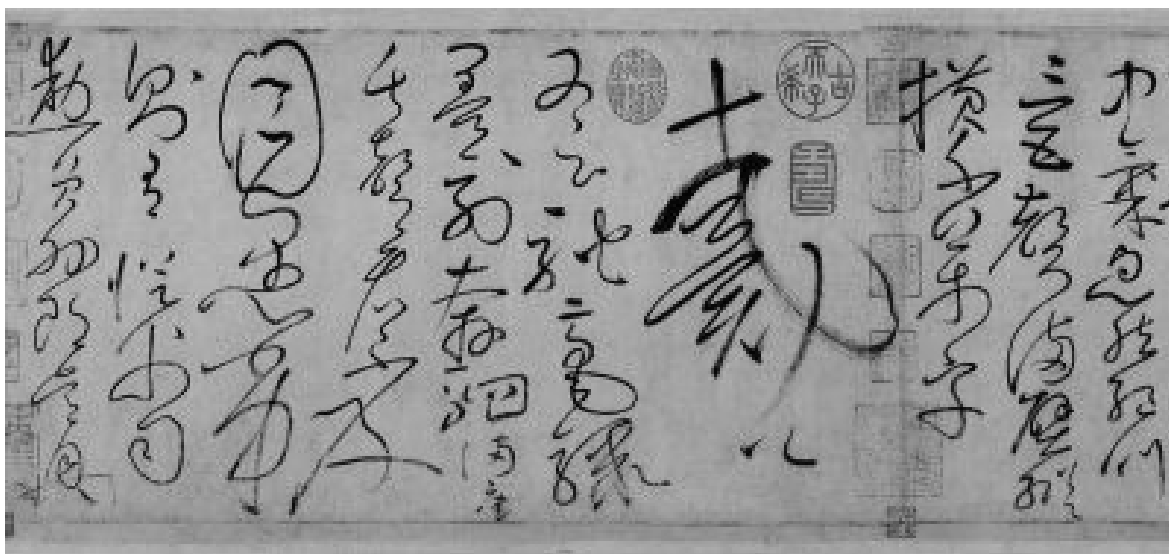


Figure 4.22. *Autobiography* [自叙帖] by Huai Su (Zhang 2015)

¹⁰⁸ The ‘dagger dancing’ mentioned in Yii’s programme notes refers to a sword dance in the Tang dynasty performed by ‘legendary beauty’, Lady Gongsun (ca. 700-756) whose dancing was highly praised by prominent Tang dynasty poet Du Fu (712-770). It is said that ‘her sword glinted with every change of posture and stance, whispering like silk on being unsheathed and flashing at each thrust. Her dancing seemed to evince a power that could hold back rivers and repulse oceans’ (China Internet Information Center 2003).

The unique cursive style of Huai Su is commonly referred to as ‘steel strokes and silver hooks’ [铁画银钩]. His works are characterised by large characters produced using a fine brush that creates ‘rounded and dashing’ brush strokes and are often being compared to the curling and bending of steel wires, hence the steel strokes. Silver hook refers to the distinctive hook created when the tip of his brush is lifted from the paper (Li 2010: 151). The cursive writing style derives from the desire to express individuality. The focus of the calligraphy viewer, therefore, is not to identify exact characters but to appreciate the aesthetic components, i.e. *yin* and *yang*, *mi* and *shu*, light and shadow, *li* and *qi*.

Despite Yii’s reference to Huai Su’s calligraphy style, *Wild Cursive* is not based on a specific piece of Huai Su’s calligraphy, but is instead inspired by the master calligrapher. Yi (2009b: n.p.) adds that audiences and listeners should not attempt to look for clear melodic lines in *Wild Cursive*, ‘just as it is not necessary to identify the exact words in wild cursive calligraphy’. An analysis of the musical work must be approached in a similar way to the investigation and appreciation of wild cursive calligraphy; by consideration of *li* and *qi*, *yin* and *yang*, *mi* and *shu*, and light and shadow.

Just as the flow of *qi* and the use or release of *li* are vital components in injecting life into the Chinese art forms, so the concepts of energy and strength are central to Yii’s *Wild Cursive*. Analysis of *Wild Cursive* highlights three prominent musical elements that clearly suggest influences of Chinese brushworks: constantly changing dynamic; glissando and wide vibrato (w.v.); and performance techniques and articulations.

As can be seen in Figure 4.23, every single note has detailed dynamic markings that constantly change. This compositional approach is also seen in Chong’s compositions discussed earlier in this chapter. Echoing the ideas of *li* and *qi*, *yin* and *yang* and *mi* and *shu*, the continuously varying dynamics in *Wild Cursive* reflect the artist’s brushwork in Chinese calligraphy. As seen in Figure 4.22, the artist completes the character by applying various degrees of pressure, intensity and release in one continuous stroke. The softer and louder dynamic ranges in *Wild Cursive* signify the lighter and stronger brushstrokes in Chinese calligraphy. Just as the varying of brushstroke pressure in calligraphy is not rigid but flowing, Yii’s changes in dynamic are gradual in *Wild Cursive* (Figure 4.23). There are, however, exceptions, where the dynamic shifts are abrupt. Examples of abrupt dynamic changes are marked in bars 14 to 17 in Figure 4.23. It is observed that these sudden changes in volume always occur at the initial point of attack of a note, and not when a note is held. The effect is

one that imitates the artist's brush, where the attack at the beginning of a stroke is forceful. Olive and He (2010: 76) describe this initial attack: 'it's a tiny movement, like a loop that just barely turns the point of your brush back over on itself'. For example, dots with little hooks seen in Figure 4.2 indicate the energy direction of the artist's brush. Like these dots that signify the initial attacks of the brush, the circled notes in Figure 4.23 are attacked with force and then the energy is released immediately. Such changes in energy are clearly audible in the performance¹⁰⁹ of the piece. Yii incorporates the flow of *qi* and the change of *li* in the dynamics of *Wild Cursive*. The changes in dynamic can also be interpreted as an imitation of the opposing concepts of *yin* and *yang* and *mi* and *shu*. The quieter dynamic symbolises *yin* and *shu*, while the louder dynamic represents *yang* and *mi*.

Frequent use of glissando and wide vibrato, marked with w.v., are noted in Figure 4.23. It is believed that the glissando and vibrato in *Wild Cursive* correspond to the increase and decrease of energy and force of the Chinese brush. Upwards glissando in *Wild Cursive* echoes with the gradual release of Chinese brush pressure called *ti* [提] (lift); while downward glissando is reflective of the gradual increase of brush pressure called *an* [按] (press) (Caoshu.org n.d.). The vibrato can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the wide vibrato signifies the rounded and curved lines of the wild cursive calligraphy style. This is evident through Huai Su's *Autobiography* in Figure 4.22, in which there are no sharp angled lines. Secondly, Yii's vibrato in *Wild Cursive* embodies a Chinese brush technique named 'chanbi' [颤笔], also known as *zhanbi* [战笔] or *doubi* [抖笔], which loosely translates as tremulous brushstrokes or trembling brushwork (Cahill n.d.: 2; Free Gallery of Art 2009: 16).

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 106 for concert footage.

14

Vln. *s.p.* (low pressure) *l.p.* gradually increase finger pressure *o.p.* *p* *sfz* *mp* *molto* *sfz mp* *sfz p*

Vla. *p* *sfz* *mp* *espr.* *sfz* *p* *sfz*

Vc. (low pressure) *l.p.* *p* *sfz* *mp* *espr.* *sfz* *p* *sfz* *s.p. pizz. LH*

Zhr. *etc.* *f* *etc.* *rh.* *etc.* *f* *etc.*

* Extremely bow pressure to break the sound.

18

Vln. *mf* *p* *sfz mp* *f* *mf* *p*

Vla. *p* *mp* *sfz* *sfz* *mp* *p* *molto*

Vc. *p* *mf* *sfz* *mp* *sfz* *mp* *pizz.* *ric.*

Zhr. *mp* *f* *mp*

22

Vln. *sfz* *mp* *sfz* *p* *sfz* *p* *ppp*

Vla. *sfz* *mp* *sfz* *sfz* *pizz.* *arco* *s.t.* *ppp*

Vc. *sfz* *mp* *sfz* *sfz* *mp* *arco* *s.p. - p.o.* *m.v.* *mf* *f mp*

Zhr. *sf* *f* *f* *etc.* *knock* *mp* *pp*

B

Figure 4.23. Yui – *Wild Cursive*, bars 14 to 26 (Yui 2009b: 2)

Chanbi refers to a style of brushwork in which the thickness of lines varies constantly as if the hand is trembling (Free Gallery of Art 2009: 16). The visual instruction for vibrato on the score and its sound effect are clearly linked to this brush technique, and it seems likely that Yii inserts vibratos in *Wild Cursive* with this trembling effect in mind. Both interpretations of Yii's application of vibrato point to the influence of Chinese calligraphy. Coupled with the change of dynamic, the sound effect of glissando and vibrato in Yii's work suggest the breath and pressure (*qi* and *li*) applied by an artist while producing Chinese artwork.

Another compositional approach Yii uses to embed elements of wild cursive calligraphy into *Wild Cursive* is found in its performance techniques and articulations (Figure 4.27). These includes Bartok *pizzicato* (♭) and bow pressure variation (increasing bow pressure, Figure 4.24; decreasing bow pressure, Figure 4.25; and extreme bow pressure, Figure 4.26) (Yii 2009b).



Figure 4.24. Increasing bow pressure




Figure 4.25. Decreasing bow pressure



Figure 4.26. Extreme bow pressure

Once again, the gradual variation of bow pressure imitates the increasing and decreasing pressure of the Chinese brush. Extreme bow pressure, 'to break the sound', (Figure 4.23:) and Bartok *pizzicato*, also called snap *pizzicato*, in which the string is pulled or pinched vertically away from the instruments and released resulting in the snapping of the string against the instrument, are used to evoke the exact moment when the artist forcefully attacks with the brush on the paper and then immediately releases pressure. The breaking of the sound by extreme bow pressure creates the effect of Chinese brush technique *pobi* [破笔] which means

split brush, whereby the brush is pressed strongly against the paper, splitting the brush hair, and creating hollow spaces within solid lines. This technique is appreciated by calligraphers and painters alike as it injects life and gives the illusion of movement by echoing the use of suggestion into their artworks. By imitating Chinese calligrapher's brush strokes, Yii brings an extra auditory effect into *Wild Cursive*, and at the same time musically enhances the 'free' spirit of the wild cursive calligraphy style in this work, which strongly suggests the gestures of Chinese calligraphy and, more specifically, of the wild cursive style of calligraphy. The extremes of bow pressure, and the swift changes in dynamic and bow pressure, create the musical parallel to the elasticity of brush pressure and spontaneity employed by wild cursive calligraphers like Huai Su.

Rehearsal Figure F marked Dagger Dancing¹¹⁰ in Figure 4.27 reveals yet another direct reference to wild cursive calligraphy or, more specifically, to Lady Gongsun's sword dancing that inspired Huai Su's wild cursive style. Musical material here is highly gestural. The boxed notes, dynamics, articulations and techniques are to be performed free in random order and the composer specifically requests that the performers should not 'try to synchronize rhythm and dynamic among each others' (Yii 2009b: 5). In the first box, gradual changes in bow pressure and dynamics, along with 'gliss ad lib', result in a transformation of atmosphere. The second box consists of various performances techniques, such as knocking on the body of the instrument, playing behind the bridge (), bowing any notes at highest or middle registers, and slapping four strings by open palm. *Wild Cursive* in this section is indeed sounding wild and free, mimicking the wild cursive calligraphy style and the inspiring sword dancing.

Rehearsal Figure E at bar 75 (Figure 4.28), is unstructured 'meditation, deep expression' (Yii 2009b: 6).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ 5'12' on YouTube recording ; see footnote 106.

¹¹¹ It should be noted that the letter E at this point appears to be a misprint by the publishers, as the same manuscript already includes Rehearsal Figures E and F before bar 75 (at bars 55 and 65 respectively). However, while it should logically therefore be called Rehearsal Figure G, in order to avoid confusion this research will refer to it as it appears in the manuscript, along with the bar number 75.

E Senza tempo

F Dagger Dancing

* Boxed notes and articulations / techniques / style expressions are to be played freely in any order.
 Don't try to synchronize rhythm and dynamic among each others.

Figure 4.27. Yii – *Wild Cursive*, bars 55 to 69 (Yii 2009b: 5)

E Meditation, deep expression (♩ = c. 35)

The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (75, 82, 85). The instruments are Vln., Vla., Vc., and Zhr. The score includes various performance instructions and dynamic markings:

- System 1 (bars 75-81):** Vln. starts with 'ca. 4" mute on', 's.v.', and 'bow changed imperceptibly'. Dynamics range from pppp to ppp. Vla. starts with 'mute on', 's.v.', and 'p.v. → s.v.'. Dynamics range from pppp to ppp. Vc. starts with 's.v.', 'p.v. → s.v.', and 'p.v.'. Dynamics range from pppp to ppp. Zhr. starts with 'pp' and 'sempre'. Dynamics range from pp to mp.
- System 2 (bars 82-84):** Vln. includes 'gliss', 'pizz.', and 'arco'. Dynamics range from ppp to mp. Vla. includes 'pizz.' and 'arco'. Dynamics range from p to mp. Vc. includes 's.p.', 'gliss ad lib.', and 'p.o.'. Dynamics range from p to mp. Zhr. includes 'legato'. Dynamics range from pp to mp.
- System 3 (bars 85-91):** Vln. includes 'w.v.', '(bow pressure)', 'gliss', and 'pitchless'. Dynamics range from mp to pppp. Vla. includes 'arco', 'gliss', and 'pitchless'. Dynamics range from p to ppp. Vc. includes 's.p.', 'gliss ad lib.', 'gradually release finger pressure', 'pitchless', 'rit.', and 'pizz.'. Dynamics range from p to pppp. Zhr. includes 'finger tip' and 'gliss ad lib. by Lh.'. Dynamics range from mp to ppp.

Figure 4.28. Yii – *Wild Cursive*, bars 75 to end (Yii 2009b: 6-7)

The section shown in Figure 4.28 has comparatively fewer changes in dynamic and bow pressures. As suggested by Yii’s instruction of ‘meditation, deep expression’, this section

perhaps denotes the ‘calming’ down of the artist (and sword dancer) after the ‘wild’ self-expression in calligraphy (and sword dancing). As discussed previously, the element of *qi* is central to all discussion of Chinese calligraphy and painting, and it is, therefore, unsurprising that the artist takes time and care in completing the flow of *qi* at the end of the calligraphy writing. This final section of *Wild Cursive* is reminiscent of the completion of the vital energy flow. It is generally much quieter than the rest of the work, with the loudest dynamic given as *mf*, compared to *fffz* in preceding sections. The work ends with a pause or rest after the violinist and cellist end their parts in *pppp*. All of Yii’s performance instructions and compositional approaches are intended to accentuate the still, tranquil and meditative nature of this final section.

***My Ears are Still Ringing* for flute and alto sax (2011, revised 2012)**

Yii’s *My Ears are Still Ringing*¹¹², which was dedicated to the composer’s father, was composed in 2011 for flute and alto saxophone, and revised by the composer in 2012. During an interview, Yii confirmed that this work is influenced by Chinese calligraphy (Yii 2012a; Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 14 October, 2013). He explained, using calligraphy examples he had selected, the ways in which the different musical materials are a reflection of the flow of *qi* and variants of *li*. At times, the composer vocalised this energy variation by humming and singing random combination of consonants and vowels with different intensities: it reflected the way that the more intense the singing is, the more energy and pressure is placed through the brush. This analysis is largely guided by the information and figures (examples of calligraphy¹¹³) provided by Yii during our interview.

My ears are still ringing
for flute and alto sax
Poco rubato ♩ = 56 Dedicated to my father
Yii Kah Hoe

Figure 4.29. Yii – *My Ears are Still Ringing*, bars 1 to 5 (Yii 2011b: 1)

¹¹² See, for example, <https://youtu.be/hNifJyIHQMU>.

¹¹³ The calligraphy extract presented in Figure 4.31 is by the well-known living Malaysian calligrapher Heng Khan Pang [彭庆勤].

The influences of Chinese calligraphy principles can be seen from the start of *My Ears are Still Ringing*. Applying the approach taken in the analysis of *Wild Cursive* to *My Ears are Still Ringing*, the same conclusions can be drawn about the changes in dynamic and vibrato mirroring the changes in strength, pressure and energy of the artist's stroke. The multiphonic (M) notation in the flute part in bar 2 (Figure 4.29) can be viewed as parallel to that of the increasing bow pressure of the strings in *Wild Cursive*, as it represents a quick surge of energy being transferred from artist's brush to the paper, creating a dot, a curved or angled line, or even a long energetic straight line. Figure 4.30, provided by the composer, is the corresponding calligraphy extract to bars 1 to 4 of *My Ears are Still Ringing*.

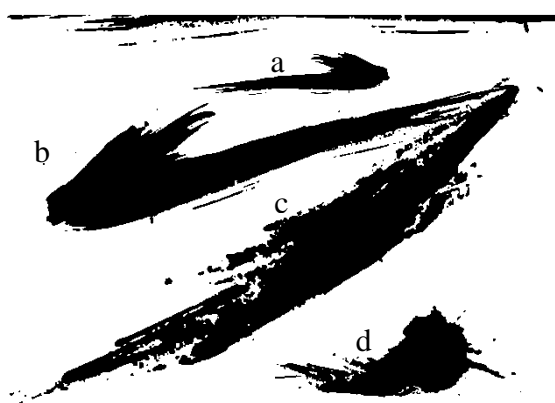


Figure 4.30. Calligraphy extract provided by Yii (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 14 October, 2013)

Analysis of the calligraphy extract reveals a direct connection to musical figures of bars 1 to 4. The top left-to-right line (marked 'a' in Figure 4.30) is drawn by the first *sffz* semiquaver B (concert pitch D) in the alto saxophone part, supported by the held air tone of the flute part, which signifies the continuous flow of *qi* even when there is no brush pressure i.e. no actual note is being played. In the next bar of the flute part, the way in which the D gradually *crescendo* to a *mf* multiphonic and then quickly backs away to D again signifies the increase in pressure of the brush to adjust energy direction to the right at point 'b' in Figure 4.30. The next stroke, marked 'c', is created by vibratos in the alto saxophone, followed by the flute vibrato. Again, the air tone towards the end of the alto saxophone vibrato note conveys the presence of *qi*. From the perspective of the calligrapher, the strong pressure at stroke 'b' splits the brush hairs. Stroke 'c', therefore, can be seen having gaps within the line, just like the split brush technique discussed in *Wild Cursive* in Chinese calligraphy. Stroke 'd'

corresponds with the key clicking of the saxophone part, with the *diminuendo* signifying the completion of a character and also the calming of the *qi* flow.

Another calligraphy extract by Malaysian calligrapher Heng Khan Pang is seen in Figure 4.31. This character is associated with bars 98 and 103 (Figure 4.32).



Figure 4.31. Calligraphy extract by Malaysian calligrapher Heng Khan Pang (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 14 October, 2013)

Figure 4.32. Yii – *My Ears are Still Ringing*, bars 98 to 103 (Yii 2011b: 6)

Bar 99 and the flute part in bar 100 of Yii’s composition is identical to that of bars 1 and 2 of the same work (Figure 4.32). This supports the analysis that the *sffz* semiquaver alto saxophone note, together with the air tone of the flute part, signifies the initial attack and increase of *qi* of the artist. The multiphonic (in the flute part) following this suggests a rapid swell in brush pressure creating the circular stroke marked ‘a’ in Figure 4.31. The subsequent stroke is rapid, active and chaotic, as reflected by the active alto saxophone part where the boxed music figure (Figure 4.32) is written with Yii’s instructions: ‘keys slap ad lib and overblow into any upper overtones’ (Yii 2011b: 6). Simultaneously, the flautist is asked to ‘breathe in (∨) and out (⊓) through instrument’ while saying the word ‘shh_____h shh h’ (Yii

2011b: 6). The elements of breath and ‘shhh’ correspond with the Chinese concept of *qi* and *shu* (hollow). The quiet ending, also seen in bar 4 in Figure 4.29, indicates the end of the *qi* flow and completion of the calligraphy character.

Yii’s use of performance techniques and articulations like bow pressure and Bartok *pizzicato* in *Wild Cursive* and multiphonic, air tone and key slaps in *My Ears are Still Ringing*, as well as glissandi and constant changes in dynamic in both works very effectively evoke and reflect the various brush strokes techniques used in Chinese calligraphy, an art form which has been a profound source of inspiration to him and his compositional approach. Analyses of Chong’s *I Hear the Wind Calling* and *Shui.Mo*, and Yii’s *Wild Cursive* and *My Ears are Still Ringing* illustrate the composers’ individualistic and unique ways in mediating Chinese elements such as the concept of *qi* and *li*, the variation of brush strokes through the use of echo effect, Aeolian-sound and air sound. These analyses of Yii’s and Chong’s compositions illustrate their programmatic approaches to evoking the sense of *qi*, *li*, darkness and light, solidity and hollow, space-consciousness and depth and perspective, the essential elements of Chinese calligraphy and painting.

4.2 The Chinese Orchestra and Its Instruments

This section now examines the assimilation of the second Chinese cultural elements: the Chinese orchestra and its instruments. The use of Chinese orchestra and traditional instruments is perhaps the most direct route to negotiating Chinese cultural elements in European-derived compositions, due to their recognisable appearances, timbre, aesthetics and performance techniques. It has been identified that two of the five selected Malaysian composers, Chong and Yii, incorporate Chinese orchestra and its instruments into their compositions. To Chong and Yii, the use of Chinese orchestra is part of their compositional journey to discover, or perhaps re-discover, their Chinese heritage and roots. Chong (2016: 21) stated that ‘[his] symbolic use of Chinese instruments [represents] the legacy of Eastern traditions’, while Yii acknowledged the use of Chinese traditional instruments to be ‘inspired by the most basic cultural roots’ (Kah Hoe Yii, pers. comm. 15 January, 2013).

The Chinese orchestra was developed in the early 20th century at a time when western influences became prominent in China. In the 1930s, many Chinese music students who had

studied overseas brought back innovative ideas to ‘update’ the traditional music in China. This resulted in ‘a synthesis of Chinese and Western music’, marking the birth of Chinese orchestra (Matusky and Tan 2004: 364). In the 1960s, this ‘Chinese sound’ attracted Chinese migrants in Malaysia and Singapore where ‘voluntary associations such as clan associations, Chinese school musical clubs and alumni clubs, and political and religious groups’ began organising the formation of local Chinese orchestras (Tan 2004: 120). The Chinese orchestra is known by other names in different countries: ‘*minzu yuedui* [民族乐队] (national orchestra) in Mainland China; *zhongyue tuan* [中乐团] (Chinese orchestra) in Hong Kong; *guoyue tuan* [国乐团] (Chinese orchestra) in Taiwan’; and ‘*huayue tuan* [华乐团] (Chinese orchestra) in Malaysia’ (Tan 2000: 107; Thrasher and Stock n.d.). The Chinese orchestra has four sections: bowed strings, plucked and struck strings, winds and percussion (Matusky and Tan 2004: 365-366; Tan 2004: 121; Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017).

Bowed string instruments

The generic term to refer to all bowed string instruments of the *huayue tuan*, the Malaysian term for a Chinese orchestra, is *huqin* [胡琴]. The word *huqin*, according to Matusky and Tan (2004: 366), means ‘violin from non-Chinese’ or ‘barbarians’, making reference to the importation of the instruments from Central Asian origins by foreigners. The bowed string section is further divided into three sections: treble, tenor and bass. Each section has similar functions to that of the strings section of its western counterpart. The treble and tenor *huqin* are two-stringed and have similar appearances, differentiated by size depending on their natural pitch range. Treble and tenor *huqin* have a long vertical stick neck with two large tuning pegs at the top. The resonator, which may be octagonal, tubular or hexagonal, is located at the bottom of the neck. One end of the resonator is usually covered with snakeskin, with the bridge set on the snakeskin. The *huqin* instruments seen in modern Chinese orchestra now have steel strings instead of the traditional silk strings, allowing a ‘more durable and smoother...sound across the whole register’ (Titon 1992: 426). The treble *huqin* consists of *erhu*¹¹⁴ [二胡], *banhu*¹¹⁵ [板胡] and *gaohu*¹¹⁶ [高胡], while the tenor section *huqin* is called

¹¹⁴ The two strings of the *erhu* are commonly tuned to D and A, although may be altered based on the requirement of compositions. This instrument usually provides tuning for the orchestra on stage prior to the entrance of the conductor, a performance practice that is adapted from the western orchestra. The *erhu* is usually played seated, with the instrument resting on the left thigh. In recent years, many *erhu* soloists find ways, by incorporating belts to the instrument, to allow the instrument to be played while standing. The horse-haired bow is inserted between the two strings and rosined on both sides. The player pushes the bow outward and inward to sound the two strings respectively. As such, double stopping is infrequently applied in performances; although it is possible perform this technique by bowing one string with the bow hair and the other with the bow stick. The

the *zhonghu*¹¹⁷ [中胡] and the bass *huqin* includes *gehu* [革胡] and *diyin gehu* or bass *gehu* [低音革胡]¹¹⁸ (Figure 4.33), the latter two of which are occasionally referred to as Chinese cello and Chinese double bass respectively.

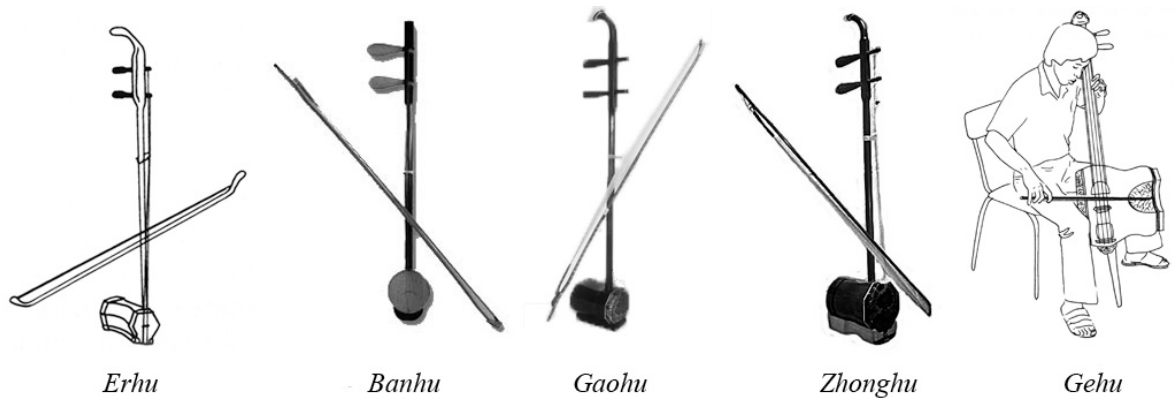


Figure 4.33. Bowed string instruments. Sources: *Erhu* and *gehu* – Matusky and Tan 2004: 374. *Banhu* and *zhonghu* – Summer Thunder Asian Music Club (n.d.). *Gaohu* – Echoerhu (n.d.).

sound created is seen as a ‘sound effect’ due to its aggressiveness (Tung 2015; Thrasher and Stock n.d.). In Chinese orchestra, the erhu section is commonly divided into *erhu* I and *erhu* II, akin to that of the violin I and violin II in the western orchestra.

¹¹⁵ The *banhu* not only looks very similar to the *erhu*, but is also played seated with the instrument rested on the left thigh. The *banhu* has a wooden board resonator, instead of the snakeskin used to cover the *erhu*.

¹¹⁶ The *gaohu* is constructed similarly to the *erhu* but with a smaller soundboard, and its two strings are tuned higher, to G and D (Thrasher and Stock n.d.).

¹¹⁷ The *zhonghu* belongs to the same *huqin* family, with a slightly larger resonator. It is lower in pitch, as the two strings are tuned to G and D, A and E or sometimes D and A, depending on the instrument (Matusky and Tan 2004: 367).

¹¹⁸ Both bass *huqin* are newly-developed in the 20th century, designed as fusions of the *huqin*, cello and double bass, with the intention of addressing the lack of bass string instruments among Chinese traditional instruments. The *gehu* and *diyin gehu* have four strings, tuned to C G D A and E A D G respectively. Unlike the treble and tenor *huqin*, the bridge of the bass *huqin* sits on the side of the resonator. In many Chinese orchestra, the *gehu* and *diyin gehu* are replaced by the cello and double bass (Matusky and Tan 2004: 367; Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017).

Plucked or struck string instruments

This section of the Chinese orchestra comprises plucked string instruments and struck string instrument. The plucked string instruments are *pipa*¹¹⁹ [琵琶], *liuqin*¹²⁰ [柳琴], *yueqin*¹²¹ [月琴], *ruan*¹²² [阮], *sanxian*¹²³ [三弦], and *guzheng*¹²⁴ [古筝]. The only struck string instrument in Chinese orchestra is the *yangqin*¹²⁵ [扬琴] (Matusky and Tan 2004: 368) (Figure 4.34).



Figure 4.34. Plucked or struck string instruments. Sources: *Pipa*, *yueqin* and *sanxian* – Matusky and Tan 2004: 375. *Liuqin* – House of Instrumentz (n.d.). *Ruan* – Summer Thunder Asian Music Club (n.d.). *Guzheng* and *yangqin* – Larkinam (n.d.).

¹¹⁹ The *pipa* is a four-stringed instrument tuned to A D E A. It has a pear-shaped shallow wooden body with between 20 and 27 frets, and is played with all fingers of the right hand. The performer is seated, with the instrument held almost vertical, and wears plectrums on 4 fingers although not on the thumb. The redesign of the *pipa* in the 1950s led to great improvements in the instruments including a wider dynamic range from *pp* to *ff*, and a more diverse tonal colour, performance technique and texture (Matusky and Tan 2004: 368; Denburg n.d.; S. Wong n.d.).

¹²⁰ The *liuqin* is smaller than, though otherwise identical to the *pipa*, which gives it a higher register. The *liuqin* have three or four strings (tuned G D G D) and are played with a plectrum (Thrasher n.d.b; Matusky and Tan 2004: 368-369).

¹²¹ The *yueqin*, also known as the ‘moon zither’ or ‘moon guitar’, has a round, hollow wooden body with a short fretted neck. It has four strings tuned to a pair of A and a pair of D to allow for louder dynamics. The strings are plucked with a spectrum.

¹²² Like the *yueqin*, the *ruan* has a round body and four strings that run along the relatively longer fretted neck. Two different sizes of *ruan* are commonly used in Chinese orchestra: *zhongruan* [中阮] (tenor *ruan*) and *daruan* [大阮] (bass *ruan*). The tenor *ruan* is tuned to G D G D or G D A E, and the bass *ruan* is tuned to D A D A or C G D A (Matusky and Tan 2004: 369; Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017; Thrasher n.d.i).

¹²³ The *sanxian*, which translates literally as ‘three strings’, is a three-stringed fretless plucked lute. Similar to instruments in the *huqin* family, the *sanxian* has a long neck with a resonator box at the bottom end, covered with snakeskin. The strings are tuned to G D G and played with a plectrum (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017).

¹²⁴ The Chinese zither *guzheng* has movable bridges and between 12 and 21 strings. The strings are generally tuned to an anhemitonic major pentatonic scale (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017; Thrasher n.d.e).

¹²⁵ The only struck string instrument in the Chinese orchestra is the hammered dulcimer *yangqin*. Thrasher (n.d.h) describes the instrument thus: ‘The traditional instrument shell is trapezoidal in shape, with rounded ends and fluted sides of hardwood, its resonating chamber covered with a thick soundboard of white pine or other softwood.’ The strings, held with bridges, are struck with two bamboo beaters called *qinzhū* [琴竹] (Thrasher n.d.h).

Wind instruments

The Chinese orchestra divides its wind section into four categories: (i) instruments ‘with the airstream passing through the holes, such as the *di*¹²⁶ [笛], *xiao*¹²⁷ [箫], *xun*¹²⁸ [埙] and *paixiao*¹²⁹ [排箫]’; (ii) instruments ‘with a double-reed, such as the *suona*¹³⁰ [唢呐] and the *guan*¹³¹ [管]’; (iii) instruments ‘with a reed, such as the *sheng*¹³² [笙], *bawu*¹³³ [巴乌], and *hulusi*¹³⁴ [葫芦丝]’; and (iv) instruments ‘sounded by reverberation of the lips¹³⁵, such as the conch, the ox horn and the brass horn’ (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2007).

¹²⁶ The *di* or *dizi* is a transverse bamboo flute comparable to the western flute. It has six finger holes, a membrane hole and a mouth-hole or blow-hole on the upper surface. Three types of *di* can be found in Chinese orchestra: *qudi* [曲笛], *bangdi* [梆笛] and *xindi* [新笛]. The usual range of the *qudi*, Thrasher (n.d.c) explains, ‘is two octaves and one tone (a’ to b’’’)’. The *bangdi* is shorter than the *qudi*. The longer *qudi* is normally associated with ‘slow and lyrical melodies of the Jiangnan region’, whereas the shorter *bangdi* has a more animated and lively style (Thrasher n.d.c). The *xindi*, which literally means ‘new flute’, is a more modern invention, emerging in the 1930s. Its 11-hole design is created with the equal temperament concept in mind, and as such the flute is fully chromatic (Thrasher n.d.c).

¹²⁷ The *xiao*, a vertical notched end-blown flute, is generally constructed of bamboo with five finger holes on the front surface and a thumb-hole at the back, similar to the western recorder, and has a two-octave range (Thrasher n.d.f).

¹²⁸ The *xun* is egg-shaped and made of baked clay, much like an ocarina. It has a blow-hole at the top with three to eight finger holes on the frontal in various patterns. Due to its size, it has a smaller range of an octave (Thrasher n.d.g).

¹²⁹ The *paixiao* is a type of Chinese panpipe. Bamboo tubes, between 16 and 24 in number, are bound together to form the instrument. The *paixiao* fell out of use in ancient China but was revived in the 20th century (Alves 2013: 293).

¹³⁰ The conical double-reed *suona* is highly recognisable by its loud, piercing and high-pitched sound. The scalloped wooden body is connected to a detachable brass bell at the bottom end with a metal mouthpiece on the top. Matusky and Tan (2004: 371) note that ‘the *suona* is always called the Chinese oboe because the principle of producing sound is the same as the oboe’. Four types of *suona* can be found in a Chinese orchestra: *gaoyin suona* [高音唢呐] (soprano *suona*); *zhongyin suona* [中音唢呐] (alto *suona*); *cizhongyin suona* [次中音唢呐] (tenor *suona*); and *diyin suona* [低音唢呐] (bass *suona*) (Raine-Reusch 2010: 81; Gunde 2002: 94; Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017).

¹³¹ The *guan* is the other double-reed instrument in a Chinese orchestra. Jones (n.d.) describes the *guan* as ‘made of a short tube of wood, with seven frontal finger-holes, one (or sometimes two) thumb-holes and a large double reed...protruding from the mouth of the instrument’. Unlike the conical *suona*, the *guan*, also known as *guanzi* has a cylindrical bore which gives the instrument its mellow and distinctive sound. *Gaoguan* [高音管] (soprano *guan*), *zhongguan* [中管] (alto *guan*) and *diguan* [低音管] (bass *guan*) are the three common forms of *guan* used in Chinese orchestra (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017).

¹³² The Chinese mouth organ *sheng* consists of a bowl-shaped air chamber constructed of metal (or wood). 17, or occasionally more, bamboo pipes of various lengths are inserted into the air chamber in a circular formation. Each pipe consists a finger hold which must be covered in order for the reed to vibrate and produce sound when blown. The *sheng* is able to produce a chromatically complete scale as well as creating chord voicing. Chinese orchestras may employ three different varieties of *sheng*: *gaoyin sheng* [高音笙] (soprano *sheng*), *cizhongyin sheng* [次中音笙] (tenor *sheng*) and *diyin sheng* [低音笙] (bass *sheng*) (Matusky and Tan 2004: 370-371; Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra 2017).

¹³³ The *bawu* is a single-reed instrument that functions acoustically in a similar way to the clarinet. Like many other Chinese aerophones, the *bawu* is constructed of bamboo, and has seven or eight frontal finger-holes, with or without dorsal thumb-hole (Thrasher n.d.a.; Raine-Reusch 2010: 67).

¹³⁴ The final single reed instrument is the *hulusi*. Its wind chamber is made from a gourd. A bamboo pipe with six finger holes is attached to the bottom of the gourd. Two drone pipes are attached on each side of this bamboo pipe. Both the *bawu* and the *hulusi* have relatively ‘soft and reedy’ tone quality (Thrasher n.d.d; Raine-Reusch 2010: 68).

¹³⁵ The instruments in this final category are rarely used in Chinese orchestra. They are not employed in the selected work by any of the Malaysian composers in this study, and therefore not discussed here.



Figure 4.35. Wind instruments. Sources: *Di* – Matusky and Tan 2004: 375. *Xiao* – Summer Thunder Asian Music Club (n.d.). *Xun* – OnMusic Dictionary 2013. *Paixiao* – Cultural China (n.d.a). *Suona*, *guan*, *sheng*, *bawu* and *hulusi* – Larkinam (n.d.).

The layout of the Chinese orchestra, like its western counterpart, may vary from one orchestra to the other, but Figure 4.36 provides a general idea of the placement of each instrument.

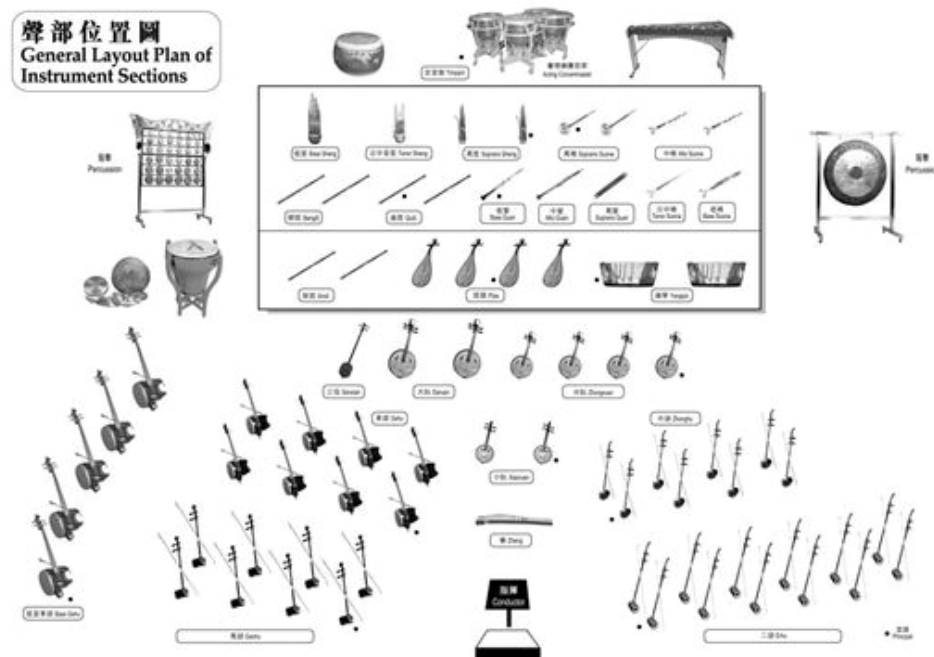


Figure 4.36. Chinese orchestra layout (Carnegie Hall 2009)

As seen in Figure 4.36, the strings are placed at the front, with the wind sections in the centre back position, and the percussion along the back. The Chinese orchestra only came to the attention of Chinese Malaysian in 1960s, during the period in which Malaysian contemporary music was taking root. One of the first known Malaysian compositions that assimilates Chinese orchestra or instruments is Yii's *Inang* for Chinese orchestra, composed in 2005. Since Yii's *Inang*, an increasing number of composers have written for Chinese orchestra and instruments, mainly by composer with Chinese background. This includes another Chinese Malaysian composer in this study, Chong, as well as other composers of Chinese ethnicity including Kup Hiang Neo, Tze Siew Teh, and Chee Wai Wong. It is noted that the other focus composer with Chinese ethnicity of this study, Ng, has not written for Chinese orchestra or its instrument. This is most probably due to the fact that Ng mainly writes for piano, the instrument he is most familiar with. Ng, in fact, calls himself a 'hobby composer' who writes 'what [he] feel[s], what inspires [him]' (Classical Music Asia 2012).

This section now examines four compositions by Chong and Yii: Chong's *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* – for *sheng*, *pipa*, *guzheng* and 10 western instruments (2005) and *Xun Feng* [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*pipa*, *guzheng*, *dizi* and *sheng*) and Chinese orchestra (2013); and Yii's *Bayang* for *wayang kulit* and Chinese orchestra (2008).

4.2.1 Chong

***Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* – for *sheng*, *pipa*, *guzheng* and 10 western instruments (2005)**

Chong, as expressed in his 2016 dissertation, has only begun to exploit traditional Chinese instruments in his compositions since 2005. In the period between 1994 and 2004, he focused solely on 'Western instrumentation to study all its potentials' (Chong 2016: 13). The first work in which Chong brings together Chinese instruments and his European-derived compositional approach is *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* –, composed in 2005. In his dissertation, Chong uses this work as a case study for the concept of spatialisation and sonic mobility in his oeuvres. This section, however, focuses on Chong's use of Chinese instruments as well as the metamorphosis of musical ideas.

Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer – (hereafter: *Metamorphosis VI*) is written for three Chinese instruments: *sheng*, *pipa* and *guzheng*, and 10 western instruments including violin,

viola, cello, double bass, harp, flute, clarinet, oboe, percussion and piano. The work was dedicated to the Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam and was the winner of the 2005 Nieuw Ensemble's Young Chinese Composer Competition.

As previously stated in Chapter 4.1.1, *Metamorphosis VI* is based on Chong's earlier work *I Hear the Wind Calling*. As the title suggests, this piece is based on the musical concept of metamorphosis. The subtitle of *Metamorphosis VI*, 'Wind Prayer', makes direct reference to *I Hear the Wind Calling*, with both works focussing on wind as the main subject. Chong (2005: 6) writes:

Last July 2005, during my stay in Lyo Island, a little island in Denmark, I rework and convey my derivation of idea [sic] on my previous piece "I Hear the Wind Calling" for western instrument ensemble.

The main musical idea of the previous composition is remains [sic]; this new work is more than just a variation; it is a sublimation or mutation from the same musical idea or emotional condition evident in the previous composition.

Despite being Chong's first composition bringing together Chinese instruments and his European-derived compositional idioms, *Metamorphosis VI* is sophisticated in the interweaving of the two different sound worlds through various compositional tools. Employing *I Hear the Wind Calling* as a platform for experimentation, Chong uses *Metamorphosis VI* to bring together the aesthetics and sound textures of three Chinese instruments and the western sound world more familiar to him. This section investigates Chong's strategies in incorporating Chinese instruments in *Metamorphosis VI*, and then examines the 'sublimation' and 'mutation' of the 'same musical idea' referred to by the composer in his comparison to *I Hear the Wind Calling*. It is strongly believed that these two compositional approaches are linked with one another. In other words, the 'mutation' or, as the 2005 work title suggests, 'metamorphosis' of musical ideas from *I Hear the Wind Calling* assists the introduction of Chinese instruments in *Metamorphosis VI*.

Similarly to *I Hear the Wind Calling*, *Metamorphosis VI* begins with the off-stage flautist playing a F# Aeolian-sound note. As in *I Hear the Wind Calling*, this is accompanied by the silently depressed clustered notes in the piano part, held by the *sostenuto* pedal. The subsequent musical materials of the opening section, however, differ from *I Hear the Wind*

Calling. The flautist begins an extensive exploitation of different sonic possibilities using various extended techniques including jet whistle¹³⁶, Aeolian-sound, gradual changes in intensity and speed of vibratos, flutter tonguing, multiphonics, whistle tone and internal trills over 15 bars. The clarinet enters softly in bar 3 with a *crescendo* multiphonic note. The multiphonic technique in the clarinet, coupled with the jet whistling of the flute part, produce a slight nasal sonic effect which leads smoothly into the introduction of the *sheng* in bar 4. The very quiet entrance of the *sheng* part contributes to the seamless transference of tonal colour from the clarinet (Figure 4.37).

Figure 4.37. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* –, bars 1 to 4 (Chong 2005: 1)



The second Chinese instrument, *guzheng*, is introduced in the next bar. The piano plays a major role in the preparation for the *guzheng* entrance. The clustered notes that are held by the *sostenuto* pedal from the start create an array of overtones when the pianist plays the *staccatissimo* semiquavers with *sffz* (*sforzato*) in bar 5 (Figure 4.38). This appears to be a sonic reminder of the *sheng* introduced earlier. At the same time, the *guzheng* glissando over strings behind the bridge, creating a sound effect similar to that of glissando on actual piano strings. This gives an aural illusion that the pianist is playing inside the piano.

¹³⁶ Jet whistle is ‘a breathy flute sound that varies from a short, violent “shriek” to a very soft, sustained sound. A jet whistle is produced when the player places the mouth over the embouchure hole and blows a stream of air into the flute. The pitch, tone quality, volume, and duration of the jet whistle are affected by the choice of fingering, breath pressure, vowel shape of the mouth, and angle of the embouchure hole relative to the lips’ (MacLagan 2009: 96).

Figure 4.38. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* –, bars 5 to 7 (Chong 2005: 2)

The harp’s arpeggiated chord in the following bar, played near the sounding board (marked ‘T’), continues the plucked string sonic effect. Chong’s ingenious exploitation of timbral effect here between the piano, *guzheng*, and the harp can be heard within the first minute of Track 15.

The third and final Chinese instrument to be presented is the *pipa*. It has arguably the most distinctive sound among the three Chinese instruments. Chong brings in the *pipa* in bar 9 (1’25” of Track 15) with its unique strumming technique known as *gun* [滚], following by another iconic *pipa* sonic effect created by the *lun* [轮] technique.¹³⁷ The oboe *sfz* multiphonic note, the rapid demisemiquavers figure of the bass drum and the ricochet *col legno*¹³⁸ double bass notes are utilised to support the entrance of the *pipa* in bar 9 (Figure 4.39). Similar sophisticated timbral interactions between instruments are found throughout *Metamorphosis VI*.

¹³⁷ The *gun* technique, marked , is a tremolo created by fast paced and continuous plucking and flicking of all four strings; while the *lun*, also a tremolo marked , refers to a five-finger roll on one string commonly used to prolong a melodic note duration (Denburg n.d.: 4, S. Wong n.d.: 28-29).

¹³⁸ *Col legno* is an instruction to strike the string with the stick of the bow.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Oboe (Ob.), Pipa, Percussion (Perc.), and Double Bass (D.B.), covering bars 9 and 10. The Oboe part starts at bar 9 with a dynamic of *p*, followed by *sfz*, *pp*, *p*, and *sfz*. The Pipa part has dynamics *ff*, *mp*, and *ff*, with a 3:2 ratio indicated. The Percussion part includes a 'Bass dr.' section with a '5:4' ratio and a 'Susp' section. The Double Bass part has dynamics *sfz* and 'Ric.' markings.

Figure 4.39. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer* –, bars 9 to 10 (Chong 2005: 3)

This section now investigates Chong’s statement about his ‘sublimation’ and ‘mutation’ of the ‘same musical idea’ between *I Hear the Wind Calling* and *Metamorphosis VI*, beginning with a comparison of instrumentation in both works. As shown in Table 4.2, the trombone, trumpet and violin II that appear in *I Hear the Wind Calling* are removed from *Metamorphosis VI*, making way for Chinese instruments *sheng*, *pipa* and *guzheng*. A pair of Zen cymbals has also been added to the percussion section of *Metamorphosis VI*. In addition to changes made to instrumentation, the instrumental layouts of the two works differ slightly from one another. The layout for *I Hear the Wind Calling* is seen in Figure 4.40 while Figure 4.41 presents the layout for *Metamorphosis VI*.

Table 4.2. Comparison of instrumentation in *I Hear the Wind Calling* and *Metamorphosis VI* (Chong 2003: n.p.; Chong 2005: 1)

<i>I Hear the Wind Calling</i>	<i>Metamorphosis VI</i>
Flute (also Thai-gong in B)	Flute (also Thai-gong in B [play with medium hard yarn mallet and coin] and a small portable radio-player)
Clarinet in B \flat (also Thai gong in E)	Clarinet in B \flat (also Thai gong in E [play with medium hard yarn mallet, coin and triangle stick] and a small portable radio-player)
	24 or more reeds soprano <i>sheng</i> (also crotales in F [connected by leather thong and play with metal-head stick] and a small portable radio-player)
Oboe (also Thai gong in A \sharp)	Oboe (also Thai gong in A \sharp [play with medium hard yarn mallet, coin and triangle stick])
	<i>Pipa</i>
Trombone	
Percussion: 2 suspended cymbals (large and medium) Large gong in C (deep) 4 tom-toms Large bass drum 2 bending gongs (Beijing gongs) 3 bongos 2 crotales on stand (F and G \flat) 4 Thai-gongs (F G A \flat C) Temple bowl gong in C \sharp 2 crotales on the 28-29 inch timpano (G \sharp A)	Percussion: 1 pair of Zen cymbals (small) 2 suspended cymbals (large and medium) Large gong in C (deep) 4 tom-toms Large bass drum 2 bending gongs (Beijing gongs) 3 bongos 2 crotales on stand (F and G \flat) 4 Thai-gongs (F G A \flat C) Temple bowl gong in C \sharp 2 crotales on the 28-29 inch timpano (G \sharp A)
	<i>Guzheng</i> (21 string)
Trumpet in C	
Piano	Piano
Double bass	Double bass
Harp	Harp
Violin I (also crotale in F)	Violin (also crotale in C, bow and play with metal stick)
Violin II (also crotale in C)	
Viola (also crotale in C \sharp)	Viola (also crotale in C \sharp)
Cello (also crotale in F \sharp)	Cello (also crotale in F \sharp , bow and play with metal stick)

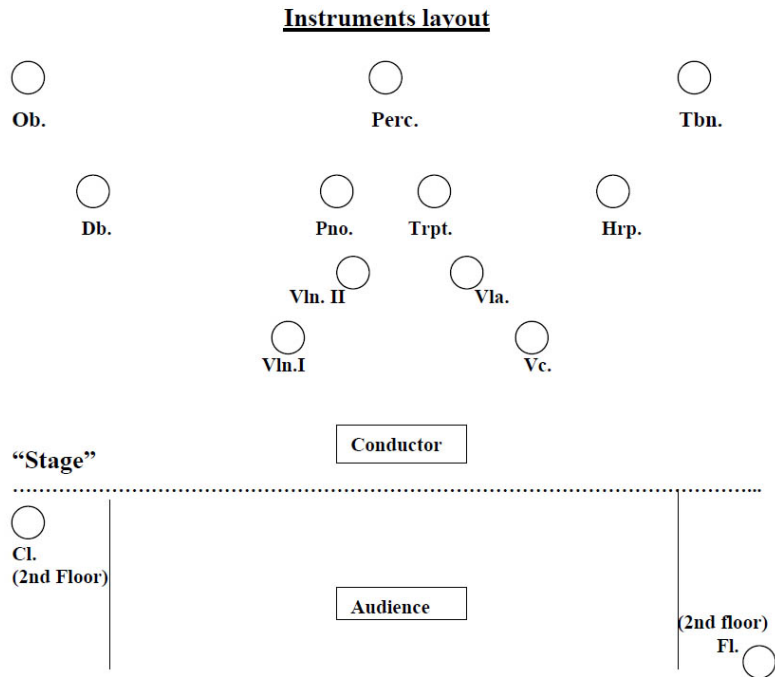


Figure 4.40. Chong – *I Hear the Wind Calling* instruments layout (Chong 2003: n.p.)

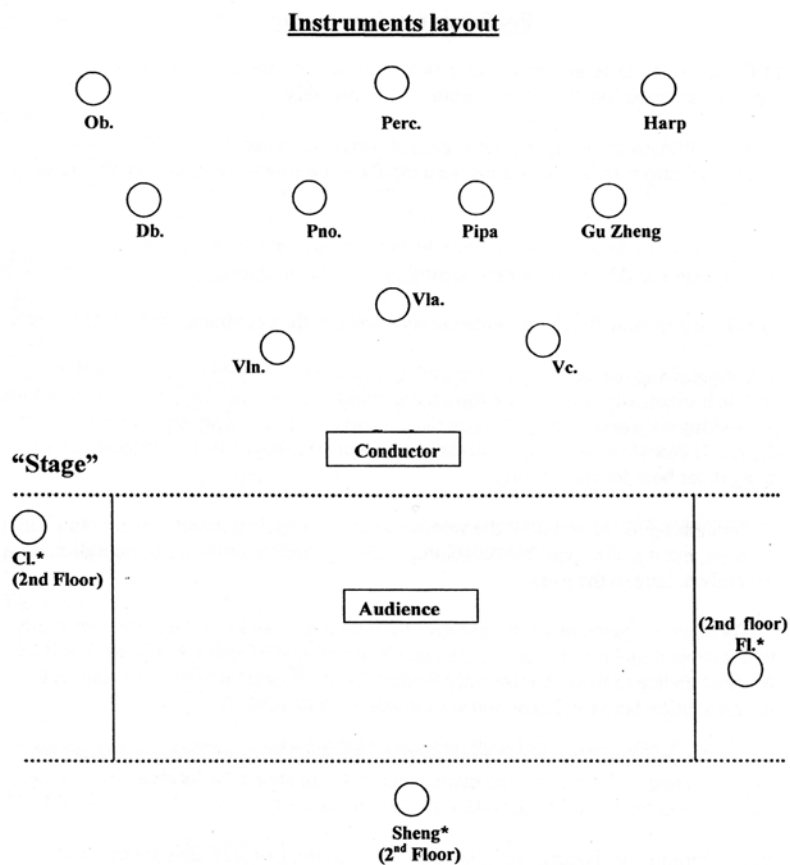


Figure 4.41. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI* instruments layout (Chong 2005: 5)

A comparison of the two instrumental layouts show that minor changes have been made in the *Metamorphosis VI*, compared to the earlier *I Hear the Wind Calling*. The harp has been moved to the back, while the *pipa* and *guzheng* are placed on the far right of the middle row, on stage. The flute and clarinet remain off stage on each side of the hall. The other Chinese instrument, *sheng*, is located at the back of the hall. Chong (2005: 5) emphasises the importance of the on- and off-stage instruments layout:

Please note that the great distance of the off-stage instruments is important for the piece!
For the practicals side of the performance in different concert hall, all of these 3 instruments [clarinet, flute and sheng] can be placed in [sic] the ground floor around audiences, or even possible place them in difference floor [sic]!

The composer's intention for a surround sound-like effect is clear, as he suggests other possible placements of the clarinet, flute and *sheng* when this work is being performed in a venue which may or may not have a similar layout.

Structurally, the two works are noticeably similar. *Metamorphosis VI* begins (Rehearsal Figure A) and ends (Rehearsal Figure J) with newly composed sections. Rehearsal Figures B to I are very similar to the complete *I Hear the Wind Calling*. As previously noted, the first section of *Metamorphosis VI*, Rehearsal Figure A, begins with a delicate and mysterious flute passage. The murmuring clarinet part and the distinctive sonic qualities of the Chinese instruments add to the ethereal and enigmatic atmosphere. The *pipa* melodic figure in bar 16 (Figure 4.42) seamlessly incorporates into *Metamorphosis VI* the opening of *I Hear the Wind Calling* (Figure 4.43).

B ♩ = c.42

16

Ob

Pipa

Perc. 2 Suspended cymbals (L/M)

D.B.

Harp

GZ

Pno

Vln.

Vla

Vc.

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

S sh.

• Trill the harmonic with the fundamental note rapidly.

Figure 4.42. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI*, bars 16 to 18 (Chong 2005: 5)

I hear the wind calling

For ensemble (13 players)

CHONG Kee Yong
(*1971)

Larghissimo ♩ = c.40

On stage

Oboe

Trombone

Percussion: 2 Suspended cymbals (L/M) with wooden head mallet (L) *ppp* with soft yarn mallet (M) *ppp*

Double Bass: Harm. suono reale *ppp* S.vibr. *mp* Sul pont. C.vibr. *pp* Pos. ord. *pp* d'arco punta

Harp: E♭ F♯ G♯ A♭ B♭ C♯ D♯ *mf* 1.v

Trumpet in C

Piano: *mp* P.I. *mp* P.II

Violin I: enter imperceptibly *ppp* Sul pont. bow change ad lib. and imperceptibly.

Violin II

Viola

Cello: Sul pont. *ppp*

Off stage

Flute: (Aeolian-sound) S.vibr. long *pp* C.vibr. *ord.* Flutt. *f p* non flutt. Bend *pp*

Clarinet in Bb: (more air sound) S.vibr. *pp* C.vibr. *ord.* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *sfz* slowly gliss. *sfz*

* Depress the cluster silently.
** Combine the playing pitch with more air sound, but it don't mean toneless!
*** Trill the harmonic with the fundamental note rapidly.

KYCHONG2003

Figure 4.43. Chong – I Hear the Wind Calling, bars 1 to 3 (Chong 2003: 1)

The flute, clarinet, harp, piano, double bass, and percussion parts are identical in the two compositions; while the violin and cello parts have minor adjustments. An arpeggio-figure is added in the *guzheng* part of *Metamorphosis VI* that echoes the harp and piano. This coherence of musical figures between *guzheng*, harp and piano is found throughout *Metamorphosis VI*. The musical materials of the flute, clarinet, harp, piano, double bass, percussion, viola and cello parts remain almost identical to *I Hear the Wind Calling*, but minor adjustments are made to the violin part due to the removal of the second violin from *I Hear the Wind Calling*. The musical figures in the trumpet and trombone of *I Hear the Wind Calling* are being distributed across the newly added Chinese instruments (Figures 4.44 and 4.45).

The violin in *Metamorphosis VI* has adapted the violin II of *I Hear the Wind Calling*. The rhythmic figure of the trumpet (bar 7 of *I Hear the Wind Calling*) falls to the *guzheng* (bar 22 of *Metamorphosis VI*), while the glissando in the *guzheng* echoes the harmonic glissando of the trumpet. The first half of the trumpet melodic motif of *I Hear the Wind Calling* has been taken over by the soprano *sheng* (as marked by the dark blue dotted box of Figures 4.44 and 4.45), and the second by the *guzheng* (as marked by green dotted box of Figures 4.44 and 4.45). The *pipa* carries the rhythmic motif of the trombone, albeit not playing exactly the same notes. Similar adaptations of the trumpet part by the Chinese instruments are employed through the work.

molto accel. $\text{♩} = c.84$ *A tempo* $\text{♩} = c.42$

Ob. 22 (Vibe speed) *pp mp molto espress.* *sf* *sub p*

Pipa *ocche prima* *pp mp p*

Perc. *sempre* *mp p*

D.B. *Harm. sostenute* *falso piana* *ST* *Ric.* *mp*

Hp. *E♭ A1* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

G.Z. *Vibe* *pp* *p* *mp* *sfz* *pp* *molto* *f* *sfz* *pp* *irregolare* *Vibe*

Pno. *sfz* *secco* *sfz* *secco* *(Senza P.I.)*

Vln. *pp* *PO* *SP* *fp* *f* *sub ffp*

Vla. *PO* *SP* *f* *PO* *ST*

Vc. *PO* *SP* *f* *PO* *ST* *sub ffp*

Fl. 22 (Vibe speed) *sfz* *sub p*

B♭ Cl. (Vibe speed) *sfz* *sub p*

S. sh. *mp* *molto espress.* *sfz* *sub p*

Figure 4.45. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI*, bars 22 to 24 (Chong 2005: 7)

accor
rit
Senza tempo
ca 20"
Completely silent

* Produce the white noise-like (like wind) voice "Shh" with a lot of air (inhale & exhale)
 ** Set the radio volume to "mp" frequency to FM, always keep away from any radio stations (white noise!)
 *** very rapid change of radio station

Kee-Yong CHONG
 15/08/2005, Brussels
 rev. 25/11/2005, Kluang

Figure 4.46. Chong – *Metamorphosis VI*, bars 84 to 86 (Chong 2005: 25)

At Rehearsal Figure J (Figure 4.46), the new material in *Metamorphosis VI* features a sudden outburst of energy across all instruments, followed by a section where the oboe, percussion (Thai gongs), harp, *guzheng*, piano, violin and cello parts are marked with ‘resonances.....’ while the flautist, clarinetist and *sheng* player create ‘white noise’ with their portable radios. Simultaneously, the harpist and *guzheng* player are instructed to ‘produce the white noise-like (like wind) voice “Shh” with a lot of air’ (Chong 2005: 25).

In the programme notes to *Metamorphosis VI*, Chong (2005: 6) refers to the adaptation of musical ideas in the later work as a ‘sublimation or mutation’ of his earlier works. The ‘mutations’ are conducted through the change in instrumentations and Chong’s scoring technique to distribute the melodic and rhythmic motifs of *I Hear the Wind Calling*. The addition of the two new sections enhances, perhaps ‘sublimates’, the musical link to the subject matter of ‘wind’. While the resultant sonic effect, particularly with the use of Chinese instruments, distinguishes *Metamorphosis VI* from *I Hear the Wind Calling*, it is also possible to hear the similarities in musical materials and motifs despite the alteration of instrumentations.¹³⁹

Based on a comparison of both works, Chong’s strategy for the metamorphosis of musical material in *Metamorphosis VI*, the composer’s first known attempt at writing for Chinese instruments, is designed to create coherence between the Chinese and western instruments in its sonic effects and sound gestures. It is observed, nonetheless, that Chong’s writing for the Chinese instruments in *Metamorphosis VI* is more conventional in terms of performance techniques and has fewer specific performance instructions than his 2013 work *Xun Feng*, to which this study now turns.

***Xun Feng* [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*pipa*, *guzheng*, *dizi* & *sheng*) and Chinese orchestra (2013)**

Xun Feng [尋風] (Seeking the Wind) is a concerto for 4 Chinese instruments: *pipa* (plucked lute, Figure 4.34), *guzheng* (zither, Figure 4.34), *dizi* (transverse bamboo flute, Figure 4.35) and *sheng* (mouth blown instrument, Figure 4.35) and Chinese orchestra (Track 16). Prior to *Xun Feng*, Chong had composed for Chinese instruments with western ensemble, including previously analysed works *Shui.Mo* (2007) and *Metamorphosis VI* (2005). According to

¹³⁹ For example, see Track 13 for *I Hear the Wind Calling* and Track 15 for *Metamorphosis VI*.

Chong (2016: 36), however, *Xun Feng* is his ‘first composition for traditional instruments...and Chinese orchestra’. The work was commissioned by Chai Found Music Workshop (CFMW) and was dedicated to the CFMW soloists Cheng-Ming Huang, Hui Kuan Lin, Jiuan-reng Yeh, Chung-Hsien Wu, and Lung-Yi Huang, as well as to the CFMW itself. *Xun Feng*, additionally, was written in memory of Chong’s mentor Professor Yu Yan Rao¹⁴⁰ (1933-2010).

As with many of Chong’s works composed in the last decade, the composer has specific seating arrangements for the instruments layout in *Xun Feng* (Figure 4.47). Such instrumental setup, as Chong (2016: 36) explained, ‘is a crucial feature of *Xun Feng*, through which [he aims] to create a sonic landscape that bears resemblance to nature’.

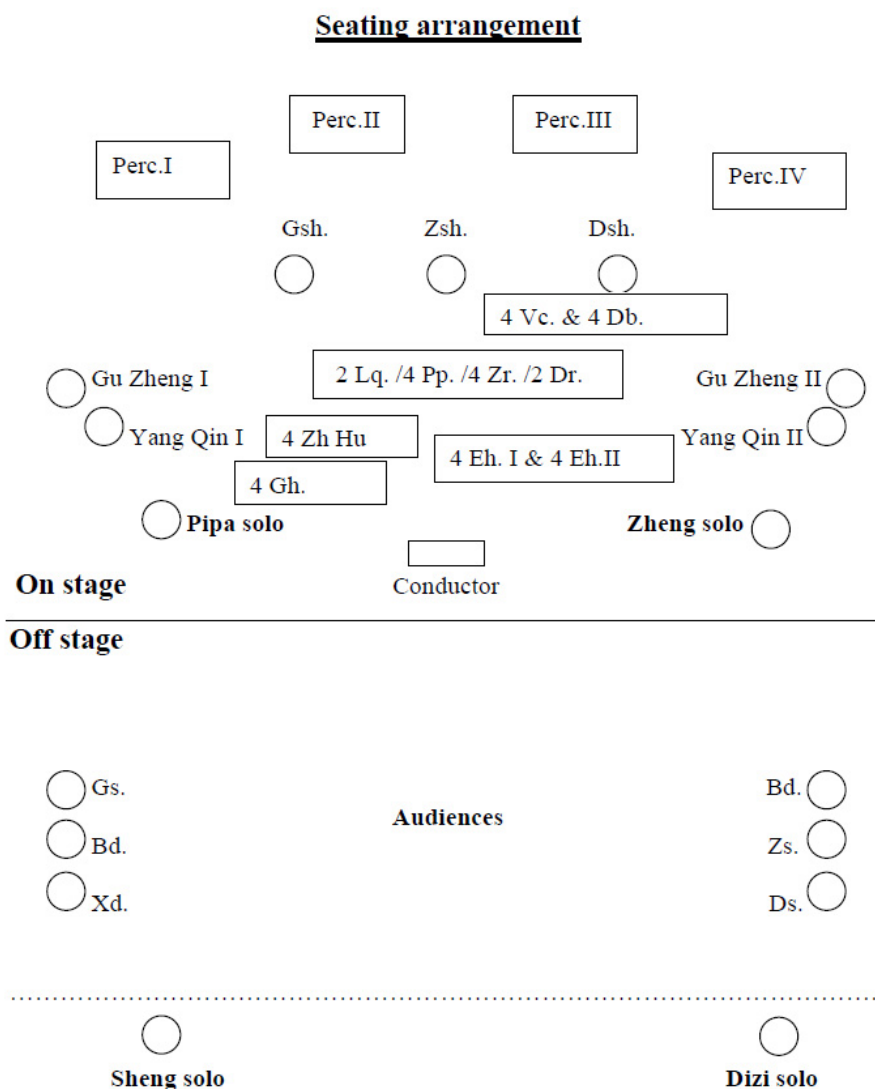


Figure 4.47. Chong – *Xun Feng* instruments layout (Chong 2013: n.p.)

¹⁴⁰ Rao Yu-Yan was a Professor of Composition at the Xi’an Conservatory of Music. Chong studied under Rao’s tutelage at the Xi’an Conservatory of Music.

One major change identified in Chong’s use of Chinese instruments since *Metamorphosis VI* is the specific performance instructions provided in the Chinese language such as ‘*fan zhu*’ [反竹] (*yang qin*: to hit the string with the hard side of the bamboo beaters, Figure 4.48), ‘*ya rou*’ [壓揉] (*gaohu* and *zhonghu*: vibrato, Figure 4.49), ‘*ju qi*’ [鋸氣] (*sheng* solo: a breathing technique, Figure 4.50), ‘*luan tan yin*’ [亂彈音] and ‘*zhu yin*’ [柱音] (*guzheng*: to improvise and to press the bridge with the left hand little finger while plucking with the right hand fingers, Figure 4.51).

The musical score for Figure 4.48 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Yang Qin I, the middle for Gu Zheng I, and the bottom for Yang Qin II. The Gu Zheng I staff has a note marked '(Sounds quartet-tone lower than written!)'. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'ff: secco', 'gliss.', 'arco s.l.', 'enter softly pp dolciss.', 'ord.', 'pizz.', 'Sub. p', and 'espr.'. The Chinese characters '反竹' are circled in the score.

Figure 4.48. Chong – *Xun Feng*, bars 1 to 5 (Chong 2013: 1)

The musical score for Figure 4.49 consists of four staves. The score includes performance instructions such as 'enter softly ppp dolciss.', 'molto espr.', 'f', and 'pp'. The Chinese characters '壓揉' are circled in the score.

Figure 4.49. Chong – *Xun Feng*, bars 4 to 7 (Chong 2013: 1)

Figure 4.50. Chong – *Xun Feng*, bars 12 to 13 (Chong 2013: 2)

Figure 4.51. Chong – *Xun Feng*, bars 64 to 67 (Chong 2013: 11)

As reflected in the comparatively more substantial use of Chinese instrument-specific instructions, the composer has expanded the vocabularies and deepened his understanding of Chinese instrument performance techniques and sonic possibilities since the composition of *Metamorphosis VI*. The composer began experimenting with unusual performance techniques in *Xun Feng*, as can be seen in the *guzheng* part, where musicians are asked to play *arco* (to bow the strings) in Figure 4.52.

It is reasonable to conclude that Chong considers the assimilation of Chinese orchestra and its instruments into his compositional language with the utmost care and respect. In the first work *Metamorphosis VI*, Chong brings together his European-derived tools and his Chinese cultural roots by using *I Hear the Wind Calling* as a platform for the introduction of three Chinese instruments, *sheng*, *pipa* and *guzheng* into his compositional sound world. His approach for these instruments is comparatively more conventional in their performance techniques. In comparison, *Xun Feng* demonstrates the maturation of Chong’s compositional

approach for Chinese orchestra and its instruments. There are more Chinese instrument-specific instructions, and Chong has begun to expand the sonic possibilities of these Chinese instruments. It is anticipated that the composer will continue to widen his compositional idioms and sonic possibilities with the Chinese orchestra and its instruments in future compositions.

The musical score for Chong's *Xun Feng*, bars 1 to 4, is organized into several sections:

- Center-right (on stage):** Includes Gu Zheng I (with instruction "(Sounds quarter-tone lower than written!)" and "arco s.l."), Yang Qin II (with "反竹" and "gliss."), and Gu Zheng II (with "arco s.l.").
- Center-core (on stage):** Includes Liuqin, Pipa, Zhong Ruan (with "(Sounds one octave lower than written)"), and Da Ruan, all with the instruction "Rubbing the strings freely".
- Center-fore (on stage):** Includes Gao Hu, Er Hu I, Er Hu II, and Zhong Hu, with various performance markings like "S.V.", "C.V.", "E.S.P.", "gliss.", and "S.P.". The Cello part includes "Seagull effect" and "Tutti IV".
- Fore-Left (on stage):** Pipa solo (with "(Sounds quarter-tone lower than written!)").
- Fore-Right (on stage):** Gu Zheng solo (with "arco s.l.").

Dynamic markings include *ppp*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *pp*. Performance directions include "enter softly", "dolciss.", "ord.", "secco", "espr.", "arco", "pizz.", "lv", and "gliss.". The score also features various musical notations such as glissandos, accents, and specific articulation marks.

Figure 4.52. Chong – *Xun Feng*, bars 1 to 4 (Chong 2013: 1)

4.2.2 Yii

Bayang for wayang kulit and Chinese orchestra (2008)

As the title reveals, in *Bayang for wayang kulit and Chinese orchestra* Yii has assimilated both *wayang kulit*¹⁴¹ and Chinese cultural elements, including Chinese orchestra. Most of the musical materials written for the Chinese orchestra throughout *Bayang* fit within the usual performance techniques and practices of standard Chinese orchestra repertoire. In *Bayang*, such techniques include repeated notes, tremolos and trill-like figures, particularly for the plucked and struck strings, which are not able to sustain notes in the manner of the bowed strings or the wind instruments, as well as glissandi, long sustained notes, and scalar figures. The string instruments are also treated as percussive instruments, as shown in the circled areas of Figure 4.53, by knocking the body of the plucked or struck strings instrument or, in the case of bowed strings, by the performer tapping the chamber's skin with their fingers.

The image displays a musical score for Figure 4.53, covering bars 279 to 284. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format. The instruments listed on the left are: Lq (Lute), Yq (Yueqin), Pp.I (Pipa I), Pp.II (Pipa II), Zhr (Zhuhan), Dr (Drum), Kk (Konghou), Perc. 1-4 (Percussion), and Timp (Timpani). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *ff*, *mf*). Several circled areas highlight specific percussive techniques: 'knock the body of instrument' (circled around the Lute and Drum staves), 'play at wooden part of yangqin' (circled around the Yueqin staff), 'tones cluster, hit low register by palm' (circled around the Konghou staff), and 'tap the chamber's skin with finger' (circled around the bowed string staves). An 'accel' marking is present above the Percussion and bowed string staves, with a tempo change to '♩ = c. 108'. The score concludes with a 'tap bow on bows' instruction.

Figure 4.53. Yii – *Bayang*, bars 279 to 284 (Yii 2008b: 47)

¹⁴¹ For discussion, see Chapter 2.

The *pipa* notes here are crossed with diagonal lines (see dotted rectangular box at bar 281 in Figure 4.53), and a symbol that looks like the letter L is marked above *pipa* II *sffz* notes. The diagonal line is a *pipa* forefinger performance technique called *tan* [弹] and the L symbol indicates a musical technique called *pai* [拍] or slap stroke. The former technique *tan*, is where a single sound is produced by the musician plucking the string from right to left. The ways in which the string is plucked creates various sound textures (Wong, S. n.d.: 26). The latter technique, *pai* or slap stroke, is where the thumb plucks the string upwards (Wong, S. n.d.: 31). In the case of *Bayang*, the string is plucked more forcefully, creating a more attack-like sound. Denburg adds that the slap stroke technique ‘creates a fret slap, like a “Bartok” slap *pizzicato*’ (n.d.: 7). Both *tan* and slap stroke are common techniques used in the playing of Chinese string instruments. The unconventional performance techniques and practices of Chinese orchestras in *Bayang*, where musicians are asked to provide vocal elements that serve to create supporting atmosphere to the corresponding scenes have been examined previously in Chapter 3 (Figures 3.34 and 3.35). These directions include instructions such as ‘screaming, howling, shouting while playing!’ and to hum ‘hu’ then gradually opening the mouth to singing ‘ah.

While Malaysian works involving Chinese orchestra and its instruments are currently mainly composed by composers with Chinese heritage, it is likely that, over the coming years, the use of Chinese orchestras and instruments will gain popularity with Malaysian composers with non-Chinese heritage. Malaysians living in such a diverse and multicultural country are constantly being exposed to many different cultures, most notably Malay, Chinese and Indian. Tajuddin, has expressed interest in writing for Chinese instruments, although he was clear that he would only do so after he learns more about the instruments and their tonal colours (Tazul Tajuddin, pers. comm. 3 October, 2013). If Tajuddin’s enthusiasm is shared by his peers and the younger composers whom he influences, then it can be anticipated that Chinese instruments and musical techniques will play an increasingly influential role in the compositional development of Malaysian contemporary music in the coming years.

4.3 Chinese Philosophy

The discipline that became Chinese philosophy, ‘first emerged during the Western Zhou period (ca. 1046–771 BCE), when Chinese people began to develop theoretical concepts in a quasi-systematic fashion to formulate their understanding of the world’ Li (2011). It is not within the scope of this study to examine the development of Chinese philosophies since the Western Zhou period, an immense undertaking that is the basis for an entire scholarly discipline. Instead, this research focuses on two philosophies that are known to have influenced selected Malaysian compositions, *Wuxing* [五行] and *Zhuangzi* [庄子].

Wuxing, also known as Five Elements, Five Agents, or Five Phases, is ‘one of the basic concepts used by the ancient Chinese along with *Qi*, *Ying*, and *Yang*, to explain natural phenomena...[It] is a term which implies something dynamic, ever moving, and transforming in a regular pattern through the operation of *Qi* in nature’ (Ang 2008: 939). The five phases of the *wuxing* are: fire [火], earth [土], metal [金], water [水] and wood [木] (Ang 2008: 940; Ruggles 2013: 53). The five elements mentioned are not tangible substances, but five different abstract ‘representations of *chi* [*qi*’ (Levitt 1999: 21). French (2014: 94) explains *wuxing* through the ‘eternal circular cycle of the seasons’, where the five elements — wood, fire, earth, metal and water — symbolise spring, summer, late summer, autumn and winter respectively. Because the cycle of the seasons has neither a beginning, nor an end, it is thus ‘eternal’. Another interpretation of the *wuxing* relates to the cosmological interaction of the five phases, with a focus on the correlation between the different phases through two cosmic cycles: (i) conquest cycle and (ii) first generation cycle (Wang 2006: 93). Wang explains that:

The conquest cycle is composed of: Wood conquers Earth (by tilling the earth with wooden plows), Earth conquers Water (by damming), Water conquers Fire (by extinguishing it), Fire conquest metal (by melting it), and Metal conquers Wood (by cutting it). The first generation cycle is composed of: Wood generates Fire (by burning), Fire generates Earth (with ash), Earth generates Metal (from ores), Metal generates Water (by melting), and Water generates Wood (by irrigation).

The two cycles show the dynamic interconnectivity of the different ‘phases’ and the importance of their coexistence in ensuring harmony and balance in natural phenomena. Chong specifies the *wuxing* as the source of inspirational for his 2010 work *Yuan-He* [源-和].

The second Chinese philosophy that has inspired Malaysian composers is *Zhuangzi*. It is an ancient book, named for its author Zhuangzi, a philosopher who is believed to have existed around 4th century BCE. It includes tales and anecdotes by Zhuangzi and other writers. Despite his crucial role as one of the founders of Chinese Daoism, little is known about Zhuangzi except what is written in the eponymous book. As Hansen (2014: n.p.) explains, details of Zhuangzi's life within the book should be treated with reservation as the text is known for its 'frequent use of fantasy'. The text is divided into 'the "Inner Chapters" (1-7), the "Outer Chapters" (8-22) and the "Miscellaneous Chapters" (23-33)' (Hansen 2014: n.p.). Zhuangzi, both philosopher and book, have influenced the 2009 composition of *Amorphous* by Ng, so much so that the programme notes include a short excerpt from *Zhuangzi*: 'With every movement there is a change; with every moment there is an alteration' [无动而不变, 无时而不移] (cited from *Zhuangzi*, Chapter 17 *Qiushui* [秋水] [The Floods of Autumn], in Ng 2009b).

4.3.1 Chong

***Yuan-He* [源 - 和] Concerto for 5 Chinese instruments and 5 western instruments (2010)**

Yuan-He is the third work within Chong's '*Yuan*' series and is an example for the assimilation of the *wuxing* philosophy. The first work of the series is *Yuan-Liu* for *sheng*, 2 pianos and 2 percussions, and the second, *Yuan-Fei* for Chinese *dizi* and 5 western instruments. Both earlier works were composed in 2009. *Yuan-He*, dedicated to Ensemble Dragon¹⁴² and Ensemble Het Collectief¹⁴³, is a concerto for five Chinese instruments: *dizi* who also plays the *xun* and *guanzi*, *erhu* who also plays *crotale*¹⁴⁴ in D, *yangqin*, *guzheng* and *sheng*, and five western instrumentalist: flute, violin who also play *crotale* in C#, piano, cello who also play *crotale* in F#, and both B ♭ and bass clarinets. The traditional definition of a concerto 'is generally held to be a piece for one or more soloists and orchestra' (Arnold and Jones n.d.). In a more contemporary sense, 'the word "concerto" has lost any residual formal meaning; it could therefore be used simply to indicate a work with one or more soloists' (Griffiths n.d.). The latter definition of the word 'concerto' is found to be more suited for Chong's *Yuan-He*.

¹⁴² A Chinese traditional chamber music ensemble based in Berlin.

¹⁴³ A five-musician chamber music group based in Brussels. Its members include violinist Wibert Aerts, clarinetist Julien Herve, pianist Thomas Dieltjens, flautist Toon Fret and cellist Martin Vink.

¹⁴⁴ *Crotale* is also known as cymbal.

There are two hidden meanings in the title of the work *Yuan-He*. Translated as ‘origin-harmony’, *Yuan-He* firstly makes reference to ‘origin’, the Chinese cultural root of the composer. The link to Chong’s cultural heritage is apparent, not only with the use of Chinese characters in the work titles, but also through his decision to employ Chinese instruments: *sheng* in *Yuan-Liu*, *dizi* in *Yuan-Fei*, and the five Chinese instruments mentioned in *Yuan-He*. Secondly, the word ‘*he*’ [和] means, as a noun: ‘peace’ and ‘harmony’; as an adverb: ‘togetherness’; as a verb: ‘blend’, ‘mix’, ‘combine’; as conjunction: ‘and’; and as an adjective: ‘harmonious’. The word ‘*he*’, thus, is central to the discussion of the correlation between elements in the Chinese *wuxing*, which plays a vital role in *Yuan-He*. ‘In this piece’, writes Chong (2010: iv), ‘the system of five elements was used for describing interactions and *harmony* relationship between the nature phenomena’ [*emphasis added*]. This discussion, therefore, focuses on unravelling the ‘interactions’ and harmonious ‘relationship’ in *Yuan-He*.

The choice of five Chinese and five western instruments seems unlikely to be by chance, but was undoubtedly influenced by the *wuxing*, or ‘Five Phases’. The selection of instruments was driven by the composer’s aspiration to create harmonious interactions between the instruments, mirroring the interconnectivity of the different elements of *wuxing*. The *dizi* is the Chinese equivalent of flute, and *erhu* is the same to the violin. The piano is chosen due to its sonic possibilities resulting from extended performance techniques, such as muting, plucking, hitting, and glissando across strings inside the piano, which complement the sound of *yangqin* and *guzheng*. Finding a western instrument that can match the uniquely nasal, piercing and loud sound quality of the Chinese mouth organ *sheng* is challenging, and as such, Chong requires the use a combination of cello and clarinet extended techniques to create ‘harmonious interaction’ with the Chinese *sheng*.

As heard in Track 17, the texture of *Yuan-He* is heterophonic, a recognisable characteristic of Chinese traditional and folk music, whereby multiple instruments simultaneously play the same melody, or a variation on that same melody. In Figure 4.54, it can be observed that the *sheng* and violin begin the descending motif, beginning on the E note, on the first beat of bar 19, followed by the *erhu* and bass clarinet on the second beat, starting on the A note. All four parts are marked ‘*rubato* (all ornaments can be very freely!)’ (Chong 2010: 5).

A *Sempre espr e calmo* ♩=c.42

Dr. 17 (improv.) *p~mp* ad lib. () continue in random order & with rubato manner

Fl. 17 Rubato (all ornaments can be very freely!) *pp* *dolciss sempre*

Y.Q. 17 (lower line with normal beater) *f* *p* *mf* ord

G.Z. 17 *p* *mf* *pp* molto espr. slowly gliss. L.v. *mp* *pp*

S.ENG. 17 Rubato (all ornaments can be very freely!) *pp* *mf* *pp* *dolciss. sempre* molto espr.

Fl. 17

Vln. 17 Rubato → S.T. (all ornaments can be very freely!) *pp* *sempre* *dolciss.*

Pno. 17 15^{ma} (on key) pluck strings with fingers *pp* *sempre* *f* *sfz* *P.L.* →

Vc. 17 → S.P. *sfz*

Cl. 17 Rubato (all ornaments can be very freely!) *pp* *dolciss. sempre*

Musical score for Chong - Yuan-He, bars 17 to 24. The score includes parts for Drums (Dr), Erhu (Er-Hu), Yiqin (Y.Q.), Guzheng (G.Z.), Sheng, Flute (Fl), Violin (Vln), Piano (Pno), Viola (Vc), and Bass Clarinet (Bass Cl).

Key performance instructions and dynamics include:

- Drums (Dr):** (d) (d) (d) stop as though torn off f
- Erhu (Er-Hu):** mf
- Yiqin (Y.Q.):** (lower line with normal beater) f p ord. mf
- Guzheng (G.Z.):** gliss. (freely) f $p < mp > pp$ mp sfz mf p
- Sheng:** mf
- Flute (Fl):** Jet whistle (mouth over embouchure) pp sfz pp mf "breathy"
- Violin (Vln):** P.O. mf
- Piano (Pno):** pp sempre f sfz $p. II$
- Viola (Vc):** pp mf pp sfz
- Bass Clarinet (Bass Cl):** mf

Figure 4.54. Chong – Yuan-He, bars 17 to 24 (Chong 2010: 5-6).

The freedom in ornamentation expression given to the four musicians ultimately leads to slight variations of the same melody, being played at the same time producing heterophonic texture. It is interesting to note that the instruments playing this downward melodic line are considered counterparts of each other: strings: *erhu* and violin, and winds: *sheng* and bass clarinet (Figure 4.54). In the case of the Chinese instruments, the *sheng*, a wind instrument, enters before the *erhu*, a string instrument. Contrastingly, in the western instrument group, the string instrument, violin, enters ahead of the wind instrument, the bass clarinet. Looking at this relationship from a different perspective, it can be interpreted that the violin is treated as equivalent to the *erhu*, with a similar equivalence between the *sheng* and bass clarinet, whereby the first instrument represents the earlier entry and the second the later entry (Figure 4.55). This provides the impression of interlocking connection between the Chinese and western instruments, which mirrors the *wuxing* ‘interaction’ Chong hopes to create in *Yuan-He*.

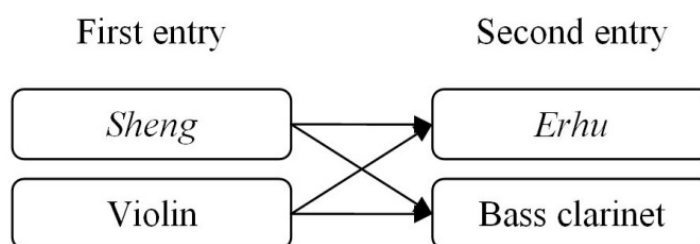


Figure 4.55. Correlations between instruments in Rehearsal Figure A, *Yuan-He*

Figure 4.54 also highlights the sustained notes of the *sheng*, violin and cello. The *sheng* and cello share the same sustained note ‘A’, while the violin plays a different note, ‘D’. The violin part is marked ‘S.T.’, *sul tasto* [on the fingerboard]. *Sul tasto* ‘produces a sound with weaker high harmonics than normal playing [which is to bow] between fingerboard and bridge’ (Scholes 1991: 995; Wolfe n.d.). The cello part, in contrast, is directed ‘S.P.’, *sul ponticello*, instructing the cellist to ‘bow as close to the bridge as possible – so greatly diminishing the intensity of the lower overtones in favour of the higher’ (Scholes 1991: 820). The resultant sonic outcome of the combination of violin and cello produces tonal colours that blend harmoniously with the timbre of *sheng*.

Another interesting compositional arrangement made by Chong in Figure 4.54 is the ‘interactions’ between the other five instruments: *dizi*, *yangqin*, *guzheng*, flute, and piano. Rehearsal Figure A sees the entrance of the piano in its higher pitch register, playing a

simple-2 note motif, which is then joined by the *guzheng* melody and the *dizi* improvisatory figures. The *guzheng* pentatonic melodic figure introduced in bar 18 is characterised by various Chinese musical traits including: flexibility in time, as represented by the use of triplet and quintuplet; nuances in pitches and inflections of tone; and the instruction '*molto espr.* 'meaning 'to play expressively'. The *yangqin* engages with the now-ornamented 2-note piano motif at the end of the *guzheng* glissando in bar 19. The *dizi* improvisatory line ends abruptly at bar 23, marked by Chong to 'stop as though torn off' (Chong 2010: 6). This sudden ending of the *dizi* part is augmented by the *sfz* jet whistle by the flute. While the *erhu*, *sheng*, violin and bass clarinet harmoniously present their heterophonic melodies, the other instruments produce a vast array of tonal colours that add to the simple yet sophisticated sonic spectrum of *Yuan-He*.

Analysis of Rehearsal Figure C (Figure 4.56) provides further support of the argument that Chong's selection of instruments, based on sonic qualities, for *Yuan-He* is a display of the relationship of *wuxing* elements.

(all ornaments can be very freely!)

Rubato

pp dolciss. sempre

(all ornaments can be very freely!)

Rubato S.T.

pp dolciss. sempre

ord.

pluck strings *pp* sempre

sfz

ord.

pp *p* *mf* *pp*

molto espr.

slowly gliss.

mp *pp*

mf *sfz*

ad lib. (* *)

(improv.)

p ~ *mp*

continue in random order & with rubato manner

(all ornaments can be very freely!)

Rubato

pp dolciss. sempre

(on keys)

f *p* *mf*

pp

(P.I.)

P.I.

Rubato (all ornaments can be very freely!)

sfz *pp* dolciss. sempre

37

Dz

Er-Hu

Y.Q

G.Z

Sheng

Fl

Vln

Pno

Vc

Bass Cl

mf

mf

ppp sempre

f

sfz

f

p

mp

pp

sfz

mf

p

"Mu yin"

stop as though torn off

f

mf

mf

f

p

mf

mf

f

pp

f

pp

gliss. (freely)

loco

slap tongue!

P.I

P.II

Figure 4.56. Chong – Yuan-He, bars 33 to 40 (Chong 2010: 9-10)

The musical figures and motifs of this section are almost identical to those at Rehearsal Figure A, but the roles and interactions of the instruments have been rearranged. The descending melodic line, which was carried in the earlier section by the *sheng* and violin as the first entry, and the *erhu* and bass clarinet as the second entry, is now played by first the *erhu* and cello and then the *dizi* and violin as the second entry. The correlation between instruments that was shown in Figure 4.55 has now been reassigned to that seen in Figure 4.57.

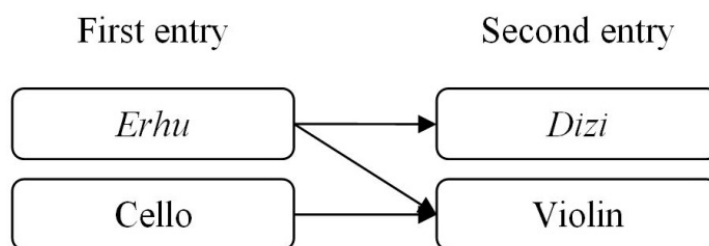


Figure 4.57. Correlations between instruments in Rehearsal Figure C, *Yuan-He*

Figure 4.57 shows that there is no direct link between the cello and *dizi*; they are neither comparable counterpart, nor do they create similar sonic effects. In Rehearsal Figure C, Chong transfers the 2-note figure in the piano part to the *yangqin*, the improvisatory figure of the *dizi* is transferred to the flute, the demisemiquaver line of the *yangqin* is transferred to the piano, and the jet whistle of the flute is substituted by the slap-tonguing technique in the bass clarinet. The *guzheng* part remains the same, while the sustained notes are now found only in the *sheng*. The transfers made by the composer are not random. As mentioned, the *yangqin* and *dizi* are considered comparable counterparts to the piano and flute. The slap-tongue of the bass clarinet serves a similar function to the flute’s jet whistling, which is to provide sonic emphasis to the abrupt ending of the *dizi* part, which is now in the flute part. All of the transfers result in a new set of correlations between the four instruments.

The ‘interactions’ and ‘harmonious relationships’ of *wuxing* elements, as illustrated by the analysis presented, are cleverly embedded into the instrumentations, tonal colourings, and music materials in *Yuan-He*. The sonic outcome is one that showcases the idiosyncratic sound quality of the each instrument without sacrificing the overall ‘harmonious relationship’ between the instruments, which is essential in the Chinese *wuxing*.

4.3.2 Ng

***Amorphous* for string orchestra (2009)**

Amorphous for string orchestra was composed in 2009 for the 2010 STREAMS New Music Festival in Brauweiler, Germany. The string orchestra consists of: 6 first violins; 5 second violins; 4 violas, who also play the crotales; 3 cellos who, again, also play the crotales; and 2 double basses, who also play a pair of Thai gongs. The word ‘amorphous’, as Ng (2009b: n.p.) writes in his programme notes to *Amorphous*, is ‘shapeless; lacking definite form or organization; no distinct crystalline structure’. The composer adds that *Amorphous* presents two contrasting ideas, ‘one from the western scientific world, another from the far-eastern Asian Chinese philosophy’. As previously noted, Ng includes a short excerpt from *Zhuangzi* in the programme notes: ‘With every movement there is a change; with every moment there is an alteration’ (Ng 2009b: n.p.).

As can be heard in Track 18, *Amorphous* is musically unpredictable: there is neither a sense of direction, nor melody, while the concept of time is fluid and relative in the sense that there is no real fixed time signature and pulse. These characteristics are precisely the definition of the title: *Amorphous* is indeed ‘shapeless’, ‘lack[ing] definite form’, and with ‘no distinct structure’. Such fluidity is enhanced by the use of a string orchestra, rather than a wind orchestra, due to the ability of the strings to create uninterrupted sounds without the wind instruments’ limitation of air volume, as wind players, unless applied with circular breathing technique, will need to take gaps to inhale air.

Unlike conventional musical scores, *Amorphous* has no bar numbers. It is instead divided by Rehearsal Figures and, in most cases, the Rehearsal Figures are separated with silence (Track 18). Time signatures, bar lines and tempo markings are prescribed, but none of the notes in *Amorphous* have a definite note value; instead, the lengths of the notes are defined by the time signatures, bar lines and tempo marking provided (Figure 4.58). The most extreme instance of this idea of relative time can be seen in Rehearsal Figure F, where Ng provides the musicians with a ‘time-line’ chart (Figure 4.59). In some cases, actual time duration in seconds is written over the top of the bar (Figure 4.60).

Figure 4.58. Ng – *Amorphous*, prelude, second system (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

This section to be played like "Canon", according the "cue" each desk playing different group (ex. a, b, c, d, e, f...etc marked)

It's advisable for the musicians to memorise the chart (group of notations) before rehearsing the work.

While the 1st group(violinists-canon) is about to finish, the conductor will spontaneously cue the 2nd group (viola, cello and doublebass-canon), then continue the 3rd/4st group(violinists) the same way as before. This section should be performed with lots of intensity and energy.

Figure 4.59. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure F (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

Figure 4.60. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure G (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

Through the use of these compositional techniques, *Amorphous* becomes free from strict regulation of time. Instead, it relies on the conductor’s perception and sense of time in guiding the orchestra. The work will, by necessity, be different each time it is performed, reflecting the Chinese text cited by Ng: ‘with every movement there is a change’.

Amorphous begins with a prelude section, which is followed by nine Rehearsal Figures. Each Rehearsal Figure encompasses a combination of ‘new’ and ‘old’ musical materials adapted from previous sections. ‘With every moment there is an alteration’, the Chinese text that is contained in the programme notes, is expressed through the compositional strategy that each re-occurrence of a music material is either slightly modified or integrated as part of the ‘new’ material introduced. An example of this is the series of sustained notes at the start of *Amorphous*. In their first appearance, the series of notes is being played very quietly *sul tasto*, with and without vibrato (Figure 4.61). Tremolo is added onto the series of notes in Rehearsal Figure A, and instead of playing *pppp*, it is now marked with *sfz* followed by a *diminuendo* (Figure 4.62). In its next occurrence in Rehearsal Figure C, it has the *pppp* dynamic of the prelude, combined with tremolo of Rehearsal Figure A. The notes here, however, are no longer static. Rather, they involve glissandi, indicated by straight and wavy lines shown in Figure 4.63. In Rehearsal Figure D, dynamics and different bowing techniques, such as ord. (normal bowing), *sul tasto* (on the fingerboard), and *ponticello* are added (Figure 4.64). Boxed double-stopped notes replace the singular notes in Rehearsal Figure E (Figure 4.65)

while retaining the tremolo and glissando features. The phrase ‘pitch fluctuation’ is added above the wavy line, directing all musicians to fluctuate the pitch as guided by the wavy lines. This motif does not appear again until Rehearsal Figure H, in which the boxed double stops are replaced by scalic figures (Figure 4.66) followed by wavy lines to be played *flautando*, meaning ‘to the producing of flute-like tones...either by (a) bowing near the finger-board with the point of the bow, or (b) using harmonics’ (Scholes 1991: 360).

Distant *for string orchestra*

(♩ = approx. 54) ♩ 5/4

Figure 4.61. Ng – *Amorphous*, prelude, first system (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

A (♩ = approx. 96) 3/4

Figure 4.62. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure A (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

C
(8/10th)

Vln. I
pppp

Vln. II
pppp

Vla.
2/4
pppp

Vc.
pppp

Db.
pppp

Approx. 30"

Figure 4.63. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure C (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

D
(♩ = 80) sf

Div ③
Vln. I
pppp ord. sf

Div ③
Vln. II
pppp pizzicato sf > pppp

Div ②
Vla.
pppp ord. pizzicato

Div ②
Vc.
pppp sul tasto

Div ②
Db.
pppp ord. sf > pppp sfz

2 3 4 5 6

Figure 4.64. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure D (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

E

(♩ = 60)

The musical score consists of five staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Db. Each staff is marked with 'Sul Ponticello' and 'fff'. The Vln. I staff includes an 'ord.' marking with a wedge-shaped dynamic change. The score shows a series of notes that evolve in complexity and activity across three measures.

Figure 4.65. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure E (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

As observed in the analysis of the music, Ng alters aspects of the initial sustaining notes each time they reoccur, by the addition of ‘new’ elements. The series of notes begin as a rather static musical motif, which becomes increasingly active with each new reappearance. This ‘change’ and ‘alteration’ of material in Ng’s *Amorphous* is strongly influenced by the ancient Chinese text that the composer provides in the programme notes: ‘with every movement there is a change; with every moment there is an alteration’.

H

Div 12" 3"

The score is divided into two sections: a 12-measure section and a 3-measure section. The 12-measure section includes the instruction "as fast as possible" and "ppp". The 3-measure section includes the instruction "flautando".

Violin I: 12" section: "as fast as possible", *ppp*; 3" section: *flautando*

Violin II: 12" section: "as fast as possible", *ppp*; 3" section: *flautando*

Viola: 12" section: "as fast as possible", *ppp*; 3" section: *flautando*

Violoncello: 12" section: "as fast as possible", *ppp*; 3" section: *flautando*

Contrabass: 12" section: "as fast as possible", *ppp*; 3" section: *flautando*

Figure 4.66. Ng – *Amorphous*, Rehearsal Figure H (Ng 2009b: n.p.)

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Chong, Ng and Yii, all of whom are Malaysian composers of Chinese heritage, have assimilated their cultural roots into their creative outputs through a diverse range of motifs and cultural elements. This is achieved by the incorporation of Chinese calligraphy and painting, Chinese orchestra and its instruments, and Chinese philosophy, through such varied means as work title, instrumentation, musical gestures and materials, instrumental layout, and performance technique, including extended techniques, dynamics, and articulations.

Othman's *rojak* metaphor can clearly be seen to apply in two separate ways to the nine compositions examined in this chapter. Each individual composition includes aspects of the composer's Chinese heritage, blended with other influences and the composer's own idiosyncratic style, to create a multifaceted sonic experience that is as unique as any *rojak* dish. Taken together, the compositions analysed in this chapter demonstrate how Chinese culture and history are combined with elements from other Asian and western cultures to create a style of Malaysian music in which individual cultural elements can be identified while simultaneously being assimilated to create the infinite combinations of a sonic *rojak*.

The distinct and recognisable compositional characteristics of the five selected composers have emerged through the analyses completed in Chapter 2, 3 and 4 of this study. Chong's compositions, thus far, display a highly gestural and sophisticated musical language that epitomise the avant-garde spectrum of Malaysian compositions. Yii is seen to be heading in the same avant-garde direction, while timbre and exploration of sonic possibilities are central to his compositions. Compositions by Chong and Yii display highly detailed performance instructions and techniques, sound effects and instrumental layout. However, unlike Chong, whose musical inspiration comes largely from his Chinese heritage, Yii's works not only assimilate Chinese cultural elements, but also the Southeast Asian elements which are the focus of his musicological researches. Contrastingly, Ng's creative outputs are typified by the broad degree of flexibility and freedom he gives to performers. In most of his works, notations serve merely as improvisatory guidance.

Chapter 5

Spiritual Practices in the Region

Chapter 5 focuses on spiritual practices in the region including Islam, Buddhism and Christianity and the ways in which Malaysian composers negotiate these cultural elements. Table 5.1 presents a list of works that have been selected to investigate Malaysian composers' assimilations of spiritual practices:

Table 5.1. List of selected works to be investigated in Chapter 5

Cultural elements	Composers	Selected works
Spiritual practices	Ng	<i>Xiang</i> for orchestra (2006-2007)
		<i>Rimba</i> for chamber orchestra (2006-2007)
		<i>A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest</i> for solo piano (2009)
		<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos II</i> (2009)
	Othman	<i>topeng I</i> for orchestra (2004)
	Tajuddin	<i>Azan</i> [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007)

Music is commonly used as a worshipping medium in spiritual practices. Plainsongs, the most common musical form of the Medieval period¹⁴⁵, is defined as 'the large body of tradition ritual melody of the Western Christian Church', which then gradually developed in to *organum* between the 11th and 13th centuries (Scholes 1991: 813). In Buddhism, the teachings of the Buddha were passed on 'by means of the repetitive chanting of scriptures' for 'several centuries' after the death of Buddha (Mitchell n.d.). Such chanting practice remains despite these scriptures having long been written down. The link between music and spiritual practices is also found in the spiritually evocative music of known composers including Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Ludwig van

¹⁴⁵ While it is recognised in most music history literature that music has existed since the beginning of human civilisation, medieval music is generally considered to be the beginning or first period of classical music, due to the availability of notation and historical artefacts (Crocker 1966; Dubal 2003; Feld n.d.; Naxos n.d.; Paxman 2014).

Beethoven (1770-1827), Edward Elgar (1857-1934), Olivier Messiaen, Toru Takemitsu, and Tan Dun to name a few.

The relationship between music and spiritual practices has been widely researched in multiple interdisciplinary studies. These studies include *Music, Modernity and God* (Begbie 2013)¹⁴⁶, *Messiaen's Contemplations of Covenant and Incarnation: Musical Symbols of Faith in the Two Great Piano Cycles of the 1940s* (Bruhn 2007), and *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera* (Bruhn 2008)¹⁴⁷, *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature* (Dingle and Simeone 2007)¹⁴⁸, *Music, Ambiguity, Buddhism: A Composer's Perspective* (Harvey 2010)¹⁴⁹, *Music as Theology: What Music Says about the Word* (Heaney 2012)¹⁵⁰, *Hwang Byungkyi: Traditional Music and the Contemporary Composer in the Republic of Korea* (Killick 2016)¹⁵¹, *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion: With an Annotated Literal Translation of the Libretto* (Marissen 1998) and *Bach & God* (Marissen 2016)¹⁵², *Contemporary Music and Spirituality* (Sholl and van Mass 2016)¹⁵³, *The Jewish Experience in Classical Music: Shostakovich and Asia* (Tentser 2014)¹⁵⁴ and *The Spirituality of Music* (Thielemann 2001)¹⁵⁵. Malaysian composers, notably Ng, Othman, and Tajuddin, have also adapted the assimilation of spiritual practice in their music, which this study now investigates.

Six Malaysian compositions are used as case studies to examine the assimilation of Islamic, Buddhist and Christian spiritual practices through musical materials, title, symbolism, and structure. These are: Ng's *Xiang* for orchestra (2006-2007), *Rimba* for chamber orchestra (2006-2007), *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* for solo piano (2009), and *Three Sketches for*

¹⁴⁶ Begbie (2013: 1) proposes that music serves as crucial 'theological current and counter-current' that contributes to the shaping of modernity; and its ability to address and move beyond the 'intractable theological' dilemmas of modern life.

¹⁴⁷ Both of Bruhn's books investigate Messiaen's musical language in relationship to his expression of faith through analysis of selected works including *Visions de l'Amen* (1943), *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* (1944), *La Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1965-1969), *Saint François d'Assise* (1975-1983).

¹⁴⁸ This book offers insights into the legacy of Messiaen as a composer and a believer in Catholicism.

¹⁴⁹ This chapter addresses Harvey's perspective of the duality between music and Buddhism as a composer.

¹⁵⁰ Heaney proposes music as another form of approach to the understanding of faith, in addition to that of the linguistic and conceptual comprehension of theology.

¹⁵¹ Chapter 3 of this book focuses on the meditative quality in Hwang's music and its link to Buddhism.

¹⁵² Marissen, in both books, provides careful interpretive insights into the biblical and religious aspects of Bach's compositions.

¹⁵³ This is a collection of essays that addresses the link between the music and thoughts of Cage, Ligeti, Messiaen, Stockhausen and spirituality.

¹⁵⁴ Collection of essays in this book investigates the influence of traditional Jewish culture in European-derived music in the 20th century and beyond.

¹⁵⁵ In this book, Thielemann argues the ability of music to represent deeper cosmic principles and energy.

Two Pianos II (2009); and Othman's *topeng I* for orchestra (2004); and Tajuddin's *Azan* [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007).

5.1 Buddhism

5.1.1 Ng

***Xiang* for orchestra (2006-2007);
Rimba for chamber orchestra (2006-2007);
A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest for solo piano (2009); and
Three Sketches for Two Pianos II (2009)**

Analyses of Ng's compositions *Xiang*, *Rimba*, *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* and *Three Sketches for Two Piano II* (hereafter: *Two Sketches II*) reveal assimilation of elements from Buddhist spiritual practices namely the teaching of simplicity and the concept of recycling and reincarnation. This section analyses the four works in two segments. In the first half, this study focuses on the assimilation of the Buddhist teaching of simplicity in *Xiang* through musical materials, structure and scoring technique. The second half investigates the Buddhist concept of recycle that is embedded in the four compositions collectively.

Xiang for orchestra, was composed by Ng in 2006 to 2007 for the MPO Forum for Malaysian Composer 2. Ng has expressed his keenness for simplicity, both in his life and in his musical compositions, in line with the teachings of Buddhism (Chong Lim Ng, pers. comm. 28 January, 2013). As Dilworth (2013: 149) explains, 'the Buddha's philosophy is a way of *acting*, where simplicity is a way of *thinking*'. Hisamatsu (1995: 30-31, as cited in Alldritt 2009: 122) adds:

Simplicity also has something in common with naïveté and abandon. For, actually, it is abandon rather than deliberateness that is in keeping with Simplicity. The ultimate Simplicity is "not a single thing," or the One. If, as the negation of holiness results in the freedom of non-holiness, then simplicity as the negation of clutter may be spoken of as being "boundless" – there is nothing limiting, as in a cloudless sky.

This idea of simplicity is manifested in Ng's *Xiang*. As the composer states in his programme notes: 'This is a piece I have long wanted to write to celebrate the life of my beloved father...There are moments of spaciousness, broadness and stillness which perhaps assimilate a connection the extra dimension of possible infinity and eternity where my beloved father

may now be' (Ng 2006-2007b: n.p.). During an interview with the composer in 2013, Ng mentioned that he was inspired by Mozart's *Requiem in D minor* (1791) and Ligeti's *Requiem* (1963-1965). The composer added that *Xiang*, however, does not make musical reference to these two compositions but, rather, is based on a similar concept where the music is associated with mourning, funeral and death (Chong Lim Ng, pers. comm. 28 January, 2013). *Xiang* contains three main sections. The first and third sections are characterised by a solemn and calm atmosphere, while the middle section is highly energetic and intense. The solemnity of the work is evident from the first notes of the piece, through the sustained notes of minor and major seconds played without vibrato by the string section, and reinforced by the occasional notes played by the tubular bells and tam tam (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Ng – *Xiang*, bars 1 to 10 (Ng 2006-2007b: 1)

As seen in the first bar of Figure 5.1, violins I 1a and II 1a of string group A sustain the minor second notes C# and D, violins I 2a and II 2a major second notes A and B, viola (a) F# and major second notes A and B, cellos 1a and 2a single note D and G respectively, and double bass single note D. All of the strings are required to sustain their notes without vibrato and

remain *mp*. This largely minor and major second motif captures the feeling of stillness that the composer mentioned in his programme notes. The ‘sporadic’ use of tubular bells and tam tam adds to the sombre mood set by the strings (Lie 2013: 63).

This is followed by a bar of silence in the strings section with the deep ringing sound of the tam tam lingering through the silence (Track 19). The resonance of the bells and tam tam evoke the serenity and solemnity experienced at ceremonial rituals in Buddhist temples, including the funeral ceremony. It is said that ‘the physical action of ringing the bell can be compared to saying a mantra’ (Discoe and Quinn 2008: 97). This, perhaps, is another of the composer’s efforts in paying respect to his late father.

String group B joins string groups A in the next bar. String group B, however, sustain a single note. The notes nevertheless form more major and minor seconds, for instance, A and G \sharp of violin I 1b and 2b, F \sharp and E of violins II 1b and 2b, D, C \sharp and B of viola (b), cellos 1b and 2b. The double bass (b), like double bass (a) sustain the note D. It is noted that Ng assigns the double bass to play the note D almost throughout the whole piece with the exception of Rehearsal Figures E, F, G and H, and the last three bars of Rehearsal Figure D (bars 90 to 92). This perhaps makes reference to the work ‘death’ or, more specifically, the death of the composer’s father, in whose memory the work was composed.

The entrance of the winds following the string section in Rehearsal Figure A, although intensifying the change in timbre, still features the long sustained figures introduced by the strings at the opening of the work. This further emphasises the stillness created by the string section. Ng’s use of gong enhances the tranquil atmosphere of the work, mirroring the sound of the Chinese gongs used in temples. This resonating gong, similar to the tubular bells and tam tam, resembles rituals conducted in temples. The intensity builds through the addition of piano, harp and timpani, together with the gradual increase in dynamic. The arrival of three *fff* *tutti* in bars 90 to 92 marks the end of this still and mysterious section.

The next section provides a contrast, with the composer’s instruction that it ‘should be played with energy, ferocity and intensity’ (Ng 2006-2007b: 11). The boxed notes seen in Figure 5.2 are to be played as fast as possible despite irregularity in tone and rhythm, and also to be played with loud dynamic range from *ff* to *fffff* creating a ‘highly tempestuous outburst’ (Ng 2006-2007b: 11). Such an outburst could be symbolic of the composer’s turbulent emotional state after the loss of his beloved father.

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Ng - Xiang', covering bars 99 to 104. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with 20 staves. The instruments are listed on the left side of each staff: Flute (Fl), Violin I (Vln I 1a, 1b), Violin II (Vln II 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b), Viola (Vla I, II), Cello (Vcl I, II), Double Bass (Db I, II), and Double Bass (DB I). The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *ff*. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines.

Figure 5.2. Ng – Xiang, bars 99 to 104 (Ng 2006-2007b: 12)

This intensity in momentum is maintained throughout the section. This strings configurations provides an aurally erratic backdrop to the explosive winds figures while the use of boxed figures offers great freedom to the musicians in the creation of sonic effect, both individually and as an ensemble. It, nonetheless, provides a contrasting musical texture to the calmness of the first section and the following third section, where the sustained note motif of the opening section briefly reappears in bar 131 (Rehearsal Figure I). In Rehearsal Figure J, Ng separates the orchestra into six *ad lib* parts, to be played for approximately 30 seconds (Figure 5.3). This final *ad lib* section has become a recognisable feature of Ng's creative outputs. The flautists, horn players and trumpeters are asked to walk off the stage and play on each side of the audience to produce a 'distant [and] atmospheric' ambiance, as seen in Figure 5.3 (Ng 2006-2007b: 20). The opening minor and major second sustained notes with tubular bells return in *ppp* in Rehearsal Figure K, this time without the deeper sounding tam tam. The work subsequently ends with long held notes, mainly the note 'D', again likely intended to pay tribute to the composer's late father.

Xiang is constructed with a relatively straightforward three-part structure, reflecting the Buddhist teaching of simplicity. Despite the simplistic structure, Ng successfully creates a myriad of textures through his scoring technique, particularly the use of seconds and boxed figures in order to create different atmospheres. The sustained minor and major seconds in the first and third section result in a sense of stillness. By comparison, the boxed figures in the second section result in a highly energetic and intense musical texture, while the boxed figures found in the final section offer a more distant and meditative-like atmosphere. The minimalistic use of compositional tools: simple minor and major seconds musical motifs and boxed figures, once again, reflect the concept of simplicity.

X ----- 30" approx. -----

1] distant & atmospheric

off stage (left) 12" approx.

off stage (right) hold 2" - 3" in between each note - repeat the fragment 2 times

off stage (right) 9" approx.

off stage (left) hold 4" approx. in between each note - repeat the fragment approx. 3 times

(Crystal glass)

(Tibraphone with bow)

approx. 4" in between each note - ad lib. throughout the entire 30" approx.

5" approx.

Remarks for all string players:
Only section leaders are required to play
approx. 3" - 4" in between each note;
dynamic range from PPP to P, ad lib. with various bow speed and slight pitch fluctuation

9" approx.

Figure 5.3. Ng – Xiang, bar 144 (Ng 2006-2007b: 20)

In addition to the Buddhist teaching on simplicity, analyses of four separate compositions by Ng: *Rimba* for chamber orchestra (2006-2007), *Xiang* for orchestra (2006-2007), *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* for solo piano (2009) and *Three Sketches II* (2009), reveal the Buddhist concept of recycling in Ng's use of musical materials, which the study now examines collectively.

The act of recycling, the words of Taiwanese Buddhist bhikkhuni Master Cheng Yen,¹⁵⁶

serves two purposes. One is to diminish the waste of natural resources and contribute to saving the planet from destruction by man. The other is to provide people with an opportunity to practice Buddhism... [The Tzu Chi recycling centres] have become...a place where a person can gain merit¹⁵⁷ by serving others. (O'Neill 2010:166).

The Buddhist concept of recycling has two aspects. One is the awareness of ecological and environmental issues, as advocated by Master Cheng Yen, based on the understanding of the interdependent dynamic between life and environment (Badiner 1999: 136). In a deeper sense, the concept of recycling may be perceived as an analogy with samsara, the cycle of life and death, forming the basis for the Buddhist belief of reincarnation. Keown (2013: 138) explains that reincarnation provides a new viewpoint on the connection between human beings and other life forms because people can be reincarnated as animals and vice versa. It is believed that 'life-forces recycle but individual personalities do not [*emphasis added*]' (Herringshaw 2009: 31).

It has been discovered, in the analyses of the four compositions by Ng, that musical materials are being, as the composer himself calls it, 'recycled' (Chong Lim Ng, pers. comm. 28 January, 2013). In addition to making reference to the Buddhist teaching of recycling, the composer also speaks about the idea of recycling musical materials having

¹⁵⁶ Master Cheng Yen is a Taiwanese Buddhist bhikkhuni, teacher and philanthropist. She founded the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chin Foundation in 1996, commonly referred to as Tzu Chi. The Foundation grew to become involved in international disaster relief programmes, environmental care, community education programmes, bone marrow donation and community voluntary programmes (Tzu Chi n.d.).

¹⁵⁷ 'Merit' here refers to acts of disinterested goodness that may create good karma. The Buddhist concept of karma, as explained by Krishan (1997: 60), is an action that 'produces...reaction or effect. The effect, in turn, becomes the source of fresh action'. In other words, teachings about karma note that a person is affected by the person's past actions and that present actions will affect the person's future.

been partially inspired by the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura¹⁵⁸ as well as the Japanese aesthetic ‘*mitate-e*’ [見立絵] (Chong Lim Ng, pers. comm. 28 January, 2013). The latter refers to the recycling and recontextualising of materials, objects, images and even literary references. Such concepts are also found in Cage’s compositions. Cage’s interest in Japanese garden and the concept of *mitate-e*, as manifested in *Ryoanji* (1983-1985), exemplifies that the composer recycles materials, as Whittington (2013: 14) describes, ‘as varied as turntable cartridge pickups and cacti as musical “instruments”’.

Rimba, scored for chamber orchestra¹⁵⁹, was written for the MPO Forum for Malaysian Composer 2 in 2006 and 2007. Composed in 2009 for solo piano, *A Distant Voice of the Rainforest* ‘contains fragments from one of [Ng’s] chamber work, “*Rimba*” for fourteen musicians’ Ng (2009a: n.p.). *Xiang*, investigated earlier for the assimilation of Buddhist teaching on simplicity, has been found to contain musical fragments from *Rimba*, *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* and *Three Sketches II*.

The title of *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* reflects its connection to *Rimba*, which is a Malay word for rain forest. The recycling of musical materials between *Rimba* and both *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* and *Three Sketches II* naturally concentrates in the piano part, as the latter two works are scored for piano(s). Figure 5.4 is a solo piano section (Rehearsal Figure F) of *Rimba* written in Ng’s signature scoring style, where the musician is given great flexibility in the interpretation of the score. Figure 5.5 is box number 11 of *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*, and Figure 5.6 is the first sketch from *Three Sketches II*.

¹⁵⁸ The Recycled Orchestra of Cateura is a Paraguayan orchestra whose instruments are made of ‘recycled materials’ from landfill (Landfill Harmonic n.d.).

¹⁵⁹ Specifically, *Rimba* was score for a chamber orchestra comprising flute, oboe, clarinet, piano, four violins, two violas, two cellos and percussion (bongos, congas, crotales, tubular bells, tam tam, four gongs of different sizes, and vibraphone).

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, identified as Rehearsal Figure F. The score is written for two staves, with the left staff marked 'piano'. The music is in a complex, rhythmic style, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The score is divided into four systems. The first system begins with a box containing the letter 'F'. Performance instructions include '(sempré)', '(collant)', '(stillness)', and 'PPP'. The second system includes '(a little movement)', 'poco accel.', 'molto cresc.', and 'ffff'. The third system features 'ffff sempre' and 'molto cresc.'. The fourth system includes 'wire brushes on strings' and 'ffff'. The score concludes with a final 'ffff' dynamic marking and a fermata over the last note.

Figure 5.4. Ng – *Rimba*, Rehearsal Figure F (Ng 2006-2007a: 10)

A comparison of Figures 5.4 and 5.5 shows that the first three bars, the ‘wire brushes on strings’ motif on the last line, and the final *fff* quaver figure of *Rimba* have been omitted in *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*. Minor alterations, including the addition or removal of ornaments and articulations, and a few subtle changes in notes, have been made, as can be seen in the marked sections of Figure 5.5. More changes are seen when comparing Figures 5.4 and 5.6 (as marked). Ornamentations and extra musical figures have been inserted to increase the complexity and virtuosity of the solo composition of *Rimba* into becoming a piece for two pianos. As seen in Figure 5.5, the final *fff* quavers are not brought over from *Rimba* in Figure 5.4 to *Three Sketches II* in Figure 5.6.

Figures 5.7 to 5.10 are piano excerpts from *Rimba* that have been found to have been recycled into the boxed figures of *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* shown in Figure 5.11.



Figure 5.7. Ng – *Rimba*, first page of Rehearsal Figure G, (Ng 2006-2007a: 11)

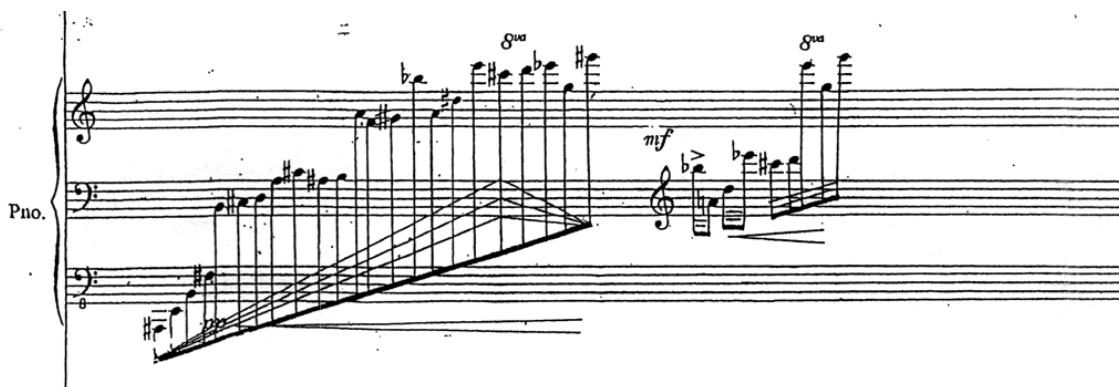


Figure 5.8. Ng – *Rimba*, second page of Rehearsal Figure G (Ng 2006-2007a: 12)

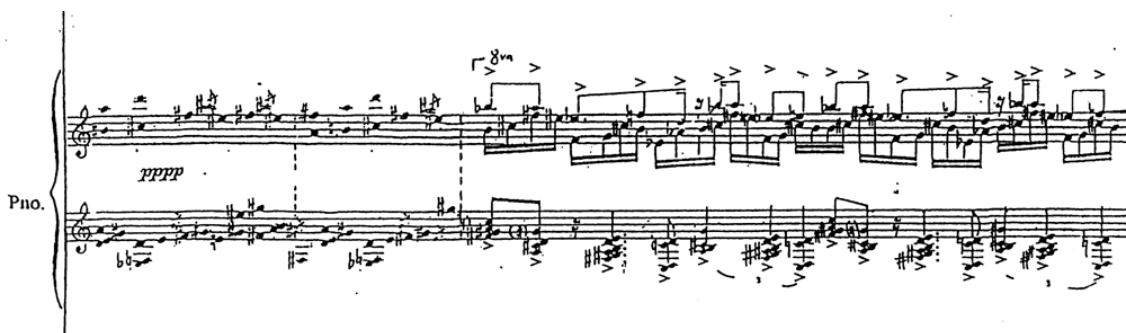


Figure 5.9. Ng – *Rimba*, third page of Rehearsal Figure G (Ng 2006-2007a: 13)

Figure 5.10. Ng – *Rimba*, fourth and fifth pages of Rehearsal Figure G (Ng 2006-2007a: 14-15)

... Atmospheric, ... distant ...

This section is a "view" which keeps changing that gives the pianist to create their own music. The boxes should be played randomly without any restriction. Spontaneity and intuition play a very important role here. The sustaining pedal must be used wisely throughout the whole piece. The whole piece should be performed with continuity and it should last approximately 5 - 8'.

Figure 5.11. Ng – *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*, box numbers 1-10 (Ng 2009a: n.p.)

Box numbers 9, 10, 4 and 8 of Figure 5.11 are identical to Figures 5.7, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10 respectively. It is also observed that box number 4 and Figure 5.9 are made up of fragments from *Rimba*, Rehearsal Figure F (Figure 5.4). Isolated from the chamber orchestra context in *Rimba*, these piano excerpts are given a voice of their own and the sonic outcome can be quite distinct from its original source (Track 20). Isolating the piano in *Rimba* which is metamorphosed into *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* gives the instrument a voice that is related but distant from its source. The composer explains:

This section is a “view” which keeps changing that gives the pianist to create their own music [*sic*]. The boxes should be played randomly without any restriction. Spontaneity and intuition play a very important role here (Ng 2009a: n.p.).

In contrast to the ensemble setting of *Rimba*, the soloist for *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* has a great amount of freedom in terms of expression and interpretation. These piano fragments are again re-contextualised when Ng recycles them in a duo setting in the second sketch of *Three Sketches II*, analysed in Figure 5.12.

The figure displays musical sketches for two pianos, Piano I and Piano II. The sketches are arranged in two columns. The left column, labeled 'Piano I', contains four sketches: 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d. The right column, labeled 'Piano II', contains four sketches: 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d. Each sketch shows musical notation with various performance instructions such as dynamics (ff, mf, sfz), articulation (accents, slurs), and specific techniques (like 'play like a xylophone').

Figure 5.12. Ng – *Three Sketches for Two Pianos II*, second sketch (Ng 2013: n.p.)

The score for first piano is on the left and second piano on the right. Ng (2013: n.p.) explains that the 'boxes should be played randomly without any hesitation'. As the visual presentation of the score is not boxed in Figure 5.12, the musical motifs of the first piano are referred to as fragments 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d, while fragments 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d refer to motifs of the second piano. The fragments in Figure 5.12 for Piano I (i.e. Fragments 1a-1d) originate from *Rimba*, as seen in Figure 5.6. Fragments 2a and 2b are materials from *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*, namely box numbers 6 and 5 respectively from Figure 5.11, while fragments 2c and 2d are the second and first halves of Figure 5.9 from *Rimba*.

The third sketch (Figure 5.13) of *Three Sketches II*, as confirmed by the composer (Chong Lim Ng, pers. comm. 1 October, 2013), also uses fragments from *Xiang*, which was analysed earlier this chapter in respect of its Buddhist influences. The third sketch is divided into four sections, as observed in Figure 5.13. Sections A and B consist of sustaining notes that are reminiscent of the long held notes that dominate the first and third sections of *Xiang*. Section C comprises fragments of piano and harp motifs recycled directly from *Xiang*, as highlighted in Figure 5.14. Additionally, the four-note motif in the box below section C is adapted from flute and crystal glass parts in Rehearsal Figure J of *Xiang*, while the first and second pianos of section D includes musical motifs from the vibraphone and harp respectively, also from *Xiang* Rehearsal Figure J, as seen in Figure 5.15.

possibly already/distant
 P I
 P I
 pedal always
 (inside the piano)
 mf
 espressivo ppp
 (inside the piano) ppp
 X
 20"
 P I
 P I
 mf
 espressivo
 pp
 all fingers
 X
 15"
 P I
 P I
 pppp (distant) ff
 pppp (distant) ff

Figure 5.13. Ng – *Three Sketches for Two Pianos II*, third sketch (Ng 2013: n.p.)

Hp.
 Pno.
 mp sempre
 expressively
 damp the strings with fingers

Figure 5.14. Ng – *Xiang*, bars 39 to 51 (Ng 2006-2007b: 8)

X ----- 30" approx. -----

J distant & atmospheric

off stage (left) 12" approx. hold 2" - 3" in between each note - repeat the fragment 2 times

off stage (right)

off stage (right) 9" approx. hold 4" approx. in between each note - repeat the fragment approx. 3 times

off stage (left)

(Crystal glass)

(Tibraphone with bow)

approx. 4" in between each note - ad lib. throughout the entire 30" approx.

5" approx.

Remarks for all string players:
Only section leaders are required to play
approx. 3" - 4" in between each note;
dynamic range from PPP to P, ad lib. with various bow speed and slight pitch fluctuation

9" approx.

Figure 5.15. Ng – Xiang, Rehearsal Figure J bar 144 (Ng 2006-2007b: 20)

The re-contextualisation of musical fragments from *Xiang* in *Three Sketches II* produces a different sonic outcome, as most of the adapted motifs are not originally written for piano but for harp, vibraphone, strings and flute. The recycling of musical motifs in the four discussed works by Ng — *Rimba*, *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*, *Three Sketches II* and *Xiang* — results in four idiosyncratic musical pieces. The extent to which they may or may not resemble one another is largely due to Ng's scoring style, which leaves huge margins for different interpretations by performers, particularly in *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest* and *Three Sketches II*. This reflects the Buddhist idea of recycling life forces where individual personalities may not remain in the newly reincarnated form.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Ng's unconventional scoring techniques such as the use of boxed materials, loose structure and relationship between instruments, rapid acciaccatura figures, the concept where musical fragments are to be selected and put together by performers, evoke a sense of familiarity with compositional techniques pioneered by Boulez, Feldman, Ligeti, and Stockhausen.

Analysis presented in this section uncovers the ways in which Ng breathes new life into his recycled musical materials by re-contextualising them. In most cases, the musical material is left in its original form when recycled, but is placed in different settings including instrumentation and genre. The outcome is a myriad of sonic possibilities using the same musical material, as shown in the four compositions discussed. Ng's assimilation of Buddhism teachings is the composer's approach to incorporating local flavours infused with his desired sound world, in which emphasis is placed on the freedom of expressivity among his musicians through his scoring technique.

5.2 Christianity

5.2.1 Othman

***topeng I* for orchestra (2004)**

The next composition is Othman's *topeng I* for orchestra, composed in 2014. The work was previously examined in Chapter 2 for the incorporation of gamelan characteristics. This section, however, discusses the hidden Christian symbolism found through pitch selection and musical materials. As mentioned in Chapter 2, *topeng I* was dedicated to the

late violist Georgina Grosvenor (1975-2003). It has been observed that the first notes of the piece are two unison ‘Gs’, making reference to Georgina Grosvenor’s initials.

Figure 5.16. Othman – *topeng I*, bars 1 to 4 (Othman 2004: 1)

It is, therefore, appropriate and in keeping with the dedication to the late violist, to begin (Figure 5.17) and end (Figure 5.18) the piece with a calm *organum*-like figure carried out by the piano part. The *organum* has a historically Christian origin: ‘Since the use of instruments in Christian worship was forbidden’, writes Hiley (2011), ‘all instruments named in the Bible were interpreted in an allegorical way, and “organum” came to mean simply “vocal music”’. *Organum* within the European context usually refers to movements in mostly parallel lines, with an emphasis on perfect 4ths and 5ths intervals (Yang 2014: 113), which are prominent in some of Othman’s chords, as observed in Figures 5.17 and 5.18. Othman’s *organum*, however, is far more dissonant.

Figure 5.17. Othman – *topeng I*, bars 1 to 21 (Othman 2004: 1-2)



Figure 5.18. Othman – *topeng I*, bars 261 to 268 (Othman 2004: 66-67)

The return of the *organum* motif in the closing section is designed in such a way that the intervals of each chord are inverted and retrograded. As marked in Figure 5.19, the bass note of the chords in the opening section has been inverted to be the highest note in the chord of the closing section.

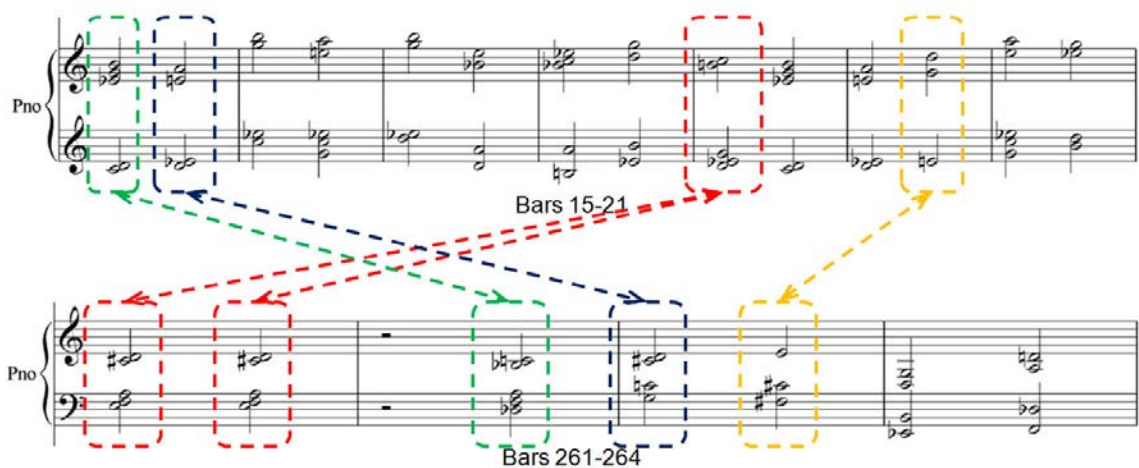


Figure 5.19. Othman – *topeng I*, bars 15 to 21 and bars 261 to 263, comparison of *organum* chords (Othman 2004: 2, 65)

For example, the lowest (bottom) note in the chords in bars 15-21 become the upper notes for the inversions in bars 261-264. Using serial nomenclature (as used in 12-tone music), the original form of the chord would P-0 (Prime form, not transposed) and the inversion would be I-0 (Inverted form, starting on the same note as P-0). In the special case of the chord marked in red (bar 19), the chord has the interval structure 1-4-4-1 (counting the intervals in semitones). As can be observed, this is a symmetrical pattern. Therefore, it is non-invertible i.e. the inversion is the same as the original form. To put it another way, an

inversion of the chord is the same as a transposition; as such, the chord in bar 261 is both a transposition (downwards by a minor 7th) of the chord and also an inversion of the chord.

Another reference made to Christianity is through the Christian doctrine of Trinity. Towards the end of the piano *organum*, in bar 30 at Rehearsal Figure A, Othman scores for an unusual instrumental arrangement of three violas (Figure 5.20).

The image shows a musical score for rehearsal mark 'A' in bars 29 to 34. The top part is for Piano (Pno) with two staves. The bottom part is for three violas (Vla), numbered 1, 2, and 3, each on a separate staff. The piano part features chords and moving lines. The three viola parts are marked 'solo' and 'pp calmato', with long, sustained notes. A box labeled 'A' is placed above the piano staff at the beginning of the rehearsal mark.

Figure 5.20. Othman – *topeng I*, bars 29 to 34 (Othman 2004: 3)

The viola is selected here to pay respect to the dedicatee of the work, violist Georgina Grosvenor. It is also symbolic that the note D, played by the three violists at their entrance in Rehearsal Figure A, as confirmed by the composer, is directly connected to the word ‘death’ (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013). Othman explains that his decision to use three violas is largely influenced by the Christian doctrine of Trinity (Johan Othman, pers. comm. 24 January, 2013): ‘the central Christian dogma that the one God exists in three Persons and one substance, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The God who reveals Himself to humanity is one God equally in three distinct modes of existence, yet remains one through all eternity’ (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church 2013).

Analysis of *topeng I* reveals the composer’s compositional strategies in embedding Christian elements through the inclusion of *organum* and the doctrine of Trinity. Othman has also made reference to the dedicatee using hidden symbols such as the notes G and D to signify the dedicatee’s initial and death. This assimilation of Christian spiritual practice

in *topeng I*, along with elements of gamelan music, as examined in Chapter 2, presents Othman's unique *rojak* recipe that involves ingredients from various cultures. This study now turns to investigate the ways in which Tajuddin assimilates Islamic and Buddhist spiritual practices into *Azan*.

5.3 Islam and Buddhism

5.3.1 Tajuddin

***Azan* [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players (2007)**

Islam is the dominant religion of Malaysia, as noted in Chapter 1, and the spiritual aspect permeates much of daily life in the country. Such influence is found in Tajuddin's *Azan* [Call for Prayer] for call for prayer, mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players. Tajuddin (2007: n.p.) explained in the programme note that the piece is 'an impression of a day in Muslim life in Malaysia with the occasional multi-cultural effect where the Buddhist chant is also audible (word "om" sing by the baritone)'. Such a mix of cultural elements (Islam and Buddhism) is yet another example of *rojak* found in Malaysian contemporary music. This section now investigates Tajuddin's approach in assimilating spiritual practices from both Islam and Buddhism into his work.

The title makes direct reference to the Islamic practice of *azan* where call to prayer, recited by the *muezzin*¹⁶⁰, is broadcast over loudspeaker from the door or the minaret of a mosque five times a day (Speake and LaFlaur 2002). Text for the call to prayer in Arabic and its translations in Malay and English, from the programme notes to Tajuddin's *Azan*, is shown in Figure 5.21.

The work *Azan* consists of eight continuous sections. 'The first section', as the composer states,

is Early Dawn (Contemplation) with Call for Prayer, second Sunrise (calm and meditatively), third Morning to Mid-Afternoon (calm to intense), fourth Mid-Afternoon to Late Afternoon (very intense), fifth Late Afternoon (most intense), sixth Sunset (calmer, contemplation), seventh Evening to Mid-Night (Ceremonial) and eight Mid-Night (serene) (Tajuddin 2007: n.p.).

¹⁶⁰ *Muezzin* is the appointed person to recite the call to prayer for events and prayer in the mosque.

The distribution of the work into eight sections most likely derives from the fact that there are eight phrases in the call for prayer (Figure 5.21). Despite the connection between the number of sections in *Azan* and the number of phrases in the call to prayer, there is no obvious link between phrases and sections. In other words, section one is not linked to the text of the first phrase, section two to second phrase, section three to third phrase and so on. The exception to this is phrase 6 ‘*Solat itu lebih Baik daripada tidur*’ [Awake and Pray is more beneficial]. In Islamic *azan*, this phrase is only recited in the morning prayer session. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that this phrase can only be found in section 3, which is subtitled ‘Morning to Mid-Afternoon (calm to intense)’.

Text:

Call for Prayer

1. (Arabic)
1. (Malay) Allah Maha Besar, Allah Maha Besar (2x)
1. (English) God is Great, God is Great (2x)
- 2.
2. Aku Bersaksi Bahawa Tiada Tuhan Yang Sebenarnya Melainkan Allah (2x)
2. There is no God but God (2x)
- 3.
3. Aku Bersaksi Bahawa Nabi Muhammad Itu Pesuruh Allah (2x)
3. I Witness (Believe) Prophet Muhammad is a Messenger of God (Allah) (2x)
- 4.
4. Marilah Segera Mengerjakan Solat (2x)
4. Let us all Pray (2x)
- 5.
5. Marilah Segera Mendapat Kejayaan (2x)
5. Let us all to Glory (2x)
- 6.
6. Solat itu lebih Baik daripada tidur (2x)
6. Awake and Pray is more beneficial (2x)
- 7.
7. Allah Maha Besar, Allah Maha Besar
7. God is Great, God is Great
- 8.
8. Tiada Tuhan Yang Sebenarnya Melainkan Allah
8. There is no god but god (Allah)

Figure 5.21. Tajuddin – *Azan*, call for prayer text, with its Malay and English translations

The requirement of the Islamic faith that followers pray five times a day, divides each day into predictable time periods. This is further enhanced by the fact that Muslims are forbidden to pray at three times during the day, sunrise, mid-day and sunset. The subtitle of each section of *Azan* strongly resembles the Islamic time periods within a day, as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Relationship between *Azan* section subtitles and Islamic time periods within a day

<i>Azan</i> section subtitle	Islamic time periods within a day (Saqib 1997)
Section 1: Early Dawn (Contemplation)	<i>Fajr</i> (morning prayer): dawn to sunrise
Section 2: Sunrise (calm and meditatively)	Sunrise: one of three times where Muslim are forbidden to pray
Section 3: Morning to Mid-Afternoon (calm to intense)	Midday: one of three times where Muslim are forbidden to pray
Section 4: Mid-Afternoon to Late Afternoon (very intense)	<i>Zuhr</i> (early afternoon prayer): after midday, before <i>Asr</i> prayer
Section 5: Late Afternoon (most intense)	<i>Asr</i> (later afternoon prayer): after <i>Zuhr</i> prayer to just before sunset
Section 6: Sunset (calmer, contemplation)	Sunset: one of three times where Muslim are forbidden to pray
Section 7: Evening to Mid-Night (Ceremonial)	<i>Maghrib</i> (sunset prayer): just after sunset
Section 8: Mid-Night (serene)	<i>Isha</i> (night prayer): after twilight to dawn

This correlation between the section subtitles and Islamic time periods within a day is not extended into the use of phrases within each section. In other words, the call for prayer text is still used in sections that correspond with times when Muslims are not allowed to pray.

In the first section Early Dawn (Contemplation), the baritone recites the call for prayer in Arabic during the pauses, as seen in Figure 5.22. The limitation of the Arabic text to the male singer reflects Islamic practice where most, if not all, appointed *muezzins* are men¹⁶¹ (Rasmussen 2010).

¹⁶¹ Voice register is not a consideration in the selection of *muezzin*. A *Muezzin* is appointed based on his good character and stentorian voice (Abuwala 2017).

TIME	3	5	6
Musico-Soprano Bass Baritone		Azan: Allahu akbar 2x	Ashadu alla- ilaha illallah 2x
PLAYER 1 (IB) BOW (Top side)	sfp p	sfp p	pp sfp p
PLAYER 2	XVIII sfp	sfp	sfp
PLAYER 3 (IA) BOW (Top)	sfp p	sfp p	sfp p

Simple p-mp (very lightly)

Figure 5.22. Tajuddin – Azan, excerpt from section 1 (Tajuddin 2007: 1)

Recitations of the text are not set to specific pitch throughout *Azan*. Instead, the singer recites in a style similar to that of the Islamic *azan*, where the recitation is highly ornamented with no fixed melody; it can be modulated, provided that the pronunciation of the text is not affected (Track 8) (Juynboll 2012). The order and number of times each phrase is sung in section 1 of *Azan* also corresponds to Islamic *azan* in which the first seven phrases are repeated twice while the last phrase is only recited once (Islamic Association of Raleigh n.d.).

Two other instances where Arabic text is employed in *Azan* are in section 7 (Figure 5.23) where the singers are asked to chant or whisper, and at the end of section 8 (Figure 5.24) where the call for prayer returns.

T	5	6
V	Al- lah Chant: Lailahailallah (2x)	whisper: [Lailahailallah] Chant: Lailahailallah
1 XVIII (B1) I (L)		
2 IX (Frame B)		
3 I (BOW upper)		

Simple mp

Figure 5.23. Tajuddin – Azan, excerpt from section 7 (Tajuddin 2007: 7)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for an excerpt of the Azan. It consists of three staves labeled T, 2, and 3, and a vocal line above them. The vocal line has lyrics written in Malay script: 'Tuhan Maha Besar' and 'Allahu akbar'. The score is divided into sections 2, 5, and 8. Section 2 is marked 'poco rit' and section 5 is marked 'rit'. The lyrics include 'Allahu akbar' and 'La ilaha illallah'. The score is handwritten and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

Figure 5.24. Tajuddin – *Azan*, excerpt from section 8 (Tajuddin 2007: 8)

On all three occasions, Tajuddin translated Arabic into Roman script to ensure that the pronunciation of the text is phonetically accurate. In the mezzo soprano part, the singer is given notated pitch with Malay lyrics based on the translation of the call to prayer in Figure 5.21. As seen in Figure 5.24, the composer replaces the word *Allah* with the Malay word *Tuhan*, both of which refer to God, in the phrase *Allah Maha Besar* [God is Great] in sections 2, 5 and 8. The word *Allah*, however, remains in sections 4 and 8. The composer’s interchangeable use of *Allah* and its Malay counterpart *Tuhan* is perhaps linked to the composer’s personal recitation practice of the Islamic *azan*, that is rooted in his Malaysian background and his Malay heritage.

Akin to the embellished recitative style of the baritone, the mezzo soprano melodic line also contains an array of ornamentation, ranging from simple acciaccatura in section 2 (Figure 5.25) to neighbouring note and turn-like semiquaver figures in section 5 (Figure 5.26).

As can also be observed in Figures 5.23 and 5.26, the melodic line starts in the lower register in section 2, and arrives at the higher register in section 5 before descending into the lower register again in section 8. This change in register from low to high and then back to low, coupled with the changes in intensity and dynamic of the sound sculpture players, creates a sonic experience that matches the subtitle descriptions from ‘calm’ to ‘most intense’ and back to ‘serene’.

2] $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 70-80$
 Sunrise (calm, meditatively)

TIME		3	3	5	6
VOICES	M-S [PI]	Tu - han Ma - ha Be - sar	Tu - han	Ma - ha	
PLAYER 1	IB (Bow Top)	<i>sfp mp</i>	<i>sfp mp</i>	<i>sfp mp</i>	<i>sfp mp</i>
PLAYER 2	III (3P) II (d-j)				
PLAYER 3	IA (Bow Upper)	<i>sfp mp</i>	<i>sfp mp</i>	<i>sfp mp</i>	<i>sfp mp</i>

Sempre mp (lightly)

Figure 5.25. Tajuddin – Azan, excerpt from section 2 (Tajuddin 2007: 2)

5] $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 100-110$
 Late Afternoon (most intense)

T	5	3	5	5	5 (B)
V	Tu - han Ma - ha Be - sar	ya			
1					
2					
3					

sempre f

Figure 5.26. Tajuddin – Azan, excerpt from section 5 (Tajuddin 2007: 5)

In the programme notes, the composer mentions the deliberate inclusion of Buddhist chanting in the baritone part (Figure 5.27). The singer sustains the word ‘om’ on a low note ‘F’ evoking the sense of familiarity to the chanting of the Buddhist mantra ‘*om maṇi padme hūm*¹⁶²’. The word ‘om’, according to the Dalai Lama (2013: n.p.), is ‘composed of three letters, *a*, *u*, and *m*. These symbolize the practitioner’s impure body, speech, and mind; they also symbolize the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha’. The inclusion of the word ‘om’ therefore draws unmistakable influence from Buddhist spiritual practice.

Figure 5.27. Tajuddin – *Azan*, excerpt from section 6 (Tajuddin 2007: 6)

Analysis of Tajuddin’s *Azan* reveals the strong influence of Islamic spiritual practice, namely the *azan*, in its structure, text, ornamentation and melodic lines, and also the assimilation of significant Buddhist chanting through the inclusion of the word ‘om’. Along with the assimilation of gamelan numbering and timbre in the pitch, time structure and sound sculpture part, Tajuddin’s *Azan* presents the composer’s mixture of ingredients to create a *rojak* work infused with local flavours.

¹⁶² *Maṇi*, ‘meaning jewel, symbolizes the factors of method, the altruistic intention to become enlightened, compassion, and love. The two syllables, *padme*, meaning lotus, symbolize wisdom...The final syllable *hūm*...indicates indivisibility...Thus the six syllables, *om maṇi padme hūm*, mean that in dependence on the practice of a path that is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha.’ (Dalai Lama 2013: n.p.).

5.4 Conclusion

Chapter 5 has revealed, through the analysis of five Malaysian compositions, the assimilation into Malaysian music of an array of cultural elements that are not region-specific but instead relate to the spiritual practices that influenced Malaysian society. Ng's *Xiang* highlights the composer's belief in the concept of Buddhist simplicity through its minimalist materials, which allows Ng's delicate arrangements of timbral variations to be displayed to full effect. Ng also draws inspiration from the Buddhist teaching of recycle, which he demonstrates by the recycling of musical materials across four compositions, *Xiang*, *Rimba*, *Three Sketches*, and *A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*. Echoing the idea of reincarnation, where recycled life-forces are given new personality, the re-contextualised musical materials offer different nuances and character in their new settings. The composer recognises the value of recycling material and uses this in an idiosyncratically intentional way that results in substantial differences between the original source and the adapted version. This effect is emphasised by the composer's signature compositional approach, which is perhaps inspired by Boulez, Feldman, Ligeti, and Stockhausen and their compositions, where the scores provide performers with considerable room for interpretation and individual musical expression. Othman's *topeng I* adds symbolism and Christianity to his previously identified wide range of inspirational sources that have been identified in previous chapters and include Sufism, Buddhist and Hindu mythology, the great Sanskrit epic Mahabharata, and pitch cell.

Spiritual practices from the traditions of Islam, Buddhism and Christianity are among the elements that have been shown to have influenced the compositions discussed within this chapter. While each element remains intact within the music into which it has been assimilated, the combination of these elements, together with the region-specific elements identified in previous chapters, show how Malaysian music, like Malaysian cooking, combines a disparate array of elements to create a unique cultural *rojak* that is greater than the totality of its constituent parts.

Conclusion

This study has used the concept of *rojak*, highlighted in the quote by Johan Othman, as the vehicle to critically evaluate modern Malaysian music, its influences and idiosyncrasies, through an examination of the assimilation of cultural elements in the compositions of five leading Malaysian composers. These five composers have played a pivotal role in the development of Malaysian contemporary music. As has been demonstrated in this study, each composer incorporates cultural elements that are meaningful to them within their broader compositional approaches, in order to create music that retains a sense of individual ingredients yet is greater than the sum of its parts. Work title, instrumentation, and the arrangement of musical materials such as structure, pitch and rhythm organisation, often have explicit references to cultural elements. By comparison, more abstract concepts such as timbre and gesture, which use the power of suggestion and imagination, provide access to multiple world views. Despite the different approaches, these composers have collectively created a Malaysian contemporary music *rojak*.

The importance of the influence of pre-colonial and colonial history and the resulting cultural assimilation processes on the five composers cannot be underestimated, especially when considered in tandem with local and international geopolitical change. As the different ethnic groups in Malaysia have grown less segregated, becoming integrated rather than merely co-existing, so too have cultural practices and beliefs become shared among the different communities. This is particularly visible in cuisine, spiritual practices, festivals and customs, cinema and film and, as investigated in the core of this study, Malaysian contemporary music, a relatively new art form that only came into existence in the 1950s. Developments through various stages, including composers who studied abroad and brought home compositional influences from the US and Europe, in parallel with the establishment of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) and the opening of Malaysia's first purpose-built concert hall, Dewan Filharmonik Petronas, have created a context for contemporary composers in general. During the time of this study, a younger generation of Malaysian composers has gradually emerged, who have begun to make their mark on both regional and international stages.

The influence of the multicultural nature of Malaysian society has been prominent in the works of Malaysian contemporary composers since the inception of the genre in the 1950s. This study, through critical analyses presented in Chapters 2 to 5, has examined the ways in which the five selected composers negotiate Southeast Asian and Chinese cultural elements, as well as spiritual practices in the region, into their compositions. Table c.1 provides a summarised list of the 29 selected compositions and their assimilated cultural elements, as well as other notable elements found through analyses in this study. The results of these analyses have been presented by theme and region, as it has been found that Malaysian composers often assimilate multiple cultural elements in one single work, reflecting the *rojak* metaphor.

Table c.1. Summary of 29 selected compositions and their assimilated cultural elements

Composer	Composition	Year Composed	Cultural Elements			Other Notable Cultural Elements
			Southeast Asian	Chinese	Spiritual Practices	
Chong	<i>Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree</i> for flute (also piccolo, alto flute, Thai-gong and tam-tam), clarinet in B \flat (also bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano	2002	- Malay poem <i>pantun</i>			
	<i>I Hear the Wind Calling</i> for ensemble	2003		- Chinese calligraphy and painting		
	<i>Monodrama</i> for oboe solo, ensemble and electronic	2004	- Gamelan			
	<i>Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer</i> – for <i>sheng</i> , <i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> and 10 western instruments	2005		- Chinese orchestra and its instruments		
	<i>Shui.Mo</i> [水.墨] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (<i>erhu</i> , <i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> & <i>sheng</i>) and orchestra	2007		- Chinese calligraphy and painting		
	<i>Yuan-He</i> [源-和] Concerto for 5 Chinese instruments and 5 western instruments	2010		- Chinese philosophy		
	<i>Xun Feng</i> [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (<i>pipa</i> , <i>guzheng</i> , <i>dizi</i> & <i>sheng</i>) and Chinese orchestra	2013		- Chinese orchestra and its instruments		
Ng	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos</i>	2004	- Gamelan			
	<i>Xiang</i> for orchestra	2006-2007			- Buddhism	
	<i>Rimba</i> for chamber orchestra	2006-2007			- Buddhism	
	<i>Amorphous</i> for string orchestra	2009		- Chinese		

				philosophy		
	<i>A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest</i> for solo piano	2009			- Buddhism	
	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos II</i>	2009			- Buddhism	
	<i>Shadows</i> for piano, gamelan and Malay percussion with shadow puppet accompaniment	2011	- Gamelan			
Othman	<i>ittar</i> for chamber orchestra	2003	- Gamelan			- Sufism and its literature - Buddhist and Hindu mythology - The great Sanskrit epic <i>Mahabharata</i> - Pitch cell
	<i>topeng I</i> for orchestra	2004	- Gamelan		- Christianity	
	<i>whose shadow would fall on</i> for trombone and piano	2011	- Gamelan			
Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i> for flute, celeste, piano, percussion and string orchestra	2001	- Gamelan - The concept of <i>tenunan</i> and <i>batik</i>			
	<i>Gamelbati III</i> for string quartet	2005	- Gamelan - The concept of <i>tenunan</i> and <i>batik</i>			
	<i>Azan</i> [Call for Prayer] for mezzo soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players	2007	- Gamelan		- Islam - Buddhism	
	<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i> [A Malay Poem IV] for violin, cello and piano	2011	- Gamelan - Malay poem <i>pantun</i>			

	<i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i> for solo flute	2013	- Malay poem <i>pantun</i>			
Yii	<i>Bayang</i> for wayang kulit and Chinese orchestra	2008	- Wayang kulit	- Chinese orchestra and its instruments		
	<i>Gongan</i> for oboe and piano	2008	- Wayang kulit			
	<i>Timang Burung</i> for solo piano	2009	- Gamelan			
	<i>Wild Cursive</i> [狂草] for zhongruan and string trio	2009		- Chinese calligraphy and painting		
	<i>My Spirit is Dancing!</i> for solo piano	2010	- Balinese baris dance			
	<i>My Spirit is Chanting</i> for soprano, bass clarinet and percussions	2011	- Mak yong			
	<i>My Ears are Still Ringing</i> for flute and alto sax	2011, revised 2012		- Chinese calligraphy and painting		

The 11 selected Malaysian compositions discussed in Chapter 2 reveal the assimilation and influence of gamelan, a traditional musical ensemble from Indonesia, predominantly consisting of pitched bronze percussion instruments played by hand and/or mallets. The dominance of gamelan influences is clearly evident as all five composers have mediated gamelan elements, in some form, into their works. Chong's *Monodrama* assimilates the rhythmic virtuosity and sonority of the gamelan, in particular through the use of oboe to mimic the gamelan *serunai*, an aerophone instrument that is commonly known as the gamelan oboe. Ng's *Shadows* and *Three Sketches* reflect the improvisatory nature of the gamelan performance as well as its intricate ensemble musicianship. Through the use of extended instrumental techniques, Ng recreates the shimmering sound of the gamelan bronze percussion in his compositions. While Othman has denied that gamelan is the main source of inspiration for *ittar* and *topeng I*, the heterophonic layering of melodic lines is indeed a recognisable feature of the gamelan. The use of cyclical structure in pitch and rhythm, and the contraction and expansion of melodic lines are also common traits of gamelan performance practices. This cyclical compositional tool is also found in Othman's 2011 work *whose shadow would fall on*.

In contrast to Othman's, perhaps unconscious, assimilation of gamelan elements, Tajuddin states unequivocally in his programme notes that *Tenunan II*, *Gamelbati III*, *Azan* and *Sebuah Pantun IV* contain gamelan elements. Analyses of these works reveal that the selection of musical materials, instrumentation and pitch structure are based on *Gamelan Gong Kebyar*, gamelan sound quality, and gamelan numbers. The term gamelan numbers refers to the gamelan cipher notation where numbers 1 to 7 are assigned to a seven-note scale. In Tajuddin's compositions, a seven-note scale is preset to the seven gamelan numbers. The composer creates the skeleton pitch structure of his works with reference to traditional gamelan pieces selected by the composer. In similar ways to Tajuddin's adaptation of gamelan numbers, Yii combines gamelan numbering with a Chinese diatonic scale cipher system to dictate pitches in *Timang Burung*. Similar to his counterparts who attempt to create sonic outcomes that resemble that of the gamelan instruments, Yii employs extended performance techniques to realise specific aural effect including a gong-like drone and the shimmering sound of the gamelan.

Based on the 11 analysed works, it can be seen that each composer employs his own idiosyncratic compositional approaches to apply his personal *rojak* signature to his creative outputs. The mixture of compositional tools and ‘ingredients’ — the improvisatory nature of the gamelan, its sonority, notation and cyclical structure — clearly parallels Othman’s *rojak* metaphor, where the national dish contains ingredients that may vary depending on location, the type of *rojak* and the desired outcome.

Chapter 3 continues the investigation into Southeast Asian cultural elements, shifting the focus from gamelan to Malay poem *pantun*, *mak yong*, *wayang kulit*, Balinese *baris* dance and the concept of *tenunan* (weave) and batik, realised in nine selected Malaysian compositions. In *Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree*, Chong’s adaptation of the Malay poem is philosophical. The contrasting musical gestures of the work serve as a reflection of the troubled and melancholic tone of Awang’s poem. Yii’s appreciation of traditional art forms of the Southeast Asian region, including *mak yong*, *wayang kulit* and Balinese *baris* dance, is incorporated in *My Spirit is Chanting*, *Gongan*, *Bayang*, and *My Spirit is Dancing!*. Yii creates his own idiosyncratic compositional language through work title, structure, melodic lines and ornamentation, variation in timbre, ostinato, extended performance practices, performance instructions, instrumentation, use of traditional gamelan ensemble and *Tok Dalang*, and choice of register and timbre as mediums for his assimilation of these cultural elements. *My Spirit is Chanting* and *Gongan* are gestural and give prominence to the variation of tone colour, while *Bayang* and *My Spirit is Dancing!* are programmatic in nature, in which musical gestures are employed to evoke war scenes in *Bayang* and dance movements in *My Spirit is Dancing!*.

Three of the nine compositions analysed in Chapter 2, due to their incorporation of gamelan elements, were further analysed in Chapter 3 to identify other cultural elements. These compositions were: Tajuddin’s *Sebuah Pantun IV*, *Tenunan II* and *Gamelbati III*. In *Sebuah Pantun IV* and *Sebuah Pantun VII* Tajuddin has not only embedded gamelan numbers in his pitch selection, but has also structured the work to reflect the *pantun* format. Titles and musical materials are other compositional tools that Tajuddin has employed to exhibit the influence of the Malay *pantun* through *Sebuah Pantun IV* and *Sebuah Pantun VII*. The concept of *tenunan* (weave) and batik are also important inspirational sources in Tajuddin’s innovative pattern-based

compositional strategy, in which he weaves together cultural elements through the use of structure, time signature, pitch and rhythmic organisations, and ornamentations in *Tenunan II* and *Gamelbati III*.

Chapter 4 demonstrates the ways in which Chong, Ng and Yii have all negotiated and incorporated cultural elements from their Chinese heritage in their works, with particular focus on the influence of Chinese orchestra and instruments, Chinese calligraphy and painting, and philosophy. Principles of Chinese calligraphy and painting, particularly brush works, are reflected in *I Hear the Wind Calling* and *Shui.Mo* by Chong, and *Wild Cursive* and *My Ears are Still Ringing* by Yii. Chong's negotiation of this cultural element is more conceptual in that musical motifs reflect gestures, the concept of *li* and *qi*, while Yii's approach is more programmatic, whereby music figures are guided by the actual motion, pressure and energy of the brush. Instrumentation, musical material and gestures, performance instructions and techniques are common mediums employed by the composers to assimilate aspects of Chinese calligraphy and painting into their compositions.

Case studies in Chapter 4 on Chinese orchestra and its instruments provide an overview of two composers' use of Chinese orchestra and its instruments, using Chong's *Metamorphosis VI* and *Xun Feng* as well as Yii's *Bayang* for *wayang kulit* and Chinese orchestra as case studies. The maturation in Chong's compositional idioms related to Chinese orchestra and its instruments was discussed during the analyses of *Metamorphosis VI* and *Xun Feng*. In Yii's *Bayang*, the composer pairs Chinese orchestra with the traditional *wayang kulit* ensemble to create a well-balanced sound world between the two different ensembles. The co-existence of the two different cultural elements, Southeast Asian *wayang kulit* and Chinese orchestra, not only evokes Othman's *rojak* metaphor, but recreates a microcosm of today's multicultural Malaysian culture.

The influence of Chinese philosophy was considered through analyses of *Yuan-He*, composed by Chong, and *Amorphous* by Ng. These works illustrate their sophisticated compositional languages, which are characterised by the exploration of a vast array of tonal colours. Interaction between instruments and the (re)arrangement of materials in *Yuan-He* suggests Chong's intention to embed the *wuxing* philosophy, especially the relationship between the phases or elements. Ng's

Amorphous focuses on the changes in musical motif that reoccur in line with the proverb cited from *Zhuangzi*: ‘With every movement there is a change; with every moment there is an alteration’ [无动而不变，无时而不移] (*Zhuangzi*, Chapter 17 *Qiushui* [秋水] (The Floods of Autumn), as cited in Ng 2009b: n.p.). The nine Malaysian compositions examined in this chapter demonstrate the composers’ compositional versatilities in incorporating influences from different Chinese and Southeast Asian elements into their works using various compositional tools. Such versatility is manifestly a reflection of the flexibility of the *rojak* recipe.

In addition to Southeast Asian and Chinese cultural elements, Malaysian composers have also drawn inspiration from spiritual practices in the region, as detailed in Chapter 5. Tajuddin’s *Azan* assimilates the Islamic practice *Azan* through its title, structure, melodic line, ornamentation, and text. The composer has also incorporated elements from another spiritual practice, Buddhism, through the inclusion of chant-like material. Ng’s *Xiang* embeds Buddhist teachings of simplicity through the fabrication of simple musical motifs. Together with three other works, *Rimba, A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest*, and *Three Sketches II*, the composer incorporates the Buddhist idea of recycling and applies this to the recycling of music materials, giving them a new life when re-contextualised.

Othman’s interest in an eclectic array of cultural elements such as Sufism and its literature, Buddhist and Hindu mythology, the great Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*, symbolism, Christianity, and pitch cell have been mediated in *ittar*, *topeng I*, and *whose shadow would fall on*. Chapter 5 specifically examined the assimilation of Christian symbolism into the structure and materials of *topeng I*. Othman’s compositions exemplify his own *rojak* metaphor: he borrows elements from a vast array of sources from all over the world, and combines them in such a way that the elements remain identifiable yet have been refined and enhanced through their combination to create an outcome that is unique and more complex and sophisticated than any single constituent element.

This research has demonstrated the range of compositional methods employed by Malaysian composers in assimilating cultural elements. It is now possible to identify each composer’s unique compositional approach.

Chong's works are characterised by the highly gestural compositional techniques that emphasise the diversity of timbral possibilities. The way he embeds cultural elements is often philosophical and conceptual. Detailed and specific performance instructions are provided in his works to encourage the desired sonic outcomes. The use of spatial arrangements in the instrumental layouts is another common feature across his compositions as, by giving careful consideration to the use of the space, he ensures that his work can be transferred to different venues while still retaining its unique sound.

In contrast to Chong, Ng includes comparatively fewer performance instructions and provides greater flexibility and freedom to the musicians performing his works. The scores provide musical motifs that are required to be constructed by the performing musician(s) using their own interpretation and expression. Such freedom of performance is seen even in Ng's most 'organised' score, *Xiang*, where musicians are given a set of boxed notes together with performance instructions such as dynamic range and tonal colour. This results in an improvisation-like section. Ng's musical languages, like Chong's, are gestural and involve considerable timbral variations. It is these gestural and timbre-centred musical motifs that articulate the composer's assimilation of cultural elements into his works.

Othman's compositional method is more structured than those of Chong and Ng, particularly with reference to cyclical pitch and rhythmic organisation. The cyclical approach in his earlier work *ittar* is relatively straightforward, while the later *whose shadow would fall on* demonstrates how his cyclical compositional approach has matured and grown in sophistication over time. The reoccurrence of cycles in the later works becomes less strict as they involve modifications that break away from the pre-determined cyclical patterns. This study has also demonstrated that Othman's mediation of cultural elements can be literal, as seen in *topeng I* where the title makes reference to the Garuda legend, or philosophical; as seen in *ittar*, in which the title is connected to Persian Sufi poet Farid Ud-Din Attar.

Tajuddin's compositional approach has been substantially influenced by several cultural elements from the Southeast Asian region, leading to the creation of his idiosyncratic compositional strategies. The concept of *tenunan* (weave) inspired his pattern-based compositional strategy, while gamelan numbers determined pitch

selections in his *Gamelbati* and *Sebuah Pantun* series. The *Sebuah Pantun* series is also structurally inspired by the Malay poem *pantun*. These compositional strategies derived from cultural elements have been developed into signatures of Tajuddin's compositions.

Most of Yii's works contain traits of programmatic music, in which musical motifs correspond with scenes, such as the war scene in *Bayang*, and movements, such as the *baris* dance and Chinese brushwork in *Wild Cursive* and *My Ears are Still Ringing*. His musical language is sophisticated, providing detailed performance instructions and directions for the placements of musicians off-stage. Yii won the MPO Forum in 2007, and it is noted that his post-MPO Forum musical language bears striking similarities to Chong's, suggesting that Chong may have been a source of inspiration for Yii. Nevertheless, Yii's music is unique, largely owing to his assimilation of cultural elements, both from his own Chinese heritage and his ethnomusicological research that focused on the traditional and folk music of the Southeast and East Asian regions.

The idiosyncratic compositional approaches employed by the five composers in this study have led to the development by each of their own unique creative oeuvres, even when influenced by the same cultural elements. Each composer creates his own *rojak* mixture with a selection of cultural elements as his ingredients. When asked about his compositional approach, Chong refused to be drawn, saying that it is his 'secret recipe' (Kee Yong Chong, pers. comm. 21 February, 2013). Indeed, each composer's recipe for their own *rojak* musical compositions incorporates a repertoire of cultural elements of interest to them. Some *rojak* may consist of only one cultural element, while others may be influenced by several. No two *rojak* are meant to be the same and, as we have seen, this is also the case for the works analysed in this study. An interesting observation is the dominating influences of Southeast Asian cultural elements in the works of Malaysian composers. This could be expected given Malaysia's location within Southeast Asia, as exposure to the cultures of the local region is inevitably strong throughout the lives of the Malaysian composers, irrespective of their ethnicity and heritage.

During an interview with Australian composer Gerard Brophy (Gerard Brophy, pers. comm. 12 September, 2012) who served as a member of the panel of the MPO

Composers Forum, he stated that the Malaysian contemporary music scene is like the pointillism technique of impressionist painters, in which a painting is made up of small dots of colour. In the context of Malaysian contemporary music, these small dots may symbolise the different cultural elements that inspire Malaysian compositions, or Malaysian compositions that contain many different compositional styles and methods, or perhaps even Malaysian composers themselves. As in the creation of a *rojak* dish, these little dots collectively form a painting, becoming the image of Malaysian contemporary music.

This study has now identified the maturation and development of compositional strategies employed by five selected Malaysian composers, all of whom have the same aspiration of mediating cultural elements meaningful to them into their European-based compositional language. It is, therefore, useful to return to Everett's three categories and seven compositional strategies, discussed in the Introduction, to determine how the Malaysian composers employ them to assimilate cultural elements into the 29 compositions analysed in this study (Everett 2004: 16). Table c.2 summarises these findings.

Table c.2. Compositional strategies for assimilating cultural elements (Everett 2004: 16)

Everett's strategies	Composers	Compositions
1. Draw on aesthetic principles or formal systems without iconic references to Asian sounds	Chong	<i>I Hear the Wind Calling</i>
	Chong	<i>Monodrama</i>
	Ng	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos</i>
	Othman	<i>whose shadow would fall on</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Gamelbati III</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i>
	Yii	<i>Gongan</i>
	Yii	<i>My Ears are Still Ringing</i>
	Yii	<i>Timang Burung</i>
	Yii	<i>My Spirit is Chanting</i>
2. Evoke Asian sensibilities without explicit musical borrowing	Othman	<i>ittar</i>
	Othman	<i>topeng I</i>
	Yii	<i>My Spirit is Chanting</i>
3. Quote culture through literary or extramusical means	Chong	<i>Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree</i>
	Chong	<i>Shui.Mo</i> [水.墨]
	Chong	<i>Yuan-He</i> [源-和]
	Chong	<i>Xun Feng</i> [尋風]

	Ng	<i>Xiang</i>
	Ng	<i>Rimba</i>
	Ng	<i>Amorphous</i>
	Ng	<i>A Distant Voice of the Rain Forest</i>
	Ng	<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos II</i>
	Othman	<i>ittar</i>
	Othman	<i>topeng I</i>
	Othman	<i>whose shadow would fall on</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Tenunan II</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i>
	Yii	<i>Wild Cursive [狂草]</i>
	Yii	<i>My Ears are Still Ringing</i>
4. Quote pre-existent musical materials in the form of a collage		
5. Transplant East Asian [Southeast Asian and/or Chinese in this study] attributes of timbre, articulation, or scale system onto Western instruments	Chong	<i>Shui.Mo [水.墨]</i>
	Chong	<i>Yuan-He [源-和]</i>
	Ng	<i>Shadows</i>
	Tajuddin	<i>Azan [Call for Prayer]</i>
	Yii	<i>My Spirit is Dancing!</i>
6. Combine musical instruments and/or tuning systems of East Asian [Southeast Asian and/or Chinese in this study] and Western musical ensembles	Chong	<i>Metamorphosis VI – Wind Prayer –</i>
	Chong	<i>Shui.Mo [水.墨]</i>
	Chong	<i>Yuan-He [源-和]</i>
	Ng	<i>Shadows</i>
	Yii	<i>Wild Cursive [狂草]</i>
7. Transform traditional musical systems, form, and timbres into a distinctive synthesis of Western and Asian musical idioms		
Other strategies identified in this study		
Employing European-derived compositional language in Southeast Asian and/or Chinese ensembles	Chong	<i>Xun Feng [尋風]</i>
	Yii	<i>Bayang</i>
Transplanting Southeast Asian timbre to art object that produces sound	Tajuddin	<i>Azan [Call for Prayer]</i>
Involving extramusical elements to evoke Southeast Asian and/or Chinese sensibilities	Yii	<i>My Spirit is Dancing!</i>

As can be seen in Table c.2, all 29 selected compositions fit within Everett's categories. It is notable that more than one compositional strategy has been employed in some of the works, and that none of the selected compositions employs the fourth strategy. Everett describes the seventh category as compositions that have fully integrated Asian sensibilities, 'musical systems and sonic characteristics' into a 'distinctive Western idiom' in a way that they are no longer detectable as separate elements (Everett 2004: 19). This study, however, finds that even when an Asian idiom is sophisticatedly embedded into the composer's European-derived musical language, where the sonic event generated does not resemble that of the inspirational source, one can still identify the embedded cultural elements with critical analysis. Examples of this are Tajuddin's *Gamelbati III*, *Azan*, *Sebuah Pantun IV*, and *Sebuah Pantun VII*, where sonic results do not make direct reference to Asian sounds, yet the composer's self-derived gamelan number compositional approach manifested in these works is identifiable, as analysed in this study. Another example is Othman's cyclical approach, reminiscent of the gamelan cyclic structure, which has been elaborately assimilated into *ittar*, *topeng I*, and *whose shadow would fall on*, but which, nonetheless, remains traceable. The traceability of embedded elements may perhaps contribute to the effectiveness of culture assimilation within a composition, although it is not the sole indication of the success of such assimilation.

Three extra strategies have been identified. Firstly, composers apply their European-derived musical language to Southeast Asian and/or Chinese ensembles, as can be seen in Chong's *Xun Feng* [尋風] Concerto for 4 Chinese instruments (*pipa*, *guzheng*, *dizi* & *sheng*) and Chinese orchestra and Yii's *Bayang* for *wayang kulit* and Chinese orchestra. The second strategy is the transplantation of Asian sounds onto art objects, such as in Tajuddin's *Azan*, where gamelan timbre is created by sound sculptures. The third extra strategy has been identified in Yii's *My Spirit is Dancing!* where he uses extramusical elements, such as dance movements to make reference to the Balinese *baris* dance. This study argues that Malaysian composers have developed idiosyncratic compositional strategies over the period of this study that reflect their personal taste, but at the same time, have pushed the boundaries of their European-derived compositional tools. The end results are an array of compositional approaches that defy simple interpretation.

Malaysian contemporary music has a bright future, with the last decade seeing a surge of younger composers having success in Malaysia, Asia, and further afield. Notable rising stars of this younger generation of Malaysian composers include Jun Yan Chow, Jun Yi Chow (b.1987), Zi Hua Tan (b.1983), Jessica Cho (b.1987), Hong Da Chin, Sayyid Shafiee (b.1987) and Ainolnaim Azizol (b.1987), many of whom have been directly and indirectly influenced by composers in this study, particularly Chong, Yii and Tajuddin. The musical language of the younger generation is multifaceted. Some of these new works are avant-garde, such as Jessica Cho's *Hypnagogic II* (2012), Nup Hiang Neo's *Whispering City* for flute (alto and bass), viola and *zhong ruan* (2014), and Zi Hua Tan's *...sur fond blanc* for flute, clarinet, percussion, violin, viola and cello (2015). Other compositions, such as Azizol's *Nocturne I – Ulek* for soprano, sampled gender-slenthem, electronics with eight speakers and movements (2016), and Jun Yan Chow's *Erhu Max!* for erhu live improvisation and live electronic with four channels sound system (2010), are embracing the global contemporary music concept of multimedia compositions, in which the composers engage other forms of media including video, images, calligraphers, painters, and dancers. Whatever direction it takes, it is expected that the future of the Malaysian contemporary music scene will continue to assimilate various cultural elements as it reflects the increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary Malaysian culture.

A complete representation of all Malaysian composers and compositions to identify signature compositional approaches was outside the scope of this study but remains an important area for future work, in particular with regard to the emergence of female Malaysian composers. The analytical approach employed in this study has enabled insights into the five selected composers and may offer other scholars a method to study the assimilation of cultures, not only for Malaysian contemporary music, but potentially also regional studies. This study has also provided many detailed examples which may suggest ways of analysing cultural elements in contemporary composition more generally. This approach is expected to be of relevance not only to the cultural analysis of Malaysian compositions, but also to the evaluation of the influences of the five leading composers on future generations of composers. This study has addressed the lack of academic research and literature on Malaysian compositions between 2001 and 2014, particularly those with an emphasis

on the subject of assimilation of cultural elements. The findings of this study highlight many aspects of Malaysian compositions that deserve further research, including detailed study on the development of signature compositional approaches by the individual composers, study of Malaysian contemporary music and works since the 1950s, and analysis of other cultural elements that Malaysian composers have been inspired by or drawn upon, and which have not been discussed within the scope of this study. Another perspective that should be investigated is the rise of female Malaysian composers, their works and their undeniably important contributions to the Malaysian contemporary music scene. The development of Malaysian contemporary music since the 1950s also requires attention, as it contextualises all other studies of these composers and their compositions.

This study has shown that, while composers are generally inspired by a wide range of cultural elements from across the world, the compositional approaches and outputs are not unified. Each composer has his own approach and inserts idiosyncratic compositional signatures into his culturally inspired creative outputs. It is expected that these composers and their compositions will make a major contribution to the growth, direction and maturation of the Malaysian contemporary music scene over the next decade and beyond. Furthermore, they are stimulating new mixtures of cultural-related compositional practices that are becoming increasingly distinctive to Malaysian compositions. Such compositional practices may, in future, arise from the ongoing processes of assimilation identified in this study. Nevertheless, it is clear that the current Malaysian contemporary music scene is sufficiently vibrant and accommodating to support this heterogeneous *rojak* mix.

Appendix 1

Biographies and List of Works by the Five Selected Composers

A1.1 Kee Yong Chong

Chong was born in 1971 into a Chinese agricultural family. The rustic environment of his home town has left an indelible impression on Chong's artistic outlook. He received his Bachelor of Art degree from the Xi'an Conservatory Music, China, in 1995 under the tutelage of Professor Rao Yuyan and Professor Zhang Dalong. His study in China combined with his Chinese heritage is reflected in his compositions. In 2001 Chong was awarded Master of Composition with the Highest Honours at the Royal Flemish Conservatory of Music of Brussels with Professor Jan Van Landeghem and Professor Daniel Capelletti.

Chong's works have won multiple compositional awards within Malaysia and internationally, and have been performed around the world. Composer and conductor Peter Eötvös called his music 'imaginative and poetic'; violist, composer and conductor Brett Dean remarked that Chong's music is 'the statement of a genuine and inquisitive musical personality'; while composer Jonathan Harvey has described his music as 'very inventive and artistically pure' (Chong 2012).

Chong is one of the co-founders of SMCC, of which he has been vice-president since 2010, and is currently president of the Society.

Table A1.1. Complete list of works by Kee Yong Chong

Work title	Year composed	Instrumentation
<i>Huang Tu</i> [Yellow Dust]	1994; rev. 2002	string quartet
<i>The Echoed Dream</i>	1994; rev. 2002	11 strings
<i>The Reflection of the Dancing Ghost</i>	1997; rev. 2000	bassoon and harp
<i>Scar</i>	1999	string quartet
<i>Invisible Cell</i>	2000	recorder, percussion and tape
<i>Si</i>	2000	solo flute
<i>Wayang Kulit</i>	2000	2 pianists
<i>Metamorphosis I</i>	2000; rev. 2007	viola and harp
<i>The Thousand Ripples of a Lonely Bell</i>	2000-2001	viola

<i>Yi</i>	2000-2001	string trio
<i>Flying Shadow</i>	2001	solo guitar
<i>For Another Better World</i>	2001	solo violin
<i>Four Short Laments for X</i>	2001	ensemble
<i>Liu-Xu-Fei</i>	2001	oboe and cello
<i>Metamorphosis III</i>	2001	piano
<i>Metamorphosis IV</i>	2001	2 musicians (in any instrumentals combination) and CD
<i>Ye Huo I</i> [Twitch Fire I]	2001	solo viola and 12 solo strings or string orchestra
<i>Aubade</i>	2002	2 groups of strings (22 strings)
<i>Di Jie</i> [Abuttal]	2002	oboe, flute, violin and cello
<i>Il Silencio dell' Ancestrale</i>	2002	conductor (percussion), clarinet, viola, piano and 2 percussionists
<i>Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree (ver I)</i>	2002	5 instruments
<i>Mourning the Murder of an Old Banyan Tree (ver II)</i>	2002	6 instruments
<i>Temple Bell Still Ringing in My Heart</i>	2002	viola solo
<i>Ye Huo II</i> [Twitch Fire II]	2002	solo flute and 11 strings
<i>Abandoned Heart</i>	2003	oboe (also cor anglais) and string quartet
<i>Beneath Your Soul</i>	2003	ensemble
<i>Epitaphe Sans Mots</i>	2003	piano trio
<i>I Hear the Wind Calling</i>	2003	chamber orchestra
<i>Kong Shan</i> [Hollow Mountain]	2003	ensemble
<i>Metamorphosis II - Snow River</i>	2003	flute in C (also piccolo and also flute) and percussion
<i>The Lost Psalms of the Abyss</i>	2003	flute
<i>Wu Yan</i> 乌焰 [Black Flame]	2003	6 percussionists
<i>The Starry Night's Ripples</i>	2003; rev. 2004	orchestra
<i>Suspended Love</i>	2003; rev. 2005	violin and percussion
<i>Illusory Angel</i>	2003; rev. 2012	piano
<i>Monodrama</i>	2004	oboe solo, ensemble and electronic
<i>Mourning the Murder of an old Banyan Tree</i>	2005	flute, clarinet in Bb, violin, cello and piano
<i>Metamorphosis VI - Wind Prayer</i> –	2005	<i>sheng, pipa, gu zheng</i> and 10 western instruments
<i>Monodrama II</i>	2005	oboe and piano (with tape)
<i>Ravage of Time</i>	2005	solo violin and orchestra
<i>Silence Cosmos</i>	2005	string quartet
<i>Splattered Landscape</i>	2005	solo piano
<i>Endless Whispering</i>	2006	<i>sheng (xun)</i> and 4 western instruments with live electronic
<i>Hidden Eternity</i>	2006	4 hands piano and ensemble
<i>Inner Mirror</i>	2006	string quartet
<i>Metamorphosis VII - Voiceless Echo</i>	2006	quartet
<i>Tearless Moon</i>	2006	orchestra
<i>Horizon's Chant</i>	2007	<i>sheng, koto</i> and <i>gayageum</i>
<i>Metamorphosis VIII</i>	2007	<i>sheng, flute (alto flute), oboe,</i>

		clarinet (bass clarinet) and double bass
<i>Ocean's Pulse</i>	2007	4 Chinese instruments, off-stage Chinese bamboo flute and Western flute with chamber orchestra
<i>Shui.Mo</i> 水.墨	2007	concerto for 4 Chinese instruments and orchestra
<i>Splattered Landscape III</i>	2007	5 instrumental groups
<i>Splattered Landscape Landscape II - Cloud's Echoing</i>	2007	chamber orchestra (19 players)
<i>Time Flows</i>	2007	piano
<i>Phoenix Calling</i>	2008	solo <i>sheng</i> and ensemble
<i>Yuan-Fei</i> 源-飞 [Origin-Fly]	2009	Chinese <i>dizi</i> and 5 western instruments
<i>Ancient Earth is Still Breathing</i>	2009	solo <i>xun</i>
<i>Angel's Voice</i>	2009	13-string <i>koto</i> and voice
<i>Yuan-Liu</i> 源-流 [Origin-Stream]	2009	<i>sheng</i> , 2 pianos and 2 percussions
<i>Ancient Calling</i>	2010	trombone, piano and pre-recorded sound sample
<i>Ancient Calling (b)</i>	2010	trombone solo and pre-recorded sound sample
<i>Flying Colors</i>	2010	guitar quartet
<i>Horizon's Chant</i>	2010	<i>sho</i> and two 13-strings <i>kotos</i>
<i>Hover in the Horizon</i>	2010	solo violin and pre-recorded sound sample
<i>Temple Bell Still Ringing in My Heart</i>	2010	solo <i>shakuhachi</i>
<i>Timeless Echoes</i>	2010	cello solo, live electronics and projection video of live painting
<i>Yuan-He</i> 源-和 [Origin-Harmony]	2010	concerto for 5 Chinese instruments and 5 western instruments
<i>Bell Stone</i>	2011	percussion
<i>Echoes</i>	2011	cello and piano
<i>Hover in the Horizon</i>	2011	solo violin
<i>Metamorphosis IIb – Chant of Snow River</i>	2011	flute in C (piccolo/alto flute and 4 gongs) and percussion with 2 off stage alto saxophones
<i>Ocean Waves</i>	2011	ensemble
<i>Threnody to the Mother of Earth</i>	2011	solo flute and ensemble (11 musicians)
<i>Time Flow II</i>	2011	solo piano and live electronic
<i>Untitled Love</i>	2011	bass clarinet and percussion
<i>Yun Yong</i> 雲湧 [Clouds Surging]	2011	string quartet
<i>Feng Dong</i> 風動 [Movement of Wind]	2011; rev. 2012	flute and piano
<i>Threnody to the Mother of Earth</i>	2012	solo flute
<i>Bie Ge</i> 別歌 [Song of Farewell]	2012	boy soprano, traditional soprano <i>sheng</i> , choir in 4 groups and 6 percussionists
<i>Wu Wei.Meng Die</i> 无为。梦蝶 [For Nothingness. Butterfly]	2012	<i>sheng</i> (<i>xun</i> and voice), bass clarinet, 2 electronic performers

<i>Dream]</i>		and live electronic
<i>Xin-Yin</i> 心。吟 [Heart.Chanting]	2013	<i>gu qin</i> , <i>pipa</i> , percussion and drummer/actor
<i>Hak.Qin</i> 客。情 [Hakka.Love]	2013	concerto for soloist (<i>sanxian</i> , <i>gu zheng</i> , voice) and Chinese orchestra with pre-recorded audios
<i>Jing Hong</i> 驚鴻 [Glimpse]	2013	flute, clarinet, violin, cello and percussion
<i>Ocean of Tears</i>	2013	solo bass flute
<i>Phoenix Calling</i>	2013	traditional 37-reed soprano <i>sheng</i> and ensemble
<i>Time Flows III</i>	2013	piano solo, video projection, live electronic and 3 off stage musicians (viola, flute and percussion)
<i>Xun Feng</i> 尋風 [Seeking the Wind]	2013	concerto for 4 Chinese instruments and Chinese Orchestra
<i>Music for JIMI</i>	2013; rev. 2015	3 percussionists and pre-recorded sound samples
<i>Endless Echo from the Ancient Land</i>	2014	alto flute or any melody instrument, 4 crystal glasses and pre-recorded sound sample
<i>Fantasy on Tearless Moon</i>	2014	orchestra
<i>Hover in the horizon</i>	2014	violin solo and live electronics
<i>Jing Xin.Hua Hai</i> 靜心。花海 [Peaceful heart. Ocean of flowers]	2014	traditional 37-reed soprano <i>sheng</i> solo
<i>Music for JIMI</i>	2014	6 percussionists and pre-recorded sound samples
<i>Surging on Woods – After J.S. Bach’s Two Part Invention of No.3 in D Major –</i>	2014	5 octaves marimbas
<i>Yuan-Fei II</i> 源。飛(二) [Origin-Fly]	2014	<i>shakuhachi</i> , flute, clarinet (also bass clarinet), viola, cello, percussion and piano
影子。戲歌 <i>Wayang-Lagu</i> [Shadow. Song for the Drama]	2014	large mixed choir a cappella with 4 wine glasses players
<i>Horizon’s Chants II</i>	2015	<i>gayageum</i> , <i>koto</i> , and string trio
<i>Shadow Chanting</i>	2015	alto saxophone and live electronics
湧現的四季 [Streams of Four Seasons]	2015	four groups of <i>gu zheng</i> , <i>da ruan</i> , double bass and 2 percussionists
<i>Legend of the Crazy Monkey King</i>	2016	atmospheric music theatre for Balinese dancer, mixed Eastern and Western instruments ensemble, video projection and live electronics
<i>Yuan. Yun</i> 源。韻	2017	<i>piri</i> / <i>Saenghwang</i> , <i>gayageum</i> , <i>sheng</i> , <i>guzheng</i> , clarinet, violin and percussion

A1.2 Chong Lim Ng

Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1972, Ng began his piano studies at the age of four and was subsequently granted a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music in London in 1994, where he obtained his Postgraduate Diploma in Music in 1997. For the next two years, he continued his piano studies in the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Graz, Austria. In 1999, he was awarded a full scholarship to attend the Hamamatsu International Piano Academy in Japan.

It is known that he often incorporates Asian music aesthetics into European-derived classical music in his compositions. In an interview with Siagian (2007: 92), Ng states that he composes with ‘nationalism in mind’. The composer further confirms this compositional style in the programme notes to the first CD anthology of Malaysian contemporary compositions, in which he writes that the *Three Sketches for Two Pianos* (2004) displays ‘a mixture of Southeast Asian (gamelan) and western influence. They are tiny little pieces to express my love of nature, my country, and simply the exploration of the natural sound world of the piano that I adore’ (Singh *et al.* 2008). His key compositions include: *Morning Mist* for cello and piano (2009); *...footprints* for piano (2008); *Xiang* for orchestra (2007); *Windows* for chamber orchestra (2007); *Rimba* for ensemble (2006); and *Three Sketches* for two pianos (2004).

Ng frequently performs as a solo pianist, raising humanitarian funds for those in need, including the recital in Kuala Lumpur on the 10th of March 2017 entitled ‘A Night for the Children: Ng Chong Lim Piano Recital 2017 in aid of PA Nepal and other humanitarian Funds’.

Table A1.2. Complete list of works by Chong Lim Ng

Work title	Year composed	Instrumentation
<i>Two Preludes</i>	1999	piano
<i>...Warna...</i> [Colours]	2001	piano
<i>Khatustitiwa</i>	2001	2 pianos and 2 percussions
<i>Sonata</i>	2001	solo cello
<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos</i>	2004	two pianos
<i>Daun</i> [Leaves]	2005	piano
<i>Rimba</i>	2006-2007	chamber orchestra
<i>Window</i>	2006-2007	chamber orchestra
<i>Xiang</i>	2006-2007	orchestra
<i>...footprints</i>	2008	piano

<i>A distant Voice of the Rain Forest</i>	2009	solo piano
<i>Morning Mist</i>	2009	cello and piano
<i>Three Sketches for Two Pianos II</i>	2009	2 pianos
<i>Amorphous</i>	2010	string orchestra
<i>Footprints</i>	2011	solo piano
<i>Shadows</i>	2011	piano and Malay traditional instruments
<i>Dragonfly(s)</i>	2012	piano
<i>Three Sketches</i>	2012	oboe, cello and piano
<i>Trio</i>	2014	piano, cello and oboe
<i>Stillness...</i>	2015	piano

A1.3 Johan Othman

Johan Awang Othman was born into a Malay family in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1969. He obtained his Bachelor of Music Composition, minoring in Music Theory, from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio in 1997. In the same year, Othman was awarded the Herbert Elwell Prize in Composition at Oberlin. In 1999, he completed his Master of Music in Music Composition from Yale University. His teachers included Richard Hoffman, Param Vir, Ned Rorem and Evan Zyporin. In 2015, Othman obtained his PhD at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, with the dissertation title *Performative Gendering: Analyzing the Representation of Gender in the Myth of Medea*, focusing on the visual representations of Medea's gender.

In his compositions, Othman draws upon an extremely wide range of sources and inspirations, ranging from religions, mythologies, philosophies and, undoubtedly, influential European-derived art music composers. He is particularly fascinated by the idea of life cycle and translated his view on life cycle into his compositions through pitch and rhythmic cycles, which has become his signature compositional tool. These features are exhibited in analyses in Chapters 2 and 5 of this study.

Table A1.3. Complete list of works by Johan Othman

Work title	Year composed	Instrumentation
<i>Peristalsis</i>	1995	chamber orchestra
<i>Papilio Albus</i>	1996	soprano and chamber orchestra
<i>Kist</i>	1998	orchestra
<i>ittar</i>	2003	orchestra
<i>topeng I</i>	2004	orchestra
<i>Composition for Piano No. 8</i>	2005	piano

<i>topeng II</i>	2007	orchestra
<i>Dying In Order To Live</i>	2008	soprano and piano
<i>Conference Of The Birds</i>	2009	opera for electroacoustics and voice
<i>Neutral Space</i>	2009	piano
<i>the dancing mouse</i>	2009	choir
<i>the dancing mouse</i>	2009	soprano and harp
<i>the dancing mouse</i>	2009	soprano and harp (vocalise version)
<i>A Modern Woman Called Ang Tau Mui</i>	2011	music for theatre
<i>whose shadow would fall on</i>	2011	clarinet and piano
<i>the doctrine of final causes</i>	2012	solo oboe
songs and soundscapes for the play "The Sandpit"	2012	musical theatre
<i>He too a simulacrum, that another person was dreaming of him</i>	2013	2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons
<i>Composition for Piano No. 3</i>	2015	piano
<i>The Killing of Meghnad</i>	work in progress	opera
<i>A piece for solo harp</i>	unknown	harp
<i>A piece for violin and piano</i>	unknown	violin and piano
<i>Oh Brickfields</i>	unknown	musical theatre
<i>Reunion</i>	unknown	musical theatre
<i>Tengku Puteri Salasiah</i>	unknown	musical theatre
<i>The Stage</i>	unknown	musical theatre
<i>Untitled solo clarinet piece</i>	unknown	clarinet

A1.4 Tazul Tajuddin

Tazul Izan Tajuddin was born into a Malay family in Banting, Selangor, Malaysia in 1969. In 1991, he received his Bachelor of Music from the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) (Malaysia). With the support of a scholarship initiated by the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Culture of Malaysia, Tajuddin graduated with a Master in Music Composition from Carnegie Mellon University (United States) in 1996. He was awarded another scholarship allowing him to obtain his PhD in composition from the University of Sussex (United Kingdom) in 2002. He has received guidance from many teachers. Among them are Leonardo Balada, Juan Pablo Izqueirido, Jonathan Harvey, Martin Butler and Michael Finnissy. Tajuddin has also studied in Spain with Franco Donatoni, and in Paris where he consulted with Brian Ferneyhough.

Tajuddin has received major compositional awards, including first prize in the Lutoslawski Composition Award 2005 (Poland) and first prize in the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award 2002 (Japan). His works have been performed and broadcast in North America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

After living in the United Kingdom for approximately 12 years, Tajuddin returned to Malaysia in 2009 and has organised seven ‘Malaysian Contemporary Concert Series’, which has run annually since 2009. The 8th Malaysian Contemporary Concert Series is to be held from 20 to 26 November 2017. Tajuddin is currently an Associate Professor working as the Head of Composition at the Faculty of Music, Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Among his compositional outputs are the *Tenunan*, *Sebuah Pantun* and *Gamelbati* series. In these series, Tajuddin applies compositional strategies such as pattern-based technique, traditional weaving as a conceptual basis for combining elements of music, traditional gamelan numbered notation and scale as source material, and Malay poetry (*pantun*) as a structural basis.

Table A1.4. Complete list of works by Tazul Tajuddin

Work title	Year composed	Instrumentation
<i>Abstract</i>	1994	8 channel tape
<i>Lagu I & II</i> [Song I & II]	1994	soprano and piano
<i>Piano Sonata (Sketch)</i>	1994	solo piano
<i>Sketch</i>	1994	string quartet
<i>Lagu Tanpa Kata I</i> [Song Without Words I]	1994; rev. 2003	soprano and orchestra
<i>Study for Electronic Music in Sections</i>	1994-1995	8 channel tape
<i>Electronic Piece I</i>	1995	8 channel tape
<i>Etude</i>	1995	chamber orchestra
<i>Piano Sonata (Etudes)</i>	1995	solo piano
<i>Violin and Chamber Orchestra</i>	1995	solo violin and chamber orchestra
<i>Karya</i> [Piece]	1995; rev. 2000	solo violin and piano
<i>Avtopotret</i> [Self-Portrait]	1995-1996	large orchestra
<i>Pemuda</i>	1996	baritone solo/narrator, soprano solo/ narrator, choir SATB and chamber orchestra
<i>Meditasi Ritualistik Seorang Pemuda</i> [Ritualistic Meditation of a Man]	1997	solo soprano, alto, tenor and bass, 3 SATB chorus groups and large orchestra
<i>Ritual - Pemuda II</i>	1997	4 soloists SATB, 3 SATB chorus groups, piano and 3 percussionists

<i>Meditasi Ritualistik Seorang Pemuda</i>	1997; rev. 2003	4 soloists, 3 SATB chorus groups and large orchestra
<i>Lagu IV</i>	1998	solo soprano and piano
<i>Lagu III [Song III]</i>	1998; rev. 2003	B \flat clarinet and piano
<i>Alhambra - Arabesque</i>	1999	string quartet
<i>Arabesque II, IIa, IIb</i>	1999	2 piccolos and 2 violins
<i>Jeritan [Scream]</i>	1999-2000	string quartet
<i>Corak - Arabesque V [Pattern - Arabesque V]</i>	2000	harp and cello
<i>Corakan [Patterns]</i>	2000	large orchestra
<i>Tenunan [Weaves]</i>	2000	small ensemble
<i>Mantera... (excerpt I-III, V and VII)</i>	2000; rev 2004	solo flute and 2 sound sculpture players
<i>Mantera...</i>	2000-2001	solo flute and 2 sound sculpture players
<i>Tenunan II [Weaves II]</i>	2001	solo flute, piano, celesta, 2 percussionists and string orchestra
<i>Sebuah Pantun [A Malay Short Poem]</i>	2002	solo piano
<i>Mantera Nadian Warna - Tenunan III [The Mantra of Pulsating Colours]</i>	2002-2003	large orchestra
<i>Torrent of Images - A Memorial I: Irrational</i>	2002-2003	solo piano
<i>Arabesque IV - Tenunan VII [Arabesque IV - Weaves VII]</i>	2003	solo guitar
<i>Kehalusan Ukiran - Sebuah Tenunan VI [A Refinement of An Objecy - Weaves VI]</i>	2003	15 musicians
<i>Kehalusan Ukiran II [A Refinement of An Object II]</i>	2003	16 musicians
<i>Ladu Tanpa Kata I [Song Without Words I]</i>	2003	soprano and orchestra
<i>Sebuah Tenunan IV [Weaves IV]</i>	2003	flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano
<i>Tenunan V [Weaves V]</i>	2003	orchestra
<i>Mediasi Masa - Raja Satariah Memoriam</i>	2003-2004	solo piano
<i>Mediasi Ukiran II - Sebuah Tenunan IX [Mediation of Ornament II - Weaves IX]</i>	2003 -2004	orchestra
<i>Mantera...II</i>	2004	solo flute
<i>Mediasi Ukiran - Tenunan VIII [Mediation of Ornament - Weaves VIII]</i>	2004	string quartet
<i>Mediasi Ukiran V – Tenunan XII [Mediation of Ornament V – Weaves XII]</i>	2004	flute, clarinet, violin and cello
<i>Torrent of Images - A Memorial II: Mediasi Masa – Raja Satariah Memoriam [The Mediation of Time]</i>	2004	solo piano
<i>Gamelbati - Mediasi Ukiran III</i>	2004-2005	gamelan and 23 musicians

[Gamelbati - Mediation of Ornament III]		
<i>Gamelbati - Mediasi Ukiran IV</i> [Gamelbati - Mediation of Ornament IV]	2005	soprano, flute/piccolo, viola and cello
<i>Gamelbati III</i>	2005	string quartet
<i>Gamelbati IV</i>	2005	piano, clarinet, violin, cello and percussion
<i>Gamelbati V</i>	2006	saxophone quartet
<i>Gamelbati VI</i>	2006	piccolo, clarinet, violin, viola and cello
<i>Mediasi Ukiran VI</i> [Mediation of Ornament VI]	2006	large orchestra
<i>Selindung Warna – Gamelbati VII</i> [Hidden Colours]	2006	solo violin
<i>Azan</i> [Call to Prayer]	2006-2007	call for prayer, mezzo-soprano, baritone and 3 sound sculpture players
<i>In Liquid Praise of Sound Refraining</i>	2006-2007	a monodrama for narrator, 4 voices (SATB), electronics and visual projector
<i>Warna Yang Bernada</i>	2006-2007	piano and chamber orchestra
<i>Laugh</i>	2008-2009	solo soprano and Sculpted Sound Ensemble
<i>Shadow Sound</i>	2008-2009	soprano and 4 sound sculpture players
<i>Sebuah Pantun II</i>	2009	solo violin
<i>Catriona</i>	2009-2010	flute, violin, cello and piano
<i>Mimpi Dalam Lagu</i> [Dream within Song]	2010	solo soprano, flute, chorus SATB and piano
<i>Sebuah Pantun III - Gamelbati VIII</i>	2010	guitar quartet
<i>Sebuah Tenunan III</i>	2010	guitar quartet
<i>Sebuah Pantun IV</i>	2011	trio violin, cello and piano
<i>Sebuah Pantun V</i>	2011	mezzo-soprano, clarinet, cello and piano
<i>Sebuah Pantun VI</i>	2013	oboe and piano
<i>Sebuah Pantun VII</i>	2013	solo flute
<i>Opera Puteri Saadong</i>	2012-2014	narrator, soloists, chorus, gamelan ensemble, <i>makyong</i> group and chamber orchestra
<i>2 New Works</i>	work in progress	solo cello
<i>Mediasi Ukiran IV</i> [The Mediation of Ornament IV]	2004 – work in progress	20 solo strings
<i>New Work</i>	2004 – work in progress	piano, saxophone and percussion
<i>Perjalanan</i> [Journey]	1997 – work in progress	soloists, chorus and large orchestra
<i>Torrent of Images - A Memorial III: New Work</i>	work in progress	unknown
<i>Gamel Rawak</i>	unknown	gamelan instruments

A1.5 Kah Hoe Yii

Yii was born in 1970, in Sibul, Malaysia. In 1991, he graduated with a Diploma of Fine Arts from the Malaysian Institute of Arts, where he mastered painting skills especially in the field of Chinese calligraphy and painting. Yii obtained his Bachelor of Music in 1997, majoring in Musicology and Chinese flute from the Xi'an Conservatory of Music. His main research area is traditional and folk music of the Southeast and East Asian regions. In 2006 he won third prize in the International Composition for Chinese Orchestra organised by the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. In 2007, Yii won the Second Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) Forum for Malaysian Composers.

Many of Yii's compositions reflect his noticeable interests in various traditional art forms including *wayang kulit*, *mak yung*, gamelan music, Chinese calligraphy and painting. He believes that 'the value and preciousness of art lie within sincerity and honesty, where one needs to be true to one's time and surroundings' (Yii 2006).

Table A1.5. Complete list of works by Kah Hoe Yii

Work title	Year composed	Instrumentation
<i>Inang</i>	2005	Chinese orchestra
<i>'A' Note Promenade</i>	2006	chamber ensemble
<i>Buka Panggung</i>	2006	Chinese orchestra
<i>Menghadap Rebab</i>	2006	<i>erhu</i> , <i>rebab</i> and mixed orchestra
<i>Inner Voices I</i>	2007	chamber ensemble
<i>Inner Voices II</i>	2007	flute, <i>dizi</i> (Chinese bamboo flute) with electronics
<i>Opening of the Stage</i>	2007	orchestra
<i>Bayang</i>	2008	<i>wayang kulit</i> and Chinese orchestra
<i>Drunken Madness</i>	2008	trombone and piano
<i>Gongan</i>	2008	oboe and piano
<i>How the Crocodile got his Teeth</i>	2008	narrator and wind ensemble
<i>Qin.Sheng</i> [琴。笙]	2008	harmonica and Chinese orchestra
<i>Inner Voices IIb</i>	2009	solo <i>shakuhachi</i>
<i>How the Crocodile got his Teeth</i>	2009	shadow puppet and small ensemble
<i>Inner Voices IV</i>	2009	<i>dizi</i> and Chinese orchestra
<i>Kuang Cao</i>	2009	<i>gaohu</i> , <i>erhu</i> , <i>zhonghu</i> and <i>zhongruan</i>
<i>Timang Burung</i>	2009	solo piano
<i>Wild Cursive</i>	2009	violin, viola, cello and vibraphone
<i>Wild Cursive</i>	2009	<i>zhongruan</i> , violin, viola and

		cello
<i>Yao.Sen</i> [垚。森]	2009	Chinese orchestra
<i>Inner Voices V</i>	2010	<i>yangqin</i> and Chinese orchestra
<i>My Spirit is Dancing</i>	2010	solo piano
<i>Entropy</i>	2011	bass <i>suona</i> and Chinese orchestra
<i>Equatorial Rainforest</i>	2011	<i>ruan</i> quartet
<i>Imagery</i>	2011	flute solo and wind chimes
<i>Imagery</i>	2011	solo viola
<i>My Ears are Still Ringing</i>	2011	flute and also sax
<i>My Spirit is Chanting</i>	2011	soprano, bass clarinet and percussions
<i>My Spirit is Singing</i>	2011	solo oboe
<i>My Spirit is Soaring</i>	2012	solo trombone
<i>The Green Walk</i>	2012	orchestra
<i>CHEERS</i>	2013	flute, piano, teacups and teapot
<i>Green Snake and the Monk</i>	2013	<i>xiao</i> , <i>guqin</i> , <i>zhongruan</i> and percussion
<i>Imagery IIb</i>	2013	flute and viola
<i>My Spirit is Indestructible</i>	2013	alto flute
<i>Secret Book of Sun Bu'er</i>	2013	soprano and piano
<i>The Spirit Play</i>	2013	live musicians, dancers, and video art
<i>My Spirit is Playing</i>	2014	solo piano
<i>Echoes of Eternity</i>	2014	symphonic winds
<i>Reflection</i>	2014	<i>gehu</i> octet
<i>The Rhapsody of River Wisdom</i>	2014	<i>dizi</i> , <i>guqin</i> , <i>yangqin</i> , <i>zhongruan</i> and cello
<i>Forest Threnody</i>	2015	2 sopranos and choir
<i>Equatorial Rainforest</i>	2016	wind quintet
<i>My Spirit is Awakening</i>	2016	solo bassoon
<i>My Spirit is Playing AGAIN</i>	2016	solo piano
<i>Silly Girls and Strange Tree</i>	2016	<i>wayang kulit</i> and Chinese orchestra
<i>Echoes</i>	2017	solo piano
<i>Imaginary Bodies</i>	2017	soprano and small ensemble
<i>Wild Geese Descending on the Sandbank</i> [平沙落雁]	unknown	<i>xiao</i> solo
<i>30th Night, Worshipping Heaven and Earth</i> [三十暝, 拜天地]	unknown	violin and voice
<i>Echoes in the Mountain</i> [山谷回音]	unknown	nose flute/ <i>pensol</i> , violin, cello and <i>zhongruan</i>
<i>My Spirit is FREE</i>	unknown	solo percussion
<i>Resurrection</i>	unknown	any instrument and voice
<i>The Plots of Tyrant</i>	unknown	music theatre
<i>The Spirit Play</i>	unknown	music theatre
<i>Voices of the Quiet of the Mountains</i>	unknown	<i>huqin</i> sextet
<i>Min Qi Zhan Jiang</i> 民族新將	unknown	voice, violin and saxophone

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