

**MALAY FOLK CHORAL MUSIC:
SELECTED WORKS OF JULIETTE LAI SAU KUEN
AND GENEVIENE WONG JEN PEI**

LEE SIEW PUI

**CULTURAL CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
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**CULTURAL CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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UNIVERSITI MALAYA

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Name of Candidate: Lee Siew Pui

)

Registration/Matric No: RGI110012

Name of Degree: Master of Performing Arts (Music)

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ABSTRACT

The amalgamation of the choral idiom and folk music began in Europe in the nineteenth-century alongside the propagation of romantic nationalism, public enlightenment and folk revival. From early twentieth-century onwards, the phenomenon of folk choral music and its ideologies emerged in many non-European countries including Malaysia later on. Many scholars relate the development and revival of folk music in Europe, largely by arranging folk music into part-songs or choral arrangements, to Romantic nationalism in the 19th century. However, there is a lack of attention paid to folk choral music and its contexts in non-European countries especially in Asian countries, and in this research, concerns were given to the context of Malaysia. This research examines the Malay folk choral music, looking into its stylistic features, compositional style and performance practice-based on a case study of selected Malay folk choral arrangements by Geneviene Wong and Juliette Lai. Methods include pre-fieldwork, fieldwork, and post-fieldwork. The different employment of folk elements in a Western choral setting, including those shown by data gathered from rehearsal sessions, performances, interviews with the composers and conductors, was analysed using scores. The results reveal four categories of folk music employment: musical borrowings, folk revival, hybridity, and appropriation for national music identity. These categories define the positioning of the folk element within the Malaysian folk choral setting where the Western hegemony is obvious. Hence, the outcome provides a thorough documentation of the stylistic feature, performance practice, interpretation of the selected repertory of Malaysian composers Lai and Wong.

ABSTRAK

Penyatuan idiom muzik koir dan muzik rakyat bermula di Eropah pada abad kesembilan-belas selari dengan penyebaran ideologi nasionalisme romantik, kesedaran dan kebangkitan rakyat. Dari awal abad kedua-puluh dan seterusnya, fenomena gabungan muzik rakyat dengan muzik koir dan ideologi yang selari dengannya muncul secara beransur-ansur dalam negara-negara bukan Eropah termasuk dalam Malaysia. Dalam tinjauan literature, terdapat banyak sarjana yang mengaitkan pemulihan dan pembangunan muzik rakyat di Eropah dengan ideologi nasionalisme romantik pada abad ke-sembilan-belas dan ia adalah dituntut bahawa sebahagian besar kebangkitan muzik rakyat ini dijalankan melalui penyusunan muzik rakyat ke dalam idiom muzik koir yang mempunyai dan dibahagikan kepada beberapa bahagian suara. Walaupun terdapat kajian sarjana mengenai topik ini, perhatian yang diberikan kepada isu gabungan muzik rakyat dengan muzik koir dalam negara-negara bukan Eropah, terutamanya negara-negara Asia, dan konteks yang mengelilingi muzik gabungan ini adalah dalam kekurangan. Dalam kajian ini, perhatian diberikan kepada muzik gabungan tersebut dalam konteks Malaysia. Kajian ini mengkaji gabungan lagu rakyat Melayu dengan idiom muzik koir, meneliti ciri-ciri gaya muzik, gaya gubahan muzik dan amalan persembahan muzik berdasarkan kajian kes gubahan lagu rakyat Melayu kepada format muzik koir oleh Juliette Lai dan Geneviene Wong. Kaedah termasuk pra-kerja lapangan, kerja lapangan, dan lepas-kerja lapangan. Pergabungan unsur-unsur muzik Melayu tradisional ke setakat yang berbeza ke dalam format muzik koir, yang merupai sejenis muzik Barat, adalah dianalisis dengan skor muzik dan diperhatikan dalam sesi latihan, persembahan, temu bual dengan komposer dan konduktor. Data-data yang dikumpulkan membawa keputusan yang mendedahkan empat kategori gabungan muzik rakyat: pinjaman muzik, pemulihan muzik rakyat, Hibriditas/kehibridan, dan

pengambilan muzik rakyat demi identiti muzik nasional. Kategori-kategori ini menentukan kedudukan unsur-unsur muzik Melayu tradisional dalam sebahagian gubahan muzik koir gabungan dengan lagu rakyat Melayu dalam Malaysia di mana hegemoni Barat masih ternyata. Kajian ini menghasilkan sebuah dokumentasi menyeluruh yang melaporkan ciri-ciri gaya, amalan persembahan, dan interpretasi gubahan muzik koir berdasarkan lagu-lagu rakyat Melayu oleh komposer Lai dan Wong di Malaysia.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation focuses on examining the performance practice of Malaysian folk choral music based on selected works by Juliette Lai Sau Kuen and Geneviene Wong Jen Pei. A research of twelve months was carried out to determine to what extent the involved musicians (arrangers, conductors and choristers) employed Malay folk music elements in a Western choral music genre. On the other hand, musical influences and performance practice from different music cultures manifested are explored to determine the dominion of different musical cultures and the positioning of the selected works in the genre of folk choral music. This chapter provides a background in the history and development of choral music, Malaysian choral music, folk music, and defines the problem statement, significance of the study, research objectives, research questions, conceptual framework, limitation of the study, and a descriptive flow of the chapters layout.

1.2 Background of Study

This research issues the concern over the cultural hybridization of Western choral art form and local folk music. Therefore, a history of the choral art form is provided to inform readers about the development of choral music since its inception to the emergence of different streams of choral music, which includes its amalgamation with folk music. The last section provides insights into the introduction and development of the Western genre of choral music in Malaysia.

1.2.1 The Origin of Choral Music (1100-1400)

Choral music has its origin in church music. It began as plainchant, a monophonic plainsong sung during mass in the middle ages (1100-1400). There was no specific sense of beat in plainchants because the churches restricted the use of beat and harmony in church music. The authorities felt strong emotion incited by these elements would interfere with spirituality and intellectuality in religious experience (Ayers, 2010). Later, choral polyphony emerged from “extempore chant-based singing” (Parrott, 2012, p. 7) and progressed into two-part harmony called *organum*, and subsequently to polyphony in the medieval period. Yet, the emergence of polyphony before 15th century does not signal the beginning of the choral form, as Brown (1978) mentioned that there is a need to differentiate groups of solo singers during this period from choir (p. 164). The medieval vocal music today is mostly sacred music, as common people who sang secular music did not have the literacy to notate their music then (Alexander, 2006).

1.2.2 Burgeoning and Flourishing Period of Vocal Polyphony (1400-1600)

In spite of using arts and music for worshipping purposes, artists in the Renaissance era (1400-1600) began to place emphasis on the expression of human emotion and realism. Vocal music took center stage during this period while instrumental music functioned mainly as accompaniment to vocal music.

Ayers (2010) states that polyphony became the musical style of choice during the Renaissance era, as more complex music was developed in both church and the secular world. A brief transition from improvised polyphony – extemporized counterpoint on top of the plainchant - to composed polyphony is documented by Parrott (2012). For time accuracy, Brown (1978) cites Manfred Bukofzer, the author of

journal article “The Beginnings of Choral Polyphony”, attempts to prove the beginning of choir or vocal polyphony happened around 1430.

Polyphonic compositions for men and boys then sparked interest in wider vocal range (Parrott, 2012). This led to novel high voices which were assumed by boys or adult countertenor, falsettists and castrati. The different voices then were gradually attached to vocal parts and vocal ranges (*ibid.*). Only by mid of Baroque period, female soprano began to assume the treble voices in church (Jerold, 2006; Parrott, 2012). Representative choral music composers of the period are William Byrd (from England), Orlando Lassus (from France), Giovanni Palestrina (from Italy), Guillaume Dufay (Franco Flemish composer), Josquin des Prez (Franco-Flemish composer) and others.

1.2.3 The Age of Grand Oratorios and Cantatas

Music in the Baroque period (1600-1750) was elaborate and highly ornamented. Although instrumental music began to gain more importance, this was the period when large choral works for large choirs such as those by Bach, Handel and Vivaldi were written. Ayers (2010) attributes the emergence of one of the main compositional tools of the time – modulation - to major/minor tonality and the equal-tempered tuning adopted that time. As a result, larger works like masses, cantatas, oratorio and opera were produced.

The rapid development of opera in this era also marked the growing popularity of solo voices. The importance of solo voices to choral music was reflected by the frequent alternating solo sections in choral works such as in the oratorios and cantatas which incorporated large portions of instrumental sections. Other than doubling the voices, Alexander (2006) explains that with the advancement of instrumental music, choral music began to incorporate instrumental accompaniment and more music is

written for combinations of voices and instruments. Parrott (2012) also clarifies that instruments were used during this period, and *a cappella* did not mean “without instruments” (p. 20).

When performing Bach’s works, one-to-a-part choral singing assumed by *concertists* (singers who sang the solos and were section leaders of their parts in choruses) and *ripienists* (singers who have subordinate role in strengthening the *concertists*) was a common practice, while instrumentalists would double the same lines (Parrott, 2012). Parrott (*ibid.*) finds the common practice of the *concertists* and *ripienists* ceased when amateur bodies of singers outside of the churches emerged accompanying the practice of the SATB formation after 1770s.

1.2.4 Choral Music in a Revolutionary Context

The classical period (1750-1825) is also known as Viennese classic period. Choral works composed by 3 Viennese composers: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) dominated the genre then (Alexander, 2006). As a reaction against the overtly ornamental style of Rococo music, the Classical style focused on form and balance. Together with industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism, a new class of bourgeoisie emerged and they constituted the market for printed music, music lessons, public concerts and were responsible for the increased size of the choirs and the organization of choral society (Alwes, 2012).

Alexander (2006) observes the advancement of orchestral music and the opera genre while choral music fell in prominence during this era. However, the opera genre saw costumed and staged choral participation popularized in operas of Rossini, Meyerbeer etc. and this opened way for the continued choral presence in the operas of

Verdi and Wagner (Alwes, 2012). On the other hand, more conservative church choral music continued to be influenced by the stylistic innovation of instrumental music. Hylton (1995) described the sonata allegro form found in sonata or symphonic movements were also used in sections of classical masses. Beethoven then “effectively relocated the inherited choral/orchestral mass from the church to the concert hall” (Alwes, 2012, p. 28) and this model of the “festival mass” was later on adopted by Schubert, Schumann, Liszt and Bruckner.

1.2.5 Age of Fascination, Nature and Nationalism (1825-1900)

Alwes (2012) states “Contemporary Western notions of choral singing are a nineteenth-century invention (p. 29).” Firstly, beyond continuing the legacy of Haydn’s last six masses, Beethoven invented the “symphonic mass” with his Mass in C, Op. 86 (1807) with its unusual tonalities and motivic continuity (Alwes, 2012). Explicitly, his *Missa Solemnis* and Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 set the benchmark for romantic choral works.

The desire of Romantic composers to express unrestraint emotion and ideas stemmed from the need to escape from the terror of revolution then and “to retreat into fantasy, fairy tales, and the benign pleasures of nature” (Alwes, 2012, p. 28). On the other hand, different from the universal character Classical music strived for, nationalism was one of the main themes explored during the Romantic period. Romantic period composers incorporated folk melodies, dances or instruments of their country of origin (Hylton, 1995) into their choral compositions. Bohlman (2004) linked the choral movement across Europe to the public enlightenment and nationalistic identity awareness near the end of the Romantic era.

Hylton (1995) points out there was a preference for heroic and miniature forms. The large choral works consisted of a series of choral symphonies, such as Mahler's Symphony of a Thousand, engendered by Beethoven's 9th symphony, is seen as an advancing product in the genre of the inherited choral/orchestral works. The oratorios, explicitly secular oratorios or "grand cantatas" were the innovation of the era headed by Haydn's *The Seasons* (Alwes, 2012). On the other hand, the most representative miniature choral pieces are part-songs, a genre resulted from the explosive growth of small choral ensembles led by the *Liedertafeln*, small male choirs comprised of amateurs who were interested in both socializing and making music formed across Germany (Alwes, 2012). The themes of these part-songs consist of masculine topics such as drinking, hunting, love and the joys of nature.

Besides the expanded and the miniature forms of choral music in the Romantic era, Alwes (2012) summarizes the revitalization of significant choral music influences from the past in nineteenth-century choral music: Mendelssohn's rediscovery of Bach's music, the incorporation of historical choral music into concert programmes by Johannes Brahms, the revival of Palestrina's music by the Catholic Cecilian movement and its influence on smaller sacred works by Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Rheinberger, Bruckner, and Liszt.

1.2.6 The Modernists and Successors

In the twentieth century from 1914 to 1995, composers found new ways of expression in respond to World War I, World War II and the frequent social upheavals (Ayers, 2010). Strimple (2012) accounts the lack of large suitable works to commemorate the enormity of the wastage wrecked by World Wars as the antecedent to the resulting large cantatas lamenting the waste of war, such as Elgar's *Spirit of*

England (1916) and Vaughan William's *Dona Nobis Pacem*. World War II was ensued by patriotic choral works such as *Testament of Freedom* (1943) by Randall Thompson, *Das Jahr* (1940) by Ernst Pepping, and propagandistic choral works in soviet and communist countries such as *Yellow River Cantata* (1939) by Hsien Hsing-Hai and *Alexander Nevsky* by Prokofiev (*ibid.*).

According to Ayers (2010), there were two streams of choral music in the 20th century: Tonal and atonal music. Strimple (2012) explains both Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg intended to continue the German Romantic Tradition. While Schoenberg focused on intense chromaticization which led to dodecaphony (twelve-tone serialism) first utilised in his *Four Partsongs* Op. 27 for mixed chorus (1925), Mahler centralized on the stretching of tonality, evident in his three great choral symphonies (No. 2 "Resurrection", No. 3, and No. 8 "Symphony of a Thousand"), which provided a guiding path to influential composers who opposed dodecaphony such as Richard Strauss and Paul Hindemith. The school of minimalism – characterized by simplest diatonic harmonic with hypnotic rhythmic structure (Philip Glass is the representative composer of the school) - which emerged as serialism waned in the 1960s was partly shaped by the school of Gustav Mahler (*ibid.*).

The twentieth century witnesses the emergence of an unprecedented number of schools of composers. One of them is Neoclassicism pioneered by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) whose opera *Oedipus Rex* (1926-1927) becomes staple work of the school. Influence of styles of Stravinsky can be seen in early neoclassical works, including the choral works, of Luciano Berio (1925-2003), added-note harmony of Jean Langlais (1907-1991), Russian style of Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998), immense polyphonic construct of György Ligeti (1923-2006) in his later avant-garde masterworks – *Requiem* and *Lux aeterna*, and the avant-garde devices fusing with traditional modes of expression of Krzysztof Penderecki in his *St. Luke Passion* (Strimple, 2012, p. 45-47).

Stravinsky's propulsive rhythm had inspired the propulsive rhythms and harmonic textures of Chinese Bright Sheng (1955-); and the synergy of the school of Primitivism, led by Carl Orff, especially in his *Carmina Burana*, characterized by asymmetrical rhythms and percussive style (*ibid.*).

The continuance of national traditions was manifested in choral works by twentieth-century composers in European and American countries. Edward Elgar (1857-1934) avoided the avant-garde and innovation of twentieth-century music in Britain along with his contemporaries. the continuance of this national tradition was carried on by Martin Shaw (1875-1958), John Ireland (1879-1962) and John Rutter (1945-). Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), Sir William Walton (1902-1983), Malcom Singer (1953-) and James MacMillan (1959-) tended towards the nationalistic style while incorporating new means of expression (*ibid.*). In Germany, the continuance of nineteenth-century romanticism is manifested in works of Max Bruch, Max Reger and Richard Strauss. Twentieth-century German composers Ernst Pepping and Hugo Distler promoted interest in the early Baroque forms and texture of Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) and the interest in Neoclassicism of Siegfried Read (1916-1968) is seen as a continuance of German heritage too (*ibid.*).

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) is seen as one of the bearers of nineteenth-century Russian nationalism in the twentieth-century with his *All-Night Vigil* (1915), which gained fame in the end of the century. Before the Soviet government took power in Russia, the torch of Russian sacred music was carried forward by Alexander Kastal'sky, Pavel Chesnokov (1877-1944) and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859-1935). During the Soviet era, tradition "was necessarily viewed through the lens of Soviet realism" (Strimple, 2012, p. 51) and the government then dubiously promoted works of Soviet composers Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) and Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975).

Dmitri Kabalevsky (1904-1987) and Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998) represent another school of Russian national tradition (*ibid.*).

Most renowned Latin American composers in the twentieth-century amalgamated European choral model with local musical tradition. In France, it was the group of composers known as Les Six which include Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), and the Swiss Arthur Honegger (1892-1955) who were indebted to the tradition of urbane French music while fusing it with polytonal, latin American and jazz elements into their choral works (*ibid.*).

Different from composers who use folk music in the classical tradition, the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Béla Bartók and Leoš Janáček base fundamentally on “the melodic contours, harmonies, rhythmic stresses and formal structures of folk music” (Strimple, 2012, p. 53). These composers advances the serious interest in folk music during the nineteenth-century: Ralph Vaughan Williams worked with Gustav Holst in treating folk music as raw material for serious composition; Béla Bartók worked with Zoltán Kodály in the collection of folk tunes and each produced individualized styles based on Hungarian folk tradition; whereas Janáček’s interest in folk text produced “the music of truth” (*ibid.*). Renowned folk choral works such as *Five English Folksongs* (1913) by Vaughan Williams, Bartók’s *Three Village Scenes* (1926) and Janáček’s *Glagolitic Mass* (1926) are partly responsible in sparking the phenomenon of folk permeation in choral music across the globe documented in 1.2.8.

The successful endeavours of women composers Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) and Amy Beach (1867-1944) to compose choral works of high quality proved the capability of women in producing works of equal importance as their male counterparts. (*ibid.*). At the same time, different genres of music: African-American spiritual, Jazz and Black gospel are slowly absorbed into choral music.

1.2.7 Heritage to Post-modernism

Based on the idioms of choral music in the twentieth century, choral music enjoys a renewed interest at the turn of the twenty-first century (since around 1996 – now). According to Alexander (2006), choral music became the domain of amateur performers, and avoided wild experimentation in other fields. This phenomenon most probably was part of the consequences of the negative reaction of composers to atonal serialism in the late 1960s. One of the main force against atonality is the school of minimalism, which used avant-garde devices embedded in tonal framework. The works by minimalist Philip Glass have influenced many composers, for instance *Magnificat* (1995) by Wolfram Buchenberg (1962-) and *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine* (2002) by Eric Whitacre (1970-) showcase characteristics of minimalism (Strimple, 2012).

The lineage of preceding national traditions persists in twenty-first-century choral music. Alexander (2006) observed the emergence of multicultural trend represented by Latin American composer Osvaldo Golijov in his *La pasión según San Marco* (2000) – which “fuses European choral concepts with local latin American musical customs” (Strimple, 2012, p. 51). Adopting an eclectic practice in the inherited German schools, Wolfgang Rihm (1952-) produces postmodern works such as *Deus Passus* (2000) which employs inclusively most of the twentieth-century German music compositional techniques, including the twelve tone technique, thematic metamorphosis, use of non-harmonic materials, distinctive twentieth century melodic practices, among others (as compiled by Leon Dallin – author of the book *Technique of Twentieth Centry Composition*, cited in the book reviewed by England, 1958). (Strimple, 2012). Traces of Russian schools of nineteenth-century romanticism were

passed down and reflected in works of Russian Sofia Gubaidulina (1931-) such as in *Johannes Passion* (2000). Another major lineage of continuing tradition goes through Nadia Boulanger – a composition teacher in France, to many composers, who “returned home with highly individual progressive styles rooted in an affectionate understanding of their own countries’ national tradition” (Strimple, 2012, p. 52). Other composers include Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter in North America, Erzsébet Szönyi from Hungary, Bright Sheng, Tan Dun and Chen Yi in China, among others across the globe. As an example of choral works produced in this line of descent, Chen Yi’s *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996) is an example of hybridization of musical culture. In Britain, the continuation of forefront choral works was assumed by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), Sir William Walton (1902-1983) and Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988). Other British composers such as James MacMillan whose representative work - *St. John Passion* (2008) – which “weave(s) many modern trends into a uniquely British lyricism” (Strimple, 2012, p. 50), continues to position British tradition into 21st century choral music.

The school of choral music based on folk idioms started by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Béla Bartók and Leoš Janáček has continued to inspire composers around the world in the twenty-first-century as much as in the twentieth-century. To name a few: Emilis Melngailis from Latvia, Jón Leifs in Iceland, Lucrecia Kassilag in Philippines, Gil Aldem in Israel, Stephen Leek in Australia, Hyo-Won Woo in Korea and Sydney Guillaume – a Haitian- American – are producing folk choral works that are completely different from those who use folk music as a component in classical tradition (Strimple, 2012).

Following the legacy of English composer Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) and American composer Amy Beach (1867-1944) in the twentieth-century, the choral works

of women composers such as Thea Musgrave (1928-), Nancy Telfer (1950-), and Chen Yi are widely performed across the globe (*ibid.*). African American spiritual, Jazz, Broadway and black gospel have ascended to serious art music from mere popular idiom in the twenty-first century and have been enlisted as major categories in major international and regional choir competitions. Popular music also gained its place into standard choral repertoire. John Rutter and Eric Whitacre are two popular choral music composer who are enjoying fame around the globe now. In line with the continuation of the different schools of twentieth-century music in the twenty-first century by composers who produce choral works, Alexander (2006) states that at some point in the century, choral music has turned into an art form of post-modernism which Steinberg (1992) describes as “more mobile and nonhegemonic”, “individual and cultural” (p. 18).

1.2.8 Folk Permeation - Folk Choral Music

As mentioned above, the phenomenon of folk permeation started with Ralph Vaughan Williams, Bela Bartok, Leos Janacek (Strimple, 2012). Their choral works confirmed the potency of their respective musical languages and serve as inspiration for composers with similar cultural goals all over the world. Emilis Melngailis (1874-1954) in Latvia, Jon Leifs (1899-1968) in Iceland, Lucrecia Kassilag (1918-2008) in the Philippines, Gil Aldema (b. 1928) in Israel, Stephen Leek (b. 1959) in Australia, Hyo-Won Woo (b. 1974) in Korea, and the Haitian-American Sydney Guillaume (b. 1982) represent only a handful of those whose choral music is based on musical ideals of different ethnicities. (Strimple, 2012).

The effect of folk permeation was first felt in Europe. There has been much zeal for folk music in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine and folk music forms part of the repertoire of the choirs in these places. For instance, the Kyiv Chamber Choir (and

many other choirs in Russia) sings Russian baroque as well as traditional Russian music (Samama, 2012). Along the same line, many choirs specialized in folk music emerged in Poland during the period of communist cultural policy (*ibid.*). In Southern Europe, choral singing is essential to the Greek folk music tradition in Greek orthodox churches (*ibid.*). In Northern Europe, Lasse Thoresen – a composer from Norway – aiming to educate amateur and professional musicians on international folk music, has developed the Concrecence project, which fuses innovative sounds based on extended vocal techniques and folk music (*ibid.*).

In the United States, publishing companies flourished through the distribution of choral music from various African countries, Mongolia, and other locales whose traditional musics are exotic to the consumers. It is worthwhile to note that African-American spiritual has benefitted from the trend and enjoyed a higher prominence (Strimple, 2012). In Canada, a diversity of distinct cultural and musical influences is found in Canada due to immigrant composers of different homelands and heritages (Abbott & Meredith, 2012). In Mexico, Manuel Ponce (1882 – 1948), considered a pioneer of nationalist Romantic music, was inspired by different styles of mestizo folk music. After Ponce, Carlos Chavez (1899 – 1978) was the most influential composer between 1920s to 1950s. He promoted the Aztec musical heritage – the indigenous music tradition before the arrival of Spaniards in Mexico. He fostered a national musical identity by producing repertoire incorporating the folkloric elements (Guinand, 2012).

In China, many composers make use of China's folk melody materials in their compositions or arrangements, notable among them are Qu Xi-Xian and Zhang Yi-Da. The folk song that has enjoyed undiminishing popularity and hence has been set to numerous arrangements is “*Moli-hua*” (Jasmine flower), a simple folk song from the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). It is the first Chinese song ever to be introduced and made

familiar to Western audiences through Puccini's adaptation of it in *Turandot* (Ling-Tam & Cho, 2012). In Korea, La Un-Yung (1922-93) is a prolific composer and choral conductor, as well as a theorist and church musician, whose nine cantatas and well over one thousand compositions represent the genre of music which combines Western idioms (such as choral modes) with Korean folk-music elements (*ibid.*).

In Southeast Asia, there is effort in Philippines to promote writing of music combining indigenous rhythms, melodies, and musical forms. A laboratory is established to serve this purpose as well as to forge the distinctive Filipino choral sound. (Quadros, 2012). However, Quadros claims most Asian choirs sing Western choral music such as Western art music, African-American spirituals, and arrangements of popular and jazz standards. Besides a number of arrangements of folk songs, he complains there is a lack of original local choral works. Nevertheless, some composers in India, Indonesia, Singapore and Philippines have responded to the need of presenting distinctive musical cultures abroad and produced some sophisticated original works.

“As the influence of folk music and jazz continued, conductors were encouraged to program less Eurocentric repertoire.” (Strimple, 2012, p. 59) The folkloric elements in the works of well-known composers in Korea, Australia, South and Southeast Asia, Venezuela, and Israel – are credited for the rising demand for their music in other parts of the world. The popularity of these works should be attributed more to the exoticism inherent in the folkloric elements than the creative workings of the composers. The impact of folk music on choral music is evident in the following quote by Strimple (2012):

After the explosion of new ideas in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the resistance to them exemplified by traditionalists and later by minimalists, the last third of the century gradually relaxed into an era where virtually nothing new was brought to

the compositional table. Rather, choral composers experimented with various combinations of twentieth-century devices, eventually abandoning atonality and dodecaphony in favor of an essentially – but not exclusively – diatonic language often derived from folk music or chant. (p. 60)

1.2.9 Choral music in Malaysia

The birth of choral singing can be traced back to Malaysia's pre-independence in 1957, when the British established many missionary schools. Choral singing was introduced as part of the curriculum in some of these schools. On the other hand, the practice of choral singing was brought in from China and adopted by the Chinese community immigrated and residing on the Malaya Peninsula during the 1940s and 50s (Saw, 2012). In fact, much of the culture of the Malaysian Chinese community was heavily influenced by the culture in China due to rather strong ethnic sentiment the community possessed then. Even though these choral activities of the Chinese community, despite years of development, have been insular and isolated from other communities, they have paved the way for the establishment of the existing choral scene and are still very much an important part of Malaysia's choral culture as a whole (*ibid.*).

As mentioned, Quadros (2012) observes most Asian choirs sing Western choral music and choirs in Malaysia are not exception. Besides attributing the phenomenon to a matter of preference, Quadros (2012) suspects it is partly due to the "lack of an extensive body of works written by local composers" (p. 163 – 164). Saw (2012) complains that despite Malaysia's rich musical heritage of the three major races in Malaysia – Malay, Chinese, and Indian and the unique forms of tribal and traditional music in Sabah and Sarawak, "there is no one body of music in existence which brings

together or promotes Malaysian music”. Saw describes the divided situation in Malaysia choral scene:

The younger generation is very much pop-influenced; Chinese communities still sing songs ‘imported’ from China, and we seldom hear choirs perform Indian music. Malaysian choirs participating in international level competitions often find it very difficult to locate music which represents our culture. (*ibid.*)

She goes on explaining there are very few choral pieces Malaysian choirs can work on for international choir competition and this situation urges them to resort to importing folk choral works arranged by composers from Singapore, the Philippines and other neighbouring countries (*ibid.*). Fam Qing Rui, conductor of Johor Bahru Chamber Choir (JBCC) supports Saw’s view point by pointing out in JBCC blog that there is currently a lack of Malaysian choral composers and representative local choral works in Malaysia (Johor Bahru Chamber Choir, 2012).

During an interview with Associate Prof. Ian Lim Kean Seng (professor in UCSI University Kuala Lumpur and conductor of Dithyrambic Singers) after a concert by Dithyrambic Singers featuring vocal compositions by local composer Khaw Guan Liang, Lim expresses the same concern. He says there are very few choirs in Malaysia singing local folk choral pieces arranged by Malaysian arrangers. If they do, these choirs in Malaysia sing folk choral pieces of other people especially those from the nearby region such as Indonesia, Philippines etc. because there are very few local folk choral pieces arranged by Malaysian composers. Lim suspects there are now probably only four active Malaysian folk choral music arrangers or composers (K. S. Lim, personal communication, October 13th, 2012).

To address the rising demand for Malaysian choral music, the Young Choral Academy in Kuala Lumpur has taken up the role of compiling and promoting Malaysian compositions and arrangements, and publishing a series of works by Malaysian composers since 2007 (Saw, 2012). The Academy regularly commissions local composers to produce original works and encourages budding composers to produce more localized works to cater to the needs of local choir teachers at all levels (*ibid.*). Geneviene Wong is one of the first composers engaged by YCA and she has begun to work as an arranger in year 2004 after being commissioned by Saw to write *A Glimpse of Malaysia*. Since then, YCA has published more than 12 local choral works by Wong and most of which are local folk choral arrangements. Other composers who gain the opportunity to work as arrangers or composers through YCA are Ng Shyh Poh, Yeo Chow Shern and Tracy Wong.

On the other hand, as an effort to encourage more representative local works which Johor Bahru Chamber Choir (JBCC) and other choirs in Malaysia could bring to the international stage, Fam (conductor of JBCC) commissioned Lai to write a folk arrangement and as a result *Sapu Tangan* – a Malay folk choral arrangement – was produced for premiere in JBCC's concert on 3rd November, 2012. The emergence of awareness among local conductors of the need of culturally representative choral works in Malaysia is evident, and this is epitomized in the statement of mission by YCA:

...one of the main initiatives of YCA is promoting local music. YCA publishes local choral scores; promotes going back to Malaysian musical roots before mastering western music; encourages more local composers to produce works for choirs; and promotes Malaysian arts and culture through choral singing. (Saw, 2008)

Malaysians can be hopeful that, using Saw's words (2012), these efforts will sow the seeds of public appreciation for Malaysian music which will bear fruit in the near future.

1.3 Problem Statement

This research looked into questions as to whether the selected Malay folk choral works belong to a Western music genre with mere borrowed themes of folk songs, or was this genre composed to be sung as close to the authentic characteristics of the folk songs and thus representing a new re-contextualized form of Malay folk songs that may function to revitalize the folk genre and further disseminate its themes to the other musical communities who are involved in Western choral singing. In addition, looking into the context of performance practice, what are the intentions of the composers and their instructions to the choir members? How should the score be presented? Should a Western approach be taken or one that is closest to the authentic folk flavour and stylistic feature? These problem statements become the foci of this study where the author seek to answer.

1.4 Significance of Study

The development and the function of the choir have been looked into by scholars. Scholarly accounts also show that the art and practice of choral music are disseminated to non-European countries through colonization, Christianization, Westernization and modernization. A number of scholars attribute the assimilation of folk music into Western music forms especially the choral art form to nationalism as well as to the local authorities' will to westernize or modernize the local culture. The identity issues concerning national identity, identity politics, the claiming of famous choral works as

cultural property to represent identities and gender identity related to choral music are covered in a canon of scholarly works.

Although there is no lack of literature on the relationship between folk choral music and the issues of identities in European countries, it is found that there is lack of coverage on the relationship between folk choral music and the issue of identities in Asian countries. Hence, the problem of lack of representative choral works which identify Malaysian culture, as brought up by local conductors, and how Malay folk music is employed in Western choral setting as a response to the problem is not addressed in any scholarly works. This dissertation reports on an in-depth analysis of the selected local folk choral works by the two Malaysian composers and seeks to position these works in the wider scope of the folk choral genre by looking into whether the selected works are intended to be performed as standard Western choral music or as a new genre of choral music emphasizing on the authenticity of Malay folk music. Details on performance practice, stylistic feature of the works, and the different ways Malaysian folk elements were employed in a Western choral form contribute new theories and informative data for scholars in the field and also performers.

1.5 Research Objectives and Research Questions

This research seeks to meet three main objectives:

- 1) To examine into the selected Malay folk choral works by Lai and Wong
- 2) To analyse selected pieces by Lai and Wong
- 3) To examine the performance practice of the selected Malay folk choral music

Research questions were designed based on the research objectives and are as the following:

- Which of the pieces are published works commissioned to alleviate the problem of lack of representative Malaysian choral works for use in regional and international choral events?
- Which of the pieces are frequently performed and popular among choirs local and abroad (for use in regional and international choral festivals)?
- What are the styles of arrangement or composition manifested in the selected folk choral pieces?
- Did the arrangers aim at portraying the Malay folk musical culture in the selected works?
- How is the performance practice of the selected Malaysian folk choral works as determined by the conductors and arrangers?
- How do these performance practices relate to the more authentic performance practice of the original Malay folk songs?
- Are the selected folk choral works predominantly Western choral works with borrowings from Malay folk music or a new genre of choral music which emphasizes on authentic Malay folk performance practice?

1.6 Conceptual Framework

This research was carried out in a qualitative theoretical framework and in the context of performance practice and cultural musicology. Choral music here refers to a genre from the West where performance practice approach was taken in this study; while the element of Malaysian folk song in a choral music setting deserves investigation from a

cultural musicological viewpoint. Thus an ethnomusicology perspective is included in this research.

The conventional concept of performance practice is, as stated by Herndon (1986), “The reconstruction of appropriate sounds of the various genres and historical periods of European music.” (p. 346) As this research is about choral music, musical elements pertaining to the performance practice of vocal and choral music is collated and they include (1) Tempo; (2) Rhythm; (3) Expression; (4) Ornamentation; (5) voice technique; (6) text pronunciation; (7) ensemble size; (8) blend of voice; (9) accompanied or unaccompanied vocal music; and (10) harmonic language. As a matter of fact, many scholars have acknowledged the limitations of the conventional concept of performance practice and aim for a wider scope of considerations for researches in performance practice of Western art music. What was termed as ‘sociology of musical performance’ (Holman, 1989) is included in the inquiry of performance practice.

Performance practice studies in ethnomusicology contribute much to steer the field of performance practice away from its limited definition. Gerard Béhague (as cited by Herndon, 1986) is one of the ethnomusicologists who represent the contributions to “the study of music performance as an event taking place within social, cultural, and physical contexts...” (p. 346). It is indicated that “new perspectives on the study of performance practice” is “attempting to integrate context and sound, i.e., performance and practice are needed...” (Herndon, 1986, p. 346)

As this research concerns the amalgamation of Western choral art form and local folk songs in Malaysia and relies on the musicians’ different degree of incorporation of the musical elements from different cultures, Western and Malay culture in this case, the suggested integration of sound and context becomes a necessity in the study of the performance practice and cultural musicology of the selected Malaysian folk choral

works. Therefore, ethnomusicological inquiry onto performance practice, as brought up by Herndon (1986), is maintained throughout this research.

1.7 Limitation of Study

Given the scope of a mix-mode research, this dissertation is set out to fulfil a partial requirement of a Masters program which consists of both coursework and research. Due to the stipulated word limit for this dissertation under the program, it is necessary to limit the scope of this research. Therefore, the scope of this research is within the limit of selected published original arrangements that are either actively performed by Malaysian choirs or commissioned to alleviate the problem of lack of representative Malaysian choral works.

1.8 Organization of Study

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter forms the foundation of the study and is constituted of introduction, background of study, significance of study, research objectives and research questions, conceptual framework, limitation of study and organization of study. The second chapter is a review of past literatures related to the topic, categorized into different aspects pertaining to folk music, choral music, the assimilation of folk music into choral music, and the associating ideologies revolving these music genres.

In the third chapter, a detailed report on the methodology of this study is provided. It discusses nature of this study, and research process which consists of pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post-fieldwork. The definitions, advantages, disadvantages of the chosen research methods and the process of obtaining results from the data together

with the validity of the chosen methods in this research are delineated in this chapter. Chapter four documents the analysis of the compositional styles of the two arrangers and the musical decisions made by conductors and arrangers for the performances of the selected Malaysian folk choral works. The analysis provides grounds for the ensuing discussion which leads to theoretical findings. The final chapter is the conclusion to this dissertation which includes the implication of research and suggests issues for future research.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is an important pre-field task to form critical evaluation of past researches related to the subject in matter to find the gap in research. In this dissertation on local folk choral arrangement by Malaysian arrangers, the compositional styles and local performance practice of the choral arrangements by Lai and Wong were investigated in order to answer the research objectives. Prior to the conduct of this research, a careful reading of past literature concerning the topic such as the history and development of choral music (see Chapter 1.2), performance practice, folk music, choral music and the positioning of folk music in the context of Western Art or modern music genre, prepares the researcher to have a better grasp of foundation knowledge, theoretical framework, issues discussed and thus identifying the gap that requires attention in scholarship.

2.2 Performance Practice

The concept of performance practice has traditionally been limited to the reconstruction of appropriate sounds of the various genres and historical periods of European music. As defined in the Harvard Dictionary of Music, performance practice is the “study of how early music, from Middle Ages to Bach, was performed and the many problems connected with attempts to restore its original sound in modern performance (Herndon, 1986, p. 346).

This is the conventional definition of performance practice summarized by Herndon. In Holman’s book review of a bibliography guide to performance practice by Roland

Jackson. Holman (1989) claims Jackson to include only 'specific techniques of musical execution' into his bibliography list.

The 'musical techniques' or music elements pertaining to performance practice, especially that of vocal and choral music, gathered for this section are (1) Tempo; (2) Rhythm; (3) Expression; (4) Ornamentation; (5) voice technique; (6) text pronunciation; (7) ensemble size; (8) blend of voice; (9) accompanied or unaccompanied vocal music; and (10) harmonic language.

Tempo is discussed by Cole (1988), Rubino (2000), Ochs & Musgrave (2003) and Temperley (1991a). Cole quotes Ratner's two ways in determining appropriate tempos for music in the Classic period, "descriptively (i.e. relatively), with terms and qualifying words; mechanically (i.e. absolutely), with watch, pendulum, clockwork, pulse, and finally the metronome" (1988, p. 33). He explains that "a steady tempo with slight modifications allowable as an expressive nuance" is advocated by theorists (p. 33). Yet determining tempo for pieces is more complicated, as Rubino brings up composers such as John Adams who still changes the tempo of his compositions as he hears them; and the recordings of Stravinsky's pieces with different tempos from the original tempo markings further illustrates the complication of determining appropriate tempo. Sherman (Ochs & Musgrave 2003) dedicated a chapter on metronome marks, timings, and other period evidence regarding tempo in his *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Practice*. Sherman quotes Epstein in claiming Brahms' tempo changes are governed by "the principle of the *tactus* found in Renaissance music – that even flow of beats that regulated this music so fully that changes of movement within all parts of a piece were *tactus*-bound through a system of mathematical proportions." (p. 103). Temperley (1991a) also examined different tempos in Haydn's *Creation*. Therefore, tempo markings and interpretation has never been a straight forward case

and different perceptions require evidence in making decision, though, issues between the composer's intention and interpretation from performers form another debate. In the present research, therefore, unlike in the context of historical musicology, interviews with composers, conductors and performers, and live performance observation form investigation for the inquiry made to tempo.

Rhythmic accuracy was discussed by scholars such as Cole (1988), Parrott (1996), Rifkin (2000), Newbould (2003), Ochs & Musgrave (2003) and Melamed (2004). Rifkin (2000), Melamed (2004), and Parrott (1996) touched upon rhythmic alteration and rhythmic *inégaux*, among other performance practice aspects of Bach's choruses. Such detailed attention paid to rhythmic accuracy is categorized in one of the two rhythmic probes which Cole (1988) summarizes: (i) matters of detail (such as 3 against 2, overdotting) or rhythmic rarities such as polymeters in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; (ii) rhythm and its contributions to expression (p. 33).

Expression consists of many aspects of music including dynamics, phrasing and articulation. Cole (1988) purports the importance of phrasing to rhetoric of music and categorizes two approaches to articulation: "the meanings of the various markings; the evolution, chronicled by Clementi and others, from a detached style of execution to a legato delivery" (p. 34). While Ochs & Musgrave (2003) explores the purposes of expression markings as he states dynamics markings serve two purposes: "most obviously to communicate the sense of the music, but also to serve a practical dimension by ensuring the internal balance of parts..." (p. 147). Newbould (2003) agrees with Musgrave's purposeful probe into expression as he proposes the thickening of orchestration texture corresponding to gradation of tone in 'colla parte' with the choir in interpreting Schubert's Mass in A flat major: Credo in measure 191 for dramatic and

narrative purpose. Yet the lack of literature on expression for narrative purpose makes Schulenberg (2012) suggest for further research on expression & rhetoric.

In terms of ornamentation and its interpretation, periodicals from Cole (1988), Rubino (2000), Schulenberg (2012), and Matusky & Tan (2004) were explored. Cole quotes Frederick Neumann in suggesting the purpose of ornamentation is “to release 17th- and 18th-century music from ‘the stranglehold of the onbeat monopoly’” (1988, p. 35). As performers have more liberty on producing variants of ornaments especially in the twentieth-century, Rubino (2000) touches upon the flexible interpretations of ornaments. In Schulenberg’s criticism on Fuller’s article which focuses only on notated variants which limit interpretations, Schulenberg points out Fuller should have considered unnotated ornaments *Port de voix* which is “often performed in seventeenth-century France as a graceful ‘pre-beat’ glide of the voice” which may not be recognized as a distinct ornament by many musicians but is important enough to be incorporated in German keyboard music especially by Kuhnau (Schulenberg, 2012, p. 11-12). Instead of the pre-beat ‘glide of the voice’, Matusky & Tan (2004) describes *Ronggeng* (a type of Malay social music) singers hold and prolong the first beat of each sung phrase. Unnotated vocal ornaments such as *tremolo* and *portamento* are usually incorporated into their singing (p. 328). Therefore, the flexibility and precise execution of ornaments seem different in various genre of music and it is the quest of this research to look into the gap in the literature that missed out on defining Malaysian folk choral works and interpretation of ornaments.

Vocal technique is central to the instructions of observed choral conductors and numerous scholars have written articles on this topic. Walls includes Parrott’s proof of *haute-contre* – a rare type of high male voice in French baroque and classical opera – being falsettists rather than high tenors in his compilation of articles of baroque music

performance practice (Walls, 2011). While Wistreich (1994) points out that male singers singing in the *verismo* style push their ‘chest voice’ to sing the high notes which should lie naturally on the ‘head register’. He paid much heed to clarify Monteverdi’s ‘chest voice’ is in fact breath support and refutes the point that ‘throat voice’ is upper or middle voice registers, and coordinating the ‘chest voice’ – the support - & throat voice – the articulation of voice – enables smooth rendition of fast passages. Yet, the original Malay singing style preferred “a vocal quality that was tense, hoarse and nasal” before it was influenced and replaced by Western singing aesthetics (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 326).

On the other hand, Neumann (1991) differentiates the good vibrato, where a clear focus on one pitch surrounded by a spectrum of pitches is heard, from a poorly produced vibrato, where a wobble sound is heard. He suggests more frequent use of the “good” vibrato in early vocal music. When singers sing with the well-tempered piano, the fact that the singer operates with a different tuning system to that of the keyboard instrument, Haynes quotes Quantz’s advises (as cited in Schulenberg, 2012) for continuo players to avoid doubling certain notes of the singer (Schulenberg, 2012, p. 8). Although the selected pieces do not have continuo parts, this advice is applicable to arrangers in arranging accompanied choral pieces. Goetze, Fales & Smishkewych (2012) provide a list of important issues pertaining to vocal production in choral music: phonation, registration, resonance, articulation, bel canto technique and, singing and language. Thus, the past literature reveals some discourse of vocal technique requirements, and the intended voice type or technique on Malaysian folk choral music was absent in the literature.

The relation between words and music plays important role in the process of arranging the folk choral pieces. Hence, past literature on words and music serves as

important references to the assessment of the selected pieces. Carter (2002) examined Monteverdi's treatment of texts in two challenging works and the modern reception of Monteverdi's conception of *seconda pratica*, which holds that words should govern the music. Ochs & Musgrave (2003) warn against the usual smeared choral pronunciation of triplets and suggest a slowing tempo to give clarity to the pronunciation. Yet the pronunciation concerned has much more to do with musical pronunciation than words pronunciation. A lack of literature on this aspect urges Schulenberg (2012) to call for further research on diction and pronunciation.

The issue of ensemble size in Bach's choral works gives rise to debates among scholars. One of the most representing voices is provided by Parrott (1996), and he testifies to one-to-a-part for performances of Bach's motet, for instances BMV55, BMV56, BMV84, and BMV169. The weight scholars put on Baroque ensemble size has affected the same issue in choral works from other periods, such as the choral works from the Romantic period. Avins (2003) provided evidence to show Brahms preferred a large chorus for his big choral works. Brahms wrote, "A smaller chorus, however good, exhausts itself and the listener" for his *Triumphlied* op. 55, for which he also wrote "it's not difficult, only *forte*" (p. 17). However, in the course of observing the rehearsals of Malaysian choral musicians, it is found that ensemble size is not as important as the ratio of voice parts touched upon by Rubino (2000), because balance of voices is what these musicians are looking for.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, there are many scholars like Holman (1989) who criticizes performance practice accounts which limit to the technical aspects of music. Brown's study of selected issues for the period 1750-1900 centers on notation but it is aimed to reveal the "intentions, expectations, or tacit assumptions" (1999, p. 1) of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers

regarding performance of their works. Under the influence of the ‘historical performance’ movement, many scholars have emphasized on composers’ intentions. One of them is Botstein (1993) who attempts to bring up the intention of Mendelssohn in using his choral music composition to disseminate idea of reason and tolerance in the social climate of assimilation and anti-Semitism during the 1840s. On the other hand, there are scholars who call for discretion and reasoning on whether to adhere to composer’s intention. A representative of these scholars is Kivy (1995) who ponders over the question of whether to adhere to a composer’s intention when performing his/her works based on three points: (1) the reason or a ‘story’ for adhering to the composer’s intention; (2) whether adhering to the composer’s intentions improve the performance can only be seen through musical practice; and (3) musical taste is not a constant but a variable under the influence of changing practice (p. 175).

Besides composers’ compositional intention and performing intentions, the inspiration of the composers in producing works is also important to help accurately reconstructing the music the composers have in their minds. Daverio (2002) deduced Schumann’s late choral music, such as part-songs for men’s chorus like *Mit Begeisterung* (With enthusiasm) and *Sehr Kraftig* (With utmost vigor), were mostly inspired by politics and revolution as the texts of these pieces circled around “two great revolutionary themes: *Einheit* and *Freiheit*, unity and freedom (p. 66). And Musgrave (1985) mentioned Brahms draw on sources from Greek mythology in his later choral works (p. 88).

Some composers gained inspiration from the works of their predecessors. Votta (2006) documents Bach’s legacy on choral compositions of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Bruckner and Stravinsky. He specially reveals Bach’s influence in Mendelssohn’s *Ave Maria Op. 23 No. 2*, which contains thematic fragments the composer would reuse

in *Lobegesang* (a choral symphony by Mendelssohn), Scottish symphonies, and in *Elijah* (p. 187).

As mentioned earlier, scholars such as Jackson, who uses an unacceptable limited definition of ‘performance practice’, are criticized (Holman, 1989). What he calls ‘studies in the sociology of musical performance’ are merely grouped into a category that is further defined as being primarily concerned ‘with the circumstances surrounding musical events’. “This will not do. It tends to produce a catalogue that is focused on the minutiae of performance – notation, embellishment, stringing, tuning and so on – rather than on larger questions to do with the disposition, scoring and repertory of ensembles... Such questions... are often dealt with... ‘sociology of musical performance’” (Holman, 1989, p. 256).

Performance practice studies in ethnomusicology contribute much to counter-balance the weight on the narrower view of the subject or even to steer the field of performance practice away from its limited definition and include the ‘sociology of musical performance’ as one of its valid inquiry. Gerard Béhague (as cited by Herndon, 1986) is one of the ethnomusicologists who represent contributions to “the study of music performance as an event taking place within social, cultural, and physical contexts... Béhague indicates that ‘new perspectives on the study of performance practice... attempting to integrate context and sound, i.e., performance and practice are needed...’” (p. 346)

A number of scholars consider the signifying aspect of choral music. Sachs (2010) terms Beethoven *Symphony No. 9* as a symbol of freedom, reflecting politics, aesthetics and overall climate of its time. Karnes (2005) considers the effect of a whole genre of choral music on society and draws an analogy between harmonic language of choral music and the social harmony it promoted. There are numerous choral

compositions serve as or constitute of musical symbols deemed important to the contexts or societies which the music is set against. Kinderman (1985) underscored the symbol for the Deity in Beethoven's *The Ninth Symphony* and *Missa Solemnis*; Kramer (1992) found representational extramusical meaning in Haydn's *Creation*; And Müller-Hartmann (1945) found that the motive symbolizing death that was frequently used by composers from end of sixteenth-century to beginning of twentieth-century had its origin from Flemish & Italian madrigals. Taruskin (2010) elucidated German composers' coding of Rossini's "Di tanti palpiti" melodic theme to symbolize the "triviality, flightiness, and inanity" of Italian opera in the Romantic period. For instance, Wagner quoted it as parody in the bleating Tailors' Chorus in *Die Meistersinger* (p. 23). Besides the type of musical coding shared by a group of composers, Reynolds (2003) highlights the personal musical coding by Romantic composers, who individually quoted certain musical motives to allude to other musical contexts or experiences. Schubert's appropriation of Beethoven's *Fidelio* in Credo from his Mass in G Major (1815) is one of such examples.

Besides contemporary contexts, scholars also consider the historical contexts of music. Herndon quotes both Knight and Linda Burman-Hall for presenting historical contexts of the different musics they study using ethnomusicological inquiry onto performance practice (Herndon, 1986, p. 347). Slightly different from the historical contexts of music, Taruskin (1995) and Kurtzman (1999) look into the history of reception of early music and document contemporary performance history of pieces including Bach's choral works and Monteverdi's *vespers*.

Recordings prove to be useful to the study of reception history. Using recordings as study materials is considered a rather new method in the field of performance practice. For instance, Fabian (2003) studied performance practice of Bach's works,

Baroque singing and Chinese choral music nuances respectively through sound and video recording. On the other hand, Bowen (1996) rendered performance analysis (which can be conducted in a detailed way by using recordings) as important in determining the appropriate performance practice of music.

As the scope of performance practice is expanding, there are more literature gaps to be filled. Schulenberg (2012) reviews Walls' book and states there is a lack of follow-up literature on performance practice. Schulenberg also points out the problem of lacking in literature on various performance practice issues: Aesthetics & philosophy of music; expression & rhetoric; religion & liturgy; economics & business of music; staging of operas; songs & poetry; diction & pronunciation; iconography.

2.3 Folk Music, Choral Music and Nationalism

This section provides an account of the literatures on folk music, choral music and nationalism that are covered. Writings by scholars indicate issues in preserving folk music in its authentic form, syncretism and hybridization of folk music and also how and when the wave of nationalism comes into play. Matusky & Tan (2004) and Hill (2005) contribute to the effect of globalization on the preservation of folk music; the issue of folk music revival partly attributed to the employment of folk music in choral music is delineated by Silverman (1983), Francmanis (2002), and Karnes (2005); Hill (2005) reveals the use of folk music and its synthesis with Western music for political manipulation while Silverman (1983) and Šmidchens (1996) document the forces against manipulation through practicing authentic form of folk music; the theme of nationalism and its relationship with folk music integration into choral music is explored by many scholars – Macpherson (1912), Hollander (1955), Musgrave (1985), Marco (1993), Blake (1997), Daverio (2002), Bohlman (2004), Karnes (2005), and

Quadros (2012); while choral music in non-European countries and Asian countries is chronicled by Strimple (2002) and Quadros (2012).

Globalized and glocalized effects on folk music were discussed. Matusky & Tan (2004) discussed traditional syncretic music in the *bangsawan* theatre (Malay opera) in Malaysia is a combination of folk, classical traditions in combination with foreign elements from Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese and Western musical sources. Another example from Finland as chronicled by Hill (2005), “Finland’s folk revival, which began in 1968, was spearheaded by an older, rural, politically conservative population” through hosting its own international folk music festival (first Kaustinen Folk Festival was held in 1968, modeled after the Welsh festival), “in stark contrast to folk revivals in other parts of the world that were associated with youth counterculture and left-sing politics” (p. 121).

Some scholars attribute the revival and development of folk music partly to the welding of folk music and the choral art form. Francmanis (2002) reported that Cecil Sharp published harmonized folk songs and this contributed to the folk song revival in England. Karnes (2005) gives detailed accounts on the process of Latvian composer Janis Cimze collecting and harmonizing Latvian folksongs as early as 1870. Silverman (1983) believes the amalgamation of Bulgarian folk music with the Western choral art form was “a natural and necessary step in the development of contemporary folk music” as regarded by Bulgarian ethnomusicologists. While Hill (2005) mentions arranging traditional folk music according to the Western music idiom was said to be “‘improving’, ‘civilizing’, ‘Westernizing’, or ‘modernizing’ folk music during the romantic nationalist, ‘public enlightenment’, or Soviet eras (p. 263).

Governments know the power of folk music in disseminating nationalistic identity. Hill (2005) quotes Wang Yin-fen narrating the state of Taiwan “intervened in

(traditional) *nanguan* music through musician training programs and other institutions in order to serve the Taiwanese government's nationalist and indigenist policies" (p. 27). Soviet Governments make use of folk and traditional music to spread soviet ideology by tinting it with nationalistic/ethnic sentiments through manipulating folk and traditional songs. Rees, as cited in Hill (2005), reports that the folk and traditional musics were modified, to replace anti- and pre-Communist symbolism and texts with pro-Communist's, while adopting Western art music arrangements, orchestrations, and aesthetics in order to "raise the standards" of the proletariat masses (p. 28). Hill also quotes Izaly Zemtsovsky and Alma Kunanbaeva this process in Central Asia:

...Orchestras of Folk Instruments" were founded everywhere and these required music-making in unison. This requirement had a revolutionary consequence for the fate of folklore in the region... The boundary between folk and art music was eradicated. In regards to traditional epics, a whole series of attacks began with Stalinist repression of the best epic singers... false compilations of huge epics began, and the traditional; Central Asian talent for improvisation was used at the government's bidding for ideological purposes... These artificial processes, organized from above, have changed the core of the traditional legacy, i.e., the artistic thinking and cultural perception of the people. (p. 28)

Hill (2005) also cites Jonathan Stock chronicles the conservatory tradition founded in China in the 1920s as part of nationalistic sentiment, and "the search for a modern, national music 'to be born from a synthesis of [Chinese] folk music and Western music'":

During Mao's Cultural Revolution conservatory leaders and professors who had favored foreign and bourgeois music were purged, foreign music was banned, traditional pieces from before 1966 were discarded, and prominent interpreters of the forbidden repertoires were denounced and in some cases driven to death; and in

the 1970s ‘new compositions and the performance of existing ones had to satisfy stringent revolutionary criteria, the failure to meet these leading to severe punishment’ (2005, p. 28-29). Hill summarizes, “In many countries the policies instigated through such institutions have significantly altered virtually all aspects of folk music, including its transmission, performance contexts, social meaning, arrangements, orchestrations, intonation, instrument design, scholarship, history, and development. (2005, p. 29)

The power of the people against Soviet government, on the other side of the phenomena, is shown by documents of Šmidchens (1996). He documents the phenomenon of the thriving of non-westernized “authentic and unrefined” singing style of rural traditions against the will of Soviet government that became model for mass activism in the Baltic region.

Opposing power against assimilation of traditional music into Western music occurs in some places due to fear for Western hegemony or post-colonial hegemony. Silverman (1983) observes that the westernized direction folk music took in Bulgaria was regarded by other schools as “conscious manipulation” towards Western hegemony (p. 58-59) as most composers/arrangers using the Western idiom were trained in the West.

Besides the penetration of the Western choral art form into folk music as a result of Western hegemony, incorporation of folk music into the choral genre in originally Western countries also plays an important role in producing the genre of folk choral music. Scholars have shown that folk elements exist in European choral music long before the period of “romantic nationalistic” movement in the 19th century. Macpherson (1912-1913) revealed that Bach’s chorales, which led to the myriad of tunes that form a heritage of the German nation, had based on Martin Luther’s Hymns, some of which adapted from folk songs (p. 155). However, folk elements do only become central to

composers' works when the phenomenon of identity nationalism occurred in Europe in the nineteenth century. Beller-McKenna (1999) argues that folk songs are defining elements in Brahms's musical style as manifested in his two folk-like, mature choral works – Op. 22 and Op. 44 composed circa 1860. Daverio (2002) quoted Kapp in saying the late choral works of Schumann, Brahms's predecessor, are suitable for the mass public because they, as said by Schumann himself in the case of *Der Königssohn*, consisted largely of folk choruses (*Volkschöre*) (p. 74).

Scholars show that folkloric elements become main components of choral works of many composers from the rather peripheral regions of Europe amidst the dissemination of the ideology of romantic nationalism. Marco (1993) rendered many Spanish composers such as Juan Alfonso García (p. 206), Fernando Remacha (p. 110), Enric Morera (p. 76) and Anton Larrauri (p. 187) were inspired by folkloric elements and this is reflected in their choral music compositions; Hollander (1955) unraveled Leos Janáček was a Czechoslovakian nationalist composer (like Smetana and Dvořák) whose songs, operas, choral works and symphonic poems frequently exhibit his native folk melodic and rhythmic characteristics, and folk poetic content or texts (or subjects) (p. 171). In the Baltic region, Karnes (2005) reported Latvian composer Janis Cimze's folk choral publication served Baltic nationalism.

In South and Southeast Asia, folk elements are assigned similarly important roles and are encouraged to be incorporated into choral music in the region. Quadros (2012) cites an instance to show the significance of folk materials to Southeast-Asian choral musicians, "Veneracion and the Madrigal Singers generated a laboratory both for creating the distinctive Filipino choral sound and for composers to write music combining indigenous rhythms, melodies, and musical forms" (p. 162). Although he points out most Asian choirs sing Western choral music, Quadros also adds that these

choirs may sing Western repertoire at home but they prefer to feature local compositions with its “distinctive musical culture” for international audiences and these local choral works “are frequently the arrangements of traditional folk songs, or pieces accompanied by instruments, and use Western chord progressions” (Quadros, 2012, p.163-164).

The chorus itself plays a central role in the dissemination and expression of the European nationalistic spirit and this direct relation is put forward by Bohlman (2004). “The chorus envoices and embodies the nation, giving voice to all its citizens and harmonizing those voices in an emblematic unisonality” (p. 96). In his accounts of choral movement in nineteenth-century Europe, Bohlman (2004) stated choir united different classes (p. 50); it was a symbol of growing power among middle class in the 1820s & 30s, and was closely tied to folk singing. On the similar issue from the perspective pertaining to social class, Blake (1997) brought a contrasting perspective that there was no native music composed in Britain before the end of nineteenth century for the middle class for the assertion of national identity, on par with the musical and nationalistic trend across Europe signalled by “Mussorgsky in Russia, Wagner in Germany and Verdi in Italy (p. 36).

After the World War I, a trend of cultural hybridization in absorbing the influence of the new world’s African-American Negro spirituals, blues and jazz into choral compositions in Europe was accounted by Blake (1997). For instance, the negro spirituals in Sir Michael Tippett’s oratorio *A Child of Our Time* (1941) was used to convey “pacifist message in time of war” (p. 53).

The choral art form began to thrive in non-European and Asian countries in the 20th century. Quadros (2012, p. 160) attributes the pandemic choral practice in South and Southeast Asia to Christianization, colonization, Westernization and globalization,

and adds that the varying choral cultures in the Asian countries are results of different degree of Christianization and Westernization caused by the colonial powers, which are also one of the main antecedents to the search for own identities among the people of the colonized countries. Strimple (2002) also investigated the reasons which make the choral form thrive in non-European countries. According to him, works of missionaries, colonization and import of political models contributed to the hybridization of respective traditional music and the Western choral form in Asian countries. However, writings on the hybridization of folk music with choral music particularly in Southeast Asian countries are not included in previous literature. Therefore it is the duty of this study to look into this gap of literature.

2.4 Positioning Folk Music Identity

Kramer (1993), Šmidchens (1996), and Hill (2005) delineate the contribution of folk and choral music in the construction of identity. Šmidchens (1996) documents the shaping of national identity in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia by using folk songs to assert the equality of their people with the rest of the world, besides manipulating the folk songs and national songs to advance national liberation through choral movements. On the other hand, Hill (2005) reveals the choices of musical elements from different related cultures Finnish folk musicians incorporate into their performances reflect the musicians' self-construct of identities either as part of "Finno-Ugric culture" or other related European cultures. Kramer's contribution is representative of this issue as he demonstrates how European choral music of the nineteenth century collaborated on equal terms with the textual and socio-cultural practices in the constitution of self and society (Kramer 1993).

The cultural practice of putting up performances of historical choral works at the beginning of 20th century is attributed to the identity politics (Scholars use the term identity politics to describe any mobilization related to politics, culture, and identity) reflected by numerous social movements of the period (Bohlman, 2004). Bohlman observes the performance of ‘Ode to Joy’ in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony served as an ideological link between the enlightenment to the late twentieth-century triumph of European ideals over the destruction of Europe during World War II” (p. 30).

There are works reported to have challenged the superiority of a nation. Verdi’s Requiem, due to the work’s genre, style, and religious and national traits which are similar to those composed by German composers, and hence perceived as superior and exclusive to the Germans, have challenged the German identity and the cultural dominance held by the German nation over others (Kreuzer, 2010).

Some scholars related performance agency of important choral works to power relations. Buch (2003) outlined a political history of the performances of Beethoven’s Ninth since its inception which reflects how different interlocutors’ claim it as cultural property for the statement of identity.

Few scholars explored into the issue of reception concerning performances of important choral works. In his quest of individual musical forms development from the perspectives of Germanic, ethno-cultural identities, Toews (2004) weighed Mendelssohn in being the only composer who produced religious cantatas which enjoyed good reception of the general people during his time (p. 214). As a way to document the composer’s attempt to produce cultural works that could represent or relate to the audience’s experience, Seaton (2008) focused attention to the *Bourgeois* class among Mendelssohn’s audience as a main component which shaped the performance of the composer’s works, of course, including his choral works. On the

other hand, Chen (2010) attributed the active cultivation of “serious” music as self-redefinition by the aristocracy in face of growing influence of the middle class, and the perceived representation of “light of reason” in Haydn’s *Creation* in lieu with the concept and policies of enlightenment in Austria and Europe, to the good reception of the oratorio among both the aristocratic and bourgeois social classes.

The issue about reception of other genre of music transforming the choral repertoire is documented by McGee (2007). He documents that Fisk College Jubilee Singers, beginning from a small ensemble of ex-slaves raising money for their university by presenting the tradition of black spirituals, and raising consciousness of post-Civil War America to audiences throughout America, Germany, and Britain on their tour, and then growing into a popular professional black choral ensemble, motivated other professional black groups, for example Hall Johnson’s choir, to follow its footsteps. Alongside prominent black spirituals arrangers and composers John Work, H. T. Burleigh, Hall Johnson, Nathaniel Dett, Margaret Bonds, William Dawson, and Undine Moore, a new tradition of choral spiritual singing was established and resulting in the genre being included into standard choral repertoire later.

Few scholars explored into the issue of gender identities in choral music. Faulkner (2012) investigates the constructed complex masculine identities by male voice choirs in Iceland: “remnants of the pan-European nationalist movement; Rousseau philosophy and political thinking; an Icelandic renaissance; a long struggle for independence; a new political, social and economic order; dominance of public vocal space; the love of singing soft and gentle songs in 4-part harmony; close, even tender physical proximity; an idealised – but certainly not sexualised – vision of women; and a clear and deliberate practice of self-therapy and everyday regulation through the taking of vocal action” (p. 228). As the male voice choirs in Iceland see themselves being an

important element in the collective identity while representing their respective counties, the resulting present agency in the lives of contemporary Icelandic men allows the male choirs to also perform the diversity of constructed masculinity (p. 225). Other gender issues in choral music are touched upon. Owens mentions female participation in Baroque music while Clutterham (2006) briefs on the transition from the male to the female gender in assuming the roles of the treble voices during the Baroque period. Hayes (2007) also observes that beginning from around 1979, LGBT choruses (choruses of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) are founded & exploded over the last quarter century.

2.5 Conclusion

The issues covered in this literature review: performance practice, folk music, choral music, the synthesis of folk music and choral music, the accompanying nationalism ideology and the issue of identity – provide the theoretical basis for my research on the phenomenon of Malaysian local folk choral music through the case study of the selected pieces.

Among the issues covered in this literature review, there are most scholarly articles dedicated to performance practice of European choral music. A major input on the performance practice issues of tempo, rhythm, expression, ornamentation, voice technique, text pronunciation, ensemble size, blend of voice, accompanied or unaccompanied vocal music and harmonic language are collated. However, there is a lack of research studying Malaysian folk music in a Western choral setting where conflicts in performance practice lies in the dichotomy between the two.

When studying Malaysian folk music, the performance practice requires an extra level of discussion of cultural context, alongside the poiesis and aesthesis of the

composer and performers. Moreover, methodological issues also require attention in this form of research.

In terms of the issue of folk music, many scholars relate the development and revival of folk music in Europe to Romantic nationalism in the 19th century. However, there is a lack of attention paid to folk choral music and its contexts in non-European countries, especially in Asian countries. Scholars also show the art and practice of choral music is disseminated to non-European countries through colonization, Christianization, Westernization and modernization. A number of scholars attribute the assimilation of folk music into Western music forms, especially the choral art form, to nationalism as well as to the local authorities' will to westernize or modernize the local culture. On the other hand, a number of academicians report on Soviet's governments' manipulation of folk music to legitimize their political desire. The identity issues concerning national identity, identity politics, the claiming of famous choral works as cultural property to represent identities and gender identity related to choral music are covered in a canon of scholarly works.

Although there is no lack of literature on the relationship between folk choral music and identities in European countries, it is found that there is lack of coverage on the relationship between folk choral music and the issue of identity in Asian countries. This dissertation on the examination of Malaysian folk choral musicians' self-identification as belonging to different types of Malaysian society as reflected by the musical decisions they make aims to fill this gap of research. In order to materialize this research project, a systematic series of methods need to be devised and the approaches used are detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research examined into Malaysian folk music in a Western choral setting and its performance practice. Selected works by Lai and Wong, folk songs arranged in a choral setting for 4- to 8-parts were analysed, while rehearsals and performances along with interviews with the composers/arrangers, conductor, and performers provide primary data for the interpretation of these choral works

3.2 Qualitative Research Framework

This research is based on qualitative research method in studying the phenomenon of Malay folk choral music in Malaysia. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as attempting to “make sense of” or “to interpret the phenomenon” (p. 3) in terms of the meanings musicians bring to them. Qualitative inquiry requires the researcher to experience and understand the cultural phenomenon (Patton, 2002), and in this case the musical phenomenon (Titon, 2008) through fieldwork.

In this research, a case study presents eight Malaysian folk choral arrangements by the composers Lai and Wong. According to Ellis (2010), case study research often “inquires into the experience of individuals” (p. 485), and in this research, the arrangers, the conductors and the choristers. The pros of case study are expounded by Stake (1995), “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). The fact that the choral music and arrangements of Lai and Wong are commissioned, published and performed by numerous Malaysian choirs in concerts and competitions both locally and

internationally, justifies the selection of the works of the two Malaysian arrangers as the case study in this research.

In order to facilitate an in-depth examination into the issues mentioned in the research objectives above, this research is carried out through (a) Pre-Fieldwork; (b) Fieldwork; and (c) Post- Fieldwork.

3.3 Pre-Fieldwork

Pre-fieldwork consists of score analysis, library study for relevant research literature, and virtual fieldwork for related information about this study online. Score analysis equips the researcher with basic understanding of the selected Malay choral works of Lai and Wong, and subsequently serves as guidance in the interview with the two arrangers for their detailed compositional intention.

Academic literature surrounding the history and background of choral music, performance practice and issues surrounding folk music, choral music and the synthesis of the two – the folk choral music – i.e., nationalism and identity are studied. Besides conducting library study for relevant literature on the mentioned topics, virtual fieldwork is also used to complement conventional literature study as Hewson (2003) testifies its value to strengthen information finding.

On the other hand, besides being effective in offering general information on folk choral trend in Malaysia, virtual fieldwork is especially useful in my attempt to deduce the musical characteristics and performance practice of Malay folk songs through the relevant audio and video files found on the internet. Through literature study and virtual fieldwork, familiarity with the choral art form, folk choral trend in Malaysia and issues surrounding the genre can be attained. The confidence gained would equip me with cultural competence to work in the field.

3.4 Fieldwork

Fieldwork is defined by Fetterman (2005) as,

The method essentially involves working with people for long periods of time in their natural setting to see people and their behavior with all the real-world incentives and constraints. (p. 159)

Fieldwork has its origin from natural-history disciplines when natural scientists transferred their ecological research methods into studies of living people and their culture (Gambold, 2010; McCall, 2006). Fetterman (2005) points out the naturalistic approach of fieldwork “avoids the artificial response typical of controlled or laboratory conditions.” (p. 159)

As ethnographic fieldwork requires “immersion” in the field, Ybema (2010) warns “distance” is equally as important as “closeness” for an adequate understanding of the “natives”...especially when familiarity with the field grows it is crucial to keep oneself from the narrowing view of the surface (p. 349). Fieldwork has turned to demand more participation from the researcher, which is true to the field of music as well, as Titon (2008, p. 25) points out that fieldwork has developed from consisting principally observation and data collection to experiencing and understanding music. Gambold (2010) believes the researchers’ experiences in the field is important to the credibility of case studies.

Since this dissertation is a case study of the selected folk choral arrangements, it is important to place the researcher into the social world of the music phenomena being studied and experience the process. During fieldwork in this study, the researcher places herself into the social fabric of the musicians’ community, who are of Malaysian nationality involved in the production of the selected works, in order to experience, understand and interpret the musical styles of Malay folk choral music, as cumulatively

posited by the community of folk choral musicians involved. By doing so, the researcher will be able “to make sense of the concerned musicians’ “sensemaking... identity... values, feelings, and beliefs...” by situating the musicians’ musical decisions within the “wider historical and social contexts” (Ybema et, al., 2010, p. 349) they self-identify with.

The methods of inquiry for case studies listed by Ybema (2010) are adapted for this research. The fieldwork activities include interviews) with arrangers – Lai and Wong – and conductors whose choirs perform the selected local folk choral arrangements, and observation/participant observation of rehearsals and performances of the selected works (refer to Ybema, 2010). These methods, alongside other issues in fieldwork are discussed in the following section and are delineated in this order: (a) Gaining access and finding a role, (b) Interview, (c) Observation, (d) Fieldnote, (e) Audio & video recordings, and (f) Equipments.

3.4.1 Gaining Access into Malaysian Choral Scene and Finding a Role for Myself

Fox lists out the issues involved in gaining access to field research:

Gaining access to a field of research in qualitative designs raises issues concerning self-presentation, negotiation of roles, research bargains and interactions, and personal relationships with informants and other participants. (Fox, 2008, p. 484)

Yet acquaintance had already been gained with the friendly director of Young Choral Academy (YCA), Susanna Saw, before I began this research project when I attended a music education course organized by YCA earlier on. Therefore, gaining access into YCA (which is very active in organizing local choral festivals, competitions and performances, and focuses on providing platform ceaselessly to promote local choral

music) does not require much self presentation and negotiations of roles. As what Burgess (1991) points out, the acknowledged acquaintance with Saw also helps in the forging of friendships with Wong the arranger, conductors and other teachers who provide a different range of perspectives on the community. These friendships, especially with Saw, also facilitate entry into rehearsals that would otherwise have been difficult.

I began my fieldwork by asking for permission from Saw to observe YCA choirs' rehearsals and performances, especially those of Malaysian folk choral arrangements. As YCA has published a number of original Malay folk choral arrangements (in fact all Malay folk choral arrangements by Wong were commissioned and published by YCA), I reckoned they must be active in promoting these works. To my surprise, Saw not only welcomed me as a researcher but she was glad to have somebody covering this research area. Without being asked, she revealed her conviction and sense of duty for promoting the different performance practice of local folk choral works – one of the issues I am dealing with! The sharing of interests has led the process of gaining access into Malaysian folk choral scene happen smoothly, as what observed by Shaffir & Stebbins (1991) about the ease of gaining access to a research when the researcher's interest matches those of the subjects.

As opposed to Chiener (Stock & Chenier, 2008) who spent 5 years within which she observed and, subsequently participated in rehearsals of a *nanguan* group in Taiwan as she was gradually accepted as a member of the group, I cannot afford the time to change the role as an observer to a participant of the rehearsals in the eyes of the musicians. I tried to gain admittance into the working committee of YCA by assuming a job as MC during the Malaysian Choral Eisteddfod Choral Competition 2012, but the effect was only temporary. I figured out unless I work with them continuously in every

project, otherwise I would still be regarded as an ‘outsider.’ Therefore, despite maintaining rather good friendship and being able to hold conversations on deeper topics with the informants, I kept myself to the role of an observer during rehearsals.

3.4.2 Interview

A comprehensive definition of interview is given by Firmin:

Interviews, in general, are a foundational means of collecting data when using qualitative research methods. They are designed to draw from the interviewee constructs embedded in his or her thinking and rationale for decision making. The researcher uses an inductive method in data gathering, regardless of whether the interview method is open, structured, or semi-structured. That is, the researcher does not wish to superimpose his or her own viewpoints onto the person being interviewed. Rather, inductively, the researcher wishes to understand the participant's perceptions, helping him or her to articulate percepts such that they will be understood clearly by the journal reader. (Firmin, 2008a, p. 908)

During fieldwork of this research, two types of interview are conducted: open-ended and semi-structured interview. Although structured interview is good for comparing and contrasting in a case study with its constant context (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002), it is not used in this research because it “might overly impose the researcher’s own framework of meaning and understanding onto the consequent data” (Mason, 2004, p. 1021). Therefore, I choose not to risk the uninterrupted insights of my main informants – the two arrangers and two conductors due to its limiting results by only conducting the open-ended and semi structured interview.

3.4.2.1 Open-ended interview

This is a type of interview which encourages full and meaningful answers based more on the interviewee's experience. It produces more objective answers but can be used on individuals only (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). With open-ended or unstructured interview, a set of preset questions is still prepared as a guidance to ensure the needed topics are covered during the interview but not to place emphasis on following the order of the questions as Atkinson (1998) warns of obtaining merely superficial answers in doing so.

This type of interview is essential in allowing the interviewees of this research to decide the course of their thoughts and hence the conversation which would lead to deeper responses on the topics asked (Atkinson, 1998). Open-ended interview proves to be especially useful considering the background of the interviewees who possess the breadth of knowledge and experiences which could easily be omitted in the preset questions.

As a case study on selected Malay folk choral works by Lai and Wong, the arrangers become the main informants. The conductors of choirs who sing the selected works of Lai and Wong constitute the second group of informants. They are interviewed for the reasons behind their interpretation of the works and influences of the musical choices they made during rehearsals and performances. These conductors include Saw – main conductor of YCA choirs, MIA Ladies Chorus, and SMK Seafield choir; Mak Chi Hoe – conductor of Young Kuala Lumpur Singers (YKLS, a choir which is also under YCA), and main conductor of the Farewell Concert for Geneviene Wong that featured most of Wong's work; Lai – also a conductor with many Singapore choirs including renowned professional choirs; Lim Kean Seng, or more commonly known as Ian Lim – conductor of Dithyrambic Singers which sang works by both the arrangers have been engaged in conversation with the researcher; and Fam Qing Rui – conductor of Johor

Bahru Chamber Choir which performed *Sapu Tangan* by Lai and her interpretation of the work is also mentioned in the body of this dissertation.

Immersion into the community of these choral musicians allows the researcher to know more about the music phenomenon through conversations, which is a form of unstructured interview, as Firmin (2008a) points out that personal communications can be particularly useful for ethnographic research. The other advantage of the open-ended interview documented by Morgan & Guevara (2008) is experienced by the researcher during interview sessions with one of the arrangers – Wong. As she is relatively tolerant of the researcher's "outsider" status, the researcher learns and even tries to probe into some sensitive topics and proper behavior otherwise unknown to the researcher during the interview sessions with her (Morgan & Guevara, 2008). This assists the interviewer in reviewing the content of the questions for other interviewees.

The issues that are discussed with the interviewees during the interviews are as follow:

With the two arrangers:

- (a) Compositional/arranging styles
- (b) The influences of the arranging devices
- (c) Evaluation of performance practice and interpretation decided by conductors; and my musical analysis and influence discussion of their works

With conductors:

- (a) Performance practice and interpretation of the local folk choral works
- (b) The influences which shape the decisions in performance practice and interpretation of these choral works

- (c) Evaluation of interpretation of their choristers

3.4.2.2 Semi-structured interview

This is a type of interview which is based on a set of questions or topics but flexibly allows new questions according to what the interviewee says. Interviewer can tailor the questions to the context (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Ayres compares semi-structured interview to unstructured interview and structured interview:

Semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. The researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews, but in contrast to structured interviews or questionnaires that use closed questions, there is no fixed range of responses to each question. (Ayres, 2008, p. 811)

Ayres (2008) goes on to describe semi-structured interview varies from having prepared questions with carefully selected words to a list of topics to be covered, either following the order of the topics or being flexible according to interviewee's responses. The interviewer in this research sets carefully the questions for all scheduled interview sessions, yet during the interviews the interviewer always tries to depart from the preset questions whenever possible to make the interview as natural as a conversation in the quest for deeper responses. Most of the time, the interviewer always returns to the planned semi-structured interview whenever the conversation has gone off-topic.

Mason's description of the possibility of the interviewer and interviewee engaging in semi-structured interviews maintaining a "sustaining contact" (2004, p. 1022) is experienced during the course of fieldwork as sending sets of interview questions to one of the interviewees – Wong – makes her feel more secured in accepting

subsequent follow-up interviews. Hence, on top of obtaining the informant's own interpretations and understandings, benefits of "interactive coproduction of knowledge and for rapport between the parties" as described by Mason (*ibid.*) are resulted. On the other hand, Mason also views the capacity of the semi-structured interview in gaining interpretive data as a limitation. He warns it can only produce partial interpretive understandings and strongly suggests other supplementary methods such as participant observation to "extend the situational dimensions of knowledge" (*ibid.*).

3.4.3 Observation and Participant Observation

In this research, both observation and participant observation are used. The pros and cons, and also the challenges involved for each of these observation modes are documented in the following.

3.4.3.1 Observation

Observation, or more precisely non-participant observation, is the main observation mode utilized when observing rehearsals and performances. It involves data collection by filtering sensory information and analyzing through rational means, sometimes involves recording of data using equipments (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Polgar and Thomas (cited in Bell et al.) define non-participant observation as a mode "in which the researcher's role is to record what is seen and heard without otherwise taking part in any activities" (Bell et. al., 2004, p. 159).

Bell et al. quote Collins suggesting that observation works best where behaviour is repeated, in a fixed setting, by participants who agree to be observed (Bell et. al., 2004). The described setting best suites the implementation of non-participant observation is exactly the setting of the rehearsals observed in this research as the rehearsals by different choirs are all of fixed format instructed by the same conductors who are working on the same pieces.

However, there are many disadvantages associated with non-participant observation. Bell et al. (2004) points out the barrier for a deeper probe into the subjects of interest by merely observing. However, under the theoretical framework of performance practice, the researcher finds that being an observer enables her to focus and document the myriad of musical decisions made by musicians during rehearsals and performances which otherwise she would miss if she had participated in the occasions. The fact that these musical decisions sometimes manifest themselves simultaneously proves the necessity of the researcher to engage in the sheer role of an observer. Even assuming the focused role is not enough as there are always too much things to document, the researcher resolves to using video recording for multiple observation of single scenes during play back so as not to miss significant data.

Another disadvantage of non-participant observation which is brought up by Di Domenico & Philips (2010) is regarding the presence of the researcher affecting the subjects being observed. Di Domenico & Philips points out that the researcher's conspicuous presence in the field may change the group s/he is observing as this may cause the group to introduce a certain degree of distortion such as foreign norms, material goods, values, language, or other elements that can disrupt those that existed before the researcher joined the group (Di Domenico & Philips, 2010). Yet, since the choir rehearsals that were being observed were all preparing for performances and had near deadlines to meet, it is observed that the conductors barely have time to run through the pieces while the choristers were working hard to catch up with the instructions. Therefore, it is almost not possible for these musicians to act out something that is not the usual practice during their rehearsals.

The list of items observed during the rehearsals are:

- (a) The musical choices made by conductors and visiting arrangers are characteristic of Malay folk music or Western choral music?
- (b) How do musicians resolve difference in interpretation?
- (c) Are there interaction between composers and musicians (conductors) before and after the performance and what are they?

3.4.3.2 Participant observation

In accordance to the definition of participant observation given by Di Domenico & Philips (2010), this mode of observation is used in this research for the study of people, their direct behaviour and customs which are not easily manifested in rehearsals. The requirement to immerse oneself into the community being studied involves finding a role within the group on top of being an observer. It needs to happen over an extended period of time and hence can facilitate the discovery of discrepancies between what the informants say and what actually happen. It can show conflicts between different representations too. It is done through informal interviews and conversations, participation in rehearsals and performances, collective discussions, analyses of personal documents and self-analysis. These are few of the activities constituting participant observation listed by Di Domenico & Philips (*ibid.*).

As mentioned, to fulfil the criteria of finding a role to participate in activities organized by YCA, I have volunteered myself to be the masters of ceremony for the 10th Anniversary Malaysian Choral Eisteddfod competition in Ipoh from 16th to 17th November 2012. By assuming a role in the festival, I had hoped the insiders will see me as a researcher who shares the insights of promoting choral music in Malaysia alongside them and will become more than willing to help in my research. However, this short term collaboration did not result in any closer friendship or intimacy as subjects who are not keen to help stays this way and never become friendly comrades. In this study,

participation in the frequent music education and musicianship courses organized by YCA helps to build rapport with the choristers and piano accompanists. Participating in the courses also provides more chances to meet the conductors and engage them in conversations.

When immersed into the social fabric of the community of concerned musicians, one should bear in mind there could be contradictory information provided by informants due to their limited perspectives or reluctance to unveil the “secrets” to outsiders (*ibid.*). However during the course of fieldwork, these issues do not pose problems to the research. First of all, the multiple sources of information do not contradict each other but rather complement each other. Especially when individual informants opine from their partial perspectives, the information they provide collectively give rise to a larger picture or more comprehensive understanding of the community. Lastly, even there are participants who are reluctant to provide assistance to the research and avoid questions with excuses, yet the researcher finds that the information provided by other helpful informants, who never show any distrusts or suspicion, are sufficient to represent the community of musicians.

3.4.4 Fieldnote

Initially a log book is brought along to rehearsals, as mentioned, yet as the multitude of performance practice elements are communicated at such a fast pace that they render recording fieldnote onto the logbook on the scene impossible. The situation is complicated by the fact that there is the need to refer to the music score to understand the instructions of the conductors. Building friendships and engaging in everyday-life’s conversations with informants also render writing fieldnote awkward. Therefore fieldnotes were recorded during playback of recorded rehearsals in this research. This

situation has necessitated the writing of fieldnotes 'out of the field' in this research. As Barz (2008) aptly addresses fieldnotes 'out of the field' and revises the definition of fieldnote as the reflection which mediates the experience during field research and the interpretation expressed in ethnography, the use of audio and video recordings which allows multiple observations of single scenes during play back proves to be a helpful option for writing 'fieldnotes' in this study.

3.4.5 Audio and Video Recordings

According to Fung (2009) and Fabian (2003), audio and video recordings have become reliable source for studying and determining performance practice of both early music and contemporary choral music. Therefore, audio and video recordings are taken during rehearsals and performances of the concerned local folk choral arrangements and are played back for the two arrangers to evaluate the performance practice and interpretation of the choirs who perform their pieces for detailed performance practice observation during playbacks.

These audio and video recordings are also played back for detailed performance practice analysis as Bowen (1996) proposed that performance analysis helps in the examination of styles which is crucial to my research in construing Malaysian choral musicians' self-identification. Moreover, Barz and Cooley (2008) state that there is a shift of emphasis from representation (text) to experience in fieldwork and this renders the experience of watching the playback of the rehearsals and performances all the more important.

3.4.6 Equipments

The audio and video recording equipments used for the recording of the rehearsals, performances, interviews and conversations are described in the following section.

3.4.6.1 Audio recording device

A Zoom (brand name) H2 handy recorder (refer to picture 1) is used to record the audio component of the performance. The device has a powerful microphone which allows four choices of recording by engaging different portion of the microphone: (a) Front 90 degrees (b) rear 120 degrees (c) surround 2 channel (d) surround 4 channel. Audio files are recorded into a SD card inserted into the recorder. By using the portable SD cards, the recorded audio files can then be uploaded into computer hard disc for playing back or archiving. The quality of the recorded audio files is usually clear and good.



Figure 3.1. Zoom H2 handy recorder.

3.4.6.2 Video recording device

Upon permission, a Sony brand NEX-F3 semi-professional camera (refer to picture 2) is used to record the video component of the performances in order to analyze the visual aspects of the performances during play back of the video tracks. The video files are also recorded into portable SD cards. When recording is done, the files can be captured into my Sony VAIO laptop by means of the SD cards. The video quality of the files is good and amazingly the audio quality of the files turns out to be also very good. Therefore, whenever video recording is allowed, this video camera becomes the only device utilized for recording purpose as the audio image produced by this device is good enough for sound analysis.



Figure 3.2. Sony NEX-F3 Digital Camera.

3.5 Post-Fieldwork

Post-fieldwork involves (a) analysis of data (b) interpretation and forming theories.

3.5.1 Analysis

Score analysis is done on the published scores of the works with the help of the arrangers themselves. Then, intended performance practice and interpretation of the selected folk choral works reflected by the instructions of the conductors and arrangers during the rehearsals are documented during the play-back of the audio and video recordings and used for further analysis of the selected works according to music elements.

The analysis concerning the arranging styles and choices of the arrangers and the musical decisions of the conductors is in its essence textual analysis. McKee (2003) justifies that textual analysis is useful for deducing or producing an understanding or interpretation of the subjects' world view and their positions in the world.

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology - a data-gathering process - for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live. (McKee, 2003, p. 2)

Most importantly, the analysis, which helps unveil musical influences, allows the elucidation of whether the arrangers intend the selected pieces to be performed abiding to the authenticity of the incorporated Malay folk music, or according to the usual practice of the Western choral genre.

3.5.2 Interpretation and Forming Theories

Firmin (2008b) defines interpretation as “the process by which a researcher construes meaning from research findings” (p. 459). By comparing the results of the musical analysis which reveal whether authentic Malay or Western performance practice is preferred, to existing theories on performance practice issues concerning

intention, interpretation and stylistic features, theoretical understanding on the hybridization of Malay folk music and the Western choral idiom is attained. The theories formed help readers, as well as performers, to make sense and position the selected folk choral pieces in the scholarly world of the genre.

3.6 Conclusion

Every step of the method described is crucial to meeting the objective of this study. Pre-fieldwork study familiarizes the researcher with the background and surrounding topics of folk choral music. The fieldwork measures: interview with conductors and arrangers and observation of rehearsals and performances allow musical data to be collated for music analysis. The musical analysis of the selected works according to the different musical elements provides evidences and facilitates the investigation on whether these folk choral works should abide to authentic folk flavour or be treated as a Western genre with borrowed theme from the folk musical culture. Theoretical findings concerning performance practice issues of intention, interpretation and stylistic features which are central to the inquiry of this study emerge when proofs from the analysis are compared to existing performance practice theories and framework.

As an embodiment of the described methods in this chapter, the next chapter delineates the analysis of the musical choices made by the arrangers and conductors, and then presents the discussion in reference to existing literature on performance practice.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

This chapter reports the analysis and discussion of an investigation on the performance practice of selected works of local Malaysian folk choral arrangement by Lai and Wong. The analysis carried out answered the research questions: how Malay folk songs are employed in a Western choral setting, what is the focus in interpretation, and what are the stylistic features. Issues in performance practice were explored to seek how should these works be represented from score, whether it is from the angle of a close representation of an authentic flavor in a choral setting or, a mere borrowed theme in a Western genre, forms discussion in this chapter.

4.2 An Overview of the Selected Malay Folk Songs in Choral Setting

Most of the selected Malay folk songs have disputable origins with claims from two countries - Malaysia and Indonesia, for instance *Burung Kakak Tua* and *Suriram*. In fact, *Sapu Tangan* and *Potong Padi* are chosen by Lai from a collection of Indonesian folk songs. There are also Malay folk songs from Singapore – *Tanjong Katong*, *Nona Nona* and *Geylang, si paku Geylang*; and folk songs from Sabah and Sarawak – *Jambatan Tamparuli*, *Jong Jong Inai* and *Liling*. However, in the local choir community, these songs were perceived as Malaysian and have been presented in regional and international choral events representing their country.

Saw (Interview, April 27, 2013), who decides which folk songs to be used in Wong's folk choral works before commissioning Wong to set those folk songs into

Western choral idiom in order to tackle the problem of lack of local choral works to represent Malaysia in regional and international choral events, expresses that Malaysia and Indonesia have a shared culture, as the people of the two countries sing the same folk songs and hence believes it is rightful to commission those folk songs. In fact, Lai and Wong perceive and regard the selected folk songs as Malaysian because they have been hearing them in Malaysia since young, but upon deeper exploration they do not mind the exact origin of the songs. To Saw and other local conductors such as Fam and Lim, whom I have spoken to during observation of rehearsals, the important criterion in choosing folk choral pieces to represent Malaysia in international choral competitions and festivals is that the folk choral pieces should be arranged by Malaysians. They also do not mind whether the Malay folk songs originated from Malaysia or Indonesia as long as the folk songs are in Malay language – the *lingua franca* of the region. The idea of the Malay folk songs as shared cultural artifacts defies arguments on ownership of these folk songs. This transnational attitude is in line with scholars' understanding of *Alam Melayu* - translated as Malay World. In defining the Malay World, Chong (2012) uses Lian's geographically fluid understanding of the Malay World, which "encompasses Peninsular Malaysia, the east coast of Sumatra, the west and southwest coast of Borneo, and the Riau archipelago" (p. 7) and quotes Lowenberg accrediting the region's common linguistic usage of the Malayo-Polynesian language family, especially the Malay language "since prehistory as the primary *lingua franca* of the region" (*ibid.*), as the defining factor of the Malay World. In the context of the selected folk songs, all songs with only the exception of *Liling* are in the Malay language, including *Jong Jong Inai*, which is mistaken to be in a language of Sarawak natives. In fact, all of the words in *Jong Jong Inai* (except *Ipong* which could be a name of somebody) are featured in *Kamus Dewan* – the Malay dictionary published by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (the

official government body institute of the Language and Literature regulating the use of the Malay language in Brunei and Malaysia).

Wan Husin (2011, p. 133) expands the concept of the Malay Realm and includes “the ethnics of Bidayuh, Kenyah, Kayan, Iban and Kelabit in Sarawak, the Murut, Kadazan/Dusun in Sabah, Batak in Sumatera, Tarodja in Sulawesi, Malay groups in the Philippines” as belonging to the Malay community in the Malay World based on their similar values and traditional systems. In this sense, even *Liling*, which originated from East Malaysia, can be argued as belonging to the category of Malay folk songs as well, due to fluid borders of the Malay World and similarity in value and traditional systems though the song is in the language of the East Malaysia natives – another language belonging to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. Hence, it is plausible to call all of the selected folk choral works as ‘Malay’ folk choral works as the two Malaysian arrangers sourced the ‘Malay’ folk songs from the Southeast Asia region which shares many cultural artifacts.

The folk songs chosen by Lai to set into the choral form are *Sapu Tangan*, *Potong Padi*, *Burung Kakak Tua*, and *Suriram*. On the other hand, the folk songs commissioned by Saw for Wong to arrange are *Ayon Laju*, *Nona Nona*, and *Tanjong Katong* and *A Glimpse of Malaysia*, which is a medley of folk songs consisting of *Jambatan Tamparuli*, *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung*, *Jong Jong Inai*, *Liling* and *Geylang si paku Geylang*.

When Fam, conductor of Johor Bahru Chamber Choir (JBCC) commissioned Lai to arrange a Malay folk song into Western choral piece for JBCC’s concert as an effort to tackle the problem of lack of choral works representing Malaysia in the regional and international choral scene, Lai chose *Sapu Tangan*, an Indonesian folk song from a collection of Malay folk songs she happened to have. The song was

composed by renowned Indonesian song writer Gesang Martohartono who also composed another famous Indonesian folk song *Bengawan Solo*. *Sapu Tangan* is about a lady being left by her lover and all she had to remember him was a piece of handkerchief (*Sapu Tangan*). Lai's arrangement of the song was premiered on JBCC's concert on 3rd November 2012. She was invited to work with the choir on the piece three weeks before the performance, and worked mostly on the expression of the piece during her session with the choir.

The choral arrangement of *Potong Padi* by Lai was published by American publisher, Earthsongs. The piece was performed and used for repertoire study at the Asia-Pacific Choral Symposium held in Singapore, National Choral Symposiums in Australia and in Germany, the American Choral Directors National Convention held in San Antonio (2000) and at The Sixth World Choral Symposium held in Minnesota (2002). According to many sources through virtual fieldwork, the origin of *Potong Padi* is disputable. Most claim the folk song to be originated from Southern Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Similar to the case of *Sapu Tangan* and *Potong Padi*, the *Burung Kakak Tua* has dubious origin either from the land of Indonesia or Malaysia. The eight-part arrangement of the folk song in SSAATTBB was sung by Singapore Philharmonic Chorus. A CD recording was produced featuring this piece under the baton of renowned conductor Lim Yau under whom Lai was the assistant conductor.

The *Burung Kakak Tua* was also sung by Seafeld Club Choir in Heidelberg, Germany as guests of the Heidelberg youth Choir on 13th March 2012. Like many other choral works by Lai, the piece has been performed by many local choirs for national competition and international choir festivals and exchanges. The number of choirs singing her works is yet to be determined, due to difficulties in tracing the transmission

of the scores because of loose copyright law. The folk song is also rearranged by Lai into SAT/B for a school choir and this version was also sung by Asia Pacific Youth Choir at the concluding concert of Asia Pacific Choral Summit held in Kuala Lumpur from 4th-8th September 2013. This performance was audio-recorded and therefore the analysis of performance practice in regards to choral arrangement of *Burung Kakak Tua* is based more on this version. In the coming 10th World Choral Symposium to be held in Seoul, Korea from 6th to 13th of August 2014, Asia Pacific Youth Choir is going to sing the 8-part version of *Burung Kakak Tua*. Parallel to this, this 8-part arrangement of *Burung Kakak Tua* is going to be published by Earthsongs in near future following the event of Lai to be featured as one of the composers in a presentation on women composers around the world in the coming World Choral Symposium in Seoul.

According to a synopsis by Cooke (1997) on choral arrangements of three Malay folksongs by Singaporean arranger Bernard Tan Tiong Gie, *Suriram* is a Malaysian folk song which he describes as “a gentle lullaby that could feature a solo soprano (rather than the section) in a call-and-response pattern” (p. 76). This information contradicts Lai’s knowledge of it as an Indonesian folk songs. Similarly to the above-mentioned folk songs, it is unable to confirm whether *Suriram* comes from Malaysia or Indonesia. Lai’s arrangement of *Suriram* was sung by Dithyrambic Singers in many concerts such as the 1st Asian Choir Games in 2007 held in Jakarta, where they won the category they participated in with the arrangement. One of Dithyrambic Singers’ performances of the work was recorded and sold in the form of an audio album and DVD, therefore the analysis of performance practice pertaining to this work is based on this recorded performance.

All Wong’s four selected Malay folk choral works were commissioned by Saw in order to allow her choirs and other Malaysian choirs to have more choices of local

works to be featured in regional and international choral events. *A Glimpse of Malaysia* arranged by Wong was commissioned by the Young KL Singers, under Saw, for their "Beat It Sing It" Concert in December 2004. It consists of a medley of Malaysian folk songs: *Jambatan Tamparuli* (Tamparuli Bridge) which originates from Sabah; *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung* – A Malay folk song; *Jong Jong Inai* – perceived by Wong as a Sarawakian folk song¹; *Liling* – a folk song of the *Dayak* people in Sarawak; and *Geylang, si paku Geylang* – A Malay folk song originated in Geylang, Singapore. The order of the song in the medley is programmatic in nature as illustrated by the synopsis by Wong herself (see appendix 3).

Many local choirs sang this piece including Dithyrambic Singers and SMK Seafield Choir mentioned above. As the mentioned Dithyrambic Singers' DVD album includes a performance of this piece, performance practice analysis of this work is based on the recorded rendition by Dithyrambic Singers.

Ayon Laju is grouped under Anthology of Malay folk songs for choral and piano arrangements (1992-92) by composer Tazul Izan Tajjudin. The choral arrangement of this folk song was a joint effort by Wong and Mak Chi Hoe, and was commissioned by Penang Methodist Girls' School Choir around ten years ago. On the other hand, the performance practice analysis of this piece is based on a recorded rehearsal session of MIA Ladies singing the piece in preparation for Wong's farewell concert titled *Thank you for the music – An Evening of Choral Celebration* on 9th March 2013.

Nona Nona is composed in the 1940's by Yusoff Bin Blugok who was born in Singapore, and the song is currently regarded as a folk song. As Matusky (1985, p. 122) points out the recognition of songs as part of folk music tradition "depend on the

¹ According to a source in the website of Malaysia Ria, *Jong* is a Malay traditional game and the song is always heard in Dikir Barat performances - a traditional Malay music form (Dayak, 2012).

acceptance and sanction of the entire community for their survival,” *Nona Nona* is acknowledged as a Malay folk song by many. For instance it is stated as a folk song in Raymond’s folk song page (www.raymondfolk.com/). Similar to *Ayon Laju*, as the recorded rehearsal session of MIA Ladies also features this piece, the performance practice analysis of the piece is based on the video recording.

Tanjong Katong is song describing a place known as Tanjong Katong in Singapore. It was performed by Seafield Choir. A video recording is made during one of the choir’s rehearsal session in preparation for Wong’s farewell concert. Therefore, performance practice analysis of the piece is based on the Seafield Choir’s performance during that rehearsal.

4.3 An analysis of the selected Malay Folk Choral Works

In this section, discussions on various elements that contributed to the performance practice study of the selected local Malay folk choral music, tempo & rhythmic features, melodic features, words, texture & polyphony, harmonic language, formal elements and timbral arrangement & vocal technique were explored. Besides through score analysis, these elements are also gathered and filtered from musical decisions made by arrangers and conductors during rehearsals. These musical decisions made during rehearsals are described and musical examples from scores were shown along with discussion to support theories and findings related to performance practice of the selected works.

4.3.1 Tempo and Rhythmic Features

The arrangers notice that tracing the original tempo of certain folk songs is difficult. Wong said she found it difficult to decide the speed for *Jambatan Tamparuli* after she listened to different Youtube clips of the song. On top of that, Wong also finds

the accompaniment and styles in recordings vary greatly. Some recordings even neglected the aspect of intonation. Wong complains about the tempo of the performed folk choral works arranged by her more often than Lai does. For instance Wong feels the *tempo* of the performance of *A Glimpse of Malaysia* by Dithyrambic Singers was too fast.

The folk choral arrangements by both Lai and Wong include certain passages with instructions so that performers do not need to follow a strict tempo. For example, in Wong's *Glimpse of Malaysia*, bar lines are omitted in the opening piano passage marked '*Improvisatory, molto rubato*' to signify the flow of river water arriving at *Jambatan Tamparuli* (see Figure 4.1).

Arranged by Genevieve Wong

The musical score is arranged for five parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). They are marked 'Improvisatory, molto rubato'. The piano part is written in grand staff (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat. It is also marked 'Improvisatory, molto rubato' and 'accel'. The score shows a flowing, improvisatory style with no bar lines in the opening piano passage. The piano part begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a half note, followed by a series of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, leading to a crescendo and a final forte (f) dynamic. The vocal parts enter with a single note, followed by a series of notes, leading to a crescendo and a final forte (f) dynamic.

Figure 4.1. Beginning of *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

Another example is featured in *Suriram*, where Lai would like Dithyrambic Singers to take liberty on the speed at the imagerial lines (*pembayang*) of *pantun* '*Lihat burung berkicau-kicauan*' and '*Memuja alam di pagi hari*' that do not carry the main meaning

of the poem (refer to bar 17-23 in Figure 4.2). In contrast to the flexible tempo at these places, each of the ensuing refrains “*suriram*” after those two lines are required to perform with straight tempo.

The image displays two systems of musical notation, likely for a vocal ensemble or solo voice with piano accompaniment. The music is in 2/4 time and G major (one sharp). The lyrics are in Indonesian, and the piece is titled "Suriram".

System 1 (Bars 17-23):

- Staff 1 (Soprano):** Lyrics: "iis Su - ri - ram Su-ri-ram". Dynamics: *mp*.
- Staff 2 (Alto):** Lyrics: "iis Li-hat bu- rung ber - ki - cau ki- cau- an Su - ri- ram ri - ram". Dynamics: *mf* then *p*.
- Staff 3 (Tenor):** Lyrics: "iis Ber - ki- cau ki- cau- an Su - ri- ram Me- mu- ja". Dynamics: *p* then *mf*.
- Staff 4 (Bass):** Lyrics: "iis Su - ri- ram". Dynamics: *p*.
- Staff 5 (Bass):** Lyrics: "iis Du du Ah Su - ri- ram". Dynamics: *p*.

System 2 (Bars 24-30):

- Staff 1 (Soprano):** Lyrics: "Su - ri- ram Bah-giahi- d". Dynamics: *mp* then *mp*.
- Staff 2 (Alto):** Lyrics: "a-lam di pa - gi ha- ri Su - ri- ram". Dynamics: *p* then *f*.
- Staff 3 (Tenor):** Lyrics: "a-lam di pa - gi ha- ri Su - ri- ram". Dynamics: *p* then *f*.
- Staff 4 (Bass):** Lyrics: "Su - ri- ram Bah-giahi- d". Dynamics: *mp* then *mf*.
- Staff 5 (Bass):** Lyrics: "Du du du Su-ri ram". Dynamics: *p* then *mp*.

Figure 4.2. Bar 17-23 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

In an interview with the composer (Wong, Personal Communication, March 4, 2013), Wong explains that the coda in *Ayon Laju* marked *freely* is not supposed to be performed with constant speed. Instead, it should sound like the movement of a swinging pendulum, which is never constant, or like wave. Wong was in science stream in secondary school, her impression of the movement of pendulum is reflected (transliterated) to her music arrangement.

The opening piano passage in *Glimpse of Malaysia*, the melismatic-like passage in *Ayon Laju* by Wong and *pembayang* (imagery) lines of *pantun* in *Suriram* by Lai are required not to be in strict tempo. These passages show affinity to Malay folk music that allows more liberty in tempi as most traditional vocal music in Malaysia. For instance, *zikir*, *pantun* and *wa* in Sarawak do not follow strict tempo and are unmetered (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 255). Whereas most music pieces of Western common practice origin have the speed specified and rhythm metered.

Both the arrangers show a trend of using rhythmic augmentation to create varying moods at the end of their works. Wong says the rhythmic augmentation at the end of *Nona Nona* is very musical-theatre-like, especially with the melodic figure at the piano accompaniment in bar 129-130 (refer to Figure 4.3). Augmentation is also used in *Ondeh Ondeh* at its last 3 notes “to sound grand”, which could be Wong’s another description for influence of musical theatre. Rhythmic augmentation is treated in a more complex way in Lai’s *Suriram*. There are two sets of rhythmic augmentation happening simultaneously in bar 45-46. The melody in quavers is being rhythmically augmented into crotchets in the tenor part, where the notes are augmented into minims in the bass part (refer to Figure 4.4).

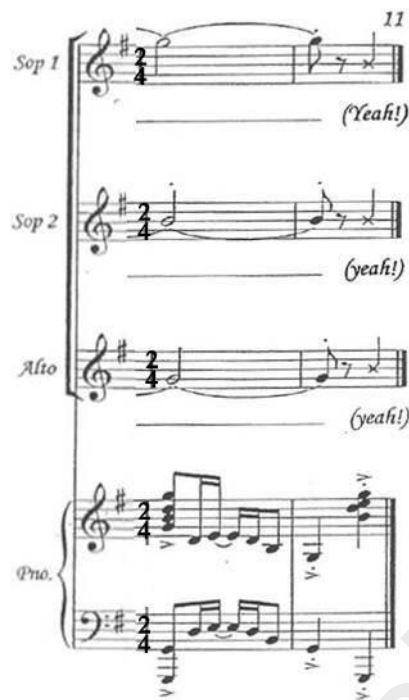


Figure 4.3. Bar 129-130 in *Nona Nona* (Wong, 2007)

Figure 4.4. Bar 45-46 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

Ironically, the tempo slows down more often in the middle passages of some selected works. For instance in *Nona Nona*, the slowing tempo and the change of articulation to the contrasting *legato* lines in chorus 3 (refer to Figure 4.5 bar 93-100)

prepare the mood for the ensuing minor-key section. The following chorus, which reverts back to the original major key and assumes the original tempo while returns to the original detached articulation, confirms the use of slowing tempo (*rallentando*) earlier as a device to anticipate demarcation of sections widely used in Western art music. Tempo change also happens at the transition to *Jong Jong Inai* and *Liling* in the medley of *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (in short, *The Glimpse*). In fact, *rallentando* is mostly used to signify change of songs in *The Glimpse of Malaysia*.

The musical score for Figure 4.5 shows four staves: Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto, and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Ja di ro sak bi na sa. No na no na, Za man se ka rang, Tak." The tempo markings are "molto rall." and "mf legato". The score is for bars 93-100 of *Nona Nona*.

Figure 4.5. Bar 93-100 in *Nona Nona* (Wong, 2007)

There is quite a prevalent use of Malay Rhythm as a device to make the arrangements resemble Malay folk music more coherently. In *Sapu Tangan*, Malay dance rhythm is delineated and relayed among the lower six voices from bar 21 to 26 (refer to Figure 4.6) as accompaniment to the melody in the soprano part. This device may have its influence from *keroncong* – a type of Malay social popular music (Matusky & Tan, 2004). The relayed rhythmic pattern in bar 25-26 in *Sapu Tangan* (see

the circled section in Figure 4.6) could be interpreted as an expansion of the interlocking style between cak (banjo) and cuk (ukelele) in a *keroncong asli* piece (see the circled parts in Figure 4.7).

The image displays a musical score for a piece from *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013). It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and an instrumental line. The first system (bars 21-26) features a vocal line with lyrics 'na dan jen - ji Te - lah di se - tu - ju -' and an instrumental line with lyrics 'Ren - ca - na, jen - ji Te - lah te - lah rhu - ju -'. The second system (bars 27-32) features a vocal line with lyrics 'Mes - ki pun ba - gni - ma - na ter - ja di Se - hi - dup se - ma -' and an instrumental line with lyrics 'i Ah pun di dup ki ja hi ma'. A blue circle highlights a section of the instrumental line in the second system, specifically bars 29-32.

Figure 4.6. Bar 21-26 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

Bars 13-15

Figure 4.7. Excerpts from *Sapu Lidi* - a *keroncong* asli piece (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 348)

Another case in point is the rhythmic pattern in the bass part in the ‘dancing’ section of *Potong Padi* SSAATTBB (refer to Figure 4.8 bar 20-29) reflects a folk flavor. Lai points out the bass part highlights “Malay rhythm” (Lai, personal communication, February 18th, 2013), but when probed deeper into which Malay rhythm being used, Lai says, “You may call it bossa or rumba or Malay rhythm. They are similar. I don’t care (which is which).”

Bar 39 to 46 in *Sapu Tangan* feature the *keroncong* rhythmic accompaniment (refer to Figure 4.10), as Lai explained during an interview (February 18th, 2013). The *keroncong* rhythm is delineated and relayed among all voices, except for the tenor part which is the melody (according to Lai the tenor assumes the melody here because it has the best range for the melody). Matusky and Tan (2004) explain that the *keroncong* rhythm has its influence from interlocking gamelan pattern. The interlocking pattern in this *keroncong* passage of Lai reflects she has a rather correct impression of this type of Malay social instrumental ensemble music, which she intends to showcase in her work.

figures in the upper parts and the triplets in Figure 4.10 perhaps show Lai's recall of a mixture of *keroncong* and *joget* flavor adapted into the arrangement, compared wto the *keroncong* and *joget* rhythm from Matusky and Tan (2004) shown in Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.11 respectively.

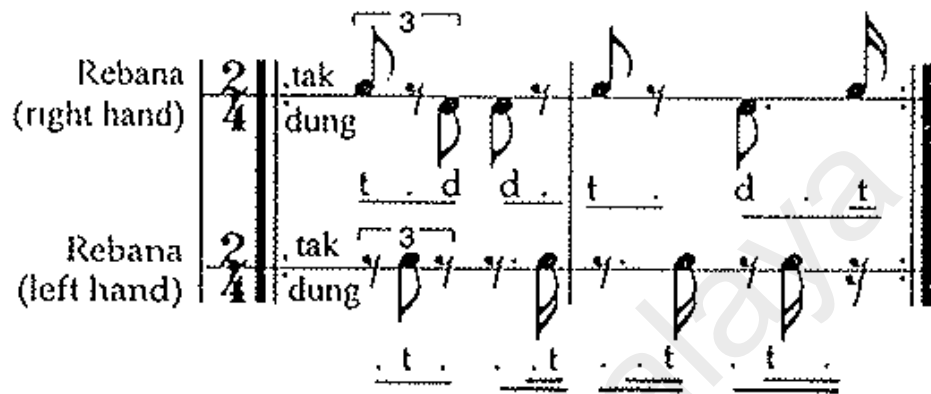


Figure 4.11. The *joget* pattern – improvisation with the left hand (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 332)

On the other hand, Wong claims the rhythm of the piano accompaniment in the *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung* section (refer to Figure 4.12 from bar 35) in *The Glimpse of Malaysia* is a type of typical Malay rhythm. Yet, this rhythmic pattern is commonly used in many music cultures, including Western music. Wong added she was not sure exactly which type of Malay rhythm it is. During a presentation of this research topic, the Director of Cultural Centre and expert of Malay *asli* music, Mohd Nasir Hashim (personal communications, January 7th, 2013) pointed out that this rhythmic pattern used is derived from the *inang* rhythmic pattern (refer to Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.12. Bar 35-38 in *A Glimpse Of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

Figure 4.13. The *inang* rhythmic pattern (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 75)

In order to highlight the Malay rhythm in the pieces, female conductors Saw and Fam (conductor of Johor Bahru Chamber Choir) incorporates bodily dance gesture – their impression of Malay traditional dance steps - into their conducting at music sections which exhibit Malay rhythm. For instance, in *Ayon Laju*, Saw begins dancing from the entry of melody accompanied by dance rhythm (see Alto part in Figure 4.14 bars 11-14); and in *Sapu Tangan*, Fam sets out dancing at the passages in the ‘keroncong rhythm’. The bodily dance gesture is done consciously during Lai’s

workshop with JBCC on the piece, she stresses the ‘*keroncong* rhythm’ and guides the choir to feel the inherent dance and later on the dance is manifested in Fam’s conducting.

The musical score for 'Ayon Laju' (Wong, 2009) is presented in two systems, covering bars 11-14. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is for three parts: S. 1 (Soprano), S. 2 (Soprano), and A. (Alto). The lyrics are in Malay. A watermark 'University of Malaya' is visible across the score.

System 1 (Bars 11-12):

- S. 1:** ju a - yon lafi la - ju, La - ju me -
- S. 2:** (Rest) *mp* A - yon lafi la - ju
- A.:** *mp* Pam Pam Pam Pam Pam Pam Pam pa - dap pa - dam Pam pam

System 2 (Bars 13-14):

- S. 1:** ngu - lik ke - cik mak so - rang, Pe - jam - lafi
- S. 2:** (Rest) *mp* Ke - cik mak so - rang.
- A.:** Pam Pam Pam

Figure 4.14. Bar 11-14 in *Ayon Laju* (Wong, 2009)

4.3.2 Melodic Features

As in the folk music of many Southeast Asian countries, the pentatonic scales are also frequently used by the two arrangers when composing counter melodies in their folk choral works. For instance, the opening piano passage in Wong’s *The Glimpse* is in pentatonic scale on tonic drone. On the other hand, the verses of Lai’s *Sapu Tangan* are in pentatonic scale and this affects Lai’s choice of tone sets for the arrangement to build on. A number of traditional musics in Malaysia are built on the pentatonic scale. The

welcoming songs in East Malaysia and *Sape* (a traditional lute of the *Iban* people in Sarawak) tunes, *Nasyid* music practiced by muslims in West Malaysia which incorporates “the scales of Chinese” (matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 265) nowadays, are in pentatonic scales as well.

Besides borrowing the familiar Malay folk tunes (and name the pieces after the folk tunes), a quotation of popular melodies is found in a number of Wong’s works. For instance, a typical melodic figure found in musical theatre or jazz music is used in the piano accompaniment at the second last bar of Wong’s *Nona Nona* (see Figure 4.3). Similarly, in the introduction of *Bunyi Gitar* (which is not a folk song and hence is not included in the selected works), a melodic figure from Shirley Bassey ‘*Big Spender*’ also occurs in the piano accompaniment (see Figure 4.15). Wong’s quotation of recognizable music could indicate her feeling for these Malay song arrangements’ affinity to popular music, as Burkholder (1985) analyses musical quotation as one of the staples in the musical style of Charles Ives, “a kind of oratorical gesture... for illustrating part of a text or fulfilling an extramusical program” (p. 3).



Figure 4.15. Bar 1-4 in *Bunyi Gitar* (Wong, 2006)

The description of the arranging processes by both of the arrangers reflects processes of improvisation. Wong categorizes her arrangements closer to improvisation

rather than to compositions, because she does not need to come up with motifs and then develop them carefully. Conversely, her arrangements are usually done impulsively, hence she feels her works resemble products of improvisation. Lai also says she does not think in terms of motifs. The repeated ideas in Lai's works are usually sequences. Instead of using motifs, she always strives to portray the mood of the folk songs and makes the choral works sound modern by adding in embellishments, which are mostly products of improvisation during the process of arranging. For instance, "Jazzy chords" are being used constantly in all her folk choral works. As Lai can inner hear all notes and parts simultaneously when arranging in her mind with her strong audiation skills, she would improvise two or few choices of introduction, or other sections, before typing the chosen one into the computer and seldom goes back to change it. Improvisation can be interpreted as a device closer to folk music than Western art music. As in other folk music, improvisation also plays a major role in traditional Malay music, for instance, "melodies in the shadow play piece are improvisatory in nature" (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 30). The introduction section to *zapin* pieces is an improvised melody called *taksim*; and the traditional theatrical music like *bangsawan* and many traditional vocal music require the singers to improvise the basic melody using ornaments (Matusky & Tan, 2004). Note that the arrangers never consider motifs, such as those might be embedded in the folk songs.

Without developing motifs and varying ideas, the selected works, especially those of Lai, abound with decorative notes for making the folk choral works more interesting. There is frequent use of decorative notes in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SSAATTBB), the C note in bass part is an auxiliary note (refer to Figure 4.16). Lai says she prefers passing notes and chromatic passing notes because better conjunct lines can be produced. A case in point occurs in bar 43 (*Burung Kakak Tua*), in order to go to

the F note in the next bar, the bass part moves from Ab through G to create a more flowing line (refer to Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.16. Bar 54 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SSAATTBB) (Lai, 2000)

Figure 4.17. Bar 43-44 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SSAATTBB) (Lai, 2000)

The other instance is in the bass line from bar 64 to 66 of the same piece. Sequences of triplets are added to the bass line (see the circled bass notes) as embellishments to the downward scale (refer to Figure 4.18).



Figure 4.18. Bar 64 to 66 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (Lai, 2000)

In bar 5 of *Suriram*, the Bb note in the tenor part is a chromatic passing note (refer to Figure 4.19). Note that a tritone is resulted between the enharmonic A# in tenor part and E in soprano parts in bar 6. Lai explains, “I don’t follow rule, and these notes are only chromatic passing notes (in contrary motion)”. Nevertheless, the tritone is resolved to a minor third in the next beat.



Figure 4.19. Bar 5-7 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

As extemporaneous ornamentation proliferates in true folk music (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983), one point noteworthy is the execution of one of the very few

ornamentations which occurs in the selected works. The conductor of Young Kuala Lumpur Singers (YKLS) Mak Chi Hoe approaches the only ornamentation sign in *The Glimpse of Malaysia* (see Figure 4.20) from a rather Western point of view, which bases on notation. Opposite to Frederick Neumann's belief that the purpose of ornaments is "to release 17th- and 18th-century music from "the stranglehold of the onbeat monopoly" as quoted by Cole (1988, p. 35), Mak is convinced that the two-note appoggiatura in bar 74 of *The Glimpse* should be sung right before the main F note which falls exactly on the second beat (see Figure 4.19).



Figure 4.20. Bar 74 of *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

Another compositional technique *klangfarbenmelodie*, invented by Arnold Schoenberg (1911), occurs in the selected works of both the arrangers. One example is in the coda of Wong's *Tanjong Katong* from bar 75 (refer to Figure 4.21). The melody first stays in the alto part, then moves 'back' to the soprano part (moves 'back' because the whole melody line of the first chorus stays in the soprano part) in the middle of the phrase (from E⁴ to C⁵ in bar 76 where the interval of minor 6th, which makes the melody discernible). However, Wong calls this tool dove-tailing which does not denote the relayed melodic line across different parts specifically. Therefore the term

klangfarbenmelodie is used to describe the musical device here. Another example is found in bar 21- 26 of Lai's *Sapu Tangan*, where the vocal accompaniment line is relayed among the lower 6 voices (refer to Figure 4.6).

The image displays a musical score for Figure 4.21, which is identified as Bar 75-83 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007). The score is written for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Baritone (Bar.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo marking 'poco rit.' is present above the piano part. A blue box highlights a specific melodic line in the vocal parts, and a blue arrow points to it. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: S. 'tu; Pu lak; nan, ju ufi di ma'; A. 'Xo non lah pu lak; nan, ju ufi di ma'; Bar. 'Xo non lah pu lak; nan, ju ufi di ma'. The piano part features a complex, flowing melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

Figure 4.21. Bar 75-83 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007)

Different musicians treat phrasing in the selected works differently according to different music aesthetics. Upon listening to the audio recording of APYC's performance of *Burung Kakak Tua* SAT/B, Lai expresses her preference for a "more abandoned, freer or more Jazzy" (Lai, personal communication, February 18, 2013) phrasing at the beginning of the piece. The more unrestricted phrasing required by Lai can be interpreted as closer to folk music, as on the contrary flowing melodious lines are tied to Western music after the 1800s. This is suggested by Cole (1988) that the articulation of Western art music in the classical period had evolved "from a detached style of execution to a legato delivery" and he quotes Ratner's saying "melodies around the turn of the century began to acquire a more continuous and broader sweep, calling for a legato style of performance. This shift represents a fundamental change in declamation" (1988, p. 34-35). This *legato* rendering of the phrases is typified by Mak's phrasing choices. For instance he insisted that the first tenor line in *Liling* (see bars 113-115 in Figure 4.22) should be sung into a continuous lyrical line instead of the more articulated version demanded Wong. When a phrase consists of two sub-phrases such as an instance in *Jambatan Tamparuli*, Mak requires the choir to join the last syllable of the antecedent sub-phrase (*tamparu-*)'li' to the first syllable of the consequent subphrase 'ba-'(*kasut*). This is similar to the phrasing issue of the classical period summarized by Winter (cited by Cole, 1988, p. 34), "the extent to which individually slurred bars are to be connected into longer phrases". These observation and comparison show that different musicians treat phrasing differently according to different music aesthetics though they share similar music background.

Tonight, my friends, we gather together
We gather together and recall the old times
Turn around and around,
Yau Along, turn around.

113

S. *Solo pp* tu-yang pe-mong

A. *Solo p* Pe - mong jai -

T. *Solo mp (melody)* A - le - mi - ni te - lu tu-yang pe-mong jai -

B. *Solo mp* A - le - mi - ni te - lu tu-yang pe-mong jai -

Pno. *ppp*

Figure 4.22. Bar 113-115 in *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

4.3.3 Words and Pronunciation

Words of the folk songs affect the structure and phrasing structure of the selected pieces. For Wong, the words serve as a framework for arrangement; For Lai, the words are used as part of a device to create a balanced feel of interaction between the antecedent and consequent phrases. Wong bases her arrangement largely on the words of the folk songs. The significance of the words to Wong's folk choral works is further justified when she says the text and melody are the only folk elements retained in her works while the rest of the musical elements are Western influences, including influences from Pop and Jazz music. Although the words of the folk songs are main bearers of the folk identity, there is a case whereby the translation of the words of *Jong Jong Inai*, mistaken as in a natives' language, is omitted. Yet in the case of *Liling*, which is in a Sarawak natives' language, the translation of the text is provided on the

score. Mak admits that the choir did not understand the meaning of *Jong Jong Inai* because the translation is not available.

On the other hand, Lai relies on the alteration of words in the Malay folk songs to create balanced sequences of phrases. Lai alters the words of the folk songs to produce repetition of certain syllabic sounds to the extent of resulting in diminutive words. For instance, in *Sapu Tangan*, the alto part echoes the last line of the second verse “*pertama bertemu*” (meaning first time meeting) with the modified “*tama bertemu*” (*tama* is not a word in Malay); the first line of the chorus in the soprano part “*rencana dan janji telah disetujui*” (meaning the agreed plans and promises) is changed in the other parts (accompaniment parts) - the texts becomes “*rencana, janji telah s’tujui*” in alto part, “*Cana janji telah s’tujui*” in tenor part, and “*Rencana lah s’tujui*” with its rhythm augmented into minims in the bass part. Note that there is no such word as “*Cana*” in Malay, though the short form of “*setujui*” – “*s’tujui*” is acceptable. Opposite to the conviction of Monteverdi in his *seconda pratica* that words should govern music (Carter, 2002), Lai is changing the texts to serve the musical purpose. In many Italian songs and *aria*, words are treated in a similar way to maintain the flow of music. For instance in renowned Italian song *O del mio dolce ardor* by Christoph Willibald von Gluck, *l’aura* is sung instead of *la aura* (meaning “the air”) and *m’empie* is sung instead of *me empie* (meaning “fills me”). However, this treatment of words by Lai is also manifested in Malay traditional music. A *Bangsawan* (Malay opera) piece *Hiburan Raja Ahmad Beradu* shows similar curtailing of word *beradu* into *b’radu* (see Figure 4.23).

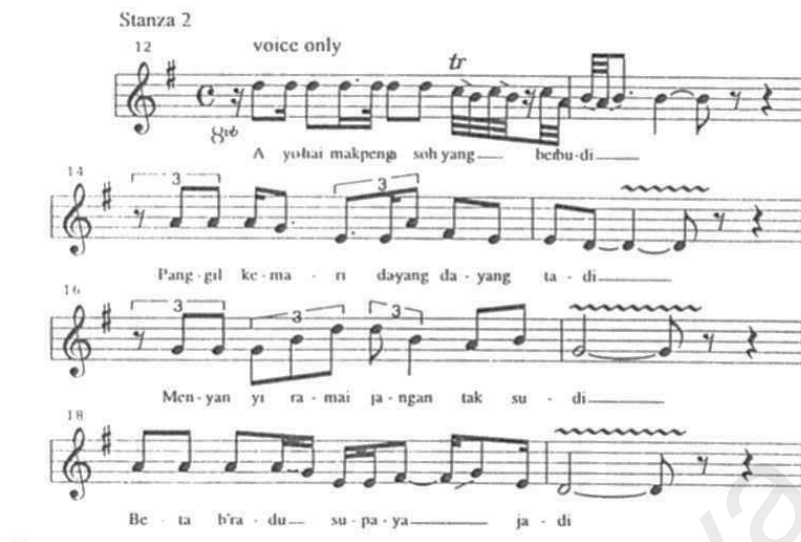


Figure 4.23. Excerpt from the piece *Hiburan Raja Ahmad Beradu*. (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 70)

In terms of pronunciation of the Malay words, while Lai gives the impression of concerning with the clarity of consonants when they do not affect the steady release of air in singing, Wong gives more precise instruction on the imploding of beginning and end consonants to make the language(s) clearly discernible. When Wong was working on an individual piece (another arrangement of *Jambatan Tamparuli*) which is not under survey here, she was asked by Saw which pronunciation of ‘p-(ak)’ she wanted, “Is it the English ‘p’ or the Malay ‘p’ that you want?” (English ‘p’ means imploded ‘p’ when compared to the non-imploded Malay ‘p’.) Wong chose neither but specified she wanted the sound produced by hitting shoes on wood. Saw immediately gave up finding answer from the cultural argument she began that would otherwise induce pondering. In addition, Wong was also observed paying attention to the native pronunciation. This was reflected through Wong and Mak rectifying the pronunciation of ‘*Liling*’ as “leleng”.

In terms of the end consonants, Wong stipulates singers to implode them following the distinct pronunciation of the Malay language although she did not seem to

assign any cultural connotation to the instruction.. For instance in the Malay folk song *Tanjong Katong*, Wong requires Seafield Choir to pronounce distinctly the end consonant 't' of '*tempat*' (bar 13). Yet the imploded 't' sounds much like an English 't' therefore I think Wong mean adding a diphthong '-et' to the word, which becomes '*tempa-et*', without imploding the 't' in order to make the Malay word discernible to listeners. Also in *Liling*, which is set in a dialect of the Dayak people in Sarawak, Wong demonstrated how she would implode the last consonant of the last word '*elan*'. Coupling with the *sforzando* dynamics marking, Wong imploded the '-n' hard enough that a loud and raw '*-ne*' was heard instead.

4.3.4 Texture and Polyphony

The biphonic texture of sustaining a drone or pedal point over the melodic line is widely used in folk music. For example, traditional vocal music in East Malaysia, such as *Pantun* of the *Kenyah* people in Sarawak and *kui* practiced by people in both Sabah and Sarawak, features drone singing that accompanies the soloist's melodic lines (Matusky & Tan, 2004). This biphonic texture is inexorable to the arrangers when arranging the selected folk choral works. The opening piano passage of *The Glimpse* is in pentatonic scale on tonic drone and a dominant pedal tone is held in the piano interlude between *Jong Jong Inai* and *Liling*. Wong says she likes to use drones on the dominant note because it is widely used in folk music such as Scottish bagpipe folk music and Western music. However, in her description of arranging process it is hinted that she incorporated the drones into her folk choral pieces subconsciously without realizing its folk connotation. On the other hand, while drone usually means the sustaining of a pedal tone in the bass part, Lai assigns a dominant pedal tone in the soprano part in *Suriram* (see Figure 4.24 bar 54).

116 15

S. jai-ee ta- wai u- yan Li ling

A. jai-ee ta- wai u- yan Li ling

T. - ee pe- mong ja - i- ee ta - wai u - yan Li - ling Li

B. - ee pe- mong ja - i- ee ta - wai u - yan Li - ling Li-

Pno.

120

S. Li- ling Li - ling Li - ling Li - ling

A. Li- ling Li - ling Li - ling Li - ling

T. ling Li - ling Li - ling Li - ling U yau A long li -

B. ling Li - ling Li - ling Li - ling U yau A long li -

Pno.

Figure 4.25. Bar 116-122 in *The Glimpse* (Wong, 2004)

To Lai and Wong, they perceive the stylistic feature as an intended Oriental or Western sound. The intended Oriental sound and Western sound is determined by ‘signature’ intervals between lines: Oriental sound is maintained by keeping the lines in a 4th or a 5th apart, while the Western sound is perceived to be formed by consonant intervals of 3rds and 6^{ths}. In the selected works, the “Western sound” becomes the norm. Wong usually keeps the melody and harmonizing lines at a 3rd or 6th apart which

gives rise to consonant sounds and simple chord progressions. Lai's emphasis on harmony leads to abundance of 3rds and 6ths between lines, yet they do not create a repetitive and redundant feel as, for instance in *Burung Kakak Tua* SAT/B, the 3rds and 6ths are hidden by a myriad of decoration notes.

Nevertheless, there are places reserved for the "oriental mood". For instance the 4ths and 5ths are kept between the soprano and alto parts and between the tenor and bass parts throughout Wong's *Liling* for a serene oriental feel. Occasionally the melody and the harmonizing lines are kept an octave apart to create a transparent monophonic texture typical of oriental sounds. On the other hand, in Lai's works which incorporates many advance devices, Lai confesses that occasionally she would use simple intervals of 4ths or 5ths between lines to create oriental sounds, because "too much 3rds and 6ths makes the arranger seem to be lacking in ideas" (Lai, personal communication, February 18th, 2013). A case in point is found in the pentatonic *Sapu Tangan*, Lai purposely sets the echo of "*tama pertemu*" of the two alto parts at 4th apart (in bar 19-20, see Figure 4.26) to create a 'chinese' feel (as Lai believes the song has Chinese origin).

The musical score for Figure 4.26 consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system (bars 16-19) shows vocal lines with lyrics in Indonesian. The second system (bars 20-23) continues the vocal lines. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics like 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). An 'Echo' label with an arrow points to a specific musical phrase in the upper voices of the first system.

Figure 4.26. Bar 16-23 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

The associating of Chinese or folk sound to interval of 4ths is a result of many traditional musics in Asia characterized by the same interval, including vocal music of the local region such as *Kui* which is a type of polyphonic vocal from East Malaysia. When singing *Kui*, the chorus sings a moveable drone to the main song sung by a male soloist while stressing the resulting harmony of Perfect 4th, 5th, the unison and the octave (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 274) and this is a feature also incorporated in the selected works (such as *A Glimpse of Malaysia*). It is noteworthy that in order to ensure a realistic oriental ambience in *The Glimpse's Liling*, Wong originally intends the “*jaiee tawai*” in the lower voices (from bar 115) to be echoed by the upper voices in bar 117 in a call and response style which is prevalent in folk music cultures (See Figure 4.27).

“What I had in mind is village calls across the village and from different part of the

village.” However, due to the long imitative lines and the sense of continuity implied between the entries, Mak rendered the lines in a lyrical way making the lines sound more like imitation than call and response.

Tonight, my friends, we gather together
We gather together and recall the old times
Turn around and around,
Uyau Along, turn around.

113

S. *Solo pp* tu- yang pe- mong

A. *Solo p* Pe - mong jai -

T. *Solo mp (melody)* A - le - mi - ni te - lu tu- yang pe- mong jai -

B. *Solo mp* A - le - mi - ni te - lu tu- yang pe- mong jai -

Pno. *ppp*

116

S. *Tutti mf* jai- ee ta- wai u- yan Li ling

A. *Echoed by Solo p* jai- ee ta- wai u- yan Li ling

T. *Tutti mf* - ee pe- mong ja- i- ee ta - wai u - yan Li - ling Li

B. *Tutti mf* - ee pe- mong ja- i- ee ta - wai u - yan Li - ling Li

Pno.

19

Figure 4.27. Bar 113-119 in *The Glimpse* (Wong, 2004)

Texture is used by both the arrangers as a device to delineate programmatic effect. A paradigmatic example by Wong is the beginning section of *Jong Jong Inai*

where the texture thickens gradually alongside the increase in dynamics in bars 99-108 (refer to Figure 4.28) to signify “one building is seen, then more tall buildings, then skyscrapers are in view” as the singers bring the audience along the musical journey from *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung* in Malay village to the *Jong Jong Inai* in urban area, as described by Wong.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system covers bars 98 to 100, and the second system covers bars 101 to 103. The vocal parts are for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), and the piano part is for Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are in Malay, and the dynamics are indicated by letters in circles.

System 1 (Bars 98-100):

- Bar 98:** Soprano and Alto parts are silent. Tenor and Bass parts enter with a melody. The piano part is silent. Dynamics: *p* (piano).
- Bar 99:** All parts continue. Lyrics: "Jong jong I nai Mak, Mak, I Pong Ra ja wa li". Dynamics: *p*.
- Bar 100:** All parts continue. Dynamics: *p*.

System 2 (Bars 101-103):

- Bar 101:** All parts continue. Dynamics: *mp* (mezzo-piano).
- Bar 102:** All parts continue. Dynamics: *mp*.
- Bar 103:** All parts continue. Dynamics: *mf* (mezzo-forte).

104 17

S. Pong Ra ja wa li Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

A. Pong Ra ja wa li Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

T. Pong Ra ja wa li Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

B. Pong Ra ja wa li Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

Pno. f

107

S. Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

A. Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

T. Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

B. Jong jong I nai Mak I Pong Ra ja wa li

Pno. ff

Figure 4.28. Bar 99-108 in *The Glimpse* (Wong, 2004)

According to Chopyak (1987), one of the main characteristics of Malay music arrangements is being programmatic. Wong says the whole medley of *The Glimpse* is in fact programmatic, as it is taking listeners through a journey. However instead of attributing the influence of her programmatic treatment to Malay music, Wong says her influence comes from Debussy. She likes the descriptive title such as *La fille aux cheveux de lin* “The Girl with Flaxen hair” (A piano piece by Debussy) because the title

already tells one what sound to produce. She questions whether there is a need for one to confirm where the music influence comes from when arranging music. She says she does not think about this when writing music.

Similar to the role of texture in Wong's programmatic sections, the drama in Lai's *Sapu Tangan* is contributed by the arrangement of texture in addition to other devices while dictated by the words of the folk song. Firstly the female solo texture at the beginning of the piece embodies the woman's emotion which is central to the song. The ensuing exceptional thick chords in the low range from bar 12 to 18 (see Figure 4.29) convey the dark mood of the song which also provides a different hue to the lonely mood at the beginning of the song. At the last line of the piece from bar 62 to 64 (see Figure 4.30), the soprano goes to much higher range compared to similar places in earlier verses. Together with other devices such as the growing dynamics in bar 63, tension is built and this signals all her hopes is coming to an end which she does not want it to be so; and coupled with an extended V^9 chord, her hopes is suspended there wishing they would not end. The sudden peeling off of all other voices leaving only the tenor voice as the melody creates an ante-climax to the tension built that culminates a bar before. The song ends with a soprano solo, similar to the texture of the beginning, creating congruence in texture, signaling the same lady telling her story throughout the songs interspersed with drama.

12

ma Da - ri ka - ke - sib ku Pa - da ma - ta da - ha -

16

tu - tis ber - ti -

tu - ber - da - a

Da da da da Per - ta - ma ber - ti - ma

Figure 4.29. Bar 12-19 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

93 *molto rall.* *mf legato*

Sop 1 *Ja di ro sak bi na sa. No na no na, Za man se ka rang, Tak*

Sop 2 *Ja di ro sak bi na sa. No na no na, Za man se ka rang, Tak*

Alto *ja di ro sak bi na sa. No na no na, Za man se ka rang, Tak*

Pno. *molto rall.*

101 *p* 9

Sop 1 *bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la rang. No na no na, Za*

Sop 2 *bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la rang. No na no na, Za*

Alto *bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la rang. No na no na, Za*

Pno. *mf* 3

Figure 4.31. Bar 93-106 in *Nona Nona* (Wong, 2007)

Like any Western choral works, polyphonic texture is commonly featured in the selected choral works in this research. Polyphonic texture is widely regarded by scholars as belonging to the domain of Western music. Degirmenci (2006) describes the music curriculum undergoes modernization and westernization in the musical schools of

the Ottoman Empire as “constituted on the basis of the principles of Western polyphonic music” (p. 57). Both arrangers explore into imitation of lines by various voices and at varying distances in terms of entries and intervals to enrich the folk song arrangements. In Lai’s *Suriram*, at the words “*Aman dan damai*” (bar 25-27) there is canonic imitation at 2 beats apart, first in A (dominant) in soprano, then D (tonic) in alto, followed by the surprising G (subdominant) in soprano 2, then back to A (dominant) in tenor, before their rhythmic confluence at “*kekal abadi*”, which leads to a modulation later on (refer to Figure 4.28). Imitation is more straightforward in Wong’s arrangements. For instance, the strict imitation of melody is at a bar apart between the male and female voices in *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung* section of *The Glimpse*.

The image shows a musical score for the piece *Suriram*, specifically bars 21 through 30. The score is arranged for five voices: Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex polyphonic texture with canonic imitation. Various musical markings are present, including *mp* (mezzo-piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *cresc* (crescendo), and *p* (piano). The lyrics are in Indonesian and include phrases like "Su-ri-ram", "Bah-giahi-dup", "ji-ka ber-ka-wan", "sa-yang A-man dan", "a-lam di pa-gi ha-ri", "Du du du du du du du du sa-yang", "da-mai", "ke-kal a-ba-di", "Su-ri-ram", "ram ram", "Danda-mai", "Danda-mai ke-kal a-ba-di", "Ram", "Su-ri-ram", and "Kekal a-ba-di". The score is visually annotated with a large, semi-transparent watermark that reads "UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA" diagonally across the page.

Figure 4.32. Bar 21-30 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

Another type of polyphonic texture, not those associated with Western vocal music but those resulted from the practice of extemporizing variations of melody simultaneously in some folk music culture, is exhibited in Wong's works. Hill (2005) illustrates the way Finnish contemporary folk musicians "improvise variations of the melody that intentionally differ to such an extent that they create a polyphonic texture with incidental harmonies and parts that give the impression of being independent" (p. 269). These processes are inherent in the selected pieces in this research such as in *The Glimpse*, while some counter melodies are variations of the main melody. For instance, the countermelody in alto part in bar 136 is similar to the melody in soprano part in bar 133-134 (refer to the circled notes in Figure 4.33). The countermelodies in the alto part from bar 135-137 (see the bracketed notes in Figure 4.33) are actually sequences and variation of the soprano melody mentioned. Note the sudden temporary shift to relative melodic minor in bar 137 of *Glimpse* which makes the variation of the countermelody in the alto part different from the one in bar 135 (see the 2 phrases with arrows in 4.33). Mak spent much time in making sure the conspicuity of these countermelodies during rehearsals. Also in verse two of *Tanjong Katong*, the counter melody in the soprano part (bar 42-44) is a melodic variation anticipating the next melodic phrase in the baritone part (refer to Figure 4.34).

22 133

S. *mp*
ma. Pu lang, Ma ri lah pu

A. *p*
ma. Pu lang pu lang lah,

T. *mp*
lah! Pu lang,

B. *mp*
lah! Pu lang,

Pno.

135

S. lang, Ma ri lah pu lang, ber sa ma sa

A. Pu lang pu lang lah, Pu lang pu lang lah,

T. Pu lang Pu lang

B. Pu lang Pu lang

Pno.

137 *mf*

S. ma. Pu

A. Pu lang lah ber sa ma sa

T. *mp*
ber sa ma sa ma.

B. *mp*
ber sa ma sa ma.

Pno.

Figure 4.33. Bar 133-137 in *A Glimpse Of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

40

S. *Ku pu ku pu ter bang a*
Ting gi ting gi Gu nung Le

A.

Bar. *(2) Ku pu ku pu ter bang a*
(4) Ting gi ting gi Gu nung Le
lik dang;

Pno. *(Very lightly)*

44

S. *lik dang.*
Ma ri po kok meng ku
Ting gi lah a sap a

A.

Bar. *Hing gap ma ri po kok meng kuang.*
Ting gi lah gi a sap a pi

Pno.

Figure 4.34. Bar 40-47 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007)

In devising countermelodies, which bears resemblance to the variation of the folk tunes, Wong could have arranged the folk choral works with some understanding of

the potentialities of the folk melodies, in the way Hill (2005) quotes Albert Lord in arguing:

...contemporary notions of a song as a fixed set of notes differ radically from traditional singers' song concept which is based more on an overarching theme and set of characteristics of potentialities. (p. 237)

This traditional concept of song does apply to traditional music in Malaysia. The practice of *Wa* by Sarawak people is in heterophonic texture, whereby each singer in the chorus simultaneously sings and varies the basic melody in terms of pitch and rhythm (Matusky & Tan, 2004). Hill (2005) explains this type of technique which is known as expanded heterophony, is a common technique for creating melodic-based polyphonic arrangements, when the variations provided are sufficiently varied (p. 269).

Another interesting texture attempted by Lai is the overlapping of verse and chorus. For instance in *Burung Kakak Tua*, in both its 8-part version (bar 32-46 refer to Figure 4.35) and the SAT/B version (bar 48-62 refer to Figure 4.36).

32

S1 *mp* Ah Du du du du du du Du du du du du

S2 *mp* Ah Du du du du du du du du du du du

A *mf* Ah Chorus Le - trum le - trum le - trum Oo lah

T Verse Bu - rung ka - kak tu - a

B *mp* lah Du du du du du du du du du du du

36

S1 du du du Du du du du du du du du du du du

S2 du du du Du du du du du du du du du du du

A lah Le - trum Le - trum le - trum Oo lah

T Mun - cul di jen - de - la

B Du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du

40

S1 du Le - trum le - trum

S2 du Le - trum le - trum

A Chorus lah Le - trum le - trum le -

T Verse Ne - nek su - dah tu -

B du du du le - trum le - trum le - trum le - trum le -

43

S1 le - trum le - trum Du du du du du du du

S2 le - trum le - trum Du du du du du - a

A trum a Oo lah lah Bu - rung ka - kak tu - a

T trum trum Gi - gi - nya ting - gal du - a

B trum le - trum le - trum Ah ting - gal du - a

Figure 4.35. Bar 32-46 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SSAATTBB) (Lai, 2000)

49 Verse kak tu - a Mun - cul di -
 Chorus trum le - trum oo la la Le - trum le -
 dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba

53 Chorus jen - de - la Le - trum le -
 Verse trum le - trum oo la la Ne - nek su -
 dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba

57 trum le - trum oo la la Bu - rung ka -
 dah tu - a Gi - gi nya ting -
 dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba

61 kak tu - a Ah
 gal du - a Ah Ah
 dm ba dm ba dm ba dm ba Ah Ah

Figure 4.36. Bar 49-62 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SAT/B) (Lai, 2008)

The same device is used at the end of *Suriram*, only in a more complicated way involving augmentation of rhythm among the parts. Burkholder (1985) terms this device as “*quodlibet* or medley, taking as the basis of a piece or section the vertical or horizontal combination of two or more familiar tunes, often as a joke or technical tour de force” (p. 3).

4.3.5 Harmonic Language

Harmony plays an indispensable role in the selected folk choral works by both the arrangers who are trained under the Western music system. First of all, both of the arrangers use simple harmonic progression, although Lai incorporates many types of more complicated harmonies, which will be discussed. In Wong's *The Glimpse*, harmonic progressions are generally simple: I – IV – V - I (see bar 35- 38 in Figure 4.12); I – V – I – V - ii⁷ – V - I (see bar 60 – 63 in Figure 4.37) in circle of fifths: I - ii - V/ii - ii - iii⁷ - V⁴₃/vi - vi - ii⁷ - V⁴₃/V – V^{sus4} – V (- I) (see Figure 4.38 bar 16-23), note the secondary dominants are usually resolved; The ending of phrases are generally perfect cadences making the rare plagal cadence (see Figure 4.39 bar 142-143) and interrupted cadence (see Figure 4.40 bar 67-68) distinguished in serving dramatic effect.

Figure 4.37 shows a musical score for bars 60-63. It includes vocal parts for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), along with Piano (Pno.) accompaniment. The Soprano part has lyrics: "Leng - gang Kang - kung di te - pi pa ya. Leng". The Alto part has lyrics: "Leng". The Tenor part has lyrics: "gang leng gang Kang kung Kang - kung di te pi pa - ya.". The Bass part has lyrics: "gang leng gang Kang kung Kang kung di te pi pa - ya.". The Piano accompaniment features a simple harmonic progression: I, V, I, V, ii⁷, V, I. Dynamics include mp and mf.

Figure 4.37. Bar 60-63 in *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

4 16

S. *Jam-ba - tan*

A. *Jam-ba - tan*

T. (melody) *Jam-ba - tan do Tam-pa-ru - li Ba-ka-*

B. *Dong Tung Dong Dong Jam-ba - tan do Tam-pa-ru - li Ba-ka-*

Pno.

20 I ii V/ii ii iii⁷ V⁴₃/vi vi

S. *sut ting-gi O - ky*

A. *sut ting-gi O - ky*

T. *sut ting-gi O - ky*

B. *sut ting-gi O - ky*

Pno.

ii⁷ V⁴₃/V V^{sus}4 V (I)

Figure 4.38. Bar 16-23 in *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

24 141 *f*

S. *ma.*

A. *ma.*

T. *ma.* *Gey* *ff*

B. *ma.* *Gey* *ff*

Pno. *f*

iv

143

S. *lang*

A. *lang*

T. *lang* *Si Pa ku Gey lang!*

B. *lang* *Si Pa ku Gey lang!*

Pno.

I

Figure 4.39. Bar 142-143 in *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

67

S. *mp* *Ba lik da ri me-nya - bung, ma kan lah na si sa ha*

A. *f (melody)* *Ba lik da ri me-nya - bung, ma kan lah na si sa ha*

T. *mf* *Ba lik da ri me-nya - bung, ma kan lah na si sa ha*

B. *mf* *Ba lik da ri me-nya - bung, ma kan lah na si sa ha*

Pno.

V vi

Figure 4.40. Bar 67-70 in *A Glimpse of Malaysia* (Wong, 2004)

Simple progression also dominates Wong's *Ayon Laju*, for instance I – V – I – I – V – V – I. Most chords are triads, but many are in different inversions due to the bass line melody (such as IV – I⁶ – V⁶₄ – I in bar 19, see Figure 4.41). Cadences, which are mostly in root position, such as V⁷ – I at bar 25 (see Figure 4.42), usually demarcate sections. In the case of the cadence in bar 25, it signals the end of the verse preceding the chorus.

The musical score for Figure 4.41 shows three staves (S. 1, S. 2, and A.) for the song 'Ayon Laju'. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The score starts at bar 18 and ends at bar 22. The lyrics are in Indonesian. A chord progression is indicated at the bottom of the score: IV, I⁶, V⁶₄, and I.

Bar 18: S. 1: tang. Ke - ris ke - chik pu - sa - ka A -
S. 2: Ha - ri dah pe - tang. Ke - ris ke - chik pu - sa - ka A -
A.: Pam pa - dap pa - dam Pam Pam Pam Pam Pam Pam

Bar 19: S. 1: (Cadence)
S. 2: (Cadence)
A.: (Cadence)

Bar 20: S. 1: yah, Nan - ti nik be - sar ja - di pah - la -
S. 2: yah, Nan - ti nik be - sar ja - di pah - la -
A.: Pam pa - dap pa - dam Pam pam pam pam...

Bar 21: S. 1: (Cadence)
S. 2: (Cadence)
A.: (Cadence)

Bar 22: S. 1: (Cadence)
S. 2: (Cadence)
A.: (Cadence)

Chord progression: IV I⁶ V⁶₄ I

Figure 4.41. Bar 18-22 in *Ayon Laju* (Wong, 2009)

Figure 4.42. Bar 25-26 in *Ayon Laju* (Wong, 2009)

Wong explains the harmonic progressions are not devised by her because they are inherent in the folk songs. She justifies her inference of harmony from the melody by quoting the similar harmony she heard in some traditional recording of the folk songs. Hill (2005) explores into the issue of “inherent” harmony found in folk songs:

What types of harmonies sound “natural” to musicians depends upon what they have been listening to and into what musical styles they have been enculturated. Thus, contemporary folk musicians’ improvised stemmoja may draw from Finnish, Scandinavian, or Finno-Ugric folk conventions such as parallel lines (frequently in thirds or sixths) and drones (often on the tonic or fifth); from the harmonic conventions of Western art/church/popular musics (e.g. major and minor triads, leading tones preceding cadences, etc.)... Contemporary folk musicians welcome rather than resist this spontaneous incorporation of non-folk and cross-cultural/intercultural elements. (p. 273)

From the simple harmonic progressions in Wong’s pieces, her use of the “inherent” harmony suggested by the folk songs themselves is heavily influenced by the harmonic conventions of Western art, church and musical theatre music. For instances, the progression of I – IV – V - I from bar 35 to 38 in *The Glimpse of Malaysia* (see Figure 4.12); and progression of I – V – I – V - ii⁷ – V - I from bar 60 to 63 in the same work

(see Figure 4.37) are simple progressions used frequently in simple Western art, church and musical theatre music.

Although Lai prefers complicated harmonies, she does incorporate simpler harmonic progressions for certain purposes. Different from the complex harmonic language Lai uses in her other folk choral pieces, the harmonic progression in *Sapu Tangan* becomes more straight-forward from the ‘*keroncong*’ section after the modulation (in bar 38), and some ‘jazzy’ harmony is retained to give a “fuller feel” (Lai, personal communication, February 24, 2013) as she describes it. Lai says it is more pleasant to listen this way. The jazzy harmony is not treated as dissonances, as she does not think about resolution.

Cases of horizontal lines with passing notes resulting in more complicated harmonies apply to works of both arrangers. Lai’s preference for conjunct movement in the voices including the bass line, especially the conjunct movement created by chromatic lines, which she feels help the piece flow better and create a “lovely feel” (Lai, personal communication, February 24th, 2013), and result in more intense harmonic progression. For instance, in *Suriram*, the cluster-like sound of F#, G & A is resulted on 3rd beat of the bar 14 (see Figure 4.43).

Figure 4.43 shows a musical score for the song 'Suriram'. The score is written for five voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are in Indonesian. A blue box highlights the fifth measure of the score, which corresponds to bar 14. The lyrics for this bar are: 'A - du - hai Su - ri - ram sa - yang Ku'.

Figure 4.43. Bar 11-15 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

Although primary chords are generally used in Wong's folk choral works, the bass movement affects the position of the chords in *Tanjong Katong* and results in a trend of non-root-position-chord followed by root-position chords in many bars. For instance, the bass in the piano accompaniment moves from C note through E note, like a leading tone, to the F note in bars 28-30. Hence the harmony is affected accordingly (see Figure 4.44). Chromatic passing notes in voices other than the bass line also affect the harmony in *Tanjong Katong*, the chromatic passing notes in the baritone part in bar 35 (in verse 1) result in the flat vi chord (refer to Figure 4.45) (the same thing happens in bar 51 at the same place in verse 2).

28

S. *Ti dak puah k'la pa Ba li*
ting gap ma ri po lion ja ti

A. *Ti dak puah k'la pa Ba li; (Ti dak puah k'la pa Ba li)*
ting gap ma ri po lion ja ti (Ma ri po lion ja ti)

Bar. *Ti dak puah k'la pa Ba li*
ting gap ma ri po lion ja ti

Pno

V⁷ V⁶₅ I

Figure 4.44. Bar 28-30 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007)

6 32

S. *Ha rap ha ti pa da Tu an Ti dak lah*
Da ri ma na da tang sa yang, Da ri lah

A. *Ha rap ha ti pa da Tu an*
Da ri ma na da tang sa yang,

Bar. *Ha rap ha ti pa da Tu an*
Da ri ma na da tang sa yang,

Pno

b vi

Figure 4.45. Bar 32-35 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007)

The works of both the arrangers feature borrowed chords. Wong's harmony is usually simple but she uses borrowed chords to solve problem with harmonic ambiguity at 'unconventional' passages. The frequent appearance of C^b in *Jong Jong Inai* shows that the section is in D mixolydian mode and the v^7 chord at the ending cadence of this section is borrowed from the mixolydian mode (see bar 107-108 in Figure 4.46). As the entire song of *Liling* is modal, Wong finds it difficult and awkward to harmonize the song using diatonic chords, therefore she uses modal harmony which creates an other-worldly sound. She thinks the sound is suitable for bringing out the feel of the non-tempered Sarawak folk songs. Another instance of borrowed chord happens in *Tanjong Katong*: the ii diminished chord in bar 76 is borrowed from the parallel minor key to serve the flat 6th note in the counter melody (see Figure 4.47).

The image displays a musical score for the song 'Jong Jong Inai'. It features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves: 'Jong jong I nai. Mak, I Pong Ra ja wa li'. The piano part is shown at the bottom. A specific chord, labeled v^7 , is highlighted in the piano part, indicating a borrowed chord from the mixolydian mode. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like ff (fortissimo).

Figure 4.46. Bar 107-109 in *The Glimpse* (Wong, 2004)

The image shows a musical score for Figure 4.47, which is Bar 75-78 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007). The score is written for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Baritone (Bar.), and Piano (Pno.). The tempo is marked *poco rit.*. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are in Chinese. The score shows the vocal parts and the piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex harmonic structure with many chords and a triplet in the final measure of bar 78.

Figure 4.47. Bar 75-78 in *Tanjong Katong* (Wong, 2007)

Lai not only uses the borrowed chords, but always tries to avoid conventional harmony by adding a layer of interesting harmony on top of the basic progression by means of chords substitution using borrowed, extended and altered chords. “Normally people do this, but I do this,” says Lai with conviction. In *Suriram*, in order to change the course of the IV^{add6} chord at the 3rd beat of bar 12 which would lead to the bare sound of a plagal cadence, Lai inserted a V^{11}_9 (without 3rd) before ‘resolving’ to the I_{Maj7}^{13} (see Figure 4.48). Chromatic harmony is resulted when the extended chord is transformed into V^7/IV which approaches to IV (without 3rd) in bar 14 as a chord of ambiguity with its cluster-like sound (which consists of do, re & mi in the second quaver of the bar) due to passing notes.

ram ram ram Su-ri- ram ku yang ma- nis ma-nis A- du- hai Su- ri- ram sa- yang Pu-tih ku-
 Su-ri-su-ri- ram Su-ri- ram ku yang ma- nis ma-nis A-du-hai Su- ri- ram sa- yang Ku
 ram ram ram Su-ri- ram ku yang ma- nis Oh a-du- hai Su- ri- ram sa- yang Ku -
 ram ram ram Su-ri- ram ku yang ma- nis du du du du ah sa- yang Pu-tih ku-
 ram ram ram Su-ri- ram ku yang ma- nis Du du du du ah Ku -

IV add 6 V¹¹ I Maj⁷ V⁷/IV IV

Figure 4.48. Bar 11-15 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

“Jazzy chords” are being used constantly in most of Lai’s selected folk choral works, except *Sapu Tangan*. These secondary dominants and extended chords of 9th, 11th, and 13th (sometimes with altered notes) lead to frequent tonicization unless they are left unresolved purposely for color purpose. For those unresolved extended chords, Lai explains she does not take pain in making sure everything is properly resolved because she depends on the spontaneous lines and chords which occur in her inner ear and already has the sound and rules of harmony ingrained. Therefore she thinks her works sound natural to her.

Altered chords are used extensively in *Sapu Tangan* due to melodic movement which passes through chromatic notes. The chromatic bass line in bars 27 (Figure 4.49(a)) and 37 (Figure 4.49(b)) bears similarity to that of the triplets figure which constitutes a \flat VII chord and a iv_3^6 chord, which can be interpreted as an altered augmented 6th chord as it resolves to the dominant chord (Lai analyzed this chord as an augmented 6th chord, but it should be an altered augmented 6th chord because the interval between the bass Db to Bb is not an augmented 6th but a major 6th), in bar 17

(see Figure 4.49(c)). This triplets figure in bar 17 precedes the pause right before the end of verse 2 which is then followed directly by the chorus. For the similar figure in bar 27, the iv^6_3 chord in bar 17 becomes iv^6_5 chord, also resolves to the dominant chord - V^7 , to mark the end of chorus before verse 3 (see Figure 4.49(a)); the similar figure in bar 37 serves as the chromatic connecting bit (pivot chord v^6_5 chord in F Major also acts as iv^6_5 chord in the new key) for modulation a key higher to G major (followed by verse 1 being repeated in the new key) (see Figure 4.49(b)).

The image displays a musical score for the song 'Sapu Tangan' (Lai, 2013), specifically focusing on bars 24 through 31. The score is written for four staves: two vocal staves (soprano and alto) and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are in Indonesian. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines. Chord symbols are provided for the piano accompaniment: V^6_5 and iv^6_5 are indicated at the end of bar 30, and V^7 is indicated at the end of bar 31. The lyrics for the first system (bars 24-27) are: 'Mes - ki pun ba - gai - ma - na ter - ja di Se - hi - dup se - ma - ti'. The lyrics for the second system (bars 28-31) are: 'Sa - pu ta - ngan di wak - tu se - ka - rang Ja - di hi - bu - ran'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets indicated by a '3' over the notes.

Figure 4.49(a). Bar 24-31 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

Figure 4.49(b). Bar 36-39 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

Figure 4.49(c). Bar 16-19 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

In the same piece, the second D minor chord in bar 16 goes to a E \flat chord (see Figure 4.49(c)). This D minor chord, which is a chord vi, does not take the usual route of going to a chord ii, but transits to the E \flat chord, a \flat VII chord which has a sound resembling that of a Neapolitan 6th chord. In *Suriram*, another Neapolitan 6th-like chord - a \flat II⁷ chord on 4th beat of bar 56, preceding chord I in the next bar, creates surprise and breaks the boredom of usual perfect cadence (refer to Figure 4.50). Lai speaks for

the irregularity, “I just like the sound, don’t ask me why.” Here, it can be deduced that Lai arranges by means of sound instead of following strict theory.

Figure 4.50. Bar 55-59 in *Suriram* (Lai, 2005)

In Lai’s works, harmony is also used for drama purposes coupling with other devices. In *Sapu Tangan*, different from the harmony at the repetition of verse 1 from bar 39 onwards (refer to the ‘*keroncong*’ section in Figure 4.10) which is quite ‘sparse’ (in Lai’s words), Lai gives richer harmony to the second chorus (which spans from bar 48-55) in bars 52-54 by using harmonic intervals of minor seconds, major seconds and diminished fourth in the alto and tenor parts. Lai explained the resulting unconventional chord progression (see Figure 4.51) signified the emotion of the lady whose excitement was rekindled as she sang about the given promises in this second chorus. Lai said the lady wished to still have something to look forward to. The following ascending line in bar 55 (*Sapu Tangan*) signals the end of drama and as the tenor part resumes the melody in bar 56, the return of the reality into loneliness is signified.

Figure 4.51 displays a musical score for a piece in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013), covering bars 48-59. The score is written in 3/4 time, key of D major, and features vocal lines with lyrics in Indonesian and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "ku Pu - nuh de - ngan ren - ca - na dan ju - ri te - lah di - se - ra - ja - i". The piano part includes various chords and melodic lines, with some sections marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *leggiero* (light). The score is divided into systems, with the first system covering bars 48-51 and the second system covering bars 52-59. The lyrics are: "Me - ki - pan ba - gai - ma - na ter - ja - di Se - hi - dup se - ma - ti Ah". The piano part includes various chords and melodic lines, with some sections marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *leggiero* (light). The score is divided into systems, with the first system covering bars 48-51 and the second system covering bars 52-59. The lyrics are: "Me - ki - pan ba - gai - ma - na ter - ja - di Se - hi - dup se - ma - ti Ah".

Chord symbols and other markings visible in the score include:

- IV ii₃⁴ ii₇ ii⁹ V¹³_{9sus4} V¹³₁₁ ii¹³ V⁹ I^{add6} I^{add6} I⁶₃ add6 (vi⁹)
- VI₇ VI₇ ii₇^{sus4} ii₃⁴ sus⁴ ii₂⁴ ii₃⁴ IV^{add6} (IV₉^{add6}) VI¹³ VI₇ ii
- IV¹³₉
- [V] [I]

Figure 4.51. Bar 48-59 in *Sapu Tangan* (Lai, 2013)

F. C. (1896) states Wagner, whose music is characterized for the drama within, “recognized the immense dramatic power which harmony possesses” (p. 730). Lai certainly discovered this dramatic potentiality in harmony and put her hands on its possibilities.

4.3.6 Formal Elements

The structure of the selected Malay folk choral works is based on the form of the folk songs. Hill (2005) cites an instance of Finnish folk singer Anna-Kaisa, who is able to sing unique variation for every single measure of the main melody and make them remain within the same melodic range, phrase structure, and meter (p. 237). Hill (2005) also documents a folk musician who improvises, yet still, in the traditional form, style, and structure (p. 240). In accordance to this usual practice, the length of Wong’s folk choral arrangements solely depends on the number of verses the folk songs have. The structure of *Nona Nona*, *Tanjong Katong* and *Ayon Laju* follows the form of the folk songs. Sometimes Wong is only given many verses of texts to begin her arrangement with and it is up to her to choose which verses she would retain. If there are 2 verses with a same melody, she usually changes the accompaniment, as what she does to the accompaniment of verse 2 of *Tanjong Katong* to vary it from that of verse 1.

On the other hand, although Lai’s folk choral works follow the structure of the folk songs, she alters the structure and texts to produce dramatic effects and create balance in form. For instance, in the tenor and bass parts, the three long-held “*mari*” preceding the one more shorter ‘*mari*’ leading to the completion of the sentence (‘*mari potong padi*’) in the ‘dance’ section (bars 20-26 see Figure 4.52) in *Potong Padi* is different from the original poem which has only two “*mari*”. And she also transformed

piece; and a long introduction passage (20-bars long) playing with texture for *Nona Nona*, which sounds rather long-winded. Likewise, Lai says she usually gives more thought over the introduction. As mentioned, she would think of a few choices of introduction which she hears all the parts simultaneously in her head, then she would choose the most interesting one that suits the mood, such as the introduction of *Burung Kakak Tua* which suits the humorous mood of the song, before typing the notes out on the computer.

Both arrangers exhibit their signature codas to conclude their pieces. Wong likes to build her codas towards the cheers “yeah!” or “Hey!” at the end of her folk choral works, and at other times prefers the treatment of rhythmic augmentation for her codas to create grand effect. Wong explains the use of upbeat codas to conclude her Malay folk choral works is to match the cheerful and happy impression she has over Malay folk songs. Lai, on the other hand, likes to employ the sustaining of specially devised groups of notes at her codas. For instance in *Potong Padi*, the repetition of the ‘dance’ section (in bars 53-54) ended with each pair of voices (the *bassi*, the *tenori*, the *alti* and *soprani* in ascending order), while maintaining an interval of 5th within their parts, entering by singing a third higher than the preceding pair of voices (see Figure 4.53). Lai remarked when she devised the intervals of 3rds between the pairs of voices here, she was not conforming to 3rd relationship prevalent in romantic music, she clarified that she never associated with names but only focus on the sounds.



Figure 4.53. Bar 53-54 in *Potong Padi* (Lai, 1999)

Clarity in the demarcation of structure is sought after especially by Lai. From the audio recording of *Burung Kakak Tua* SAT/B by APYC, Lai remarks a longer breath should be taken before the section with overlapping of verse and chorus (starting from bar 47). Although a pause or a sign denoting new section is not stated there, Lai expects conductors to analyze the piece and have a sense of the structural division when working on her piece.

Modulation usually signifies point of demarcation in the selected choral works. In *The Glimpse*, modulation happens between the sections of *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung* and *JongJong Inai* from F major to closely-related key C major by means of chromatic modulation (the connecting line is in Db major, a minor 3rd down from F major, before going to C major).

On the other hand, the arrangers demonstrate the use of modulation to closely-related key to heightened built-up climax and mood change. In Lai's *Potong Padi* (SSAATTBB), the 'dance' section (bars 20-29 see Figure 4.54) is already building up to the 'most jovial' section from bar 30 to 37 (refer to Figure 4.55). Yet the emotional climax in the 'most jovial' section is further heightened by the 2-bar temporary

[illegible]

30

S1 *mf* Ah ri ber-su-ka ria, *mf* Ma

S2 *f* Ma ri ber-su-ka ria, *f* Ma

A *f* Ma ri ber-su-ka ria, *mp* Ah ah Ma

T *f* Ah Ma ri ber-su-ka ria, *p* Ah *mf* Ma

B *f* Ma ri ber-su-ka ria, *f* Ma, ma-

35

S ri me-nya-nyi dan ber-gem-bi-ra

A ri me-nya-nyi dan ber-gem-bi-ra

T ri me-nya-nyi dan ber-gem-bi-ra *f* Ma

B1 ri me-nya-nyi dan ber-gem-bi-ra *f* Ma

B2 ri me-nya-nyi dan ber-gem-bi-ra *f* Ma

Figure 4.55. Bar 30-37 in *Potong Padi* (SSAATTBB) (Lai, 1999)

Figure 4.56 shows a musical score for a piece in G major, 4/4 time. It includes four staves: Sopranos 1 and 2, Alto, and Piano. The lyrics are in Indonesian. The piano part features a triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand.

Bar 101: Sop 1: *bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la rang. No na no na, Za*
 Sop 2: *bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la rang. No na no na, Za*
 Alto: *bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la rang. No na no na, Za*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 102: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 103: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 104: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 105: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 106: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 107: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 108: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 109: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 110: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Bar 111: Sop 1: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Sop 2: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Alto: *man se ky rang, Tak bo leh di te gur, tak bo leh di la*
 Piano: (Piano part with triplets)

Figure 4.56. Bar 101-111 in *Nona Nona* (Wong, 2007)

Modulation by half a step and a step higher, which exhibits the influence of pop music in this aspect, is widely used in the selected pieces. In *Suriram*, the confluence of all voices in bar 27 at “*kekal abadi*” results in a ii^{11} chord, which leads to a semitone-higher modulation (to Eb major) in the next section by means of chromatic movement to the V^4_3 chord in the new key (see Figure 4.57).

da-mai ke-kal a-ba-di Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram

Amardan da-mai ke-kal a-ba-di Su-ri-ram ram ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-

Amardanda-mai ke-kal a-ba-di Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram

Danda-ma-ke-kal a-ba-di Ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-

Kekal a-ba-di Ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-ram Su-ri-

ii¹¹ V⁴₃V₇ I

Figure 4.57. Bar 26 - 30 in *Suriram* (SSATB) (Lai, 2005)

Modulation to a step higher from F major to G major happens at bar 57 in *Nona Nona* by means of a V₇ chord of the new key embedded in a scale-like figure which exhibits jazzy rhythm leading to the new key (see Figure 4.58). Note that a one-step-up modulation also occurs at the beginning of chorus two in *Tanjong Katong* from F to G major.

I tu men ja di ha ti ku ke li ru.

pu, I tu men ja di ha ti ku ke li ru.

I tu men ja di ha ti ku ke li ru.

No na lah

No na lah

F: I vi⁶₅V^{add13}₁₁⁹V₇/ii

G: V₇ I

Figure 4.58. Bar 52-57 in *Nona Nona* (Wong, 2007)

Modulation to remote keys is used only by Wong, ironically, who intends to keep her folk arrangements and devices “simple” (in Wong’s own words). Modulation to remote keys happen two times at the beginning of song section *Geylang si paku Geylang* (in section E). Each time the text “*Geylang si Paku Geylang*”, which is 2-bar long, is repeated, a modulation to a minor third higher happens: The first time from Eb major to Gb major; the second time from Gb major to A major (refer to Figure 4.59). The modulation to a minor third higher may have its influence from third relation in Romantic music. Wong wants to signify the traveling to faraway places using the two modulations at “*Geylang si paku Geylang*” before finally going home at “*pulang marilah pulang bersama-sama*” (which means let’s go home together).

129 *mp* *Leisurely, flowing* 21

S. *Gey lang Si Pa ku Gey*

A. *lang, Gey lang Si Pa ku Gey*

T. *Gey lang,*

B. *Gey lang,*

Pno. *mf* *Leisurely, flowing*

131

S. *lang, Gey lang Si Ra ma ra*

A. *lang, Gey lang Si Ra ma ra*

T. *Gey lang, Pu lang*

B. *Gey lang, Pu lang*

Pno.

Figure 4.59. Bar 123 - 132 in *The Glimpse* (Wong, 2004)

In *Suriram*, the modulation back to the home key of D major, according to Lai, also signals going back home. The modulation back to home key, which is a common practice in Western classical music, does not happen in other Lai's folk choral works.

4.3.7 Timbral Arrangement and Vocal Technique

Wong emphasizes on the use of sound symbols (Hill, 2007) created by different combinations of voices and notes to signify folk culture in her choral works. For instance, the beginning of *Jambatan Tamparuli* in *The Glimpse* is an imitation of the sound of *Angklung* – music instrument made of bamboo originated from Indonesia – by the voices. When the melody of *Jambatan Tamparuli* comes in, the bass carries on the *Angklung* sound with the piano accompaniment. Similarly, Wong's employment of different neutral syllables ('pam' in the alto part, 'doo' in the soprano 2 part, and 'dum' newly added to the soprano part) to be sung concurrently in verse 2 of *Ayon Laju* is to create different timbre and texture of vocalization, which represent the sounds of different instruments, or scat singing in jazz music (Wong, personal communication, March 14th, 2013). Her changeable answer indicates she does not mind whether the musical elements incorporated are of Western or Malay folk music influences just like Lai.

The mentioned *klangfarbenmelodie*, coined by Arnold Schoenberg (1911, harmonielehre) to describe a musical line split between several instruments, is also a type of timbral arrangement used by both the arrangers. For example, from bar 56 to 59 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SSAATTBB), the melody is passed from "*Giginya*" in tenor part to "*tinggal*" in alto part and then "*dua*" in soprano part (see Figure 4.60). Note the melody is passed from lower voice to higher voices to create logical difference in timbre. The relayed vocal arrangement at the beginning of *Ayon Laju* which Wong describes as "dovetailing", a term she learns from orchestration classes (Wong, personal communication, March 14th, 2013), also illustrates the use of the device. Both the arrangers emphasized the effectiveness of this device in urging all choristers to listen to each other in order to produce a flowing, coherent sound.

Figure 4.60 shows musical notation for two bars (54 and 57) of the song *Burung Kakak Tua* in SSAATTBB format. The notation includes vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are in Indonesian. Bar 54 shows the Soprano and Alto parts with lyrics 'Ne - nek su - dah tu - a'. Bar 57 shows the Soprano and Alto parts with lyrics 'Gi - gi - nya ting - gal du - a Bu - rung Bu - rung'. The Tenor and Bass parts also have lyrics. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats.

Figure 4.60. Bar 54-60 in *Burung Kakak Tua* (SSAATTBB) (Lai, 2000)

The interplay between the male and female voices is frequently included for variety in vocal timbre. For instance in *Potong Padi*, the beginning descending line is sung by male voices, while the ascending melody is assumed by the higher female voice. In *Sapu Tangan*, the chord progression which produces a dense texture due to its exceptional low range from bar 11 to 18 gives a dark mood contrasting to the lonely ambience created by the female solo texture in the beginning. Lai says she always writes interesting lines for basses to avoid the repetitiveness and boredom associated with the bottom part.

The topic about accompanied and unaccompanied choral music proves to be important performance practice issue in the selected folk choral music, and the two arrangers take completely different grounds in terms of writing instrumental accompaniment for the choral works. Most of Wong's arrangements include piano accompaniment, except *Ayon Laju* and *Liling* in *The Glimpse*. Saw exclaimed Wong's arrangements are very 'pianistic'. As a pianist by training, one may infer the heavy influence of her western music training on her choral works from her preference for piano accompaniment in her arrangements.

On the contrary, Lai usually writes *a capella* choral works, she only uses piano accompaniment when the choral pieces need to be reduced to less parts, for instance, piano accompaniment is added to *Potong Padi* SSA to enrich the texture. The existence of the piano accompaniment provides another medium for Lai to advance her creative ideas. Note the interplay between the voices and piano accompaniment in *Potong Padi* SSA: the G'-G octave figure of the countermelody in the piano accompaniment (bars 44, 46 see Figure 4.61(a)) is repositioned in the soprano part in bars 51- 55 (see Figure 4.61(b)).

40

ri me - nya - nyi dan ber - gem - bi - ra Ma - ri po - tong pa - di

ri me - nya - nyi dan ber - gem - bi - ra Ma - ri Ma -

ri me - nya - nyi dan ber - gem - bi - ra Ma - ri Ma -

45

Ma - ri po - tong pa - di Ma - ri po - tong Ma - ri po - tong pa - di

ri Ma - ri Ma - ri po - tong pa - di Ma - ri

ri Ma - ri Ma - ri po - tong pa - di Ma - ri

Figure 4.61(a). Bar 40-49 in *Potong Padi* (SSA) (Lai, 2010)

50

Ma - ri Pa - di Pa - di Pa - di Pa - di Pa - di

Ma - ri Ma - ri Ma - ri Ma - ri Ma - ri

Ma - ri Ma - ri Ma - ri Ma - ri Ma - ri

Figure 4.61(b). Bar 50-55 in *Potong Padi* (SSA) (*ibid.*)

Both Lai and Wong demand folk vocal sound for their folk choral works but Wong, most probably influenced by Saw, shows much more affinity for the traditional

vocal sound than Lai. For instance, Wong thinks the sound produced by Dithyrambic Singers in their performance of *The Glimpse* is too round and too fine. Working closely with Wong, despite his training and conviction in Western vocal technique, Mak occasionally tries to bring out the folk sound out of his choirs. For instance, he wanted the “*lenggang*” calls in *The Glimpse* to be “*kampung*”-like (*kampung* means Malay village literally but connotes unrefined and raw). The soprano responded well to this, perhaps it is natural for them to produce ‘flat’ tones at those high notes. This voice should coincide with the Malay singing style described in *The Music of Malaysia* as “a style featuring a narrow range with a vocal quality that was tense, hoarse and nasal” (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 326).

Another case in point of rendering music with non-Western vocal style is when Mak instructs the choristers to imitate the sound of *Angklung*. Instead of the hard and percussive sound the choir produced, Mak guided them to allow the end consonants of “*Dong*” and “*Tung*” at the beginning of *Jambatan Tamparuli* to reverberate in the nasal cavity. The instruction is similar to that of Lai’s wish for APYC to have held the ‘-m’ instead of ‘-u-’ in “*letrum*”. The effect is similar to the imitation of *gamelan* sound in a choral piece which is audio-recorded by UNIMA Choir (State University of Manado Students Choir), an Indonesian choir who was being invited to give key performances at Asia Pacific Choral Summit 2013 in Kuala Lumpur from 4th to 7th of September 2013.

Nevertheless, conductors, and sometimes the arrangers of the folk choral music themselves, prefer Western vocal production to the folk vocal sound. This trend is typified by the Mak’s insistence in guiding all the male voices to produce lyrical melodic line “like caramel” at the beginning of *Liling* against Wong’s will. Wong remarked, “If Chi Hoe (Mak) is so pedantic, why he never follows the instruction - *solo* - in the score, and I don’t know why I did not insist”. He guided the tenors to put their

hands on chest “to keep resonance there” while singing the line. He also used this ‘chest-touching’ technique to guide Seafeld Choir and the combined choir in producing resonating vocal sounds. Saw also instructed the MIA Ladies’ Chorus to do the same thing for a rounder tone. Wong opines this technique which enables singers to feel vibration in chest when their voices are connected to breath proves to be effective in preventing them from producing shallow sounds. Wong’s opinion is in line with Wistereich’s clarification of Monteverdi’s *voce del petto* (‘chest voice’) actually means support of the vocal line instead of voice registers (1994, p. 14).

Another requisite of Western vocal technique that the conductors stress is the idea of verticality in voice. Tracy Wong Wei Wen (conductor of YCA Children’s choir) was always seen signaling the children to keep the verticality of voice especially at the high notes. Similarly, Saw is always seen signaling for the vertical vocal alignment when conducting MIA Ladies’ Chorus. As a solo singer himself, Mak paid much attention to the physical reasons which affect the choristers’ vertical vocal alignment. He used a number of approaches to depict the shallow tone versus the sound with resonance. Once, he told the soprano not to open their mouths wide when singing so as to keep the resonance in a smaller space. It is logical that the sound energy kept in a smaller space would travel further in a more focused way.

4.4 Discussion

The fusion of Malay folk music and the Western choral idiom concerns the study of musical culture contact between Western and local cultures. Nettle (1992) pronounces the issue of Western music influencing other musics in the world as one of the most important events in 20th century world music, and points out its importance due to the

existence of a unified system of Western music familiar to scholars which provides the “comparative perspective afforded by the possibility of viewing Western impact upon many cultures” (p. 381-382). It suggests this dissertation regarding the synthesis of Malay folk music and Western choral music may contribute to the comparative study of musics in contact with Western music.

In the amalgamation of Malay folk music and the Western choral idiom, the selected choral pieces feature an obvious dominion of Western music influence. Western compositional devices such as canonic writing and imitation in Lai’s *Suriram* and Wong’s *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung*, the frequent use of modulation within the pieces and the customary harmony maintained by intervals of thirds and sixths between lines are few indications of the bountiful composition styles characteristic of Western music found in the selected works. Performance styles are dominated by influences from Western music as well. A case in point is the Western singing technique which emphasizes on resonance and verticality of voice being instructed by conductors most of the times during rehearsals. Reading and memorizing from scores also reveal that the mode of instruction and learning of the choirs originate from the Western music education system. Mak’s way of executing the music observed during rehearsals provides an obvious insight into the dominion of Western music culture affecting interpretation of the selected works. He spent considerable time during rehearsals on details, such as observing rests, holding of long notes and cutting of short notes. He attempts to maintain continuity across subphrases and confirms repeatedly the exact places to take breath so as not to disrupt the continuous flow of phrases. None other musicians observe technical demands cultivated through their western music training to such stringency.

The selected pieces, which are heavily loaded with Western influence, may be categorized as either 'modernized' or 'westernized', as suggested by Nettl (1978) for categorization of Western music impact on different musics. Nettl restates his theory published in 1978:

... 'modernization' as involving "the adaptation of Western influence to enhance but not replace central musical values of the tradition, and 'Westernization' is the substitution of central Western musical values for the traditional ones. (Nettl, 1992, p. 382)

Therefore, to determine whether the selected pieces should be categorized as modernized or westernized music depends on whether 'central Western music values' are emphasized.

Nettl goes on listing certain central features and concepts of Western music which he had listed out in publication in 1985:

...the system of functional harmony, for example, or the importance of the large ensemble, the prevalence of notation, the predominance of certain instruments such as piano, violin and guitar, the importance of composed works known by their composers, the concept of public concerts, and the notion of the general availability of music to anyone and at any time in contrast to social and ritual restriction. (Nettl, 1992, p. 382)

Comparing to the examples of central Western musical features listed above, many of these elements are central to the selected pieces and hints the selected pieces are Westernized products. Functional harmony is used throughout all of the selected pieces with Lai's pieces featuring advanced harmony; all choirs learn music by sight-reading the score; piano accompaniment is indispensable to Wong when arranging the folk choral works (while Lai prefers to set her choral pieces *a cappella*, the interplay between voices and relationship between voices and piano accompaniment in, for instance, reduced *Potong Padi* into SSA voices, are devices learnt from Western music

too); a concert dedicated to feature Wong's choral works and choirs hiring Lai to conduct master classes on her choral pieces signify the importance of attributing works to composers in the local choral scene; and all performances are conducted as public concerts and never for ritual purposes show the centrality of Western music values in the selected folk choral pieces.

Although Lai and Wong seem to be advocating different degree of Westernization during interviews, such as Lai announces her liking for modulation, while Wong says she tries to shun away from modulation to make the pieces simple. However, modulation does not occur less frequently in Wong's pieces than in Lai's pieces. In certain cases some modulation are even more advanced than those of Lai's which are usually a tone or a semitone higher. Another example to contradict their sidings is that Lai never shuns away from using Western terms to describe the complicated structure and texture in her pieces e.g. 'canonic writing' in *Suriram* while Wong prefers to describe the canonic writing device in *Liling* as call and response. From these we are able to see both Lai and Wong are equally influenced by Western music at a similar degree.

Though elements of folk music abound the selected works, such as use of Malay rhythm, use of drones, oriental sounds of 4ths apart, improvisation, 'uncultivated' voice production, imitation of traditional instruments or use of folk sound symbols, sparse texture typical of folk music and so on, these are not central features of the selected pieces but are more like elements incorporated to make the pieces more folk-like. Moreover, most of these folk music elements are not limited to the Malay music culture exclusively.

The centrality of Western music influence in the selected pieces is most probably due to the training both the arrangers obtained under the Western music

education system since young. They have taken music performing graded examinations and graduated from music colleges or conservatories in the UK or Australia. (Please refer to the biography of the arrangers and conductors in the appendices for the details of music education obtained by the musicians.) Their music background, which is shaped by Western music education, influences them to impart to the choristers what and how they learn in the Western music system. For the arrangers, it is only natural that they use the musical tools and devices equipped during their long years of training under the Western music education system while arranging the selected works.

Both the arrangers and the conductors show the imbalance preference for Western music performance practice. From the instances of both Saw and Mak showing it was necessary to try many times before getting the sections marked *free tempo* in *Glimpse of Malaysia* right; and Mak trying to cancel the “natives’ call” which had been inserted and ever since practiced at the beginning section of *Lenggang Kangkung* in *Glimpse of Malaysia* since its premiere, it can be concluded that Western based musical execution are out of comfort zone for both the conductors as well.

Comparatively, conductors are more willing to give instructions based on western music standard and aesthetics. Both Lai and Wong exclaim their folk choral arrangements are not authentic folk music but belong to the genre of Western choral music, in line with Quadros’ view on choral music in South and Southeast Asia,

Structured as Western choirs, it is only natural that Western art music, African-American spirituals, and arrangements of popular and jazz standards form the core of the repertoire. Even where local composers have produced works, they are frequently arrangements of traditional folk songs, or pieces accompanied by instruments, and use Western chord progressions. (2012, p. 164)

Though the selected works are acknowledged by the arrangers themselves as Western choral music, the fact that the selected Malay folk choral works can be narrowed down as belonging to the genre of folk choral works hints the importance of folk elements in the selected pieces. Having examined the different degree of emphasis on the folk elements in the production and performances of the selected pieces, the positioning of the selected pieces in its genre of folk choral works can be attained. After comparing the characteristics of the selected pieces with existing performance practice and cultural musicology theories, it is found that the different degree of incorporation of folk elements in the selected folk choral works reveals musical borrowings, folk revival, hybridity, and appropriation for national identity as four types of processes and intentions involved in the production and performances of the selected pieces.

4.4.1 Musical Borrowings

With the dominion of Western music characteristics reflected and confession of the musicians in line with Quadros' observation of choral music in Southeast Asia as a Western genre, the selected folk choral works feature musical borrowings from the Malay folk music that are, like the borrowings of materials from the surrounding societies of Jews in Israel, "rearranged and adapted" (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983) in the new context of the Western choral art form.

According to Burkholder(1994), musical borrowings is the uses of existing music which encompass modeling, variations, paraphrasing, arranging, setting, cantus firmus, Medley, Quodlibet, stylistic allusion, cumulative setting, programmatic quotation, collage, patchwork and extended paraphrase etc. The musical borrowings in the selected folk choral works bear more resemblance to specific types of musical borrowings and those include variations, arranging, Medley, Quodlibet and, most

evidently found in the selected pieces, borrowings of folk tunes which Burkholder (1994) explains by citing example of the borrowing of Russian folk tunes in *The Rite of Spring*.

Having quoted Szulc's "concept of folk borrowing to specific mazurkas" (Milewski, 2000, p. 7), Milewski uses the term folk borrowing to denote borrowing of folk tunes and folk elements in Chopin mazurkas. Milewski goes on listing out the folk elements pointed out by Polish musicologist Zdzislaw Jachimecki in Chopin's Mazurka in F Op. 68 No. 3 as proof of folk borrowing: "The use of an open-fifth bass accompaniment; short, repeating motifs in a restricted melodic range; and the appearance of raised fourths." (Milewski, 2000, p. 10) Being a Western music art form engaging in folk borrowing just like the mazurkas, the selected folk choral works do share these folk elements at certain places, such as the use of 5ths, use of Malay rhythm, and imitation of traditional instruments, yet these borrowings are not acknowledged by arrangers. The only folk elements borrowed and acknowledged by Wong are the Malay folk tunes which are featured or borrowed in its entirety (J. P. Wong, personal communications, March 14th, 2013). (I heard Wong proclaim this after Mak started rehearsing Wong's folk choral works and perhaps this thinking was influenced by Mak because I heard Mak say the same thing during my interview with him) (C. H. Mak, personal communications, April 5th, 2013). When Wong said the whole folk melodies were the only folk elements borrowed, she also highlighted the structure of her folk choral works, consequently, is determined by the form of the folk songs.

The structure of Wong's pieces may remain the same as the folk songs, but the works are products of mindful arrangements just like the musical acculturation in Jewish music documented by Shiloah and Cohen (1983).

The musical style of the surrounding society influenced Jewish music. Borrowings, however, were not mechanically adopted, but rearranged and adapted... even when the melodic elements are wholly borrowed... (p. 232).

Shiloah and Cohen (1983) also observe certain trends about the borrowing of the entire folk tunes and folk elements in Jewish music:

Traditional ethnic tunes were frequently appropriated by modern composers and published under their name... In the field of fine arts, members of the so-called “Mediterranean School of Composition”... frequently borrowed elements or whole tunes from specific ethnic groups, or from a variety of traditions, to endow their work with an “Oriental” flavor. Such borrowings, however, were highly selective, sporadic and tainted by a tendency to exoticism. They were not intended to bring the music of any particular group to the attention of the wider public. Indeed, the identity of the group from which the borrowings were made often remained obscure (except in cases where the composer merely arranged ethnic songs for concert performance). The borrowings had, therefore, little, if any, feedback effect upon the image of the group in the wider Jewish society. (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983, p. 246)

Similar to the case described, Lai and Wong borrow the Malay folk tunes and adapt and rearrange the tunes under their names. The difference between the borrowings is the origins of the songs borrowed in the selected pieces never remain obscure. In fact, the folk choral pieces are named exactly the names of the folk songs borrowed. As the folk songs stay intact in the selected folk choral pieces and the names of the folk songs are showcased as titles of the pieces for easy recognition, folk music revival could be part of the intentions of the arrangers and commissioners for producing the selected pieces.

4.4.2 Folk Revival

Wong clarifies her goal is to expose children to more folk music. This intention of Wong resembles that of Cecil Sharp in his effort of reintroducing English folk songs to the English children which leads to English musical revival, as well as national revival during Edwardian era. Francmanis quotes Sharp's writing on the matter in *Folk-Song: Some Conclusions* (1907, p. 131-6,139):

...(the folk songs) were, as a communal and racial product, nothing less than the expression of national aims and ideals in musical idiom. Possessed of these 'race-products', the English child's knowledge and understanding of England and its inhabitants would be transformed. '[h]e will love them, the more, realize that he is united to them by the subtle bond of blood and of kinship, and become, in the highest sense of the word, a better citizen, and a truer patriot. (Francmanis, 2002, p. 7)

Writing for choirs consist of mostly Malaysian Chinese, Wong surely knows these children do not feel 'the subtle bond of blood and of kinship' with the revival of Malay folk songs through the choral repertoire, yet the folk songs do help fostering understanding of the Malay culture, which is the dominant culture in Malaysia. As understanding between races in a multiracial country is essential for harmonious living, children learning these folk songs can become 'a better citizen'.

Wong leverages on children's interest in choral singing to reintroduce the folk songs to them and hence there is a need to arrange them into four-part choral forms. This insight is shared by Francmanis who quotes Fox Strangways claiming harmonization is "a measure made necessary 'in order to get the songs sung'". (Francmanis, 2002, p. 10) Similarly, renowned Latvian school teacher and composer Jānis Cimze (1814-81), to whom revival of Latvian folk songs is indebted, adapted the musical arrangements of the collected folk songs in the German choral approach in his

attempt to revitalize “the imagery and themes addressed in the songs’ texts (which) resonated with the diverse experiences specific to the Latvian-speaking residents of the Baltic *gubernii*” (Karnes, 2005, p. 220-223) because “traditional modes of singing had, by the 1870s, been largely supplanted by choral singing on the Baltic German model”. (*ibid.*, p. 219)

When discussing about the complexity of the arrangements, Wong believes keeping folk choral music simple is a way to conserve the folk songs and to transmit the folk culture to children. Therefore she does not change the structure of the songs when arranging, and tries to make her choral arrangements more accessible. Jonathan Velasco, a renowned conductor who frequently works with musicians in the region, opined that her arrangements are good, because they are simple and enable the conductors to bring the most out of them, unlike some others which are complicated and wild, and not singable.

As Wong proclaims the structure of her folk choral pieces follows exactly the form of the folk songs, these pieces of hers belongs to the category of arrangement which Doliner (1987) defines whose “melodic, rhythmic and formal framework of the folkloric source remains unchanged and highly prominent.” (p. 53) In this respect, her arrangements should be considered as ‘conserved music’ according to the categorization of Israel ethnic music proposed by Shiloah & Cohen (1983).

Conserved: deliberate preservation of traditional, pre-immigration musical styles, edited and adapted for a new, external audience. Though members of the ethnic group may be interested in the dissemination of their music, the editing and adaptation is usually done by outsiders, professional musicians with a Western musical education. (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983, p. 239)

Indeed, Wong intends to preserve the Malay folk songs by arranging them for the children choirs, as mentioned consist of mainly Malaysian Chinese and hence can be considered as 'new, external audience'. In this case, it is not the 'members of the ethnic group', but 'outsiders' - Wong and Saw (the commissioner) who are both Malaysian Chinese and are professional musicians with Western musical education – who wish to transmit the Malay folk culture. As described by Shiloah & Cohen (1983, p.239), Wong's folk choral works share many features of the 'conserved' Jewish ethnic music. The most obvious one is the transcription of the folk tunes into Western notation and having the choristers learn and perform from the score for modern Western audience or westernized audiences such as panel, fellow choristers and musicians at regional or international choral festivals. The other important feature is the 'simplification of stylization' such as 'ornamentation, rhythmic freedom and complexity, as well as inherited vocal intonations' and singing tone are neglected for easier rendering by 'outsider' choristers. Just like the aims of "Center for the Integration of the Jewish Oriental Heritage", Wong and Saw intends to "propagate the musical heritage of the [Malay] communities by helping to adapt it to a modern Western audience." (*ibid.*)

Though simplifying the Malay folk style based on Western musical convention for the aims of suiting the pieces to the Western ears, Wong nevertheless did not wish to have her folk choral works sound as Westernized as it is now. She expressed her wish to learn more about folk music elements and equip herself with folk or non-western music arranging devices and tools at her disposal for her future arranging (J. P. Wong, personal communications, March 14, 2013). In fact, she felt lacking in options and therefore had to fall back on her Western music training when she was arranging the selected folk choral works. When listening to the recordings of her folk choral works, she is not satisfied with the overtly Western interpretation, which makes the works sound more Westernized than expected. For instance, she complained about the singing

tone of Dithyrambic Singers was too round while listening to their recording of *The Glimpse of Malaysia*. However, Lai shows an opposite stand in terms of performance practice of her folk choral works. Lai expresses she requires tonal blending and when arranging the folk choral works she plays with text, overlapping the verses and choruses and so on, seemingly in contrast to Wong's ideal of keeping the pieces simple and follow the form of the folk songs.

However, both arrangers reveal their attempts to insert as much folk or non-western music elements into the selected works. For instance both arrangers incorporate drones and pedal points, both of them included sections which are supposed to be performed with free tempo, and despite Lai's emphasis on creative arranging ideas, they are mostly manifested through texture and harmony but never really through the structure of the pieces, hence the structure of Lai's pieces also follows the form of the folk songs like those of Wong's. The arrangers' attempt to incorporate folk elements and musical influences from other cultures into the selected works suggests the works contribute to a type of nativistic musical revival which is described as the following:

Nativistic musical revival – This is a special subcategory of musical preservation (Nettl's term, 1978:131). A culture that has been dominated by another and has neglected its own music eventually may become aware of the danger of that music's possible extinction and make efforts to revitalize it. A so-called nativistic revival of this kind may be made for nationalistic, racial prestige, historical, nostalgic, touristic, and artistic reasons. For example... Israel has been attempting to revive its ancient folk dance, which is frequently mentioned in the Talmud and the Bible, in a form that is suitable for modern audiences. The revivalist Israeli folk dances combine Chassidic and Yemenite Jewish elements with those of various of their host nations while in exile, and with modern, work-inspired musical ideas (Kaufman 1951:55-7). As this example shows, it is often in fact not possible to revive a dance or piece in its ancient, so-called

authentic form, not only because ancient styles are no longer known, but also, as has been argued above, because the concept of pure, primeval authenticity is an unrealistic one. (Kartomi, 1981, p. 237-238).

Considering the selected works combine Malay folk elements with musical influences from different cultures which the arrangers are exposed to, and also with 'modern, work inspired musical ideas' (especially in the case of Lai's interesting arrangements), it can be deduced that the improbability of reviving a single culture in its purest form holds true in the case of the selected works.

Among the musical elements from various culture incorporated into the selected works, Western music influence, as mentioned, plays the most dominant role even in the plausible context of folk revival concerning the selected works. Kartomi (1981) attributes the adoption of broad Western music principles, "such as equal temperament or harmony", by any traditional culture to

(1) the halo of dominant culture prestige in colonial situations; (2) the need for artistic communication among groups lacking a common culture; or (3) material or political advantage, or the forces of commercialism. The initial and sustaining impulse and impetus for musical transculturation is normally extramusical. (p. 244-245)

Many folk music revival movements are accompanied by the utilization of broad Western music principles and the Latvian folk music revival in the 1870s can exemplify this. Cimze's arrangements of his collection of Latvian folk songs, which concretized the Latvian folk music revival, are in the German choral style which was introduced by, paradoxically, "Evangelical Lutheran pastors seeking to extinguish the Latvians' folksong traditions" (Karnes, 2005, p. 201).

In the United States in 1935, Gershwin rode on the trend of urban folk music revival, ignited by the Lomaxes to revitalize African American folk songs, and set folk

music of the black people into his folk opera – *Porgy and Bess* during a time when American was seeking to “elevate the art of the common person” (Allen, 2004, p. 255) under the hegemony of the Anglo-American tradition. Similarly, still under the post-British-colonial Hegemony, the revitalization of Malay folk elements in the selected pieces does result in an elevation of the status of Malay folk music among the conductors and choristers who perform the pieces. For instance, for once Mak instructed for ‘uncultivated’ singing tone for a section in *The Glimpse of Malaysia*. This decision of his caused a certain astonishment after witnessing his insistence on maintaining a smooth *legato* singing for *Liling* against Wong’s will.

With folk music elements, either exclusive to the Malay folk music culture or not, and the dominion of Western music principles come into play, folk music revival in the selected pieces could be, as the way Feintuch (2006) describes, “(the earlier impression of music revivals...) held as contaminated, spoiled, and distracted...”. However, he justifies the validity of revival with its multi-factorial nature and supports with conviction that “Revival” is “the word for the waxing and waning, and shape-shifting which happens frequently in the worlds of music” (Feintuch, 2006, p. 2). By saying this, he also justifies the soundness of the dynamics involved in the fusion of Malay folk music and Western choral idiom in the selected pieces to be termed as a process to revitalize Malay folk music.

4.4.3 Hybridity

As continuity to the previous section, this section begins with the reiteration of both arrangers make individual musical choices, regardless of the origins, to meet the purpose they want to achieve in their arrangements and adaptations. The programmatic nature of Wong’s *Jong Jong Inai* in *Glimpse of Malaysia* is delineated by the thickening

of texture, which is required to be performed in the manner of terraced dynamics in Baroque music. While it struck a chord with Wong when she heard that section resembled terraced dynamics in Baroque period, yet Wong revealed that she had never thought of the origin of the idea. On the contrary, she questioned the need to consider the origins of the musical ideas as an arranger. While Lai also exclaims she does not care whether the 'Malay' rhythm she used resembles or is interpreted as Malay, bossa or rhumba rhythm. The dubious possibilities of the origins of different music elements and the dominion of Western music culture over others in the selected pieces lead us to the theory of hybridity

Horowitz (1999) defines hybridity as the following:

...Hybridity as the process by which musicians combine preexisting, and often seemingly disparate, genres in their creative practice. For musicians, this hybrid composition involving their choice of musical forms and poetic lyrics is a conscious, strategic act. Hybridity is thoroughly intentional – an aspect of artistic interactions in a multicultural and multivocal social field... As an analytic perspective, hybridity shifts the focus from artistic pieces and mixed wholes to the performing artist's agency; it explores her of his aesthetic, social, and political intentions in selecting and conjoining particular compositional elements... (p. 450)

Indeed, when both arrangers neglect the origins of the musical elements incorporated into the selected works, the center of attention becomes focusing on the arrangers' intentions and backgrounds. The agencies of the arrangers become more conspicuous at the arrangement sections, which feature exceptional creative ideas of the individuals, such as the beginning of Wong's *Geylang, si paku Geylang* which undergoes a three-fold modulation highlighting chromatic median relationship (third relations), and Lai's manipulation of texts and texture – overlapping of chorus and verses, among other special musical features.

According to Doliner (1987), there are two types of arrangements: harmonization and sophisticated harmonization, both of which maintain “the melodic, rhythmic and formal framework of the folkloric source” (p. 53) with the latter possessing a more complex harmonization and “a higher degree of diversity.” (*ibid.*) Comparing the selected works by both of the arrangers, Wong’s arrangement can be termed as arrangement with harmonization as she advocates simplicity in her arrangement while the harmonization and special musical treatments are for the purpose of making the folk songs more interesting to choristers. On the other hand, Lai’s arrangement should be categorized as arrangement with sophisticated harmonization in view of the myriad of altered, extended chords and advanced harmony embedded in her folk choral works. In fact, Lai takes pride in saying, “Others usually do this, but I do this.” A case in point is while pedal points are usually in the bass part, as mentioned in the analysis, she assigns a pedal tone on the dominant note in the soprano part in *Suriram*.

Lai’s focus on her own intention and interesting ideas makes the arranging process of her folk choral pieces resemble that of the ethnic fine art music as defined by Shiloah & Cohen (1983):

While the composer’s ethnic identity is clearly preserved and emphasized in his style of composition and performance, his claims are set higher than in the preceding cases. By weaving the ethnic element into essentially heterogenetic compositions, he claims recognition of his work as a stylistic variety of fine art music and thereby asks for legitimation of his own status as an “artist”. (p. 248)

While Jewish composers of ethnic fine art music may “gain acceptance by the wider musical public”, and have their works regarded as ‘art’ without the necessity of “acculturation to Western standards” (*ibid.*), Lai’s folk choral works appear to rely on

her command over the Western choral music idiom in order to gain the recognition the selected works enjoy now. It might be difficult for Lai's *Potong Padi* to be published by Earthsongs via Professor André de Quadros, and have the piece sung at many international choral festivals (Dolan, 2012) and used for repertoire study at a number of regional and world choral symposiums in Singapore, Australia, Germany, San Antonio and Minnesota without Lai's considerably good command over the Western choral idiom. This claim is supported by Swedenburg's account on the popularity of hybrids of Western music and other traditional music:

Part of the appeal of the exotic commodity of "hybrid music" is the excitement of finding reflections of the West in "other" places, and the reassurance that "others" are becoming more like us. (Swedenburg, 2001, p. 35)

Moreover, Lai takes pride in rendering the folk songs into the complexity associated with and meeting the standards of Western choral art music. As mentioned, she never shuns from describing the arranging devices used in the Western art music terms. Lai's emphasis on Western music culture in her folk choral works is in line with what Horowitz (1999) states about Hybridity: "Hybridity also presumes that cultures are in contact, most likely on unequal terms, that some traditions are dominant and others are marginalized, and that musical institutions are controlled by a dominant culture." (p. 450-451)

However, though Western music is dominant in Lai's folk choral works, Lai does not wish to promote it like Bartok did in his hybrid music aiming to portray the Hungarian character as the dominant culture. Gold & Revill (2006) clarifies "Bartok envisaged integrating foreign ethnic elements within a Hungarian-dominated style" (p. 63) and quotes Brown's restating of Demény's observation to prove Bartok's ambition to raise the status of one music over the others:

In other words, his model of Hungarian culture, even at this least chauvinistic state of his thinking on the subject, echoed Herder's isolationist-diffusionist model of German culture. (Gold & Revill, 2006, p. 63)

As a matter of fact, different from the intention manifested by Bartok's hybrid composition in which he retains Hungarian folk music as 'home' music, which is always capable of transforming other 'new' music (including Western music) (Brown cited in Gold & Revill, 2006, p. 63), the Western choral factors in the selected pieces are definitely not more submissive to the folk music and neither do the arrangers intend to push Malay folk music to a higher status than Western art music in their choral arrangements. On the other hand, although Western art music elements play a more dominant part in the selected works, both arrangers do not emphasize on promoting western art music, when producing the selected works, as much as focusing on making the arrangements interesting. Recognizing these attributes of the 'hybridity' manifested by the selected works, we can safely acknowledge the agencies of the arrangers in the phenomenon of Malaysian folk choral music as they put their geniuses into making the hybrid component of the selected works fulfill their aesthetic and cultural intentions.

4.4.4 Appropriation for National Musical Identity

Saw is the main commissioner of all of Wong's local folk choral works and she also shows her support for folk music-specific performance practice. As mentioned in the background, her motivation to commission local folk choral works results from the difficulty in getting hold of choral works arranged by Malaysians that could be used to represent Malaysian music culture at regional and international choral festivals and competitions. The lack of these works, which could identify Malaysia, compels Saw and other conductors to use regional folk choral works, mostly Malay folk choral works,

arranged by composers from Singapore, Philippines and Indonesia. Saw wishes to turn this problem around by commissioning and encouraging more local choral works by Malaysian arrangers. When choosing songs that could identify the local musical culture to be commissioned, like in the cases of commissioning Wong to appropriate local folk songs into the Western choral idiom, Saw is driven to look for the roots and heritage of the region. She uses folk songs in the Malay-archipelago and she found a collection of folk songs from Sarawak compiled by Chong Pek Lin, researcher and lecturer in Batu Lintang Teachers College, very useful. Fam Qing Rui, conductor of Johor Bahru Chamber Choir saw the same problem of lack of representational works. Besides encouraging more Malaysian musicians to try their hands on arranging local choral music, she commissioned Lai to write a piece of local folk choral music and resulting in the conception of *Sapu Tangan*, which Lai sourced from an Indonesian source.

However, it is controversial to use shared cultural heritage, in this case folk songs whose origins are disputed, for appropriation in search for a national musical identity. No less of the controversy sparked when Gershwin underscored “jazz, ragtime, Negro spirituals and blues, southern mountain songs, country fiddling, and cowboy song” as legitimate folk styles that “can be employed in the creation of American art-music” (Allen, 2004, p. 248) while searching for national music of America. Along the same line, there were clashes which almost exacerbated into battles over the ownership of cultural icons such as folksong *Rasa Sayang* between Indonesia and Malaysia, and minor squabbles among Southeast Asia countries. Nevertheless, the fact that these icons are part of the shared cultural heritages of the “Malay World”, which defies “present-day international demarcations” (Chong, 2012, p. 7) and justifies the act of appropriating regional folk songs for creation of representative works of the Malaysian musical culture.

What makes the products specifically Malaysian is that the arrangers must be Malaysians. They need to be “the spokesman” and “the mouthpiece” of the folk just as Shakespeare does to the English folk.

To propagate... a knowledge and understanding of the Shakespearean drama is to nourish and quicken the spirit of nationalism, to stimulate the growth of a pure and wholesome patriotism. (Excerpt from *Musical Times* quoted by Francmanis, 2002, p. 9)

There is an “intimate and abiding relationship” between the purposeful appropriation of the arrangers and the folk songs which embody the “national ideals and aspiration of a (the) community” (*ibid.*) In this sense, the folk choral works of the arrangers, of a particular nationality, can therefore be regarded as agencies carrying national bearing of that particular country.

As appropriation involves bold attempts in incorporating “different elements from various cultural forms, removes them from their contexts and reprocesses them in the new contexts” (Degirmenci, 2006, p. 62), unfortunately, it frequently connotes negative meaning to the parties who claim ownership to the cultural icons. “Dozens of Indonesian artists and hundreds of others staged rallies at the Denpasar Cultural Park in protest of the alleged appropriation” (Chong, 2012, p. 2) and “...protecting that culture from outside appropriation and misinterpretation” (Allen, 2004, p. 244) are two examples among many which prove appropriation by ‘outsiders’ is undesirable to ethnic and regional advocates. The commissioners and the arrangers of the selected works, though they are not of Western origin, but they are Chinese Malaysian musically trained under the Western music system, are ‘outsiders’ both ethnically and culturally. When they adapt the Malay folk songs to meet the convention of Western choral music, the issue of authenticity and its problem do appear. The lack of proper immersion into the Malay culture compels the arrangers to use stereotypic traditional elements such as

imitation of *Angklung* sound and incorporate Malay rhythms with superficial understanding of them, as the arrangers focus merely onto making the folk choral works to be acknowledged as part of Asian choral music by the regional and, especially, international choral communities. One marked instance of this is the supposedly *keroncong* rhythm which did not sound like *keroncong* to Malay *gambus* player Abdullah bin mohd Redza who is familiar with Malay music as a cultural and ethnical insider.

These characteristics of the selected works – predominantly in the Western style, using stereotypic traditional elements, produced and performed by people outside the ethnic group for an external audience – echo the attributes of the pseudoethnic music in Israel categorized by Shiloah & Cohen (1983):

Pseudoethnic: the artistic transmutation of ethnic musical forms by producers and performers from outside the ethnic group for an external audience. While the works are presented as ethnic music, their form has undergone such far-reaching changes to Western stylistic patterns that, properly speaking, they no longer belong to the realm of ethnic music. This indeed is what happened to many of the songs, composed by Jews of Western origin or rearranged, harmonized and orchestrated by them... The ethnic label on music of this type refers, at most, to superficial imitations of traditional elements incorporated in the new songs. The outsider composers, arrangers and performers are most anxious to meet the standards of the commercialized light music currently popular on the market, rather than render traditional ethnic musical patterns. Despite their similarities with other light music, such as the use of big orchestras and overwhelming sonorities, pieces in the “Pseudoethnic” style are fraught with stereotypic “Oriental” elements, such as Spanish rhythms and harmonies. (p. 242)

Nevertheless, these negative attributes of the selected folk choral works do not render them as invalid representative works of Malaysia musical culture. The traditional

elements in this style of music are “tacitly incorporated”, as revealed in the case of Israel ethnic music, because “the national institutions were keen on creating a distinct Jewish national identity” but “eager to ‘integrate’ – to acculturate and assimilate various ethnic groups into one ‘nation’” (*ibid.*, p. 245). In the selected folk choral pieces, besides the name of folk songs being kept as title of the works, the folk musical elements incorporated in the works are somehow ‘sweepingly’ implied rather than precisely delineated to their details and accuracy. This may account for the *keroncong* rhythm being unrecognizable to a Malay ‘insider’. Although this is partly due to the negligence of the arrangers who should have delved into detailed study of the Malay folk music, yet this negligence can be a result of the arrangers’ subconscious viewpoint for a need to ‘integrate’ – assimilate and acculturate - minor stylistic differences of the dominant Malay culture afforded by the cultural understanding of different ethnicities in Malaysia rather than emphasizing on any particular musical detail from a particular culture in Malaysia.

Young (2006) argues that the cultural experience argument which claims that “artists cannot successfully employ a style unless they have had experiences available only to members of a culture” cannot be true as even Amiri Baraka, a famous blues musician who had expressed he did not believe a musician can learn to “produce the blues well except via ‘*the peculiar social, cultural, economic, and emotional experience of a black man in America*’” (p. 457), admits some musicians are able to appropriate from African-American culture and produce something valuable such as the case of Beiderbecke who appropriated black New Orleans brass style successfully. From another source, Young quotes Jones also defending white Jazz musicians such as Beiderbecke who “make creative re-use of what he had appropriated and he produced good music.” (*ibid.*, p. 459) Moreover, there are musicians whose works represent styles the origin of which the musicians do not belong to. “The greatest composer in the

French baroque style was Jean-Baptiste Lully (born Giovanni Battista Lulli in Florence). Arguably the most proficient master of the Italian baroque style was *Il caro Sassone*, George Frederic Handel.” (Young, 2006, p. 460) These arguments of Young justify the validity of the selected works arranged by ‘outsiders’ as representative works of the Malaysian music culture.

The musical processes mentioned above, such as improvisation and creative re-use, are classified as “innovative content appropriation” which is characterized by appropriating “a style or a motif from a culture but use it in a way that would not be used in the culture in which it originated” (p. 458). This specific type of appropriation concerns the selected works. For instance, some of the Malay folk melodies are employed and presented into *Klangfarbenmelodie*, which is a Western arranging device unknown to Malay music culture. As mentioned, other than musical elements from Western music culture, elements incorporated into the selected works include musical elements from folk cultures, Jazz and musical theater, such as the use of pentatonic scales and drones. These musical elements can be termed as general folk elements, due to their existence in many folk music cultures. The plethora of jazzy chords and harmonies used in Lai’s folk choral works and Wong’s quotation of melodic lines from Shirley Bassey’s song – Big Spender, among others, are also adapted into pieces. The simultaneous utilization of coexisting music elements from different music cultures can be explained as *Musical compartmentalization*.

Members of a bi- or multi-ethnic society may absorb during childhood the musical styles of their own as well as of another ethnic group with which they have lived in close contact, keeping each music separately compartmentalized in their minds... much as a child living in a bilingual situation can learn to speak two languages well. (Kartomi, 1981, p. 237)

This depiction matches the narratives of musical experience by Wong. She mentioned arranging the Malay folk songs makes her reminisce her childhood when she was surrounded by familiar Malay folk tunes (Lai implied this too); at other times she always saw her parents danced to *irama twist*, which is an adaptation of the Western Twist dance to the Malay *joget* dance, while dressed in *baju kebaya* and traditional Malay clothing. Being music students or musicians receiving Western music training while being exposed to other different musical cultures since young allows musical compartmentalization to happen in the arrangers' minds. Musical compartmentalization asserts its impact on the selected folk choral works when the arrangers are compelled to draw on different music elements they have been exposed to. This signifies that the selected folk choral works are accurate portraits of the musical influences a Malaysian musician can have throughout his/her life experience in the country. This renders the selected works as valid representative works of Malaysian musical identity.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter begins by analyzing the selected works according to the inherent different musical elements: tempo & rhythmic features, melodic features, words, texture & polyphony, harmonic language, formal elements, and timbral arrangement & vocal technique. The analysis provides insights into the intention, interpretation and stylistic features in performance practice study of the selected pieces. In the investigation on whether these folk choral works should abide to authentic folk flavor or be treated as a Western genre with borrowed theme from the folk musical culture, it is found that the selected pieces are westernized musical works which manifest intentions and processes characteristic of musical borrowings, folk revival, hybridity, and appropriation for

national musical identity in their respective manners as discussed. As a summary to the outcome of this research, the next chapter entails the conclusion of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This chapter provides a summary of findings that were obtained in this study on the integration of Malay folk music into the Western choral genre by Lai and Wong by looking into whether the selected Malay folk choral works are predominantly Western choral works merely employing traditional music elements in order to be recognized as folk choral works, or re-contextualized Malay folk songs which are to be performed according to the authentic characteristics of the traditional music so as to revitalize the folk music culture.

5.2 Summary of Findings

After this research has been conducted for a year, the research objectives centered on issues of performance practice, stylistic features and composers' intention have been met. This research has revealed new theoretical findings in these issues concerning a Western music genre amalgamating with traditional music and its elements.

The analysis carried out for the performance practice study of the selected pieces answered the research questions: What are the styles of arrangement or composition manifested in the selected folk choral pieces? Did the arrangers aim at portraying the Malay folk musical culture in the selected works? How is the performance practice of the selected Malaysian folk choral works as determined by the conductors and arrangers? It also provides evidence for the investigation on whether these folk choral works should abide to authentic folk flavor or be treated as a Western genre. In the quest for the positioning of the selected works in its wider genre of folk choral works, it is found

that the selected pieces are westernized musical works which manifest intentions and processes characteristic of musical borrowings, folk revival, hybridity, and appropriation for national musical identity after comparing the characteristics of the selected pieces with existing performance practice and cultural musicology theories.

5.2.1 Westernized Musical Works

The general characteristics of the selected Malay folk choral works are documented as follow. Both arrangers explore into Western polyphonic texture to enrich the folk song arrangements. On the other hand, harmony plays an indispensable role in the selected folk choral works by both the arrangers who are trained under the Western music system. First of all, both of the arrangers use simple harmonic progression, although Lai incorporates many types of more complicated harmonies. From the simple harmonic progressions in Wong's pieces, her use of the "inherent" harmony suggested by the folk songs themselves is heavily influenced by the harmonic conventions of Western art, church and musical theatre music. Although Lai prefers complicated harmonies, she does incorporate simpler harmonic progressions for certain purposes, but some 'jazzy' harmony is retained to give a "fuller feel". In addition, the works of both the arrangers feature borrowed chords. Wong's harmony is usually simple but she uses borrowed chords to solve problem with harmonic ambiguity at 'unconventional' passages such as modal passages.

Most of Wong's arrangements include piano accompaniment. On the contrary, Lai usually writes *a capella* choral works. For both cases, one may infer the influence of their western music training on the selected choral works. In terms of arranging device, *klangfarbenmelodie* is used in the selected works by both the arrangers. Both the arrangers emphasized the effectiveness of this device in urging all choristers to listen to

each other in order to produce a flowing, coherent sound. The other criterion for choristers to bear in mind is when singing the selected pieces, is although folk singing method is used, conductors, and sometimes the arrangers of the folk choral music themselves, still prefer Western vocal production to the folk vocal sound.

These considerably central traits of Western music influences featured in the selected pieces signify these works are Westernized products rather than modernized. Moreover, there are traits indicating rendering of folk music elements to be out of the comfort zone of at least one conductor. This can be exemplified by Mak's insistence in rendering a melodic line *legato*, which is regarded as affiliated to Western art music especially in the classic period, against Wong's will. And contrary to the extemporaneous ornamentation proliferates in true folk music (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983), Mak approaches the only ornamentation sign, in *The Glimpse of Malaysia*, (see Figure 4.19) from a rather Western point of view which bases on notation. The affinity of the arrangers and first interpreters of the selected works to Western music influence leads to the theory of the selected pieces as Westernized works involved in Musical borrowings from the Malay music culture.

5.2.1.1 Musical Borrowings

Folk music practices and elements are borrowed and adapted in the new context of the selected choral works. Improvisation, which is interpreted as a device closer to folk music than Western art music, is an arranging process both arrangers undergo during the course of arranging. Also, another type of polyphonic texture, not those associated with Western vocal music but those resulted from the practice of extemporizing variations of melody simultaneously in some folk music culture, is exhibited in Wong's works. Among the borrowings of folk material, the most

conspicuous borrowing is the borrowings of whole Malay folk tunes with the names of folk song remain as title of the arrangements. However, they are still mindful arrangements carefully devised and delineated by the arrangers.

The following shows mindfully devised music features in the selected works. First of all, texture is used by both the arrangers as a device to delineate programmatic effect. For example, the interesting texture of the overlapping verse against chorus, which Burkholder (1985) terms as “*quodlibet* or medley” is attempted by Lai. In terms of harmony, the arrangers’ effort to create conjunct movement in the voices, especially chromatic lines in the bass line result in more intense harmonic progression. In Lai’s works, harmony is also used for drama purposes coupling with other devices. Lai does not only use borrowed chords but she always try to avoid conventional harmony by adding a layer of interesting harmony on top of the basic progression by means of chords substitution using borrowed, extended and altered chords. On the other hand, both the arrangers pay attention to devise introductions to the selected works for various effects. Likewise, both arrangers exhibit their signature codas to conclude their pieces. Wong explains the use of upbeat codas to conclude her Malay folk choral works is to match the cheerful and happy impression she has over Malay folk songs. In employing modulation, the arrangers demonstrate the use of modulation to clearly signify point of demarcation in the selected choral works; while modulation to closely-related key is incorporated to heighten built-up climax and mood change. Ironically, modulation to remote keys is used only by Wong, who intends to keep her folk arrangements and devices simple.

5.2.1.2 Folk Revival

The structure of the selected Malay folk choral works is based on form of the folk songs. This practice brings to mind folk singers improvise over fixed structure. Most of Wong's works abide to form of the folk songs except for the Medley *A Glimpse of Malaysia*. She intends to make her selected works simple in order to disseminate the Malay folk songs to the children who participate in choral singing activities. Leveraging on a considerably big group of children interested in choral music activities, Wong's purpose of using her Malay folk choral arrangements to educate children about the folk songs resembles that of Sharp's to produce better patriots by reintroducing folk songs to the children in the folk revival movement in Edwardian England. The simple structure of the arrangements, in fact by both Lai and Wong, follow the form of the folk songs and this aspect of the selected works makes the pieces share characteristics of "conserved" ethnic music as categorized by Shiloah & Cohen (1983).

As in other folk music, the biphonic texture of sustaining a drone or pedal point is inexorable to the arrangers when arranging the selected folk choral works. In Wong's description of arranging process, she hints the use of drones emanates 'folk sound' as she says many folk musics such as Scottish bagpipe music feature drones. It is also hinted that she incorporated the drones into her folk choral pieces subconsciously without realizing its folk connotation. The incorporation of pentatonic scales, which is general attribute to many folk music cultures, by both the arrangers also show that both Lai and Wong inserted various folk music elements, including general folk music traits existing in many folk music cultures, into their works without identifying the origins of the elements. This shows the association of the selected pieces with Nativistic revival works.

In terms of vocal technique, both Lai and Wong demand folk vocal sound for their folk choral works but Wong, most probably influenced by Saw, shows much more

affinity for the traditional vocal sound than Lai. Wong's persistence to stick to the folk vocal sounds has influenced Mak and choristers in accepting the 'uncultivated' voice when singing her folk choral works. Although these arrangements do induce acceptance of the folk music among conductors and choristers, Lai and Wong do not intend to raise the position of the Malay folk music as folk music advocates do when they use Western music as a vehicle to elevate the status of folk music such as in the case of folk opera - *Porgy and Bess* amidst the urban folk music revival. Like other folk revival music, the selected works also present problems with authenticity. Nevertheless, scholars find ways to play down the issue of authenticity in music hybrids aiming at reviving folk music. One of these scholar is Feintuch (2006) who argues music revival connotes "waxing and waning" (p. 2) of different musics and hence justifies plurality in folk revival music.

5.2.1.3 Hybridity

In timbral arrangement, the different neutral syllables incorporated by Wong represent the sounds of different instruments, or scat singing in jazz music. Her changeable answer indicates Wong does not mind whether the musical elements incorporated are of Western or Malay folk music influences just like Lai. These heterogenetic influences manifested signify the selected works share characteristics of hybridity. In terms of pronunciation of the Malay words, while Lai does instruct for clarity of consonants provided the steady release of air stipulated in Western singing technique is not compromised, Wong demands the imploding of the beginning and end consonants. Wong requires singers to implode the consonants following the distinct pronunciation of the Malay language although she did not seem to assign any cultural connotation to the instruction. On the other hand, programmatic music is featured in the works of both the arrangers. Instead of attributing programmatic features in her selected

works to influence of Malay music, as claimed by Chopyak (1987), Wong responds that those sections have more to do with Debussy's music when asked for the influence. However, she questions whether there is a need for one to confirm where the music influence comes from when arranging music. Lai also expresses she does not care whether the Malay rhythm she used is interpreted as bossa, rhumba or Malay rhythm. These characteristics of the selected pieces whose influences are not given importance show arrangers do not have a specific intention to highlight either Western or Malay folk music culture. On the other hand, the fact that an entire concert was dedicated to Wong to showcase her folk arrangements and Lai is always hired to conduct master classes on interpreting her arrangements illustrate the significance of the role of the arrangers in the selected works. The focus is shifted from the influences of works to the agency of the composers or arrangers in hybrid music.

In terms of resolution of dissonant harmonies, there are a number of unresolved chords, especially the unresolved extended chords. Lai explains she does not take pain in making sure everything is properly resolved because she depends on the spontaneous lines and chords which occur in her inner ear and already has the sound and rules of harmony ingrained. The sophisticated harmonization in Lai's works signifies the arranger's dependence on her command of Western art music in order to claim recognition as a fine artist, unlike Jewish ethnic musicians who were able to gain acceptance as artists without relying on the prestige of Western art music (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983). Though hybridity presumes certain cultures to be dominant over others, the dominion of Western music influences in the selected works does not aim to present an 'idealized, home' culture which is able to "transform other new music" (Gold & Revill, 2006, p. 63) as manifested by the hybrid characteristics in Bartok's compositions.

5.2.1.4 Appropriation for National Identity

To the arrangers, the intended Oriental sound and Western sound is determined by 'signature' intervals between lines: Oriental sound is maintained by keeping the lines in a 4th or a 5th apart, while the Western sound is perceived to be formed by consonant intervals of 3rds and 6ths. In the selected works, the "Western sound" becomes the norm. The arrangers rely on these "sound symbols" (Hill, 2005) to engender "folk sound" because the arrangers are outsiders both culturally and ethnically to the Malay folk music elements they appropriated, as they are Malaysian-Chinese who are trained under the Western music system. The fact that the arrangers settled for stereotypic and oriental elements as the selected works are mainly targeted at westerner-audience qualifies the pieces as pseudoethnic pieces (Shiloah & Cohen, 1983, p. 242).

There is quite a prevalent use of Malay Rhythm as a device to make the arrangements resemble Malay folk music. For instance Lai claims she uses *keroncong* rhythm in *Sapu Tangan*; while Wong says Malay rhythm is used at the beginning of *Lenggang Lenggang Kangkung*. However, the fact that Wong is not able to pinpoint the rhythm she used is actually derived from the *inang* rhythmic pattern as pointed out by Dr. Nasir (director of UM Cultural Center); and a professional Malay traditional musician strongly assert that the specified rhythm used in *Sapu Tangan* is not *keroncong* suggests the Malay folk music elements are 'sweepingly' implied rather than delineated to its accuracy. The limited degree of familiarity of the arrangers with Malay folk music shows there is a need to integrate the minor stylistic differences and assimilating differences in the understanding or impression of the dominant Malay culture afforded by different ethnicities in Malaysia. "Innovative content appropriation" by Young (2006, p. 408) further upholds the validity of the selected works, which are arranged by outsiders of the Malay music culture, as representative works of the national musical identity.

Quotation of popular melodies is found in a number of Wong's works. The quotation indicates her feeling for these Malay song arrangements' affinity to musical theatre and popular music. On the other hand, modulation by half a step and a step higher which exhibits the influence of pop music in this aspect is widely used in the selected pieces. Both the arrangers show a trend of using rhythmic augmentation to create varying moods at the end of their works. Wong says the rhythmic augmentation at the end of *Nona Nona*, and *Ondeh Ondeh*, is also inspired by musical theatre. The different type of musical ideas of influences from musical theatre, pop, jazz, Western art and Malay folk music which emerged in the minds of the arrangers during the course of arranging signify musical compartmentalization – different musical styles absorbed and kept separately compartmentalized in the mind since young (Kartomi, 1981) – applies to the arrangers. This signifies the selected folk choral works are accurate portraits of the musical influences Malaysian musicians can have throughout their life experiences in the country and renders the selected works as valid representative works of Malaysia musical identity.

5.3 Impact of Research

As this research concerns the amalgamation of Western choral art form and local folk songs in Malaysia and relies on the musicians' different degree of incorporation of the musical elements from different cultures, Western and Malay culture in this case, the cultural analysis delineated alongside the analysis of music elements may have contributed to the field of cultural musicology; the analysis documented which emphasizes on the integration of sound and contexts may also have contributed to the ethnomusicological inquiry onto performance practice - the study of music performance in social, cultural, and physical contexts (Gerard Béhague cited by Herndon, 1986, p. 346).

Previous researchers conducted similar projects on the contribution of individuals who revived his people's music by harmonizing the music for his people who had been acculturated to Western singing custom such as Karnes (2005), Francmanis (2002); on individual composers' output in employing their folk music culture into Western music forms or hybrids influenced predominantly by Western music for both insider- and outsider-audience such as Milewski (2000) on Chopin mazurkas and Gold & Revill (2006) on Bartok; on individual composers, who are westerners, attempted to elevate the status of folk music belonging to other ethnic groups by incorporating the music into their works which are based on Western music idioms for consumption of westerners such as Allen (2004) on *Porgy and Bess*; on employment of music culture of an ethnicity in Western music idioms with the aid of national institutions for 'improving' or 'modernizing' the traditional music culture such as Degirmenci (2006) and Hill (2005). Compared to the previous researches on similar themes, this research focuses on the act of integrating Malay folk music into the Western choral music idiom by Malaysian Chinese arrangers, who are non-westerners trained under the Western music system and are both ethnical and cultural outsiders to the Malay music culture, for audience who are westerners or outsiders to the folk culture. By defining the concerned arrangers and conductors in this perspective, I hope to have contributed academics views on this ethnomusicological scenario.

The study of the stylistic features of the selected Malay folk choral works entails the exploration into the poiesis and aesthesis of the composers. This reveals the arrangers' intention and processes in producing the selected works as discussed: Musical borrowings, folk revival, hybridity and appropriation for national identity. The theoretical findings documented in the discussion of the selected works in terms of these issues may have contributed to the academic inquiries in these issues. A case in point is, similar to many folk revival movements, the production and performance of the selected

Malay folk choral works are accompanied by the utilization of broad Western music principles (Karnes, 2005). However, different from Sharp's folk revival in Edwardian England (Francmanis, 2002), the Malaysian choristers, who are mostly Chinese Malaysian, do not feel the bond of kinship when singing the selected Malay folk arrangements, but gain a better understanding of the Malay folk music and hence the dominant Malay culture, and may become better citizens. In the discussion on appropriation of Malay folk music elements for national musical identity, though it is controversial to claim the origin of the Malay folk tunes as they are shared cultural artifacts of the region (especially with Indonesia), the commissioners, arrangers, conductors and performers of the selected works have no doubt that the works can represent Malaysian national identity as long as the arrangers are Malaysians. The arrangers become the spokesman of the folk as Shakespeare did to the English folk (Francmanis, 2002).

As mentioned in the literature review, there are most scholarly articles dedicated to performance practice of European choral music but there is a lack of research studying Malaysian folk music in a Western choral setting where conflicts in performance practice lies in the dichotomy between the two. The report of the analysis of the selected works according to the musical elements of tempo & rhythmic features, melodic features, words, texture & polyphony, harmonic language, formal elements, and timbral arrangement & vocal technique, fills this gap and provides insights into the performance practice study of this genre of music – the amalgamation of folk music and Western choral music.

Also mentioned in the literature review, issue of how folk music in Asia especially Southeast Asia is employed in the Western choral setting is not covered. The question of whether the choral works based on Asian folk songs should be performed as

standard Western choral music or as a new genre of choral music emphasizing on the authenticity of the folk music has not been explored into. This study has answered these questions. On top of this, the understanding of Lai's folk choral arrangements as stylized music hybrids may suggest her works to be included into South East Asia original local choral works which Quadros (2012) claims to be in shortage.

As stated in 1.2.9 Choral Music in Malaysia, many conductors in Malaysia find there is a lack of representative local choral works which they can use in regional and international choral festivals and competitions. Local music institutions such as Young Choral Academy (YCA), alongside individual commissioners like Saw and Fam, have put effort into encouraging the production of more local choral works. This study on the selected local folk choral works can serve as a major reference to local arrangers who wish to embark on or continue in producing this genre of music. As the selected Malay folk choral works are popular works and are frequently performed both locally and abroad, this study also serves as an important source to inform conductors on the performance practice of the selected works.

5.4 Limitation of Research

Given the scope of a mix-mode research, this dissertation is set out to fulfill a partial requirement of a Masters program which consists of both coursework and research. Due to the stipulated word limit for this dissertation under the program, it is necessary to limit the scope of this research. Therefore, the scope of this research is within the limit of selected published original arrangements that are either actively performed by Malaysian choirs or commissioned to alleviate the problem of lack of representative Malaysian choral works.

5.5 Suggestion for Future Research

On the basis of the results of this study, future research may provide deep analysis and more encompassing theoretical understanding of the performance practice issues pertaining to the incorporating of Malay folk music into the Western choral music genre. Future research may include the study of other published or commissioned Malay folk choral arrangements by other Malaysian arrangers, who could be Malay (ethnic and cultural insiders) themselves or from other ethnicities, targeting at audience who are insiders, outsiders, Westerners and any combination of these.

5.6 Conclusion

This study of the selected Malay folk choral works, by looking into questions as to whether the selected Malay folk choral works belong predominantly to a Western music genre, or are they composed to be sung as close to the authentic characteristics of the folk songs, informs the performance practice of these pieces, and provides insights into this genre of music – the amalgamation of folk music and Western choral music. The cultural analysis delineated alongside the analysis of music elements may have contributed to the field of cultural musicology and ethnomusicology. It should also be noted that this research focuses on the production and performance of the selected pieces by Malaysian Chinese arrangers, who are both ethnic and cultural outsiders to the Malay music culture, for audience who are also outsiders to the folk culture. In the study of the stylistic features of the selected pieces, it is found that these pieces are westernized musical works which manifest composers' intentions and arrangement processes characteristic of musical borrowings, folk revival, hybridity, and appropriation for national musical identity. This study can serve as a major reference to local arrangers who wish to embark on or continue in producing this genre of music to

help alleviate the national problem of lack of local choral works that can represent the Malaysian musical identity. The fact that Malaysian musicians view musical works, that are arranged or composed by Malaysians, as representative of the national music identity, makes it seem like Malaysians are entrusting the power of voicing out their national aspiration and beliefs musically to Malaysian arrangers and composers. The entrusted parties should bear in mind that their musical products are accurate portraits of the different musical influences a Malaysian musician can have throughout his or her life experience in the country. It is in hope that such findings in this study will motivate more Malaysian arrangers and composers to take up the ordeal of producing more local original works.

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