

consideration Malaysia's geographical and historical position as an important seaport that was fuelled by the Spice trade, and that over time resulted in the formation of a pluralistic society, thus giving rise to the propagation of many cultural exchanges, hybridised communities as well as art forms.

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**Malaysian Chinese Art Song Competitions:
An Invented Tradition Bridging Past and Future**

The Malaysian Chinese art song has its past as a transnational "variant" of the European art song and a lineage from both the Chinese art song and revolutionary song. The genre combines musical realms from the West and the East, while also engaging with the local cultural practices where it is produced. The emergence of this local art song in the 1950s, pioneered by the first generation of Malaysian Chinese composers, reflected a desire to reform and hybridise cultural identity in diasporic Chinese communities. In comparison, the recent generation of composers has been redefining the genre to reflect the evolving cosmopolitan Malaysian Chinese culture. However, the literary and musical components of the art song are not the only sites that reflect and negotiate a hybridised identity; rather, through the dynamic forces of social, cultural, political, and economic functions of art song competitions, the genre becomes one of the participating signifiers that exuberantly express Malaysian Chineseness. By examining extensive archives of competition and festival booklets dating back to the 1960s, this study seeks to uncover socio-cultural facts about how the art song genre is disseminated and preserved through the singing competitions. Moreover, I argue that these singing competitions contributed to the creation of an "invented tradition" across West and East Malaysia, which collectively shaped the performativity of Malaysian Chineseness.

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Dabus Variant: The Acclimatization of Dabus in Malaysian Political Landscape

Dabus is a ritual art form practiced by communities in both Malaysia and Indonesia. Its arrival in Malaysia over 300 years ago, has seen various adaptations made to adapt it to the Malaysian context. Policies such as the National Culture Policy, which incorporate the role of Islam in their design, have influenced both music and dance heritage in Malaysia.

Since rituals are forbidden in Islam, art forms are either excluded from performing or must undergo a filtering process by state agencies before they are allowed to be performed. Therefore, state policy has forced ritual art forms such as dabus and others to conform. This form of scrutiny towards marginalized ritual performances also comes from locals, largely practicing Muslims, who prefer to exclude rituals from their heritage. This adaptation has led to a new identity of dabus that differs from that of its counterpart in Indonesia. Compared to Malaysia, Indonesia has more flexibility in performing ritual performances. Ritual art forms and practices such as kuda lumping and debus can be freely performed without much scrutiny. While dabus in Malaysia revolves heavily around music and dance, its neighbor focuses on the feat of strength made possible by ritual practices within the art form, such as eating glass or placing heavy stones on the body. Since dabus is believed to have originated from Indonesia, the different approach of Malaysian dabus is indicative of a softer approach to the art form. The differences in approach between the two communities reflect the need for the Malaysian dabus to adapt to its locale.

Bios

Mayco A. Santaella studied Asian Studies and Ethnomusicology at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and conducted research for his doctoral studies as a Fulbright recipient. He is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Film & Performing Arts and Associate Dean (International) at the School of Arts, Sunway University.

Jotsna Nithyanandan is a multiple Malaysian Cameronian Arts awardee who started out as a dance and music student at the Temple of Fine Arts and has been teaching and performing with TFA since 1997. Her Guru Swamiji Shantanand Saraswathi was instrumental in shaping her into the musician and composer she is today. She currently teaches piano, and music ensemble classes at the Temple of Fine Arts Kuala Lumpur. Jotsna has also worked with well-known Malaysian artistes like Reshmonu and Yogi B. In 2009 and 2012 she was invited to compose for the prestigious Malaysian Philharmonic orchestra as well as the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. Jotsna holds a Masters in Performing Arts from University Malaya and is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at Sunway University, Kuala Lumpur

Samuel Tan graduated from the University of Malaya with First Class Honours in Bachelor of Performing Arts (Music) and went on to earn a Master of Music in Piano Performance and Accompanying, as well as an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Performance, both with distinction, from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. He has extensive experience in higher education for classical and popular music programs, including curriculum development and leadership roles at the University of Malaya, National Academy of Arts Culture & Heritage, International College of Music, and Sunway University. Currently, Samuel serves as an accredited examiner for the Trinity College London examination board while pursuing a PhD in Creative Arts and Media at Sunway University. He also actively contributes to the music community as a pianist and arranger

for Genius Seni Koir, the children and youth choirs under the National Department for Culture and Arts (JKKN) in Malaysia.

Azeem Shah is a postgraduate student at Sunway University as well as a music composer. Born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, he has always been passionate about music and anthropology. During his undergraduate degree, he further developed his musicianship skills, particularly in song and film compositions. After working with multiple underground artists and film production, he yearns for a new challenge, thus decided to pursue his Master's degree in ethnomusicology. Being in academia, it has broadened his horizons and creativity. At the same time, he was also involved in archival institutions, realizing the importance of documenting, preserving and reviving archives.