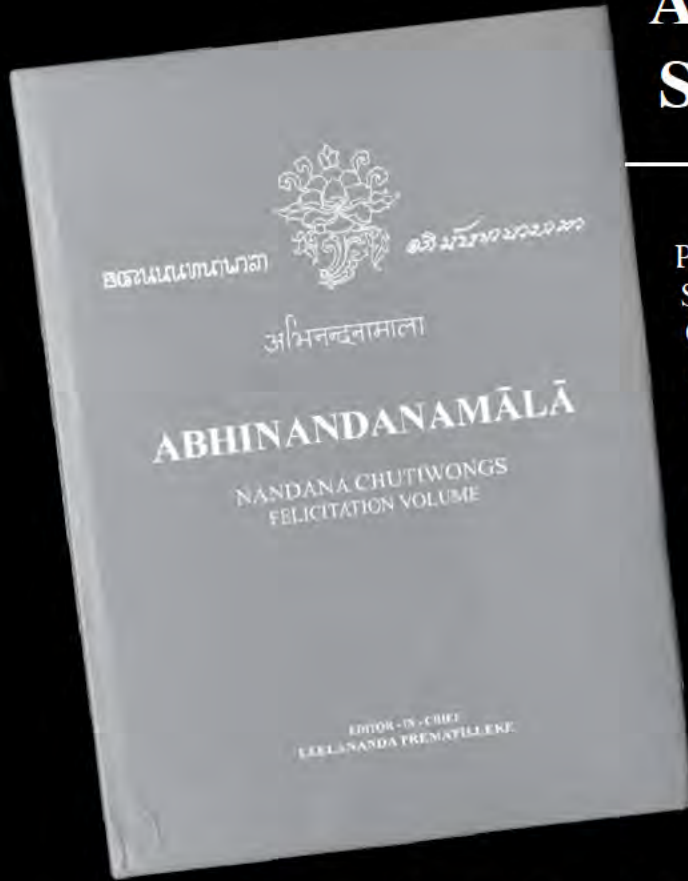


Abhinandanamala and Supplementum



Published in 2010 under the joint auspices of SEAMEO SPAFA and the Abhinandanamala Committees in Colombo and Bangkok, Abhinandanamala and Abhinandanamala Supplementum constitute a felicitation volume dedicated to Dr. Nandana Chutiwongs by her colleagues and friends. The volume was compiled under the editorship of Professor Leelananda Prematilleke (Peradeniya and Colombo), Professor Pisit Charoenwongsa (Bangkok), Professor Kalpakam Sankarnarayan (Mumbai) and Professor Timbul Haryono (Yogyakarta).

The volume contains 57 significant research articles covering countries of Buddhist and Hinduist Asia. Divided into sections on prehistory and cultural history, art and archaeology, religion, iconography, museology and heritage, the articles were contributed by scholars of established international repute, and young researchers. Serious readers will find many topics which are both unique and inspiring in these richly illustrated publications that were splendidly designed by Gunaratna Printing of Colombo and the Museum Press of Bangkok.

The Abhinandanamala and its Supplementum are available for free, but are in limited number. Research institutions and scholars may apply for printed copies at:
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Preventing Malaysia's Traditional Music from Disappearing

Connie Lim Keh Nie and Mohamad Fadzil Abdul Rahman discuss how instrumental music performed in the past by the indigenous tribes in Sarawak, are gradually vanishing, or merging with contemporary musical styles, transforming to a modern fusion of ethnic folk music. The authors touch on the diversification of Malaysia's traditional music, and the approaches adopted by composers and arrangers.

As the advocates of ecology do their best to keep nature intact, musicians should strive equally hard to ensure that traditional and ethnic music survive. Negligence will allow the music to vanish in the process of globalization and changes in trends, lifestyle and preferences, particularly among the new generation.

The world of music has been experiencing an evolution of genres through the years. In response to these changes, the rationale for diversifying various aspects of traditional music in the form of performance, instrument making/modifications or repertoires should be considered. Using different approaches to keep traditional music alive can ensure its survival. They are, however, not tantamount to abandoning the authentic forms of traditional music, as some critics claimed.

The term "World Music" has long suffered the difficulty of precise definition. In the media and the music industry, it was first used as a marketing/classificatory device to generally classify any kind of non-Western mainstream music. However, it is now accepted that in musical

terms, 'World Music' can be roughly defined as music that uses distinctive ethnic scales, modes and musical inflection. It is usually produced with or accompanied by distinctive traditional ethnic instruments. However, the transition from the traditional community setting, where such music is played, to the performance stage is fraught with challenges that need to be faced. As our lifestyle changes, it becomes increasingly difficult to hold on to our individual cultural identity and our traditional modes of expression. There is a danger that our native music is increasingly becoming a novelty reserved for tourists or museums.

Old folks as well as the veterans have passed away without handing down the knowledge of music to their children. Why this tradition is no longer in practice is perhaps due to many factors, one of which being the lack of interest among the youngsters – contemporary music is much more appealing to them. It is difficult to promote the appreciation of traditional music when the inheritors of the heritage are not even interested in it.

In the purists' view, cultural heritage must be preserved in its truest form; any deviations from this is considered a corruption of the original source. In subscribing to this principle, stifling the creativity and freedom to innovate and reinvent is inevitable, and contribute to the loss of interest of the youth, further consigning traditional music to the pleasure of tourists, and the privilege of museums.

Pragmatic Reasons/Sentimental Preferences

There are many views on the cause of traditional music disappearing. Purists bemoan the loss of native music and its authenticity. Improvising and modifying ethnic music performance or musical instruments have encountered resistance (a participant at a recent international conference, for example, expressed fierce opposition to *any* change, whether it be modernising traditional instruments, improving the tuning systems, or altering the way traditional music is performed). The reluctance to change reflects a denial of the fact that the young generation today does not enjoy listening to monotonous and repetitious tunes, and even less when the music is off tune, and performed in a dominantly pentatonic scale for hours on end. Indeed, there is validity in the arguments, but the

issue should be seen in a holistic and broader perspective. Suggestions offering pragmatic reasons, much more than sentimental preferences, should be considered seriously.

Concern for the fate of traditional music has been well documented. However, efforts to promote interest, and foster tradition, were opposed on the basis of authenticity. Organising concerts, workshops, appreciation classes and intellectual discourses are impressive efforts, but to what extent do they enhance the level of awareness amongst the younger generation? Are these activities appealing enough? The answer is no. To develop more realistic efforts in promoting traditional music, changes in contemporary lifestyle must be accepted.

The Way Forward

A group called 'Tuku Kame' in Sarawak has taken several steps in confronting the difficult challenge of attracting the interest of the young generation in traditional music. It has successfully revised traditional music by creating modern versions of it. Tuku Kame, literally meaning "our rhythm" in the local Malay dialect, is an ensemble which performs daily at the village. It was formed in 1998 in the Sarawak Cultural Village, a centre established to preserve and exhibit cultural and artistic heritage of Sarawak. The group strives to introduce Sarawak's traditional music and instruments to the world music industry. The aim of the Sarawak state multi-ethnic "world music" ensemble is to encourage the young generation to appreciate the musical instrument, *sape*¹, and learn how to play it. The group incorporates its use in performing popular music.

¹ A lute type, four-string traditional instrument played by the *Kenyah, Kayan, Penan* and other upland ethnic groups of Sarawak. It is used to provide music for dancing and entertainment in festivals. In the past, the instrument is also used in healing ceremonies.



*Sarawak Cultural Village
Tuku Kame (which means "Our Rhythm or Beat")
was created in 1998.
This award-winning Sarawak Cultural Village
ensemble consists of 7 musicians,
and 3 vocalists.*

Under the directorship of Mr. Narawi H Rashidi, Tuku Kame performs compositions that aesthetically synthesize various aspects of local vocal and instrumental traditions with globally recognized popular music idioms. In the last ten years, Tuku Kame has struggled to find a contemporary audience outside the Cultural Village where it originated. They have so far produced two albums, 'Gadong' and 'The Rhythm of the Rainforest', both of which are available at the Cultural Village, tourist outlets, and sold online through www.borneoworldmusic.com. The group participated in MTV Band Alert in 1998, and won the 'Grand Prix Award' and 'MTV Breakthrough Award'. Mr. Jerry Kamit, a *sape* player of the group, and Tuku Kame itself, received the highest recognition and achievement at the 12th World Championship of Performing Arts in 2009. These achievements are clear indications of how traditional music can be popularized and internationalized. The efforts undertaken by this group to promote, preserve, enhance creativity and diversify the Sarawak music heritage among local and international audiences should be supported.

When asked why traditional music is not performed the way it was performed in the past, Mr. Narawi replied in jest: *"We are all traditional musicians. We want our next generation to play traditional instruments as well as [traditional] music. That's why we infused jazz, pop and fusion in our performance. We also want to convey the message that traditional music is not only used in the olden days for ritual ceremonies but can also be extended through contemporary music."*

It is clear that to reach out to the youngsters, traditional music must adapt to contemporary and diverse styles. The interest of the young is one of the most important factors in ensuring the continuation of the heritage. Once taken to the music, the desire to learn to play the instruments will follow. Currently, the practice at Sarawak Culture Village focused on the basics, and lessons are taught in the traditional manner and form. From how to hold the *sape*, tune the strings, and memorize the name of the strings and the traditional tune 'Datun Julud', youngsters are equipped with all the fundamental knowledge. This is an example of how fundamental values are not forgotten when authenticity is a concern. Only upon mastering the basics of playing the *sape* and its music are practitioners allowed to make creative variations and arrangements based on the traditional tune.

According to Mr. Narawi, Tuku Kame usually plays one or two original form(s) of folk/traditional songs before adopting the contemporary style during their one-hour stage performances. Most of the traditional songs are repeatedly played with no refrain. *"We have to instill interest [in] and retain the attention of the young generation, so they will love traditional music. If not, it will die,"* said Mr. Narawi.

² Traditional dance music of the *Kenyah* ethnic group in Sarawak

Ghazal

Ghazal, which is a form of syncretic music, is performed as a popular social music in the State of Johor, south of Malaysia. Featuring recitation of romantic and religious verses in a singing style, Ghazal is an art form that came to Malaysia from the Middle East in the early 20th century.³ Over the years, local music traditions have influenced its form and style, transforming it into a musical genre with a unique Malaysian flavor. Ghazal was brought to the Malay Peninsula by Arab missionaries in the early 1900s, and depending on the repertoires, it is still performed as popular music in the Middle East. As a syncretic music genre, Ghazal combines musical instruments and influences from Indian, Arab, Malay and Western Music. Musical instruments used in a Ghazal ensemble include the Indian harmonium, tabla and baya, the Western violin, guitar, maracas, and tambourine as well as Middle Eastern musical instruments, the gambus and the ud. The violin and the harmonium are the main instruments that provide the melody, sometimes in unison with the singer. The gambus and guitar provide the accompaniment, and the maracas dictates the rhythm at regular beats, picking up tempo at the end of the passage. Occasionally the rebana drum and gong are used when a local rhythm is played. Maruas (a type of hand drum played by the Malays) is also used to emphasize the drum beat in a particular rhythm.

Ghazal Johor is believed to have been introduced by musicians from North India in the 1920s. Pak Lomak (Mr. Haji Musa Yusof), a locally-recognised musician, was credited with popularizing this strain of Ghazal in Johor. He was well-known for singing the Ghazal in Urdu, and playing the harmonium and tabla, the two main instruments in the Indian Ghazal. Later, Ghazal is localised to suit the taste of the locals by introducing long melodic and musical forms. Lyrics are also created to suit the local language as in the popular Malay *pantun* (poem) form. Pak Lomak started to translate Urdu lyrics from the Indian Ghazal songs into the local dialect, and some of his songs, such as 'Seri Mersing', 'Gunung Banang' and 'Pak Ngah Balik', are still popular today. Over the years, Malay rhythms such

³ Matusky, P. & Tan, S. B. (2004). *The Music of Malaysia*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited. pp. 351-354.

Organising concerts, workshops, appreciation classes and intellectual discourses are impressive efforts, but to what extent do they enhance the level of awareness amongst the younger generation? Are these activities appealing enough? The answer is no. To develop more realistic efforts in promoting traditional music, changes in contemporary lifestyle must be accepted.

as *Joget, Inang, Zapin* and *Masri* have blended well in the Ghazal musical repertoire.⁴ Many Ghazal songs composed in the original rhythm have been incorporated in other musical genres, and adapted into folk songs featuring the *Asli* eight-beat rhythm.

It is obvious that had the authenticity issue been an impediment, and the "purists" held sway, Ghazal would not have made its mark in Malaysia, and a national music heritage would not have been created. Ghazal Malaysia is a national music heritage produced by the "melting pot" approach to become unique and different from its origins even though almost all of the instruments involved are foreign

to Malaysia. With its creativity, modifications, and arrangements adopting local flavours, Ghazal Malaysia does not exist in any other part of the world.

Irama Malaysia

Irama Malaysia (Malaysian Rhythms) was established by Malaysian composers who incorporated the *Asli, Zapin, Inang* and *Joget* rhythms in their musical compositions. The composers include Suhaimi Mohamad Zain (Pak Ngah), Mohamad Nasir Mohamad (M. Nasir), Manan Ngah, Zubir Ali, and S. Amin Shahib. Their efforts in promoting Irama Malaysia and creative ethnic music were further boosted by local singers, such as Dato Siti Nurhaliza and Noraniza Idris. Singer Dato Siti Nurhaliza and composer Pak Ngah won an award for their song, 'Cindai', in *Anugerah Juara Lagu*⁵ under the category of Irama Malaysia in 1998. 'Cindai'⁶ was composed in standard ternary form (AABC) and played in minor mode. The scale used is similar to the Arabic *Maqam Nahawand*, which is similar to the harmonic minor and melodic minor scale. One of the characteris-

⁴ Ariff Ahmad. (2004). Ghazal. In Ghulam-Sawar Yusof (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia – Volume 8: Performing Arts*. Singapore: Archipelago Press. pp. 84-85

⁵ Anugerah Juara Lagu ('Champion for Songs Award') is a popular annual music competition in Malaysia, organised by TV3. Nominees are derived from a list of mostly Malay songs which have garnered the most public votes throughout the year.

⁶ Anon. (2006, January, 12). Siti Nurhaliza – Cindai (Live @ Royal Albert Hall, London) [Video File] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucdhzbbDWqQ>



Dato Siti Norhaliza Binti Tarudin
<http://liriksemualagu.blogspot.com/2010/02/semua-lirik-lagu-siti-nurhaliza.html>

tics in Irama Malaysia is the combination of local and foreign traditional musical instruments. A standard feature of Pak Ngah's compositions is the insertion of Malay traditional drums such as the rebana, gendang and kompang together with the Indian *tabla* and Arabic darbuka or maruas.⁷ In 'Cindai', the fast pace of *Inang and Zapin* rhythms is applied, while traditional Malay and western drums provide the interlocking rhythm patterns. As a professional accordionist, Pak Ngah is fond of inserting accordion and gambus sounds in his works.

Blending the local with the foreign whilst maintaining the essence of traditional music is the forté of Irama Malaysia; the indicator of its popularity is the overwhelming response from the public, including the younger generation. The radical approach taken by Pak Ngah proved that creativity, exceeding limits, and preserving the essence and fundamentals of traditional music could actually be very fruitful and productive in promoting traditional music. 'Cindai' served as a catalyst in drawing the young generation toward traditional music.

⁷ Chor, K. C., Mohd Nasir Hashim & Yeong, H. Y. (2009). Irama Malaysia – A Case Study of Pak Ngah's Irama Malaysia. Saarbrücken: VDM Publishing House. pp. 38

When Classic Meets Pop

Music of the past has been revived in the 21st century in different forms to accommodate the younger generation. 'Canon in D' (originally scored for three violins and basso continuo) by German Baroque composer Johann Pachelbel is a famous piece of music characterized by imitation and repetition. Many other classical works forgotten for centuries were rediscovered in the 21st century by songwriters who created popular songs and film music. In 1967, a Greek progressive rock band Aphrodite's Child released their first single, 'Rain and Tears'⁸, which was a rework of Pachelbel's 'Canon in D'. Through this song (with English lyrics), the band became an overnight sensation in France and several other European countries in which the single charted well. It sold over one million copies, and was awarded a gold disc. In 1997, artist Leon Ivey Jr, better known by the stage name Coolio, performed 'C U When U Get There,'⁹ another rendition of Pachelbel's Canon – in a rap version. It was featured on the soundtrack in the comedy film 'Nothing to Lose'. The Farm ft S.F.C. Boys Choir borrowed the well-known chord progression, the circle of fifth from Pachelbel's canon, to produce the official song, 'All Together Now 2004'¹⁰, for the England Football Team's Euro 2004 tournament campaign (the song reached number 5 in the UK charts that year).

The native musical instrument of Scotland, the bagpipe, is another example of how old instruments can be brought back into vogue again. The bagpipe has been used in various genres of music, from traditional folk to jazz, and even rock. The song, 'Mull of Kintyre'¹¹, popularized by Wings in 1977, was composed on the pentatonic scale by Paul McCartney, who included bagpipes in the music to exude a characteristic Scottish sound. The Darkness, another rock band, also used bagpipes in the song, 'Hazel Eyes'¹², in November 2005.

⁸ Anon. (2007, January, 13). Aphrodite's Child - Rain and Tears [Video File] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4e_a8xXtb6Y

⁹ Anon. (2006, November, 26). Coolio - I'll C U When U Get There [Video File] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP1PXRiVoJw>

¹⁰ Anon. (2010, May, 27). The Farm - All Together Now 2004 [Official Video] [Video File] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3xrv5A41AU>

¹¹ Anon. (2006, November, 9). Mull of Kintyre – Wings [Video File] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYhTye_A9H0

¹² Anon. (2008, September, 6). The Darkness - Hazel Eyes [Video File] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvc3P2-C3Ns>

'Canon in D' was a 17th century musical composition that has been re-popularized in movie soundtracks, pop songs and rap music to become one of the favourite classical music of the young generation.

Tailoring to the needs of young people is crucial; music can be rearranged, reinterpreted and adapted to suit their tastes. New skills on the use of instruments can emerge. Accepting changes is part of musical development.

Conclusion

The survival of music heritage, and the commitment in preserving it, have been a concern for many. However, there are differing perspectives, anchored in different ideas and approaches, even though the aim and goal to preserve and maintain music heritage are the same. The debate on maintaining the authenticity of music by only allowing it to be performed in its original form will continue. Intellectual discourses on the issue should be encouraged but what matters most is supporting what is best for the survival of traditional music. Whether we like it or not, diversifying performances and instrumentation occurs regularly, and will continue to develop. Maintaining authenticity for the sake of being authentic at the expense of survival and development is a heavy price to pay, as traditional music vanishes.

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