



**MUSICAL NARRATIVES IN PIANO SOLO WORKS BY MALAYSIAN
CHINESE CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS (2000-PRESENT)**

By

WONG SEE YEE

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science**

December 2024

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fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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This research conducts analysis on selected piano solo works composed by Malaysian Chinese contemporary composers to display the musical narratives of the works through interpretation. The formation of musical narrative is a diachronic and temporal process where the meaning and interpretation change according to life experiences and social dynamics. Musical narrative refers to the interpretation and understanding of the meaning of the works. The study aims to share applicable theories and potential schemes of analysis, to enable multi-angle interpretative analysis to be done to reach out to wider audience. Specifically, this study examines the musical narrative of selected piano works and data compiled from interviews and written texts obtained through composers and performers. Main methods employed were textual analysis, music scores analysis, and interpretation as a hermeneutic approach recommended by the concept of musical narrativity suggested by John Rink, which includes views from that of a composer, as well as creativity and ideas from a performer. Through this research design, the musical structure of the

compositions, the composers' intent, as well as the interpretation of the performances will be investigated. Semi-structured interview was conducted on the Malaysian pianists who had performed the selected works publicly. The pianist is required to recall the process of learning the piece and how that affects his/ her interpretation towards the work. Interview and other written texts were interpreted hermeneutically and compared intertextually to identify the emergent musical narratives. Results of the study disclose that the interpretation of the performers might come to a convergent or contrast with the composers' intent. Analysis of musical narratives from these two different perspectives opens more possibilities to analyze music from a more holistic manner. Any analysis or interpretation should not be based on a single viewpoint but should integrate and consider the perspectives from multiple positions, in contemplation of displaying the meaning of the music from the perspective of the composer and the performer. This research contributes to the cultural and educational development of the Malaysian music industry. By evaluating and analyzing contemporary Malaysian compositions, it enhances the understanding and appreciation of local musical heritage. Further studies could be conducted on Malaysian compositions from time to time by using said method to accomplish a more comprehensive record on the development of Malaysian contemporary works.

Keywords: contemporary composition, Malaysian composers, musical narrative, piano solo.

SDG: GOAL 4: Quality Education

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**NARATIF MUZIKAL KARYA-KARYA SOLO PIANO YANG DIKARANG
OLEH KOMPOSER-KOMPOSER KONTEMPORARI CINA MALAYSIA
(2000-KINI)**

Oleh

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Disember 2024

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Kajian ini menjalankan analisis terhadap beberapa karya solo piano tertentu yang dikarang oleh komposer-komposer kontemporari Cina Malaysia untuk menunjukkan naratif yang tersirat melalui tafsiran. Naratif muzikal dibentuk melalui proses diakronik dan sementara-an di tafsiran dimana maksud muzik mampu berubah bersama dinamik sosial serta pengalaman hidup. Naratif muzikal merujuk kepada tafsiran dan pemahaman terhadap makna karya-karya tersebut. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk berkongsi teori-teori dan skema-skema analisis yang berpotensi, untuk membuka saluran bagi mendapat pengiktirafan dan kenalan daripada para pendengar yang berlainan. Secara khusus, kajian ini juga menganalisis naratif muzik yang terdapat dalam karya-karya tersebut serta data-data yang terdapat daripada temu duga atau ulasan bertulis daripada komposer dan pemuzik berkaitan. Kaedah utama yang digunakan merangkumi analisis teks, analisis skor muzik, dan tafsiran melalui pendekatan hermeneutik yang digalakkan oleh teori yang dicadangkan oleh

John Rink, yang merangkumi pandangan daripada komposer, serta kreativiti dan pandangan daripada pemuzik. Melalui kaedah kajian tersebut, rangka muzik karya, kehendak komposer serta tafsiran persembahan merupakan aspek yang akan disiasat. Temubual separuh-spontan telah dijalankan terhadap pemuzik-pemuzik Malaysia yang telah mempersembahkan karya-karya terpilih tersebut secara awam. Mereka digalakkan untuk mengimbas kembali proses pembelajaran karya tersebut serta aspek yang mempengaruhi tafsiran terhadapnya. Temubual dan teks bertulis lain dianalisis secara hermeneutik dan dibandingkan antara satu sama lain untuk mengenal pasti naratif muzikal yang muncul. Hasil daripada kajian ini telah mengungkapkan bahawa tafsiran daripada para pemuzik boleh datang pada perbezaan atau persamaan dengan kehendak komposer. Analisis naratif muzikal daripada kedua-dua perspektif yang berbeza ini membuka lebih banyak peluang yang lebih luas lagi untuk mentafsir muzik secara lebih holistik. Sebarang analisis dan tafsiran tidak wajar dilakukan hanya berdasarkan satu sudut pandangan, namun memerlukan integrasi serta penerangan pandangan berlainan, agar boleh memaparkan isi tersirat atau maksud muzik tersebut dari pandangan komposer atau pemuzik. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada perkembangan budaya dan pendidikan industri muzik Malaysia. Dengan menilai dan menganalisis karya-karya kontemporari Malaysia, ini dapat meningkatkan pemahaman dan penghargaan terhadap warisan muzik tempatan. Kajian selanjutnya boleh dijalankan dari masa ke semasa dengan menggunakan kaedah tersebut untuk mencapai rekod yang lebih komprehensif tentang perkembangan karya-karya kontemporari Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: karya kontemporari, komposer-komposer Malaysia, naratif muzikal, solo piano

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Contemporary music composition has developed into a continuous expanding global phenomenon, marking a significant departure from the conventional tonal frameworks, embracing more experimental and innovative techniques. Contemporary music refers to a genre starting after year 1945, which has led to diminishing in effectiveness to analyze contemporary music by traditional methods, for instance, the Schenkerian analysis (Link, 2018). The emancipation of contemporary music from tonality and musical form displays idea of individualism in music composition. Composers began to challenge the established norms by using novel approaches like atonality, serialism, and aleatory music. These changes signify a move away from music as a structured, universally understood language to a more personal, expressive medium that highlights individual creativity and unique artistic voices. This global shift has redefined the boundaries of music composition, creating room for innovation, creativity, and exploration outside of traditional forms.

In Southeast Asia, contemporary compositions have developed a unique identity, combining traditional cultural elements with modern techniques. The rich diversity of the region and the composers' capacity to experiment while maintaining ties to their roots are apparent in this synthesis (Tan, 2016). Within Malaysia, contemporary music has become an essential medium for

expressing national identity and cultural heritage, providing a platform for multicultural narratives that embody the country's societal fabric.

The sino-soundscapes in Malaysian history dates back to the pre-independence colonial period till now, which include the Peranakan culture, the local festivals and arts enriched with customs, dialects, and traditions originated from China, the localized and hybridized performances, such as the Chinese orchestras incorporating local elements and lion dances that portray Chinese identity (ISMEO, 2021). From 1990s onward, the trend inclined to internet-driven transformations, fostering cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. Notable sino-soundscapes include lion dance, hands percussion, and Ombak Potehi in traditional arts, along with pop music by Ah Niu and Namewee. However, art music remains underexplored. This study on Malaysian Chinese contemporary composers' piano solo works addresses this gap, contributing to the narrative of said works that merged cultural heritage with contemporary themes.

The origins of Malaysian contemporary compositions can be traced back to that of the late 20th century where new music stemming from western countries generated a huge impact on the style of composition that Malaysian Chinese composers currently have (Yu, 2020: 212). Despite Malaysia being a highly collectivist society (Azmi, et al., 2023), the trajectory of Malaysian composition has manifested in the same regard of individualism, whereby works are also free from the restraint of traditional composition styles, especially in the 21st century where the emergence of Malaysian Chinese composers in said style

has been much more prevalent. The changes in composition style from traditional classical style to contemporary new music with adaptation of local folk elements are playing an important role in shaping and building multicultural musical identity of Malaysia. Malaysian Chinese composers have played a pivotal role in shaping the country's contemporary music scene by seamlessly blending their rich cultural heritage with modern and global musical themes. Their works often reflect a deep connection to traditional Chinese musical elements, such as scales, rhythms, and aesthetics, while incorporating contemporary techniques and styles that resonate with broader audiences. This unique synthesis not only showcases their cultural identity but also positions their compositions as significant contributions to the global landscape of contemporary music. Piano solo works, in particular, serve as an intimate medium for Malaysian Chinese composers from the Southeast Asia region to express their individuality and creativity, bridging traditional and modern narratives (Khoo, 2014). By exploring these contributions, this study highlights the importance of their works in fostering a deeper understanding of Malaysia's multicultural identity and enriching the discourse on contemporary music by uncovering the value within musical narratives of the piano solo works presented from the composer, music structure as notated, and performer's viewpoint alike, which spawned from said epoch, pertaining to year 2000 onwards.

One of the potential schemes of analysis that could be taken is the concept of musical narrative suggested by John Rink (2018), which includes views from that of a composer, creativity and ideas from a performer, and feedback from

audience altogether to formulate a more unbiased and diverse interpretation. Musical narrative is suitable for analyzing Malaysian contemporary works which will also allow for more people to understand said topic, actively increasing the quality and standard of said field in the future. By presenting the affluent relationship between these three aspects, this study aims to provide a comprehensive, balanced and more diverse perspectives, hence placing local contemporary compositions in a more optimal stance and allow for more accessibility to said topics in order to actively promote the field of contemporary music in Malaysia.

1.2 Problem Statement

Nowadays, events involving performances of local contemporary works are gaining more popularity, for instance SoundBridge Music Festival – a bi-annual event starting from 2013, has been promoting contemporary compositions from Malaysia as well as other countries; being able to draw in people from different walks regardless of cultural, racial, religious backgrounds, allowing for more positive discourse to be achieved within said communities, forming healthy relationships among diverse cultures and standpoints. However, many obstacles still exist in the current status quo, with an example being the lack of contemporary compositions existing in most of the performance repertoires, as well as the lack of Malaysian contemporary works being included in international music examination syllabus, such as Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Trinity College London, and local universities' music departments examinations alike.

In the current situation, little attention is given to local compositions. The repertoire that a Malaysian pianist would choose to learn, or a Malaysian piano teacher would teach, is mostly the standard classical pieces from the western countries over our own local compositions, as the British's post-colonial influence is still shadowing our music education till now. The choice of repertoires and methods of teaching in most of the private music teachers and music centres in Malaysia are catered to fulfil the requirements of the music examinations set according to British's standard (Tye, 2005). This clearly unveils that the examination syllabus is an important factor that affects the choice of repertoire. Moreover, local contemporary composition is not a compulsory repertoire in Malaysia's undergraduate music education in local varsities. It is not compulsory to include a work by Malaysian composer in students' performance or examination. The lack of local works being featured in the examination syllabus has indirectly reduced the importance of local works.

On the contrary, London College of Music Examinations has included compositions from 20th and 21st century in the piano diploma repertoire list (London College of Music Examinations, 2018). New Zealand Music Examinations Board includes compositions of New Zealand's composers in all grades of piano examinations (New Zealand Music Examinations Board, n.d.a). The piano examination repertoire of Central Conservatory of Music in China for grades one to nine include several compositions by Chinese composers (Baidu, 2018). And yet it is undeniable that selecting a local contemporary composition by Malaysian composer as an examination

repertoire is uncommon among examination candidates in Malaysia. The recognition of Malaysian composers and the accessibility to local compositions still need improvements.

The scene of contemporary music is constantly growing and changing with a broad spectrum of development. However, research on local contemporary music is scarce. We are facing a lack of information and guidance on how to interpret contemporary works that are always being labelled as difficult to understand. There is a wide gap on acceptance of contemporary music among the public. Discussed by Phang Kong Chien in his PhD thesis, "Social and Cultural Perspectives of Bel Canto Tradition among Urban Chinese Communities in Peninsular Malaysia", several Chinese composers were featured, ranging from those who were active in the 1960s to composers nowadays (Phang, 2016). But the composers and some of their works are only known within small clusters of Chinese community. They are not recognized nationwide. Moreover, the said research provides little help on interpreting contemporary works, even though the analysis of musical structure was conducted from the viewpoint of a performer cum researcher. The meaning of the works was merely derived from the lyrics, without adding hermeneutic analysis from the perspective of the performer, that displayed little relation to the narrative constructed by the musical elements from the compositions.

Similar situation happened to the prolific patriotic composer, Jimmy Boyle. His compositions such as Tanah Pusaka, Putera-Puteri and Kemegahan Negaraku are performed nationwide but not many realized that Boyle was the

composer. The Jimmy Boyle Young Talent Jazz Competition is one of the programs featured in the Penang Island Jazz Festival, a local event that put Penang on the international jazz map (“Two-day Fest in Penang a Real Blast for Fans of Music Genre”, 2008). But sadly, the most ironic part of the situation is that although the competition is named after Jimmy Boyle, it did not bring much recognition about Jimmy Boyle to the public. The younger generations in his homeland, Penang, do not even know about him (Lee, 2017: 41). The research by Lee (2017) only serves as a documentation of Jimmy Boyle’s works, excluding the interpretation of the said works.

This issue is also closely intertwined with analysis on local contemporary works which is currently lacking in the field. Among the few research are Siagian (2007) – a study on Malaysian and Indonesian composers, Lie (2013) – discussion on music of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) Forum 2 Finalists, Gan (2014) – a study of Tazul Izan Tajuddin’s “Tenunan II” on his synthesis of Indonesian and Malaysian culture with Western composition techniques, Khoo (2014) – analysis of selected solo piano works by contemporary Malaysian composers, and an article by Tham (2019) about a Malaysian contemporary composer’s piano solo work written in 2018 – Tazul Izan Tajuddin’s “Kabus Pantun”. These research inclined to structure analysis which contributes little to narrowing the gap of accepting and understanding the said works. We do not have enough or proper references on how to interpret and understand the meaning of the works composed by Malaysian composers. Despite some information on composers’ ideas were shared in the said research, the works remain as an aloof subject without further

explanation from the performers' perspectives to convey the meaning of the works. If this situation prevails, it will bring negative effect to our music industry, as the recognition of local composers will decline, and this is a huge demotivation to all musicians, killing creativity at the same time. We desperately need a discourse to bring a new perspective in approaching local contemporary compositions and revisiting the connection of performer's interpretation with composer's intent, instead of just focusing on the structure of the works.

It is these problems, combined with the multiple other factors which exist which cause Malaysian contemporary compositions to be unable to have a strong status from an international perspective.

1.3 Research Questions

To cultivate a wider acceptance as well as the feeling of empathy towards local contemporary works provides great help in the propagation and spread of local works, in which a wider recognition towards local composers can be achieved. Hence, we need a more holistic perspective in terms of analyzing the meaning of said works. Analyzing works on surface value solely based off the composer's words in written prologues or the structure of the music based on the scores is lacking a deeper layer of meaning from different other fields, and this is where the interpretation of performers come in. The performer's interpretation is an aspect that cannot be ignored, as it is only through performing which endow meaning and emotion to the notation on the music scores. Via synthesizing the multifaceted perspectives, we are able to achieve

a better understanding towards local contemporary compositions, at the same time allowing easier transmission and integration of personal experience in works, formulating feeling of empathy and understanding which further advances for a more balanced way to interpret the works, without an overly biased perspective, all of which relate to C.S. Peirce's theory (1998) in semiotics.

Sign theory according to C.S. Peirce, the co-founder of semiotics, is an explanation of signification, representation, reference and meaning. His theory emphasized on the importance of interpretation to signification, where a three-party relationship of “sign”, “object” and “interpretant” is used (Atkin, 2010). By applying this theory to music performance, the performance could be the signifier, which is the “sign” and the picture or feeling that the music is trying to convey is the signified, which is the “object”, then the perceiver plays a very important role to generate the signified, thus bringing the sign and object together to create an effect, the “interpretant”.

Another relevant theory by the French musical semiologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990), has developed a three-dimension of analytical level, with the terms “poietic”, “neutral/trace”, and “esthesis”, that could be assigned to perceptions from three different dimension – the composer, the performer, and the audience. In his book “Music and Discourse – Toward a Semiology of Music”, Nattiez wrote “...a perfect balance between the poietic and the esthetic, in which poietic and esthetic strategies closely correspond, seems to be the rarest of birds in the history of music...”. By combining these two

theories by Peirce and Nattiez, composer, performer and audience are the three different perceivers who might capture a different picture or feeling while listening to the same composition, hence creating different interpretants. How does different interpretants contribute to a more balanced way of understanding contemporary compositions?

Another essential condition worth investigating would be the relationship between composer's intent and performer's interpretation. Performance is not a simple or straight forward process that present the composer's idea and transmit the message from the score through music to the audience. It involves the interconnection of the performer's personal experience, expression, and some added creativity to the performance. Cook (2001) and Leech-Wilkinson (2016) strongly advocate the appreciation of performer's creativity and effort in giving meaning to the work. According to Rink (2018), the term "musical narrative" is used to define the diachronic process of disclosing the meaning of the work. What is the relationship between composer's intent and performer's interpretation in the context of musical narrative?

By focusing on selected piano solo works as the main materials, this research denotes the interpretation of Malaysian local composition after year 2000 and serves as a reference for pianists attempting Malaysian contemporary music in their future performances or examinations, as well as being a catalyst to draw more attention from the younger generations to explore novel approach in composition and interpretation. Hence, the research questions can be further elaborated as below:

1. What are being narrated from a Malaysian local contemporary piano work beyond the musical structure and composer's immediate intent for the work?
2. What are the new messages that could be obtained by using the approach of musical narrative by Rink?
3. How does the interpretive process and the musical structure of Malaysian local contemporary piano work contribute to the musical narrative construction of the work?

1.4 Objectives of Study

The objective of the study is to produce several multi-angled musical narratives for selected Malaysian local contemporary piano works, in order to examine how different interpretants contribute towards comprehensive understanding of the selected works, particularly on the role-relationship of composer and performers in interpretation of the works. With a focus on local contemporary piano works composed by Wong Chee Wei, Teh Tze Siew, Tee Xiao Xi, and using the framework of Rink's musical narrative, the study conceptualizes different interpretants as well as musical structure as "texts" of different nature, and the approach is to conduct intertextual examination of these different "texts".

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the texts of different interpretants towards selected local contemporary piano works using hermeneutic approach (textual analysis);

2. To conduct cross-item comparison among the texts of interpretants and integrate them into intertextual relations (intertextual analysis);
3. To examine the musical narratives of the work by observing the relation between different texts of interpretants and the musical structure itself (intertextual analysis).

1.5 Organization of Thesis

This chapter is about the introduction and background of the study. Chapter 2 provides the review of literature related to the research, including the status quo, the applicable theories and potential schemes of analysis that could be taken to interpret local contemporary piano solo works. Chapter 3 delineates the construction of methodology, selection of works, and the flow of method used to conduct the research. The results attained through analysis and the information gathered from interviews are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 is the discussion and conclusion of the study that comprises the revisit of the research questions and the argument of a new approach in understanding local contemporary piano solo works.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In order to analyze the piano solo works and engage in discussion of the musical narrative of the selected works, certain amount of information related to Malaysian Chinese composers, the compositions, and the current scene related to contemporary art music status quo is needed. This section of literature review contains review of studies in local composition, applicable theories in music analysis, as well as items that are broader and more general.

The three selected works are composed by three Malaysian Chinese composers who attended Chinese education since young and grew up in the environment of Chinese background. During their college years in Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), they were still surrounded by the influence of Chineseness, as the composition teacher for Wong Chee Wei and Teh Tze Siew was Liu Ban Hong (1955 – 2023), and Tee Xiao Xi was under the guidance of Tan Chin Ho (b. 1972). They also received tutelage from the same piano teacher in MIA, Lean Hin Chong (b. 1960). Hence, the close relation that is shaped by a homogeneous identity – how the individuals share a common Chinese ethnicity, and homogeneous lineage – sharing tutelage under the same teachers who are Chinese descendants, generates a closely-tied musical narrative of Chinese origin.

2.2 Overview of Malaysian Chinese Composers

In order to understanding the development of contemporary compositions in Malaysia that leads to the present study, a chronological development of composers and compositions, particularly that of the composers of Chinese-diaspora and later Chinese-descent Malaysians are presented as below.

In year 1939, the choral composition “Mu Han Yi” (暮寒衣) by Chan Lok Hung (1911 – 1996), a self-taught musician, mark the beginning of Malaysian composition by Chinese composer (Huang, 2018). This was the first choral work written with arrangement in proper notation on manuscripts, comparing to the numbered musical notation that was widely used in Chinese compositions, hence served as the catalyst for the growth of Malaysian local composition. Most of the works composed during this early period were vocal compositions, due to the influence of Wuhan choir tour that performed in Malaya (now known as the peninsular of Malaysia) from 1938-40 (Phang, 2016: 105).

There were more Chinese composers who added to the local vocal compositions, which stem from different background that include those who were classical trained, such as Shen Bing Guang (1922 – 2012), Tay Ching Seet (1923 – 1983), Chong Chai Kong (1923 – 2014), Khaw Guan Liang (1935 – 2002) and Mario Lim (1939 –); and self-taught composers, Lee Lem Heng (1928 – 2000), Tor Chor Soon (1933 – 2016) and Ooi Chin Boon (1937 –). (Huang, 2018).

Though primarily vocal, early efforts in instrumental compositions also emerged. Shen Bing Guang, who collected North Borneo folk songs, composed the Sonatina in C minor in 1944 (Shen, 1993). Mario Lim, born in Ipoh in 1939, composed Muhibbah Sonata (Goodwill Sonata), though its exact composition date is unknown.

In 1967, the founding of Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA) and the formation of music department in 1980, added to the prosper of contemporary composition in Malaysia (Phang, 2016; MIA Music, n.d.). Chong Chai Kong, a local Chinese composer, was one of the pedagogues to promote music education. As stated in his interview posted on YouTube, MIA was the first art institute to have music faculty starting in 1980 and he became the head of music department in 1985 (Llememorial, 2009).

Continuing from the above-mentioned composers, a new group of Malaysia Chinese composers arose, including Tan Su Lian (b. 1964), John Yong Lah Boh (b. 1967), Martha Lee Jin Ai (b. 1972), Minni Ang Kim Huai (b. 1966) and Chan Cheong Jan (b. 1969); in which some of them are female composers (Lam, 2001). Here, piano was given more attention and piano solo works are becoming more prominent.

Besides, the forming of Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) and constructing Dewan Filharmonik PETRONAS (DFP) in year 1998 – the first concert hall in Malaysia, was an integral step to shaping local music scene to an international level (Yu, 2020). Through MPO Forum for Malaysian

Composers, and MPO Forumplus, local contemporary compositions have achieved a burgeoning in which they are given a playing field to premier their compositions, allowing for the flourishing of Malaysian contemporary pieces. The featured Malaysia Chinese composers included Chong Kee Yong (b. 1971), Vivian Chua (b. 1974), Adeline Wong (b. 1975), Ng Chong Lim (b. 1972), Teh Tze Siew (b. 1971), Yii Kah Hoe (b. 1970), Tzu-En Ngiao (b. 1977), Wong Chee Yean (b. 1979), Tan Zi Hua (b. 1983), Wong Chee Wei (b. 1975), Isabella Pek (b. 1968), and Jessica Cho (b. 1987) (Yu, 2020).

Yu (2020) has a comprehensive list containing a multitude of composers – Chew Hee Chiat (b. 1970), Chow Jun Yan (b. 1984), Chong Huey Ching (b. 1986), Chin Hong-Da (b. 1985), Chow Jun Yi (b. 1987), Simon Kong Su Leong (b. 1976), Neo Hup Hiang (b. 1976), Lee Chie Tsang (b. 1984), Yeo Chow Shern (b. 1988), Vanessa Choke Yuan Teng (b. 1994) and Tee Xiao Xi (b. 1981), to name a few. The contemporary composers who are alumni of MIA include Chong Kee Yong, Wong Chee Wei, Neo Hup Hiang, Teh Tze Siew, Tee Xiao Xi and Yeo Chow Shern.

2.3 Differences in Compositional Style

From the past research on different eras of Malaysian composers, stark differences of compositional styles are shown between these times, having a multitude of changes. Analyzing and researching said changes are important to understanding the differences and to provide a guideline for future generations as to the different characteristics of these different periods. For vocal compositions, the composers born in the 1970s are featured as the new

generation (Phang, 2016). Their compositions are more adventurous and experimental compared to their predecessors who favored regular phrasing, lyrical melody, and clear cadences with simple modulations to related keys. In the 21st century, new ideas and elements, such as, more complex rhythmic pattern, no fixed time signature or tonal center, non-diatonic and less concern of melodious tune, chromaticism and dissonance are all taken into consideration to represent the cosmopolitan and culture diversities in Malaysia.

The change in lyrics is also significant. We see the change of bel canto presented in the Chinese community from a vocal technique to express love and memories towards their place of origin, China, to the expression of localness in Malaysia; from mainly China classic poems to lyrics that portray the beautiful places and current situation in Malaysia, with lesser sense of Chinese-ness in the lyrics, even with usage of other languages, such as, Malay and English (Phang, 2016).

There were not many piano solo compositions being produced among the composers in the early period. Thus the “Muhibbah Sonata” was a milestone and representation of what music in that era resembled. This sonata in C minor has three movements – first movement allegro assai in sonata form, second movement andante sostenuto in binary form and third movement rondo moderato, all written in western traditional pattern with clear tonal style of the classical period in late 18th to early 19th century. The usage of regular phrasing, rhythmic motifs, ornaments, modulations to related keys with clear cadences,

arpeggios and chordal accompaniment are found in the sonata, but none of these reflect the style of a 20th century composition. Description of this sonata by the composer was written at the end of the score, “Malaysia is a multi-racial country with a rich culture. Her people despite their different backgrounds have been living together as one family for many years. It’s a land of smiling faces and goodwill (Muhibbah).” Even until the seventies and eighties, western traditional style was still widely favored among composers and audience (Yu, 2020).

The works of two Chinese composers – Minni Ang and Chan Cheong Jan, were analyzed in the research by Lam Ming Huey. As a conclusion of the analysis, different kinds of composition styles and folk elements were adapted in the works, but there was no obvious inclination of direction or preferences in composition styles at that time (Lam, 2000).

Tan (2021) emphasized on the manifestation of Chinese identity in Malaysia through performing arts with gradual shading of localization and hybridization. From 1990s and onwards, the sign of transformation is more intense and obvious, with performing arts deeply immersed in trends of cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and glocalization. Thus, a state that “embraces the local culture but without total assimilation, at the same time keeping the culture and tradition originated from China” is presented.

2.4 Overview of Local Contemporary Art Music Scene

In a sense, the growth of contemporary piano works is a phenomenon that highly relies on social awareness. Besides the initiatives by MPO which aid in advertising contemporary performing arts, multiple different organizations have been formed to support said growth too. For example, the creation of the Ombak-Ombak ARTstudio, a non-governmental association that features artists and producers from different races who are interested in contemporary performances, carnivals and festivals that reflect Malaysian cultural traits, inventiveness and identity (Ombak-ombak, n.d.). Among one of the performances of Ombak-Ombak was Streets Alive, a performance presented by Ombak-Ombak ARTstudio on 7th July 2012 during the UNESCO Penang Heritage Celebration.

Another medium of spreading Malaysian traditional and contemporary performing arts is via Kakiseni, a non-profit agency that cooperates with many artists to create a continuous and ongoing artistic atmosphere in Malaysia in order to introduce arts and culture to the public (Kakiseni, n.d.). In year 2002, the BOH Cameronian Arts Awards was established by Kakiseni to acknowledge the contribution and dedication of Malaysian artists in performing arts.

Malaysian composers have also gotten together and created an official Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC). This website provides different details of composers, from their birthplace to their current situation. The objectives of forming this society include, to strengthen the

rapport of contemporary music industry in Malaysia, to support original compositions by Malaysian composers, to spark interest in contemporary music and to act as a link to connect Malaysian composers with other contemporary musicians from other countries (SMCC, n.d.). Since 2013, SoundBridge Festival, organized by SMCC and Studio C (established by composer Chong Kee Yong), has been an active bi-annual event that provides opportunities for contemporary music composers to perform their works, and serves as a conduit reaching out to more audience. Concerts, discussions and masterclasses are among the programs included in the festival. It serves as a platform where composers, musicians and artists from Malaysia and other countries get connected and exchange ideas, hence achieving better interaction and cooperation.

There is another similar official organization for local composers, the Malaysian Composers Collective (MCC). This is a non-profit organization that contributes to promoting Malaysian contemporary classical music, such as, by organizing workshops, concerts, producing recording and anthology of local compositions (Malaysian Composers Collective, n.d.).

All these efforts furnish our society with better and easier approach to new music, hence bringing local contemporary piano compositions to a new height in which will shape a stage for the situation in our status quo as of current to have a much wider audience.

2.4.1 Recent Performances Featuring Local Contemporary Piano Solo Works

SoundBridge Festival is an innovative and pioneering milestone in nature, while also symbolizing the determination in the Malaysian composers' community towards bringing attention to different contemporary works. To host an official event which is not overly condensed or hard to access; being large in scale while still being able to attract walks of all life; meets international standards while maintaining the integrity of local culture, is a big undertaking in itself. Different aspects like conceptualization of the idea to publicity and sales were no easy task to handle and manage, thus SoundBridge Festival is a noteworthy occasion that deserves to be recognized and appreciated. Among all the events present, Malaysian Voices is one of the highlighted events in SoundBridge (SoundBridge, 2023). It is a concert featuring works of Malaysian contemporary composers, with the added aspect of being performed by Malaysian musicians themselves. Besides being a performance, this is also a representation of identity, expressing the passion of the Malaysian contemporary music scene. It is no doubt that this show of passion will definitely be one of the reasons that more people will be attracted, as they will be able to empathize and understand on a cultural level.

The SMCC has also been playing an important role in advocating for the publicity of local contemporary music. Besides drawing attention to this matter, the SMCC has also widened the circle of reach, being able to allow for both Malaysian and Singaporean alike to collaborate. An example of this was in 2019, where two concerts were organized, with the first being hosted in

Singapore in September 2019 – “Compositions Exchange 2019: A Singaporean & Malaysian Music Compositions Recital” (see Appendix 2.1) (Composers Society of Singapore, 2022a); and the sequel being two months after in Malaysia – “Rendezvous of the Chordophones” (see Appendix 2.2) (Sinchew, 2019), allowed for both closer relationships to be formed and exchange of musical insight, interpretations, and compositional ideas. As both Malaysia and Singapore are multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual countries, there are many noteworthy similarities and differences in culture and living styles. With that, music acts as a reflective medium to display the idiosyncratic elements of both countries and cultures, serving as an easily accessible and understandable device for the public.

Likewise, the MCC is another society of composers which is actively involved in promoting local contemporary works. Different efforts have been taken by them to allow for more public access, including the release of a CD compilation, “Interweaves” in 2016 which presents six compositions by four Malaysian female composers (Malaysian Composers Collective, 2016). In 2019, an anthology of fifteen Malaysian composers entitled “Free Hand Anthology I: 21st Century Malaysian Piano Works” was published, and in conjunction with that, the Free Hand Festival was hosted to feature nine out of fifteen new piano works in the said anthology (see Appendix 2.3) (Free Hand, 2019). The success of this festival has been a big encouragement to having a sequel – Visiting Artist Series: Beyond Borders, hosted in Singapore during February 2020, reperforming four Malaysian piano compositions and multiple Singaporean works too (see Appendix 2.4) (Composers Society of Singapore,

2022b). In June 2022, Free Hand Festival had a successful comeback after the long COVID-19 lockdown. It was held in UCSI University and nine local contemporary compositions were featured (UCSI University, n.d.).

Apart from the larger scale events mentioned above, there were sporadic events which feature local piano works, usually hosted by smaller organizers or private individuals who are enthusiasts in said field. Examples of this include the Piano Gala in 2015, presented by “MyMusic Outlet”, a small-scale private organizer that has been organizing vocal and piano concerts since 2014 (MyMusic Outlet, n.d.). At the meantime, as a researcher-cum-practitioner who is interested in local contemporary piano works, I have been including the said genre in my performance repertoire. In 2019, I organized two lecture-recitals with the theme “The Colours of Malaysia”, in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall, and Department of Music in Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA). Since both SEGi College and MIA provide music courses, these are definitely ideal locations to introduce local works to the music students. After a long halt due to the pandemic, the third iteration of “The Colours of Malaysia” returned in June 2023 at the Kong Choi Room of the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (see Appendix 2.5).

From the aforementioned performances, pre-concert talks or lecture-recital is gaining popularity especially in performances involving new music. This is to provide a better communication and interaction between performer and audience, hence preparing a clearer perspective as well as a friendlier

approach to contemporary works that are always considered as “difficult to understand”.

2.4.2 Inclusion of Contemporary Piano Works in Examination Repertoire

Since 1947, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) has been a prominent music examination board in Malaysia (Tye, 2005). Alongside with other foreign music examination boards, such as Trinity College of Music and London College of Music, they play an important role in upholding the level of music assessment and encouraging music education in Malaysia.

ABRSM has been dominating the market for over seventy years. According to an article dated 26th July, 2019 in The Sun Daily, the practical and diploma ABRSM examination in Malaysia scheduled from 12th June until 30th August 2019 involved 25530 candidates for all instruments (“ABRSM Practical and Diploma Exam to Continue as Scheduled”, 2019), with piano being one of the most popular choices. For candidates taking grade one to grade eight piano examinations, they must choose one piece each from the three lists: A, B and C (ABRSM, n.d.). The three lists consist of pieces from different styles and periods that require a demonstration of skills from expressive tone colors to fingers agility, including works from 20th and 21st century. This is to encourage candidates to prepare a balanced program and to be able to learn music of different techniques and characters. By looking at the number of candidates,

this has contributed a great effort in introducing contemporary works to the music learners in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the attention given to contemporary works is also clearly shown in London College of Music (LCM) examination board. In the piano diploma syllabus year 2011-2015 of LCM, works composed by living composers and works composed in or after 1945 are to be included in the examination program for the candidates taking performance-recital examination (London College of Music Examinations, 2011). In 2019, there were changes in the LCM piano diploma syllabus. Starting from 2019, it is compulsory for candidates taking the first three piano diploma levels of LCM – Diploma of the London College of Music (DipLCM), Associate of the London College of Music (ALCM), and Licentiate of the London College of Music (LLCM), to include a work from the anthology “In Concert” and “In Concert Book 2” (London College of Music Examinations, 2018). In the anthology “In Concert”, seven of the nine piano pieces are composed by composers from the 20th and 21st century. In the anthology “In Concert Book 2”, four of the five piano pieces for ALCM are composed by composers from the 20th and 21st century, and for LLCM, three of the five piano pieces are composed by living composers. The importance of contemporary works remains even after the change of syllabus.

However, only the contemporary works from the western countries are given attention, not many are interested in our local Malaysian contemporary works. Local compositions are not even a compulsory repertoire for undergraduates pursuing music in Malaysia’s local universities.

By using New Zealand as a comparison, we can see that the priority given to their local composition is far beyond Malaysia. This could be seen in their music examination board, the New Zealand Music Examinations Board (NZMEB). This is a charitable trust that was established on 12th July 2006, with Waikato University as the accrediting body (New Zealand Music Examinations Board, n.d.b). The examination system includes syllabus for various kinds of instruments, with an extensive choice of repertoire, together with compositions by New Zealand composers. In the NZMEB piano syllabus for 2018 to 2022, the compositions of New Zealand's composers are included in all grades of piano examinations, from preliminary to grade eight and the diploma examinations (New Zealand Music Examinations Board, n.d.a).

Given these circumstances, New Zealand's local works have a proper medium of expression and have more potential to be accessed by the general public due to having not just a complete and effective exam system, but also due to having a convenient way of allowing public reach regarding access to the scores of New Zealand compositions. This is because there exists the implementation of SOUNZ.

SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music is a charitable trust that promotes the music of New Zealand. They have alliance with around 550 New Zealand composers who are active in various music genre, including, classical composition, Māori music, music using taonga puoro (traditional Māori instruments), electroacoustic music, jazz composition, screen composition and sound art. SOUNZ provides services such as, selling music scores,

organize workshops and concerts, create online platforms for new events, provide assistance for composers, teachers and performers (SOUNZ, n.d.).

On the contrary, the public in Malaysia would not have said opportunity of exposition to local works, nor would they know the contacts to access the scores or to reach out to the composers. Vice versa, it is also not easy for local composers to publicize their works.

China, similar to New Zealand, includes local contemporary compositions in their examination syllabus in order to increase the publicity of said matter. Being one of the leading universities in China, The Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) formed an examination system – Standard Grade Examinations in Music (SGEM), with its first examination commencing in 1993 (Zhang, 2016). Inspired by ABRSM, SGEM consists of ten levels, with grades one to three as the fundamental level; grades four to six as the ordinary level; grades seven to nine as the advanced level and the tenth grade being the professional-level. According to an article posted on Baidu during 17th September 2018 (Baidu, 2018), the piano examination repertoire of CCOM for grades one to nine includes several compositions by Chinese composers, including Ma Ke, Chen Peixun, Li Chong Guang, Fu Geng Chen, Zhang Xudong and Tan Dun. Among the repertoires are “Selling Sundry Goods” and “Thunder During the Drought” by Chen Peixun and “Blue Nun” from Eight Memories in Watercolor by Tan Dun. “Selling Sundry Goods” also appeared in ABRSM 2017 – 2018 piano examination’s list C grade eight syllabus (Jones, 2016).

All facts mentioned are solid indications of flourishing growth in contemporary classical music around the world. When compared to Malaysia, one thing that is currently lacking in our status quo is the lack of a fundamental base or starting point to ensure the growth of contemporary music in Malaysia's general public, especially given that contemporary composition is not a new element to us. A relatively small step that has been taken by ABRSM is the inclusion of Malaysian composer Chee-Hwa Tan's two solo piano works, one being "The Swing: from Through the Windowpane" in the piano examination pieces of year 2021 – 2022 (Jones, 2020), and another one is "At the Seaside: from A Child's Garden of Verses", which is included in the grade one piano examination pieces of year 2023 – 2024 (Jones, 2022). This is a good start to promote Malaysian composition. It would be one step nearer to make local compositions an active repertoire for pianists from Malaysia as well as from other countries.

2.5 Theory of Interpretation

Music analysis is an important step to help in interpretation. It is closely related to one's background and culture, as the process is empirical and the object – music, is intangible. This causes different individuals to have different views, even on the same music; and on the contrary, music will create different effects or impressions on different individuals. As follows are the applicable theories and potential schemes of analysis that could be taken to interpret local contemporary piano solo works.

2.5.1 Peirce's Semiotics

Peirce's theory of signs, also known as semiotics, provides a thorough explanation on the phenomena about one's personal experience and feelings towards an object. The American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914) was a co-founder of semiotics – a theory related to signification, representation, reference and meaning (Atkin, 2010). According to Peirce, he wrote "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former." (Peirce, 1998). Here, a three-party relationship is formed, where the sign could be the signifier; the object as the signified; and the combination of sign and object could provide a better and clearer understanding of the situation, creating the interpretant. Different individual will create different interpretant, as the interpretant could be an effect resulted by further understanding of an individual towards the signifier and signified. The interpretant could also act as a new sign, hence creating more interpretants.

By applying this theory to music analysis, we take the music performance as the signifier, which is known as the sign; and the picture or feeling that the music is trying to convey as the signified, which is known as the object, then the perceiver plays a very important role to generate the signified, thus bringing the sign and object together to create an effect, known as the interpretant. This shows that the misconception of "new music is difficult to understand or could not be understood" can be solved through an act – interpret. By combining listening and interpretation, everyone could generate

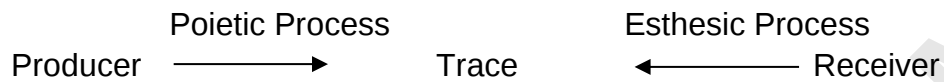
interpretants that might be relevant or irrelevant to the original idea of the music.

2.5.2 Nattiez's Semiology of Music

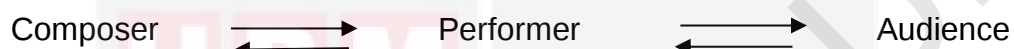
Continuing from Peirce's theory, the French musical semiologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez (b. 1945) had furthered the concept to suit better for music, thus based on Jean Molino's theory, he developed a three-dimension of analytical level – the tripartition, which consists of poietic, neutral/trace, and esthetic levels (Nattiez, 1990). The poietic level includes all processes leading to the creation of the composition, from the sprout of an idea to writing it down as notes. Molino borrowed the term “poietic” from the French philosopher, Etienne Gilson. “Poietic” from the Greek word “ποιεῖν” carries the meaning of “to make” (Nattiez, 1990: 13). The neutral level or the trace refers to the physical traces that are produced through the poietic process, such as, the music scores, the printed version of scores, the performance of the music, and the recording of the performance. The esthetic level relates to how one perceives the music, which is also an empirical process that involves understanding, interpretation and aesthetic judgement. The word “esthetic” was coined by the French poet and philosopher, Paul Valery, as distinct from “aesthetic” to avoid confusions. From “αἰσθησις”, esthetic contains the meaning of perception from the senses, which is more suitable and closer to the act of interpreting. The tripartition of “poietic – neutral – esthetic” could be easily misinterpreted as a one-way relationship of:



However, Nattiez argued that the tripartition is not a linear line or graph, in fact it could be linked to Peirce's theory of the interpretant, which the interpretant could act as a new sign to trigger more interpretants, hence created a concept as follow:



Through performance of a composition, the concept is reconstructed as:



The three different parties will yield different judgements and influence each other. The composer's intent, the performer's interpretation and the audience's feedback are three interlocking aspects that could trigger a series of interpretants for each other, which is the reason as to why interpretation, representation and perception may vary drastically for different individuals as well as different performance events, even for the same program.

2.5.3 Tokumaru's Intertextuality

Yoshihiko Tokumaru (b. 1936) is a Japanese musicologist. His theory of intertextuality advocates understanding of different groups and styles of music to form a better network in presenting their connections between each other (Tokumaru, 1991). For example, with adequate knowledge, quotation of musical style could be presented through assimilation of folk elements in the composition; performance with improvisation adopting certain styles or musical elements; cognition of musical quotation to be acquired by audiences.

These examples could be further explained by Tokumaru's idea of "text" and "context".

"Music can be regarded as texts that are woven by the bearers of each tradition. On the other hand, context here denotes the environment in which these texts are woven and put into practice." (Tokumaru, 1997)

From the perspective of the creation of local compositions in Malaysia, intertextuality is a viable medium to analysis of musical composition. This is because Malaysian composition includes a wide collection of elements ranging from that of folk, cultural, fusion of both western and oriental musical styles and other techniques to shape the likes of our music today. These influences shape our musical identity, and to relate to what Tokumaru has stated, the next step is to shape and create more contexts and allow these local compositions to become popular repertoires, allowing for a wider reach, with more countries using our compositions as popular repertoires, hence achieving true globalisation, turning Tokumaru's motto "reputare nihil insulatum" (consider nothing isolated) into something more than just a vision, and more of a reality that we are able to live in.

Tokumaru's concept of intertextuality was applied and localised in a study of local musician, Jimmy Boyle's composition (Chan, et al., 2020). Through examining the manuscripts and artefacts left by the composer Jimmy Boyle, the manifestation of a same idea or similar "texts" – to quote Tokumaru, is presented in many of his compositions, showing proofs of inter-relation, initiating more profound and thorough interpretation.

2.5.4 John Rink's Creative Role of a Performer

A common fallacy that is deeply ingrained in society is the idea that the performer merely functions as an agent to deliver the messages and materials written in the score, without contributing any intrinsic value or individuality. This is a belief long embedded in the society, articles by Peter Kivy, Richard Taruskin and Wallace Berry are among the significant amount of prior research that support the said conservative mindset (Cook, 2001). Several academic investigations have further suggested that even composers themselves have aided upon this ideology.

Over time, this perception has progressively evolved, with the performer's part gaining more acknowledgement and recognition in the task of interpreting and performing a work. This is argued by many musicologists in their publications of articles, Cook (2001), for instance, advocated that performers should be given a greater artistic autonomy to perform music by "thinking of scores as 'scripts' rather than 'texts'". According to Leech-Wilkinson (2016), performers deserve more appreciation for giving meaning and value to the scores while performing. Furthermore, the idea that the performer's influence in display of musical narrative is supported by Rink (2018), where he provided solid proof justifying the creative role of the performer in allowing the work to fully actualize and present the most complete image to the audience is an undisputed fact.

A performer is somebody who performs and conveys the musical narratives to the listeners by using performative process. Rink described a live performance

as “evanescent”, “ephemeral” and “elusive”, not even recording could precisely capture the moment of the exact equivalent scenario (Rink, 2018). Additionally, in the contemporary era, live performances encompass events hosted online which do not necessarily display the audience. The ambience of a live performance is influenced by a number of factors, which include, the venue’s acoustic architectural design, the instrument’s quality, mental and physical health of the performer, and all other components that involve in the constitution of a performance. Performer plays an essential role to enhance and bring the composer’s ideas to life by transforming the ideas to musical narratives in order to be interpreted and understood by listeners.

In the context of musical narrative, various elements that compose the narrative, such as, the motives, phrasing, music structure, could not be considered as a simple “ $1+1=2$ ” equation, in fact, it leads to a more complicated picture, where the answer “greater than 1” is preferred, instead of giving a definite answer “2”. In this case, since contrasting ideas cannot be simply explained, it is allowed to be seen as a bigger picture. By integrating different variables derived from personal unique opinions and experiences of a performer, it brings more flavor and creativity to the performance. This allows for different narratives and interpretations to be presented on a particular piece, which is the attraction point of musical narratives.

Quoted from Rink’s essay, “‘musical structure’ is a fundamentally synchronic notion valorized by analysis but at odds with the diachronic process of music-in-sound” (Rink, 2018). Metaphorically, by only presenting structural analysis

without any musical narratives over time is like a two-dimensional space without any linear progression, no matter how one describes the music, be it in the most proficient way possible, it still remains stagnant – frozen as a screenshot of something bigger. A performance is way beyond a synchronic process could describe, it includes every individual at the present, giving the most thorough explanation possible, as it is demonstrated through the music itself, unfolds through time and space, travels through different era.

During a performance, there are two kinds of narrative that occur simultaneously: from the performer, which is poietic; and from the listener, esthetic. Regarding the narrative conceived from the performer's perception, it is a procedure that looks straightforward to the listeners, yet in reality it is not a simple task at all. It is an arduous journey that requires strenuous effort and training for the performer to develop their muscle memory to perform the piece to its finest detail while implementing their own refinements in order to make it appealing to the audience. This process is presented in a continual manner, with the combination of raw mechanical skill, mental fortitude and performer's experiences to fully display and interpret the piece in a complete and perfect medium in the end.

Another narrative as perceived by the listener carries the inherent quality of esthetic. It is a direct representation of the aesthetic value and sensitivity of an individual, hence the transmission of musical narratives from the performer to the listener varies among different individuals. Certain compositions that are more abstract and complicated might be classified as merely noise for some

listeners. Similar to poietic, this is also a process that requires an extended period to refine but not in the context of raw mechanical skill, instead, the correction and refinement of a mindset built upon the pillars of the current generation – it is also a time-consuming effort to educate a generation who appreciates values in the most abstract of concepts, and when we are able to reach such a point of time, it would be a valuable achievement in terms of the improvement in aesthetic value. Meanwhile, Rink proposed that a “talk-and-play” lecture recital could be a solution to improve communication and impartation of musical narrative from performer to listener.

2.5.4.1 Musical Narrative

Narrative has been always linked with storytelling to most of the people, with the assistance of language and semantics. When narrative is applied on music, there tends to be underlying presumptions on the works, such as, they do not comply with the usual composition form; narrative music is always related to programmatic titles or lyrics; the musical ideas are usually derived from literature or drama (Almén, 2008).

This misconception is subverted in a journal by Byron Almén (2004), proving the connections between musical narratives and topics in his analysis. Topic, construed as a synchronic static expression, refers to the style presented by the music through its usage of harmony, rhythm, tempo, motives and many more. On the contrary, musical narrative, construed as a diachronic dynamic expression, refers to the identification of musical elements, understand each narrative trajectory expressed by the elements, and to relate the interactions

between musical elements to create narrative archetypes. Hence, musical narrative is a temporal process where the meaning of the music is gradually unfolded through time. However, the perception of musical narrative highly depends on the interpretation of the analyst or listener.

2.5.4.2 Performative

The term “performative” was coined by a linguistic philosopher John Langshaw Austin in 1955 (Schechner, 2013). “Performative” is used as a contrast to the term “constative” which describe utterances that only gives the information of true or false statements in language (Loxley, 2007). According to Austin, performative is a doing of an action where the utterance is inseparable from the situation of the action, thus “saying” comes with “doing” simultaneously. When utterance is made, the heart should comply to the words spoken and the validity of the utterance depends on appropriate circumstances. Instead of true or false, performativity emits the information of felicities or infelicities. Later, the term was further applied by the feminist philosopher Judith Butler in her essay – *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* (1988). She used the term “performativity” to argue that gender is not determined through birth but constructed through behaviors and acts.

Later, when performance studies has become a recognition for performance as an element worthy for academic analysis and investigation, the term “performativity” has been specialized to focus the investigation on the performance act of certain object or practice (Loxley, 2007). Performativity

includes all factors that might affect the quality of a performance, such as the venue of the performance, the instruments, the performer's approach towards the program, and audience's feedback (Kartomi, 2014).

The term "performativity" is also used in John Rink's idea of creativity in music playing. The performative process is an important underlying factor that aids in thorough comprehension of a music performance, and it is investigated from two different perspectives – performers and audiences (Rink, 2018). Here, Rink advocated Cook's theory that music scores should be attended as "scripts" that suggest creative approaches towards the music, discovering a unique performance each time through the performative process which is a dynamic and ever-changing continuum through time and space. Rink defined the combination of creative role of a performer with all other factors influencing the performance, as "total performance event".

2.6 Similar Studies

Almén (2008) demonstrated his analysis on Chopin's Prelude in G major, op.28 no.3 by using the method of musical narrative, has subverted the misconception that musical narrative analysis is only applicable to compositions that do not comply with the standard traditional tonal style; or works with programmatic texts and evocative titles; or compositions that are derived from other mediums, such as, drama, play, or literature.

In Almén's analysis, the narratives are extended from the musical score. The accompaniment pattern and the ostinato rhythm suggest an imaginary scene

for the opening's background environment, which also shows certain level of intertextuality, as the musical elements recall other similar works. The relationship between motives and their reoccurrence were examined by comparing the differences in register and directions. The part-whole relationship between musical elements and how the combination engenders another level of understanding is obtained by analyzing the dialogue among the different elements that lead to an upsurge of certain characters in the music. There are also some hidden aspects that need more introspective approach to create meaningful insights that supports the interpretation.

Locally in Malaysia, Tham (2019) applied Rink's concept on performer's creative role to analyze a contemporary piano solo work "Kabus Pantun", composed by a Malaysian composer Tazul Izan Tajuddin. Rink (2015) advocates the idea of "structural potentialities within musical materials and then realising them as they see fit within the broader musical narrative of their performance", which implies the combination and the relationship between musical materials is a temporal process that results in outcomes that are unique to different individuals.

Tham emphasized the importance of this concept as it opened up a new ideology and it could serve as a guideline to learn contemporary piano works that require more experimental and avant-garde playing techniques which deviate from the conventional method to approach western piano repertoires that have been the mainstream of classical art music. In order to achieve a better understanding in the musical elements used in said work, Tham has

provided a summary on the composer's background, his composition style and Malay cultural elements, and some brief information on his works.

In Tham's analysis, he explained on his approach towards the extended techniques, such as, playing the muted note and producing the smacking voice sound. He also suggested a more creative and effective method to overcome the issue of note accuracy due to rapid movements and leaps between the extreme registers on the piano. He used the idea of "mapping", where he identified musical materials as different groups of gestures, according to their registers and starting note, to provide geographical reference for pianists to locate the notes conveniently. This is an essential criterion in presenting performance as a continuum that gradually unfolds the musical narratives of the work through a diachronic process.

2.7 Brief Summary

The literature review in this chapter includes a brief history of the development of local art music scene and the influence of the examination boards that are dominating the market. Potential applicable theories by several scholars revealed a resourceful and all-rounded method towards analyzing local contemporary works. All of this information provides vital knowledge to a dynamic discourse that contributes to better understanding of said works.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to determine the relationship of composer's intent and performer's interpretation to discern the meaning of the work, by applying Rink's (2018) concept of "musical narrative" in the interpretation of piano works composed and performed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by the researcher (hereby denoted as the "performer"). This chapter explains the methodology used in this research; and the methods employed to conduct a comparison between the composer's intent, the performer's interpretation, and viewpoints from another pianist who had performed the selected compositions (hereby denoted as the "pianist"). Analysis is done to compare the tripartition and the musical structure to form.

3.2 Research Design

The research aims at producing multi-angled musical narratives for selected Malaysian contemporary piano solo works using Rink's framework of musical narrative. This is a design of textual analysis with hermeneutics as its underlying approach. The unique point of the design is that it conceptualizes both interpretants of a work as well as the musical structure as different form of "texts". Thus, this study is a design to determine intertextual relationship among a varied form of "text".

3.3 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework shown in Figure 3.1 is constructed based on the adaptation of Rink's theory of musical narrativity (2018), and with several underlying theories of Peirce (1998), Nattiez (1990), and Tokumaru (1997), localized to comply to the nature of this research. According to Nattiez, the composer's act of composing is a poietic level that created the work of the neutral level. However, Rink advocated that the performer's act of performing is also a poietic process that co-created the work. Both Nattiez and Rink considered the audience's interpretation towards the work as the esthetic process, but audience's feedback is not analyzed in this research. By using Peirce's concept in semiotics, there are interpretants generated from two different perspectives – composer's interpretant written in the prologue (hereby denoted by Text 1); performer and pianist's interpretant written in program notes (hereby denoted by Text 2a) and in interview verbatim text (hereby denoted by Text 2b). By applying Tokumaru's idea where text comes in varied form, the music scores in notation are considered as text (hereby denoted by Text 3). Tokumaru's intertextual is employed to do comparison between the common themes found in the interpretants and the notation to construct musical narratives that adhere to the musical structure of the works.

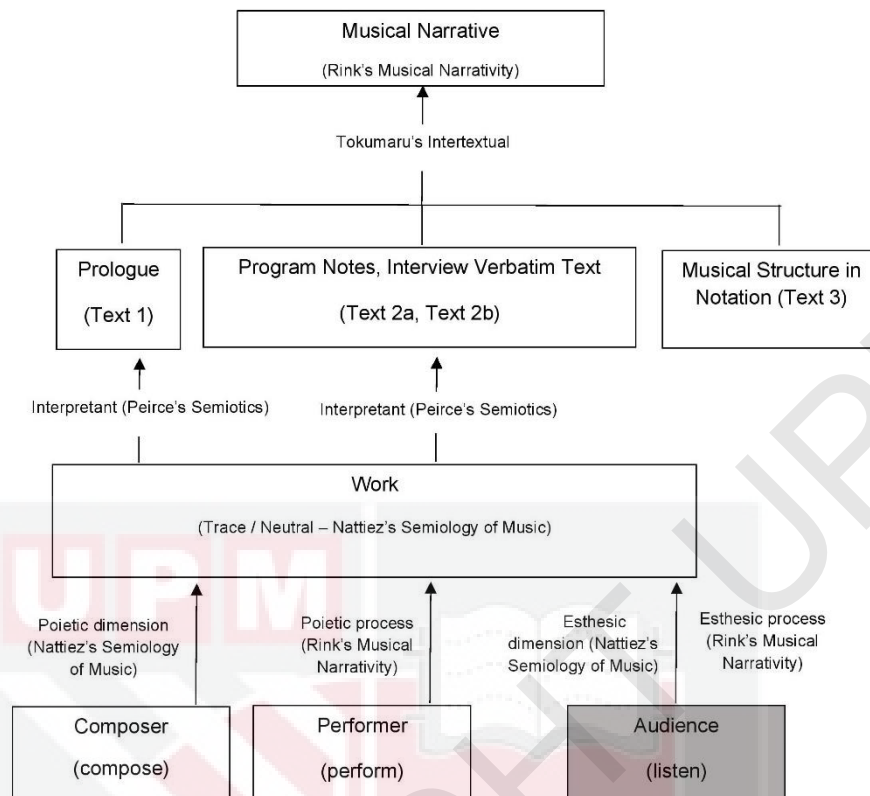


Figure 3.1 : Conceptual Framework: A Multi-angled Musical Narrative

3.3.1 Interpretant

In Peirce's theory of semiotics, the triadic relation consists of three terms – representamen, object, and interpretant (Deledalle, 2001). Representamen is a measurable tangible sign, such as, sound, movement, or a written sign, that signifies or represents an object. Interpretant is an intangible sign created in the mind of the interpreter during this act of signification, resulting ramifications in the level of meaning, from an immediate impression, to nuance that involves certain context which is diachronic and changes along with social dynamic, and finally an interpretant that includes personal preferences. This concept is juxtaposed by a trichotomy by Peirce that proposed three types of interpretants – emotional, energetic, and logical (Deledalle, 2001: 44). In the

context of musical narrative, the emotional interpretant is the instant feeling generated from the music performance, a direct impression of the musical ideas conveyed by the composer. The energetic interpretant is the meaning spawned through the application of physical or mental force, in this case, the physical act of a performer to perform a work and the interpretation the performer has in mind. The logical interpretant refers to the alterations and adjustments done that affect the responses, under these circumstances, the changes on the constructed musical narratives, valorized by the musical structures of the work.

3.3.2 Text 1: Composer's Interpretant

The composer encodes the piece with conscious meaning, which is intended to convey a solid message that is clearly seen – it is explicit, allowing the audience to view it in the clearest way possible, sometimes even shown clearly in the title of the work. However, there are circumstances where the meaning is encoded with subconscious meaning, reserved to one who observes closely, where this meaning is not shown in a clear light, it is hidden and coated into the piece, where under some circumstances the composer might not even realize said meanings themselves. Rink (2018) used the experience of “living out a dream” as an analogy to describe performance act. This analogy is applicable to describe composers' intent, instead of “living out a dream”, their intentions could be interpreted as “a dream living as part of them”, to represent their subconscious mind that might incorporate subtle details which are the accrual from different past experiences to become part of their works.

Composer's interpretant in this research refers to the composer's intent written as the prologues (Text 1) of the selected solo piano works by Wong Chee Wei, Teh Tze Siew and Tee Xiao Xi. The prologue of each composition written by the said composers are analyzed to obtain the intended meaning of the work.

3.3.3 Text 2a and Text 2b: Performers' Interpretants

The performer could be known as someone who decodes the sign encrypted in the music score. With certain level of music education, a performer understands the notes and the performance directions written on the score, but the way of interpreting it depends on the knowledge background, personal experiences and aesthetic values of the individual; and finally resulting in producing different tone colours, dynamics, contour of the melody, and projecting a story or images to the audience through performance. The feeling of a performer could be very complex while performing, as he or she might feel anxiety, pressured but at the same time able to take critics and keep on improving to deliver aesthetic through artistic performance. Leech-Wilkinson (2016) advocated that performers should have a critical role to represent the music in a creative way with new spirit granted to it and shower the notes with new meanings. It is time to change the norm where performers are supposed to help composers convey their intentions encoded in the scores as a verbatim passage. In fact, appreciation is shown to the creative role of a performer to view the music from different angle. The said article was directed to classical music but it definitely can be applied to classical contemporary music.

Performers' interpretants in this research refer to the researcher cum performer's interpretation featured in the program notes (Text 2a) written by the researcher for the performance on 21st May 2019 in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall, and another performer's point of view obtained by conducting interviews with another three pianists who had performed the selected solo piano works in a public performance, which is written as interview verbatim text (Text 2b).

3.3.4 Text 3: Musical Structure in Notation

Musical structure in notation of the three selected works is considered as a kind of text in this research. The notation can be presented as a representamen in Peirce's triadic relation. There are three types of representamens – icons (signs that resembles the object), symbols (signs that are arbitrary), and indices (signs that are related to the object). For example, by using repeated notes to signify the object "angklung", the compositional elements could be an iconic sign as the level of resemblance is obvious. By using whole-tone scales to signify awareness in life is symbolic because of the arbitrariness. Hence, the common themes that emerged from the interpretants are compared with the musical structure to prove its validity as a musical narrative.

3.4 Selected Compositions

The three works are chosen due to the high level of coherency shown in the composers' homogenous background. The three composers graduated from Malaysian Institute of Art in about the same period and they were influenced

by the same teachers, hence, they share a common root and similar training background that could represent a school of thought. In addition, the selection of works also include the following criteria: 1) The composer is a Malaysian who is currently active in the contemporary classical music field; 2) the work selected is a composition for piano solo; 3) the work composed belongs to the category of contemporary composition which appear in Malaysia after year 2000; 4) the work shall reflect to certain extend local elements in various form whether directly or metaphor; 5) the three composers have related music education background.

The selected works are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 : The Three Selected Piano Solo Works Composed by Malaysia Contemporary Composers

Title	Composer	Year of completion	Premiere
Poetic and Pictorial Splendor	Wong Chee Wei	2013	16 th March 2014 in Chinese Assembly Hall, Kuala Lumpur
Jl	Teh Tze Siew	2010	9 th August 2015 in Chinese Assembly Hall, Kuala Lumpur
Life • Awareness	Tee Xiao Xi	2016	18 th June 2017 in Auditorium Elio Venier, Pasian di Prato (Udine, Italy)

As shown in Table 3.1, all three composers have homogeneous background – they are of a Chinese background, they graduated from Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), they took piano as their minor study and learned under the tutelage of Lean Hin Chong, they pursued further studies in China, and they

joined the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC). These three compositions are for piano solo and were composed later than year 2000. “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor” and “JI” were premiered in Malaysia by Malaysian pianists, where “Life • Awareness” was premiered in Italy.

The recording of these works performed by the researcher on 21st May 2019 in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall is available on YouTube. The video links are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 : Duration and Video Link of the Three Selected Works

Title			Duration	Video Link
Poetic and Pictorial Splendor			7 minutes 20 seconds	https://youtu.be/iTIQxPcOlml
JI			2 minutes 30 seconds	https://youtu.be/h0N2BbkWR1s
Life • Awareness			5 minutes 50 seconds	https://youtu.be/9qMTuLuLvWM

3.5 Informants

The informants in this study were the composers of the three selected works and the Malaysian pianists who publicly performed the selected works. Biodatas of the six informants are shown in Appendix 3.1.

3.6 Data Collection

The data of this research consists of three types of texts – written texts (composer’s prologue and performer’s program notes), pianists’ interview verbatim texts, and the scores of the three selected works in musical notation.

3.6.1 Text 1: Composers' Prologues

Prologues of the three selected works were obtained by contacting the composers via email in year 2017 and 2018. Conversations through phone calls and WhatsApp messages were conducted from time to time, to achieve a better understanding of the composers' perception.

3.6.2 Text 2a: Performer's Program Notes

Performer's program notes were written by the researcher in early 2019 for the lecture-recital in May 2019, where the performance of the works was recorded.

3.6.3 Text 2b: Pianists' Interview Verbatim Texts

Semi-structured interview was used in this study to construct some open-ended and prompting questions, in order to provide more freedom and imagination for the three pianists when interview was being conducted (see Appendix 3.2 for procedures and semi-structured interview questions for the three pianists.) All pianists were given a brief introduction of the research and the objective of the interview beforehand. For obtaining their agreement to conduct the said interview, they were asked to read and sign the Respondent's Information Sheet and Consent Form. The interview was conducted online in a one-to-one basis, and all interviews were recorded by using Zoom.

3.6.4 Text 3: Music Scores in Notation

The music scores of the three selected works were obtained by contacting the composers via email in year 2017 and 2018.

3.7 Data Analysis

Textual analysis and intertextual analysis with hermeneutic approach are conducted on the collected data. Both textual and intertextual analysis are closely related to the culture, social, and historical context (Tokumaru, 1997; Zimmermann, 2015). Interpretation of the texts involve subjective hierarchical evaluation, hence presenting diverse attribution and various level of significance in different individuals. In order to validate the credibility of hermeneutic approach, the interpretation of the texts is bound to the inherent quality, the featured epoch and social setting that matches the context it renders.

All interpretants are given equal weightage by principal but the discrepancies in the description of results would be unavoidably being affected by the amount of information that can be retrieved from each interpretant.

3.7.1 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is conducted to examine the texts of different interpretants towards selected local contemporary piano works. This is to acquire the connotation, significance, and ideas conveyed by the texts (Smith, 2017). This methodology provides a better understanding towards the texts from the

inherent attributes. Additionally, more thorough insights are generated through critical thinking, discerning judgement, and integrating other possible clues and related contexts into a convincing unit. The following steps are the procedure of textual analysis applied in this research:

1. To do data entry for the collected materials, including the composers' prologues (Text 1), performer's program notes (Text 2a), and the pianists' interviews in verbatim (Text 2b).
2. The keywords are analyzed complying to the featured genre, location, and other related contexts found in the texts.
3. A table of two columns is created. The interview data in Text 2b that is related to this research is divided into shorter sections and transferred to the left columns of the table. The comments of the interview data are written in the right columns of the table (see Table 3.3 for example). The comments are connected to produce a commentary of meaningful layout.

Table 3.3 : Example of Comments on the Interview Text

Interview text	Comments
I think notation wise, it's not too bad, considered quite traditional, compared to the more avant garde kind of writing, you know. Notation wise, not too much problem, it's also relatively, quite, I'd say, not too difficult to understand, for me. And of course, like small details, the composer will tell you what to do, like how you take time, more free, in certain places.	She described the work as less progressive compared to other works, technically not too difficult and not using much of the new extended composition techniques, while still retaining relative coherence, with minute details being further clarified by the composer, for instance, some freedom of time in certain parts.

3.7.2 Intertextual Analysis

Intertextuality is a word coined by philosopher Julia Kristeva, which is highly related to hermeneutic approach (Elkad-Lehman & Greensfeld, 2011). It literally carries the meaning of “interweaving”. Yet, this concept of “interweaving” is not limited to the relationship between the original text and the author’s intent. It encompasses the applicable contexts, prior understanding, and personal background of the interpreter, to create the meaning of the text. Intertextual analysis is employed in this research to conduct cross-item comparison among the texts of interpretants (Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b) and integrate them into intertextual relations. This has certain similarities with thematic analysis (Dawadi, 2020), where careful reading and coding are used to acquire deeper comprehension on the data besides its intrinsic qualities. Thus, coding technique is applied on the intertextual analysis across the texts of interpretants. The following steps are the procedure applied in this research:

1. To do coding by hand, the texts of interpretants (Text 1, Text 2a, Text 2b) are printed out to physical pieces of papers and highlighters with different colors are prepared.
2. Read all texts carefully to familiarize with the data.
3. Initial codes are generated and highlighted with different colors.
4. Cross-item comparison among the texts of interpretants is conducted to identify the similar and different codes from the highlighted excerpts between texts. The codes are organized into categories.
5. To do second round of qualitative coding to identify the main themes and sub-themes from the similarities and differences obtained from the codes.

6. Review and define the name for main themes, only the themes that occur in two or more texts are taken into account.
7. To transfer all gathered information to a table that displays the main themes, sub-themes, Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b.
8. To organize the themes into coherence structure, ready to construct in a form of narrative, also known as “Musical Narrative”.

3.7.3 Musical Narrative Analysis

Musical narrative of the work is constructed by observing the relation between different texts of interpretants and the musical structure that is also considered as a text (Text 3).

3.8 Validity of Research

The result of the research will be shown to the composers and pianists involved to perform member checking. The feedback obtained from the member checking will be reported in Chapter 4 – Results.

3.9 Exploratory Study

Prior to the interview, I have conducted an online presentation on 12th March 2022. This event was organized by the Department of Music in Malaysian Institute of Art and Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers. In this presentation, only one of the three piano solo works was analyzed by using the prologue written by the composer, the music scores, and the program notes written by the researcher as the performer. This presentation helped to inform that the perception of another pianist who had performed the work is

needed, to provide a more objective interpretation in obtaining the musical narrative of the work.

3.10 Brief Summary

The objective of this chapter was to provide an overview of the research methodology and to describe the process of doing the research. Textual analysis by using hermeneutic approach was discussed. The explanation on conceptual framework, and the brief information of all selected compositions were provided. This is followed by a description of procedures and methods used for data collection and data analysis that adhere to the concept of textual and intertextual analysis. In accessing the validity of this research, members' check and exploratory study were implemented.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Background

Malaysia contemporary piano solo works are not featured in the music examination syllabus, hence being excluded from the standard repertoires of the piano teachers and students in Malaysia. The limited research on Malaysian contemporary piano solo works is not providing enough assistance on understanding the work, as most of the studies only emphasize on the structural analysis instead of the interpretation on the meaning of the works. Over time, the works are labelled as “difficult to understand”.

The research presents a holistic approach to interpreting Malaysian contemporary piano solo works, incorporating perspectives from both the composer and the performer. The interpretants and musical notation are the texts to be analysed for a more balanced way of understanding the work. According to Tokumaru (1997), music could be perceived as a type of text and the meaning of the text highly depends on the context that is applied on the text. The analysis on the interpretants (Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b) includes the background of the composers and performer, the pianists’ concern while practising or performing the work, the cultural context of the region and the social dynamics during the related epoch. Furthermore, delving into the deeper meaning of the texts prompts more critical thinking and essential insights towards the works. This serves as a potential approach towards interpreting contemporary works.

4.2 “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

“Poetic and Pictorial Splendor” is a piano solo work composed by Wong Chee Wei on year 2013. The duration of the piece is around seven and a half minutes.

4.2.1 Structure of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

The three main elements that construct the piece are the ostinato figure that resembles the sound of angklung, the tone clusters and pelog scale – one of the scale systems used in the Balinese gamelan. Angklung, originated from West Java, is a traditional musical instrument that is made of bamboo (Saragih et al., 2020). It produces sound by shaking the bamboo pipes, generating repeated notes through vibration. The ostinato figure can be found throughout the piece. It is written in the form of reiteration of the same note or tremolo of different note.

The piece can be divided into five sections. The absence of bar lines gives it a wider span of breadth to acquire the splendor of nature. There are places with commas to indicate slight breaks. The resemblance of angklungs and usage of pelog scale suggest an atmosphere of rustic and tranquil, fulfilling the ambience requested by the composer, “quiet and with a wealth of expressiveness”, to create a poetic scene with rustling leaves and gentle breeze as shown in the title, presented in Figure 4.1. In the beginning, the accented ostinato figure that has a diminishing temporal interval, enhanced by the change of dynamics level decreasing from moderately loud to soft, gives

诗情画意
Poetic And Pictorial Splendor
黄志伟
Wong Chee Wei
Op. 31
Quiet and with a wealth of expressiveness

© 2013.12 Wong Chee-Wei

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The music proceeds with continuous ebb and flow of angklung in the piece, disrupted by some pelog scales in a descending manner at times, shown in Figure 4.2.

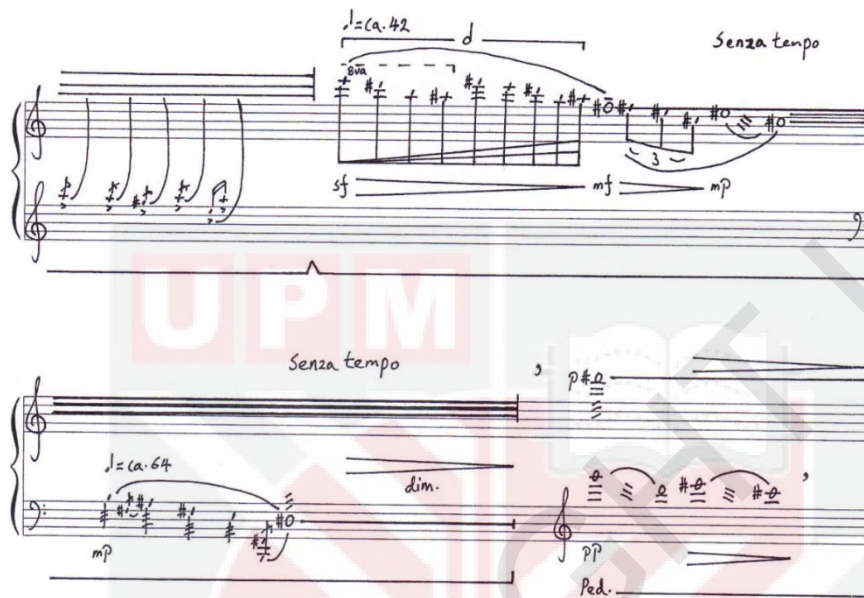


Figure 4.2 : Music Extract from the Second Page of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

The second section commences out of the blue without any presentiment. In Figure 4.3, the sudden change of tempo to one hundred and sixty-five quavers in a minute, allure the undulating quavers in the left hand that form a horizontal linear wave that serves as the ground bass, while the right hand is still resembling the angklung. This results an oppositional sound effect as well as contrasting expression. The left-hand quavers provide a sense of mysterious vibes, suggesting the lurks of danger; but the right hand’s angklung melody is simple and peaceful, with tremolos in interval of a major third.



Figure 4.3 : Music Extract from the Third Page of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

After a downwards arpeggiation, the flow of quavers has been shifted to the right-hand part. With the usage of una corda, the threat is depicted as being far away, yet tension begins to build up in the left hand until a sudden pause, not long enough to ponder, the music thrust in, with continuous phrases one after another, by using the pelog descending scale-like motive, as shown in Figure 4.4.

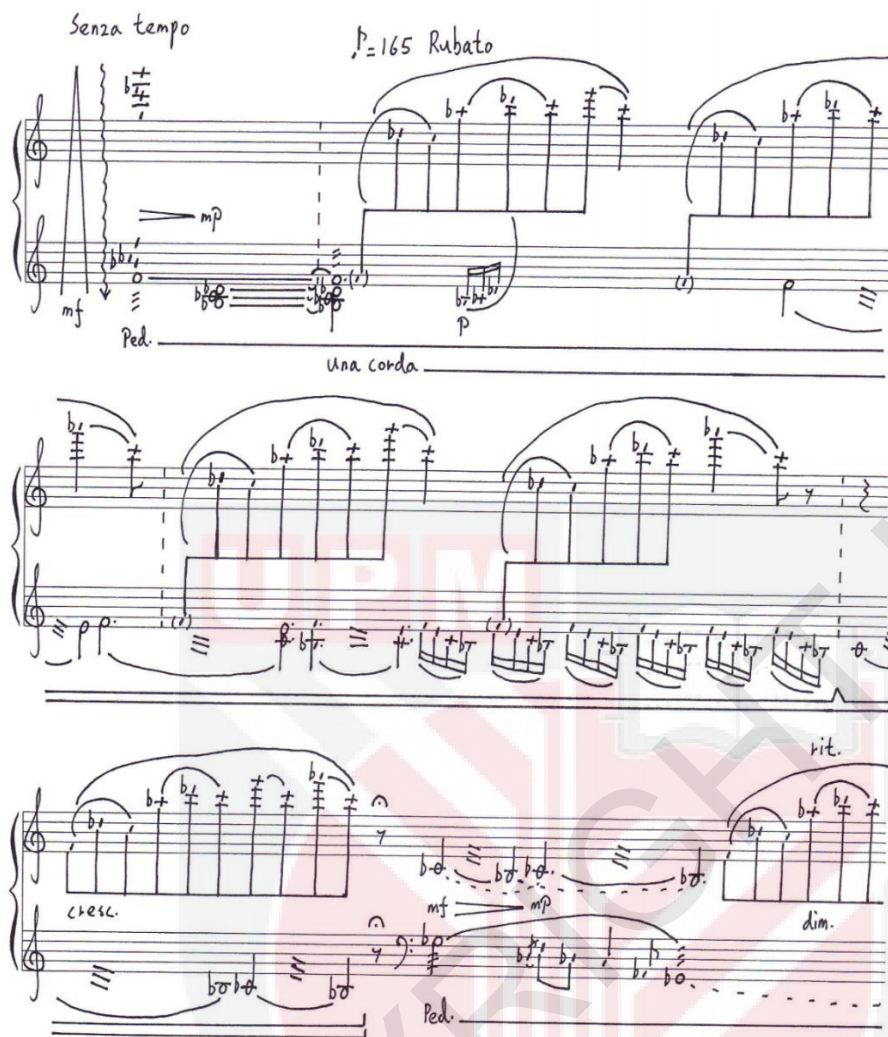


Figure 4.4 : Music Extract from the Fourth Page of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

Unanticipatedly, it subsides to the reminiscence of the beginning, but striving upwards again after three occurrences of acciaccatura in the left hand, pairing with three groups of tremolos in the right hand, following by three groups of gradually amplified tremolos in the right hand again, as to welcome the entrée of the third section after the slight break indicated by the comma.

The third section consist of eight groups of loud and bold accented notes preceded by acciaccaturas and proceeded by strong tone clusters, instructed

to be played with a gradual change from a relaxed to compact manner, as presented in Figure 4.5. There is usage of acciaccature in both hands, which are in the interval of a falling semitone – falling perfect fourth – a rising semitone, and an exact inversion form of this; each hand playing in extreme high and low register, and dive in to the tone cluster. The rise of tension is enhanced with added tremolos and finally push the tension to its boiling point depicted by repeated inversion motive between hands from slow to very fast.

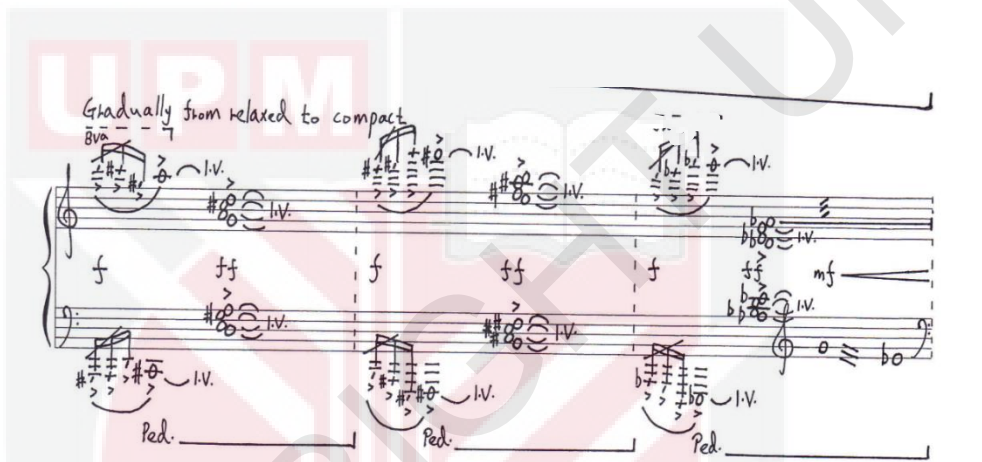


Figure 4.5 : Music Extract from the Fifth Page of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

This added intensity allows the piece to proceed to its fourth section with an indicated tempo of two hundred and forty quavers in a minute, displayed in Figure 4.6. The undulating quavers based on pelog scales re-occur, this time in both left and right-hand part, interlocking each other.

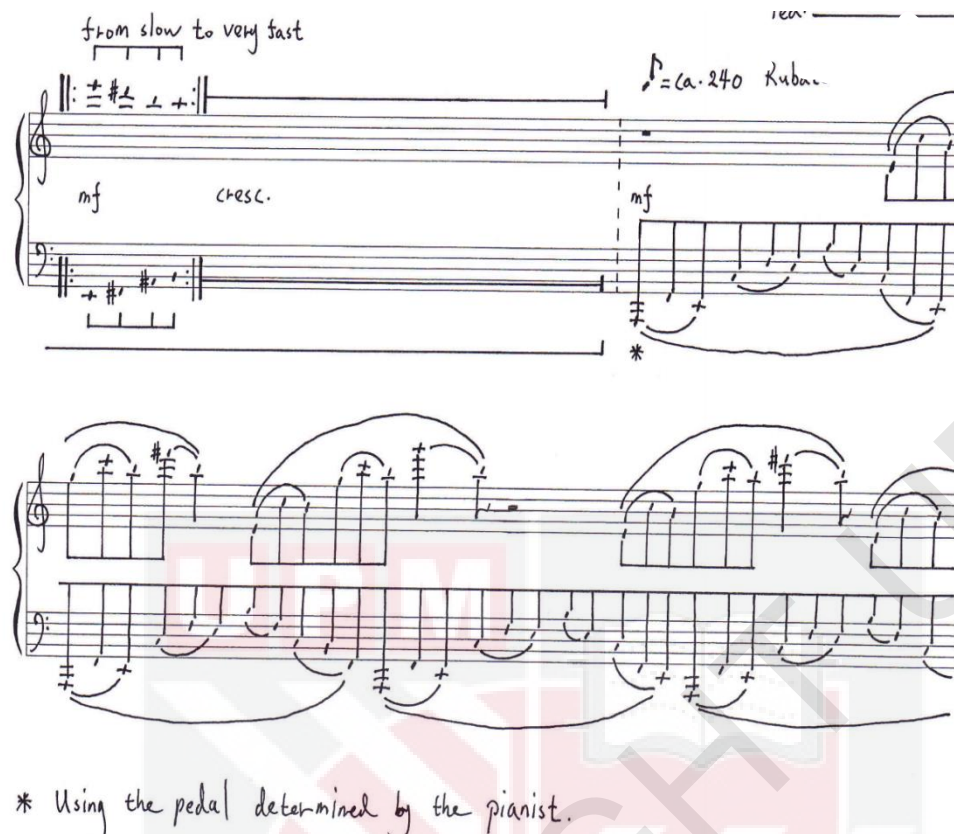


Figure 4.6 : Music Extract from the Sixth Page of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

The change from quavers to semiquavers to trills create a gradual compressed feeling in the rhythm. This chaotic rise of waves displays the tension at its climax in a cross-rhythm of two quavers against triplets. The melodic contour looks like a roller coaster that dives down to the lowest point and ascend to the peak; at the same time subsiding by slowing down and getting softer.

Finally, in Figure 4.7, the fifth section is a reprise of the opening by using fragmentation of elements from the first section. Similarly, it should be played as “quiet and with a wealth of expressiveness”. In this piece, the pianist is given the freedom to determine on the duration of the notes at the places indicated “senza tempo”. Here, at the end, it is up to the pianist to display the

musical narrativity that he or she could feel in the phrases in order to give length to it to create the yielding effect. At the end, the G sharp note in the bass and the paused G sharp note in the upper part form a dominant to tonic – perfect cadence effect with the final C sharp note, giving the piece a rare sense of tonal centre.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of staves. The notation includes notes, rests, and various musical markings.

- System 1:**
 - Tempo: *Moderate speed then getting slower*
 - Dynamic: *mp* (mezzo-piano)
 - Markings: *dim.* (diminuendo), *8va* (octave up), *Senza tempo* (ad libitum).
 - Performance instruction: *Quiet and with a wealth*
- System 2:**
 - Tempo: *Senza tempo*
 - Dynamic: *mf* (mezzo-forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo).
 - Markings: *8va* (octave up), *Ped.* (pedal).
 - Performance instruction: *of expressiveness*
- System 3:**
 - Dynamic: *dim.* (diminuendo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano).

The score concludes with a double bar line.

Figure 4.7 : Music Extract from the Ninth Page (last page) of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

4.2.2 Text 1: Prologue of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

The prologue of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor” written by the composer – Wong Chee Wei, is as follows:

“Poetic And Pictorial Splendor” is a piano solo piece which showed the reflections of my childhood’s village lifestyle in Nanyang (Southeast Asia). While the unique instrument “Angklung” sounded from time to time, it makes me think of the nature village of my homeland and this always recalls my childhood memories. This unique sounds effect of piano playing always represents the traditional instrument of “Angklung”. The sound always keeps recalling and to remind us to “Save our nature world”.

The prologue represents the composer’s intent. It is divided into shorter sections for analysis and commentary.

“Poetic And Pictorial Splendor” is a piano solo piece which showed the reflections of my childhood’s village lifestyle in Nanyang (Southeast Asia).

The composer was born in the year of 1975 in Sibul, Sarawak, with childhood years mainly being from the late seventies and early eighties. During this period, Sibul’s economy was mainly based on agricultural products, such as, rubber, timber and pepper. Located alongside the longest river in Malaysia, the Rajang River, Sibul had an advantage over other towns, as its strategic location enabled it to stand as one of the leading business hubs in Sarawak (Hsu, 2012). Moreover, the influx of Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century had provided Sibul with an adequate

manpower. The Chinese immigrants gradually dominated the population and the economy of Sibu since the 1960s. They maintained a strong and close bond within themselves by forming clan associations, and upheld their identity in this new place they called home. This new place was also known by the Chinese as “Nanyang” (Wang, 2018), a region in Southeast Asia that includes Malaysia and Singapore. The reference of his own hometown as Nanyang reflects a certain level of diasporic background, despite living in Sibu for years or decades, the composer has shown more of a sense of integration than assimilation, still upholding Chinese tradition and culture, yet coexisting with local indigenous culture.

The title provides a clear image set by the composer for this piece. “Poetic” is related to poetry, that could explicitly consist the meaning of imaginative, expressive, lyrical, and with aesthetic qualities; implicitly, it could imply the meaning of metaphorical qualities, which might evoke awareness, catharsis of emotion which could be just imagination or real-life experiences. “Pictorial” is related to picture, something that could be presented in a form of an image, but here, applying to music, this might refer to the scene or image that comes to the mind while listening to the piece. “Splendor” refers to magnificent and splendid appearance that displays a sense of glory and grandeur. It could describe the beauty of scenery or nature that is grand, breathtaking, and stunning. As a whole, the title suggests an evocative expression and emotions, and dazzling imagination of images brought out by the music to the audience.

While the unique instrument “Angklung” sounded from time to time, it makes me think of the nature village of my homeland and this always recalls my childhood memories.

The traditional instrument “Angklung” was featured throughout the piece. This is an instrument made of bamboo that originated from Indonesia (Bakri et al., 2021), where the main method of playing it is conducted by shaking it. It used to be an important instrument for farming ritual in the ancient Sundanese society, however, its importance faced a decline in the modern society, as the younger generation is exposed to a lot of other musical instruments, additionally the raw material for making angklung is insufficient, and the art of making angklung is not popular among the younger generation. On the other hand, Sibuy was facing rapid development, industrialisation and modernisation from early 1970’s (Hsu, 2012). This might cause environmental issues, such as, pollution and deforestation that will cause threats to the natural habitat. The changes of Sibuy are related to the changes in the importance of angklung, which is displayed in the sound of angklung, here imitated by the piano, from time to time, changed parallel to the social changes.

This unique sound effect of piano playing always represents the traditional instrument of “Angklung”.

The angklung’s sound is produced by shaking the instrument, and since the sound could not be prolonged, the player has to shake it continuously to produce a repeated pitch for the intended length of value, hence, this technique is imitated in “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”, where the piano’s repeated notes are imitating the angklung’s sound. The sound is heard from time to time, this indicates a diachronic progression through time that involves the changes happened to angklung, and the dynamic social changes through time. Despite the drastic changes, the sound of angklung is able to call back

to previous cultures, ideals and memories, albeit far, is still possible and transcends the limitations of instrumental mediums.

The sound always keeps recalling and to remind us to “Save our nature world”.

The sound of angklung is a suggestive association to saving our nature world. As an idiophone instrument, angklung purely rely on the vibrations of the bamboos when shaken. The pitch depends on the length of the bamboo, and the tone color is related to the quality of the raw material. On top of this, the weather and the level of humidity in the air will also affect the quality of the bamboos, and directly affect the tone color of the instrument. It is clearly shown in all these factors, angklung is an instrument that is closely intertwined with nature. The original purpose is also for cultural and ritual functions, which is related to the natives. With the decline of importance, insufficiency of materials, and environmental issues, angklung is definitely an ideal choice of instrument to represent a reminder for us to look into the alarming issues of our nature.

“诗情画意” is the Chinese title of the piano. It is a suggestive and evocative title that carries the meaning of poetry and picturesque sceneries. It contains aesthetic qualities that conveys expression and portrays images through music to the audience.

4.2.3 Text 2a: Program Notes of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

The program notes of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor” as shown below was written by the performer – Wong See Yee, for her performance on 21st May 2019 in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall:

This piece gives a cultural feeling of nostalgia, explaining the simple, traditional “kampung” lifestyle of the composer when he was small, without the dominance of pollution. However, after many decades, pollution has grown more prevalent, slowly turning the Earth into a wasteland.

The memories recalled beautiful days. It was always breezy, beautiful days beginning with the calls of birds and swaying coconut trees, alongside with the sound of the angklungs, without hesitation the beginning was an abstract scene, filled with serenity. Yet no one realized the dangers lurking about, trees slowly disappearing from the surface while toxic emissions filled the air.

Mother Earth began feeling distressed and angered, sending out many warnings to mankind. But mankind, turning a deaf ear, continued destroying the Earth.

The middle section of the piece made me felt like I was in the sea, inside the spinning undercurrent, while a storm was approaching from the far tides, slowly coming towards me while dissipating at the same time.

Mother Earth was enraged!

Lastly, Mother Earth has faced major destruction. It was as if the apocalypse was here, only the faint sounds of the angklungs could be heard, slowly healing the Earth.

The program notes represent the performer's interpretation. It is divided into shorter sections for analysis and commentary.

This piece gives a cultural feeling of nostalgia, explaining the simple, traditional "kampung" lifestyle of the composer when he was small, without the dominance of pollution. However, after many decades, pollution has grown more prevalent, slowly turning the Earth into a wasteland.

The performer was born in Kuala Lumpur in the year of 1978, with her childhood years almost similar to the composer, hence, the phrase "lifestyle of the composer when he was small" could be also referring to the performer herself. This suggestion is supported by the idea where the performer referred the village as traditional "kampung", which is more Malay-oriented, and this does not match with the situation in Sibu that was more Chinese dominated during the said era. The "kampung" used to be peaceful, calm, harmonious, with a more laid-back lifestyle, however this was gradually being destroyed by pollution. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, being one of the most important cities, Kuala Lumpur experienced urbanisation and rapid development, as well as a rapid growth in population, causing problems like insufficient living space and pollution of environment to rise (Yaakob, et al., 2010). The level of detestation on pollution has become so intense, the performer even ascended the problem to a global issue, from her birthplace to the earth. The word "Earth" is capitalised here as a proper noun to emphasize it as a specific place that we live on.

The memories recalled beautiful days. It was always breezy, beautiful days beginning with the calls of birds and swaying coconut trees, alongside with the sound of the angklungs,

without hesitation the beginning was an abstract scene, filled with serenity. Yet no one realized the dangers lurking about, trees slowly disappearing from the surface while toxic emissions filled the air.

The above functions as a visualization of the performer's interpretation as to what truly constructs an ideal, Malaysian village. The gradual change caused by pollution was not noticed by anyone, no one realised the danger and the consequences caused by deforestation and rapid industrialization.

Mother Earth began feeling distressed and angered, sending out many warnings to mankind. But mankind, turning a deaf ear, continued destroying the Earth.

The word "Earth" has changed to the term "Mother Earth", giving it a character of a caring mother who takes care of all living things on this planet, and nurtures them with all resources that could be found on earth. The said term has given life and soul to the word "Earth", presenting it as a living thing like human, that has emotions and feelings. This constructs a closer connection between human and nature, hence, expressing more feeling of empathy towards the misery that Mother Earth has gone through. Human beings are described as greedy, selfish and stubborn, a contrast to the Mother Earth who is always caring, and her sacrifice was taken for granted.

The middle section of the piece made me felt like I was in the sea, inside the spinning undercurrent, while a storm was approaching from the far tides, slowly coming towards me while dissipating at the same time.

The performer interpreted the middle section of the piece as a turmoil, with storm and whirlpool in the sea, forming a vortex that could engulf anyone anytime. The storm that is gradually approaching creates tension that increases as it comes closer. The waves and storm could have seized upon her and submerged her into the sea, but the disaster did not happen, it just disappeared at the same time. This symbolises the helplessness felt by the performer towards the destruction happened to Mother Earth, yet she hoped that it was just a dream and all devastation done is reversible.

Mother Earth was enraged!

Lastly, Mother Earth has faced major destruction. It was as if the apocalypse was here, only the faint sounds of the angklungs could be heard, slowly healing the Earth.

“Mother Earth was enraged!” This is a vehement condemn, castigating the selfishness of human beings, bringing damage to the environment. The dire consequences, metaphorically compared to an apocalypse, caused by the human actions are urgent and need to be stopped immediately. Once again, the sound of angklung is heard. The soothing sound of bamboo is also representing the sound of nature, providing hope and healing power to the earth. The performer is also using angklung as an instrument to associate with nature, and a reminder for everyone to take good care of the environment, in order to enable recovery from the damage.

4.2.4 Text 2b: Interview Verbatim Text of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

An unstructured interview with the pianist – Chee Su-yen was conducted online via Zoom on 2nd May 2022. The interview was about her preparation, experience, and her interpretation on her public performance of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor” on 16th March 2014 in Chinese Assembly Hall, Kuala Lumpur. The interview verbatim text is shown in Appendix 4.1. The commentary of her interview presented in a meaningful structure is as follows:

Technical wise, the pianist described the work as less progressive compared to other works, technically not too difficult and not using much of the new extended composition techniques, while still retaining relative coherence, only the repeated notes have to be given more sensitivity and attention to maintain the evenness of the notes. The repeated notes also render different roles in the music, in the beginning, the “repeated notes” idea is creating a more spacious atmosphere, and later this idea exhibits a stormy mood.

Interpretation wise, the approach towards the piece was mainly based on her own ideas. She tried to create different moods and characters for different sections, like the rubato section is more flowing, and the chordal section more intense, yet she understood that the composer’s intent, performer’s interpretation and audience’s understanding towards the piece are personal and totally depending on their life experience. That explained her reason of not imposing any message on the music, even though the prologue described the composer’s recollection of the piece’s inspiration, she still emphasized on

the freedom and personal engagement among listeners towards the piece, hence, she added onto the open-ended description mentioned, without necessarily imparting a specific message.

She mentioned the advice the composer gave on the few occasions they met, he managed to provide her with some essential information, as well as how the tone color required a subtler approach, with minute details being further clarified by the composer, for instance, some freedom of time in certain parts, the inspiration of the piece is relevant to his hometown, and the repeated notes are related to the traditional instrument – angklung.

To her, the piece has an innate feeling of nature, which includes a calm scenery, stillness of nature, landscape, mountains, storm, waves, and water. The piece contains musical elements that echo the nature, where listeners could easily connect the music to nature, and for the performer, the interpretation of the piece will still be related to nature, with or without the prologue given. She described the climax of the piece as more “complicated”, “stormy”, and “compact”. She took the composer’s advice to create tension to the climax by increasing the speed. The third page is described as having a waterlike texture to it, with her mentioning that the piece has motives drawn from a modified pentatonic scale which has Javanese influence.

Besides being construed as depicting the nature, she also mentioned that the piece has Chinese influence, as she drew semblances to the angklung, due to repeated notes, as well as the pipa due to how the score’s technique is

structured. On top of this, she gave an analogy of the work being akin to Chinese painting. The pianist seems to perceive, however, the idioms more from her personal background. As she said, “And also, this piece is kind of based on traditional Chinese influence, I think naturally the Chinese instruments will come in to your mind...”

She takes the Chinese influence as something “natural”. This could both imply her personal background as a Chinese descent, as well as the cultural background of the composer. The repeated notes, rather than the tremolo of the angklung, implied more as the tremolo of pipa. One may speculate that the influence of the string instrument may lie subconsciously within the composer. It could also infer that the pianist, may need an analogy to something that is culturally closer to assist in her imagination of angklung. After all, the position of both composer and pianist, as a native Mandarin or Cantonese speakers, in portraying the effect of other ethnicity, reflects the sentiment similar to the word “Nanyang”.

According to Bohlman (2005), “Music represents both self and other.” Music could be narrative, where it represents landscape, culture, tradition, and the society, but at the same time, music also has its own innate artistic essence, such as, the phrases of the melody, rhythm, harmony, and dynamics. By examining the basic elements of music, it enables exploration from the simplest units of musical elements, also allowing for extrapolation up to a higher, aesthetic level. Thus, the pianist also expressed her insights on the analysis of the score. She focused on the musical elements used in the piece,

for instance, the fourth intervals, the five-notes motives, scales, and the contrast between left and right hand. She continued to elaborate on the elements that occur in the piece and how they were switched between hands, and even the grouping of notes plays an important role in giving flair to the music. She summarized the overall ambience of the piece is built from spacious to flowy and to stormy, before going back to spacious, and the changes were presented like an arch form.

4.2.5 Cross-item Comparison between Texts

Comparisons were made between Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b. The themes that occur in two or more texts are taken into account (see Table 4.1). The composer (Text 1) and the pianist (Text 2b) share an awareness of a diasporic sentiment of Nanyang. Although this sentiment was not present in the performer's understanding (Text 2a), nostalgic recollection of childhood and traditional life is common to all parties. Angklung is another prevalent theme for all three texts. Expressiveness is also a concern for all interpreters, in which technical skills and the effect in portraying nature as well as angklung are intertwined. A social message runs consistently in Text 1 and Text 2a. Although Text 2b has no such inclination, the sub-theme of nature, landscape are some common areas.

Table 4.1 : Themes and Sub-themes of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

Themes	Sub-themes	Text 1	Text 2a	Text 2b
Nanyang	Hometown, nostalgic recollection, traditional village, Chinese influence	✓	Nostalgic recollection, traditional village	✓
Expressiveness	Suggestive title, imaginative scenes and images related to the music, interpretation	✓	✓	Technical skills and interpretation issues
Angklung	Nature	✓	✓	✓
Social message	Save the nature, pollution, Mother Earth, environmental issues	✓	✓	Nature, landscape
Score analysis				✓

4.2.6 Musical Narratives of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

In determining themes for the construct of musical narratives, the relationship between the three text is scrutinized. This piece unfolds musical narratives that consists of four themes, “Nanyang” is one of the themes present in the three texts. An awareness of diasporic identity is shared by all three texts, which could be reflected in the word “Nanyang”. Text 1 and Text 2b shared a common sentiment of Chinese influence, and they imposed the point of view from a Chinese perspective towards the piece, and interpret the piece through the lens of Chinese values. Conscious or unconsciously, they present Chinese standpoint which allows Chinese influence to be examined and analyzed in the texts, such as, usage of the word “Nanyang” in Text 1 reflects senses of Chinese reference towards the region, and in Text 2b the Chinese sentiment

is straightforward as the pianist considered it “natural” to relate Chinese influences to her interpretation. On the other hand, Text 2a has a slightly different view. The performer referred the piece to the scenery of a Malay traditional village, which is more localized, without any reference to Chinese ethnicity. Her nostalgic recollection is about the lifestyle of a peaceful village in the early eighties, with the image of the village clearly portrayed by words of description to picture the scenery.

The theme of “Nanyang” is evident in all three texts with the concept of diasporic identity deeply ingrained in the tapestry of cultures that differs in origin. This delves into the inclination of each party on how they project their culture influences on the word “Nanyang”. Despite all of them being Chinese descendants, the presentation of Chinese cultural significance and the imposition of Chinese standpoint differ in depth for all three texts. The varied diasporic experiences are personal and somehow affect the artistic expression shown in the texts. The perspective of localization from Text 2a opened up another possibility on how different individual navigates on one’s cultural roots. The imitation of angklung and the usage of pelog scales both give references to the region of Nanyang; whereas the repeated notes having a gradual speed increase, similar to the effect often used in the Chinese music, known as “慢起渐快”, which means starting from slow speed and gradually getting faster, show penchant towards Chinese music style. However, it could be a sound effect, without much intention of showing sense of Chineseness, yet the usage of this composition element invites listeners to engage with Chinese diasporic

perspective. Therefore, the theme “Nanyang” is considered as coherent with the musical meaning.

Expressiveness is a theme present in all three texts, where all parties are trying to portray an image that could be imagined through listening to the music. The composer’s intent of displaying the expressiveness is clearly shown in both English and Chinese evocative title, as “poetic” and “pictorial”. Both Text 2a and Text 2b exhibit images of nature for the piece, with the differences being, in Text 2a, the performer anthropomorphized the earth and used metaphor of turmoil and storm as the helplessness faced in life; whereas in Text 2b, the pianist was more concern on conveying the expressiveness of the music through convincing technical skills and interpretation by creating moods and characters that suit the changes of sections in the piece.

Generally, the three texts are linked by a common theme of “Expressiveness”, but analysis is needed to investigate on the various ways in which expressiveness manifests itself, by examining the composer's goals, the performer's imagination on anthropomorphic and metaphorical imagery, and the pianist's emphasis on pianistic and artistic skills. By looking at the musical structure, it is difficult to relate to the images suggested in Text 2a by the performer. Moreover, it is also not reflecting any hint of nature as stated by the pianist in Text 2b, the descriptions in Text 2a and 2b are purely a personal approach. Nevertheless, the performance directions written on the scores provide immense assist on understanding the expression needed to be conveyed while performing the piece. Additionally, the spacious and airy

rhythm in the beginning and ending demonstrate a huge contrast with the busy and compact rhythm in the middle part, this could contribute to certain level of connection to the composer's evocative title, as well as the performing skills required to deliver the expressiveness. Hereby, I argue that the manifestation of expressiveness has little resemblance with the musical meaning. This highlights the subjectivity which allows a range of interpretation that serve as a variant to the narrative of the musical structure.

Both Text 1 and Text 2a relate the sound of angklung to the nature, and they mentioned about the usage of angklung from the beginning to the end, with Text 1 presented it in a documentary method by introducing the origin of the instrument, the method of playing and how it was imitated by the piano, and the decline of angklung among the younger generation; whereby in Text 2a, the sound of angklung is associated with calm and beautiful scenery of a village in the beginning, but has turned to a sound that represent nature due to its material – the bamboo, and it carries a function of healing the earth at the end. In Text 2b, if not told by the composer, the pianist might relate the repeated notes to pipa instead of angklung, hence, her connection with angklung is lesser compared to Text 1 and 2a.

The theme of "Angklung" is clearly mentioned by the composer in Text 1 and this was echoed by the performer and pianist in Text 2a and 2b, where all parties wove a connection of this instrument to the nature. It is engaging a pre-emptive conception that the repeated notes and the tremolos in the piece are imitating the sound of the traditional instrument, angklung. Contrarily, the

pianist suggested pipa instead of angklung, which showcases personal perspective applied without the preconception. It is logic and acceptable to relate angklung to the nature by knowing that it is made of bamboo. On the other hand, it is rather obscure to expand the narrativity to “the decline of angklung among the younger generation” and to transcend the angklung from a musical instrument to a medium with healing power. The expansion of angklung’s narrativity is beyond the musical meaning found on the score. It is only made possible with contextualization of the instrument on its status quo, individual interpretation, and with certain understanding of cultural and historical origin. Thereupon, the semblance of angklung is explicitly displayed on the musical elements. However, any further symbols and meaning extended from there remain as personal perception.

Despite referring to different area, Text 1 for Sibu and Text 2a for Kuala Lumpur, both texts highly impart social messages that involved social dynamics on rapid development, industrialization, modernization, and urbanization that started from the 1970s. The appeal is shown in Text 1 – “Save our nature world”, and in Text 2a about pollution that turned the earth into a wasteland. The consequences include environmental issues such as deforestation that caused lesser raw material to be found for the making of angklung, hence, in Text 1, angklung is used as a symbol to nature, as the decline in its importance symbolizes the deterioration of the nature. The detestation on human’s action leading to serious pollution is stronger in Text 2a. In order to gain empathy, the earth was brought to life and given a character of “Mother Earth” that was badly damaged and finally healed by the

sound of angklung. Although differ in level of detestation, both Text 1 and Text 2a are using the sound of angklung as reminder to save the nature. No specific messages were imparted in Text 2b, however, the pianist mentioned that the reference to nature was palpable and innate. The flow of the music that goes from calm and spacious to stormy and back to spacious somehow matches the archetype of a narrative that forms an arch.

The theme of “Social Message” is presented in Text 1 and 2a, but they differ in terms of intensity and level of desperation. As such one interpretation could appear vastly different from another. Imagining nature is one matter but advocating preservation is a discourse of a different level. Logically, it takes efforts to link angklung with deforestation and pollution. The musical structure, on the other hand, only corresponds to signifying the region of the composer’s homeland by the featuring pelog scales throughout the piece, but how intense is theme “Social Message” being featured in the musical structure itself? The compact chords pictured in the middle part, accentuated by compelling use of repeated notes and tremolos, and *accelerando* in the tempo to achieve the speed of “240 quavers in a minute” may be considered as a form of intensity, but it could well be a general induce of excitement for dramatization purpose in order to highlight the climax of a work. Hence, I argue that the intensity, or level of desperation as depicted in “Save our nature world” mentioned by the composer and performer have no direct relation with the musical meaning. In this regard, the theme of social message, or social advocacy remains as one of the possibilities in interpretation rather than an innate part of the narrative.

4.3 “JI”

“JI” for piano solo is composed by Teh Tze Siew in year 2010. The approximate duration of the piece is two and a half minutes.

4.3.1 Structure of “JI”

There are four main sections in the piece. As shown in Figure 4.8, the dissonant effect of the second-interval is employed throughout the whole piece, except for the slightly slower third section. Accents are frequently used as a sudden attack mounted at places. The starting four bars serve as an introduction with touches of rubato that gives the opening a more spacious atmosphere. Then the sudden change to the “vivace” tempo (fast speed) in bar 5, displays an effusion of compelling perpetual semiquaver rhythm, building up the feeling of restlessness and aggression of this toccata-like composition. Acciaccaturas are added at times, forming a forceful yet crystalline thrust to the continuous rhythm. The first section ends with a few strong accented dissonant chords in fortississimo and the last chord prolonged by a pause.

击

郑适秀 Teh Tze Siew

Moderato (♩ = c. 108)
Tempo Rubato

Piano

mf *sfz* *mf* *sfz*

less pedal

Vivace

Figure 4.8 : Music Extract from Bar 1 to Bar 9 of “JI”

The music resumes with a sudden turn of direction in the second section (see Figure 4.9), which is created by changes of notes grouping. In this section, “accelerando” – getting faster, were used twice to create an agitated forwarding drive, enhanced by increasing the dynamics level. This section ends in an abrupt manner, before the music plunges itself to a trill on a low bass note, with a sudden change to soft dynamic, which unveils the third section in the speed of moderato.



Figure 4.9 : Music Extract from Bar 26 to Bar 37 of “JI”

The third section is played in a relatively slower speed, yet it still requires touches of rubato and sense of agitation. With the left hand constantly playing a trill on C1 and its adjacent D flat, the right-hand part is divided into two voices that consist of cluster chords, constructing a contrapuntal melodic texture, where all the notes are from the F sharp major pentatonic scale – basically, only the black keys of the piano are used for the right hand (see Figure 4.10). As instructed by the composer, the cluster chords have to be pressed with the palm. Towards the end, the two voices are combined and merged to one voice only. Here, the tension escalates with more frequent usage of syncopated rhythm alongside with “accelerando”, but the music then eases down by gradually slowing down and dying away to the dynamics level of pianississimo (ppp) – very soft, forming an arch shape. Una corda is being used throughout the whole section, giving it an introspective emotion, hence generating a sharp distinction with the outer sections.

46 **Moderato**
press all the black key with palm within the octave

subito *p* *mf* rubato e agitato

8th *p* *una corda*

51

56 *accel.*

8th

Figure 4.10 : Music Extract from Bar 46 to Bar 60 of “JI”

Before entering the fourth section, a two-bar bridge with minor seconds spanning over six and a half octaves, with the usage of “accelerando”, links the music back to the original speed, shown in Figure 4.11.

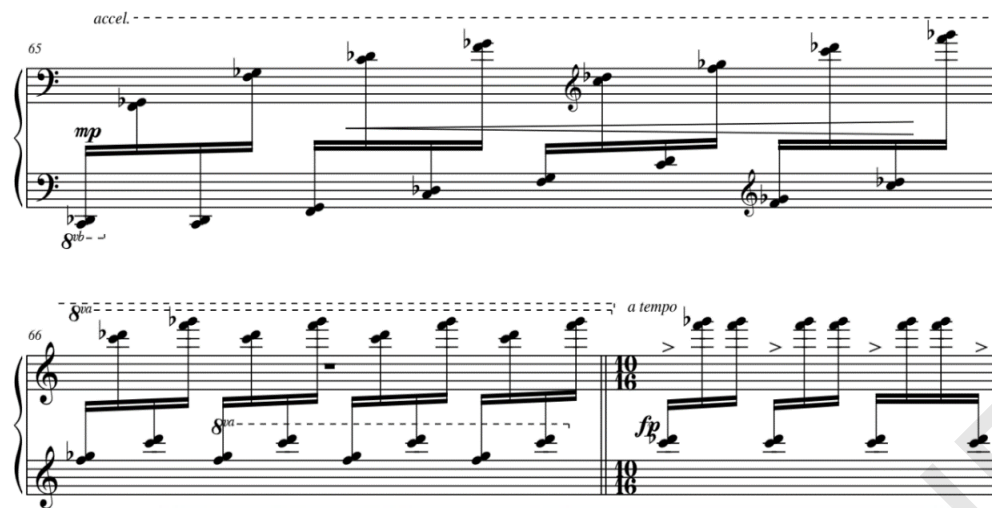


Figure 4.11 : Music Extract from Bar 65 to Bar 67 of “JI”

This is also the final section where the perpetual rhythm returns, leading to a euphoric state towards the end but interrupted by three accented dissonant chords, and a bigger surprise awaits at the last bar – a sudden change to soft dynamics, ending on the pitch of F7, with a thread of notes played rapidly before it, then vanishing like a wisp of smoke, as shown in Figure 4.12.



Figure 4.12 : Music Extract from Bar 79 to Bar 81 of “JI”

4.3.2 Text 1: Prologue of “JI”

The prologue of “JI” written by the composer – Teh Tze Siew, is as follows:

JI, means beat or hit, convey high spirit combination of variety Chinese and Malay percussion instruments with used of minor second interval and irregular rhythm. This piece is full of excitement and eagerly to reach the tranquillity of mind.

The composer also wrote the prologue in Chinese, translated to English by the researcher as shown below:

击，为打击乐器的“击”，曲子结合中国民族及马来土著的各种打击乐器音效及节奏特征，以二度音程的组合构成不规则的节奏。整曲以极度激烈，快速及激情演奏，直到到达结尾的平静。

JI, is “beat” or “hit” from the percussion instrument, the piece combines various sound effects and rhythm characteristics of percussion instruments from the Chinese nation and Malay natives, presented through the interval of seconds to construct the irregular rhythmic patterns. The piece is to be performed in an extremely intense, high-speed, and passionate way, until reaching the tranquillity at the end.

The prologue represents the composer’s intent. Both versions of prologue are divided into shorter sections for analysis and commentary.

English version:

JI, means beat or hit, convey high spirit combination of variety Chinese and Malay percussion instruments with used of minor 2nd interval and irregular rhythm.

Chinese version:

JI, is “beat” or “hit” from the percussion instrument, the piece combines various sound effects and rhythm characteristics of percussion instruments from the Chinese nation and Malay natives, presented through the interval of seconds to construct the irregular rhythmic patterns.

The title “JI” is originated from a Chinese word which means beat or hit. It carries an explicit meaning that comes with movements, as well as an implicit meaning that implies a concept when performing the piece, to display some energetic percussive techniques. The combination of Chinese and Malay percussion instruments might reflect the multiculturalism society of Malaysia. It could also be reflecting the composer’s experience of being a Malaysian but had sojourned in China. This idea is stated in the prologue in Chinese version where she mentioned “中国民族” which means “Chinese nation” and “马来土著” which means “Malay natives”. The interval of seconds (mostly minor seconds, some being major seconds) are used to convey the dissonant sound effects of the percussion instruments. The irregular and unpredictable rhythmic patterns create asymmetrical rhythm and forwarding momentum, which add folk flavour and an energetic drive to the music.

English version:

This piece is full of excitement and eagerly to reach the tranquillity of mind.

Chinese version:

The piece is to be performed in an extremely intense, high-speed, and passionate way, until reaching the tranquillity at the end.

The Chinese version of the prologue gives a clearer concept on how the music should be presented. It requires the performer to perform it in an “extremely intense, high-speed, and passionate” way, which shows a higher demand on both technique and expression, whereby in the English version, “high spirit” from the first sentence and “excitement” from the second sentence are the only words relevant to the required effects. Both versions mentioned about reaching the state of tranquillity as a goal, it could be a planned turning point that serves as a contrast to the energetic atmosphere, or it could be a mere ending. However, the English version gives more sense of direction and urgency as the tranquillity is eagerly to be reached, specifically the peace of mind, providing a resolution to the exciting journey.

4.3.3 Text 2a: Program Notes of “JI”

The program notes of “JI” as shown below was written by the performer – Wong See Yee, for her performance on 21st May 2019 in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall.

This piece is permeated by the outpouring interval of seconds, especially minor second, that gives a strong sense of percussive and dissonant clashes throughout. According to the composer, there are imitations of the sound effects of big and small gongs, mu-yu (woodblock), and Chinese castanets.

There are several pauses and changes of notes grouping in the music that disrupted the rattling toccata-like passages. By my personal interpretation, I treat this as a sudden change in life that disturbs the peaceful routine. The disruption of the mechanical energy includes the plunge to the melodious and yet mysterious middle section, enshrouded by the usage of

una corda. This gives me a picture of two girls having a secret conversation behind a blind, and I would interpret the gradual change of tempo along with the syncopated rhythm as: the conversation brings no solutions and they end the conversation with a long silence.

The return to the dissonant-seconds-figuration recalls the routine busy life tempo, with this reprise showing a vying for speed between the hands, reminding me of the competitions that we face in life, fighting a place for ourselves. After the chaos ascend to a boiling point, the sudden tranquil ending surprises us and somehow gives me a sense of relief.

The program notes represent the performer's interpretation. It is divided into shorter sections for analysis and commentary.

This piece is permeated by the outpouring interval of seconds, especially minor second, that gives a strong sense of percussive and dissonant clashes throughout. According to the composer, there are imitations of the sound effects of big and small gongs, mu-yu (woodblock), and Chinese castanets.

The performer emphasized on the frequent usage of seconds, especially the interval of minor second, which is the smallest interval between two notes. She agreed that the harmonic interval of minor second presents "a strong sense of percussive and dissonant clashes" that suits the composer's intent. She received information from the composer via phone conversation about the imitation of particular percussion instruments. This includes some gongs of different sizes, which could be Malay and Chinese gongs that are bossed and suspended (Simons, 2009); "mu-yu" (woodblock) as literally understood as

wooden fish, where the shape of a fish is carved on it and being hit by a stick (Yang, 1993); Chinese castanets which are from the clapper family of the percussion instruments (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998), also known as wooden-clapper, or “ban” (Yang, 1993) which means wooden board.

There are several pauses and changes of notes grouping in the music that disrupted the rattling toccata-like passages. By my personal interpretation, I treat this as a sudden change in life that disturbs the peaceful routine. The disruption of the mechanical energy includes the plunge to the melodious and yet mysterious middle section, enshrouded by the usage of *una corda*. This gives me a picture of two girls having a secret conversation behind a blind, and I would interpret the gradual change of tempo along with the syncopated rhythm as: the conversation brings no solutions and they end the conversation with a long silence.

According to the information retrieved online from Encyclopaedia Britannica, toccata is a musical form for keyboard instruments that consists of highly technical demanding elements, such as continuous rapid running notes, in order to demonstrate the performer’s virtuosity. Toccata is presented as a compelling, energetic, continuously advancing, and fast passage. However, the momentum is interrupted by pauses and changes of notes grouping – some musical elements that bring totally contrasting effects to the toccata. Hence, the piece display combination of intense and relaxed moments, lapses in the midst of excitement, which add diversity and zest to the music. The performer interpreted the changes and interruptions as the sudden transition in life which is more related to personal life experiences. This idea is extended to a close-up on the middle section where it was associated with a secret

conversation between two girls, giving it a more realistic description that could be visualized through imagination.

The return to the dissonant-seconds-figuration recalls the routine busy life tempo, with this reprise showing a vying for speed between the hands, reminding me of the competitions that we face in life, fighting a place for ourselves. After the chaos ascend to a boiling point, the sudden tranquil ending surprises us and somehow gives me a sense of relief.

The performer continues to associate her interpretation on this piece to life, such as, daily routines, challenges in life, struggles and obstacles in life. The final relief after all chaos might be a solution to all difficulties, or an open window to all closed doors.

4.3.4 Text 2b: Interview Verbatim Text of “JI”

An unstructured interview with the pianist – Kenneth Teh Kien Huat was conducted online via Zoom on 23rd May 2022. The interview was about his preparation, experience, and his interpretation on his public performance of “JI” on 9th August 2015 in Chinese Assembly Hall, Kuala Lumpur. The interview verbatim text is shown in Appendix 4.2. The commentary of his interview presented in a meaningful structure is as follows:

The pianist took a humble position, mentioning that it was his first experience to engage with local composition, he collaborated well with the composer, seeking advice for deeper insights and understanding towards the piece, and trying to comply to the composer’s intent. The composer gave suggestions on

the usage of pedal, the percussion instruments that she was imitating, and the overview of the piece. He understood the composer's intent for the piece as portraying "energy for the outer sections" and "more like a layering of different colors" for the middle section. He has been keeping this advice in mind and mainly took his duty as to adhere to the composer's request. In order to achieve a better understanding, he did some research online and referred to the actual instruments for inspiration, especially for the tone color of Chinese percussion instrument. It is exactly due to this dedication and intuition, in which he is able to further enrich his own experience after each performance or concert.

Besides solely complying to the composer's advice, the pianist infuse his own interpretation, mainly to bring out energy for the outer sections, and to create a mysterious and zen-like feeling for the middle section. By blending in his own ideas, he is able to perform the piece through a unique artistic approach. He gave more emphasis on the middle section, a place where he enjoyed exploring the sound effects, and taking it as an effect of "gong-like sounds" that shall produce "nice effect". Moreover, he described the middle section as "impressionistic", like Debussy's *Sunken Cathedral*. This requires a sensitive touch to create subtle changes in tone color and nuanced resonance. The effect is enhanced by discerning usage of pedal and different layers of dynamics, to create the dreamy and reminiscent quality of Debussy's impressionism. During his first performance, he was highly aware of producing the intended sound effect with considerations of the acoustic features of the

performance venue and the instrumental technique. He took all factors into account to deliver the intended sound quality to the audience.

Generally, the pianist described the piece as “fast energy” with rapid changes, which also limits the capacity to produce any profound message. The fast tempo and swift moving of position on the piano keys left little time for him to convey much information or message to the listeners. Instead of giving space and time for the listeners to digest the intrinsic meaning of the piece, he kept his performance captivating, capturing the listeners’ attention, as if they were having “a very exciting ride, roller coaster ride, colors and rhythm”. He described the excitement and momentum presented in the piece as a “very brief but colorful engaging exciting fireworks, of sound and rhythm”, which would lead listeners to gaze in awe, rather than contemplating for meaning.

4.3.5 Cross-item Comparison between Texts

Comparisons were made between Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b. The themes that occur in two or more texts are taken into account (see Table 4.2). All three parties presented the ideas of excitement and percussiveness, especially through the demonstration of high spirit and immense level of energy. Folk-flavor is also a common theme portrayed in all three texts. Only Text 1 and Text 2a highlighted the tranquillity of mind that has to be achieved at the end of the piece. Structural concern was given attention by both Text 2a and Text 2b, where the different sections in the piece were dramatized and analogised to life story in Text 2a, whereby Text 2b focused on the technical skills required to display different sound effects for different sections.

Table 4.2 : Themes and Sub-themes of “JI”

Themes	Sub-themes	Text 1	Text 2a	Text 2b
Excitement	High spirit, display of energy, toccata-like	✓	✓	✓
Folk flavor	Multiculturalism, identity	✓	✓	✓
Percussiveness	Display of energy, interval of seconds, dissonance	✓	✓	✓
Tranquillity of mind		✓	✓	
Structural concern	Middle section, technical skills and sound effects, dramatization and life story imagination		✓	✓

4.3.6 Musical Narratives of “JI”

“Excitement” is one of the themes presented in all three texts. Both Text 1 and Text 2b emphasized on the energy and the fast tempo that represent the excitement in the music, in Text 2b the pianist described the excitement similar to a “roller coaster ride” and “fireworks of sound and rhythm”, which display feeling of excitement that is impressive yet brief. Text 2a summarized all the descriptive words for excitement in a term – toccata, that embodies all requirements to perform a virtuosic piece.

As the theme “Excitement” permeates all three texts, it is common that the theme is expressed through energy and speed, but differs in distinct ways of portraying excitement. It is presented in Text 1 as an unambiguous scene, in Text 2b as a metaphor, whereas in Text 2a, the description for excitement is encapsulated in one word – toccata. These various viewpoints provide a more

comprehensive understanding on the feeling of excitement through the dimension of empirical and technical. Meanwhile, the theme is clearly embedded in the musical structure. The tempo of vivace and the busy rhythmic pattern that mostly consists of semiquavers (bars 5-46 and bars 65-81) impeccably conform to the theme. However, the vivid metaphorical pictures could only be presented as one of the possible interpretations, instead of the meaning projected by the musical structure.

Folk-flavor is another theme found in all three texts, presented by imitation of Chinese and Malay percussion instruments and usage of irregular rhythm, but varies in depth of meaning. "Folk-flavor" carries most weight in Text 1, followed by Text 2a and Text 2b. In Text 1, the folk-flavor alludes the identity of a Malaysian Chinese which is portrayed in two possibilities – a Chinese in Malaysia which is a multicultural country, or a Malaysian with multicultural background sojourned in China. Text 2a and Text 2b mentioned about the information on imitation of folk percussion instruments that was retrieved from the composer. In order to obtain a better understanding, extrapolations are done from Text 2a and Text 2b to attain a more holistic spectacle on the instrument's qualities from the former, with the latter text focusing more on the effect of the instrument's tone and resonance.

Within the context of these three texts, the theme of "Folk-flavor" arises as a complex and multifaceted analysis that contributes to a more holistic narrative on the manifestation of folk-flavor in the music, despite being presented through different methods, producing a divergent point of view from three parties.

The present discourse advocates for deeper investigation into how folk-flavor manifested distinctively in identity, multicultural influences and musical sound effects. By examining the musical structure, the right-hand part of bars 47-64 is constituted by notes from the pentatonic scale of F# G# A# C# and D#, which display some oriental flavor that is akin to Chinese instruments. The utilization of the highest and lowest range in the piano could suggest diverse sound effects of various instruments, but not specifically folk instruments. Apart from that, it is abstract to relate the musical structure to identity and ethnic culture. Hence, I assert that the basic folk-flavor is inherent, anything that requires a step further to be taken remains as personal insights that has no explicit relation with the musical structure.

Another common theme among the three texts is “percussiveness”, which is brought in the music through an energetic performance in fast speed. As mentioned in Text 1 and 2a, the sound effect of percussion instruments is conveyed via the dissonant interval of minor seconds that permeates the whole piece. The theme is clearly shown in Text 1 as the title is a romanized Chinese word that carries the meaning of percussiveness as well as the verb “to hit or beat”. Text 2b extends from information delivered from the composer and to perform the piece adhere to the intended sound effects, without any implicit meaning.

The theme “Percussiveness” appears to be a dominant theme that is presented in a rather similar level of intensity among all texts. The display of the theme is most prominent in Text 1 due to the purposeful choice of title that

overtly reflects the essence of the piece. Overall, the exploration of percussiveness, energetic momentum and dissonance could be easily comprehended in the musical structure that consists of minor seconds, note clusters and a fast tempo. Even though it is difficult to identify the folk instruments that the composer was imitating, the intended sound impact still corresponds with the composition elements chosen by the composer. The convergence of data compiled from different individuals resulted in a similar theme that encompasses language, musical elements, and sonic effects that are carefully constructed. Thus, I construe that percussiveness is immanent in the work itself, while the energetic momentum and sonic impact are complementary.

“Tranquillity of mind” is indicated in Text 1 and Text 2a at the end. In Text 1, tranquillity is considered as a goal to be achieved eagerly after a chaotic and exciting journey, however, it reserves some ambiguities that it could be just an ending that subsides to a peaceful state. In Text 2a, the chaotic and energetic sections are interpreted as challenges and struggles in life, hence, the state of tranquillity entails a solution to all difficulties faced, whereas in Text 2b, tranquillity of mind is not mentioned, the only element that is slightly related to tranquillity is the “zen-like feeling” for the middle section, but not at the end.

As a theme that is only featured in Text 1 and 2a, “Tranquillity of mind” is set as the final mission to be accomplished, despite going through different routes. Fundamentally, one could navigate disparately, depending on one’s life experience and background that leads to an intriguing thread of imagination.

In Text 2b, tranquillity is not a goal to be achieved at the end, yet it is somehow related to the calmness proposed in the middle part of the piece. The differences in interpretation assign varied roles for tranquillity, it might be a final goal at the end, one of the expressions to be conveyed, or just a resolution after a chaotic passage. The ambiguity invites extensive interpretation that involves exploration of emotion and insights from multi-dimension. From a rational perspective, the music shows no hint of “tranquillity in mind”, not to mention the expansion that spans to challenges and struggles in life, these are not forming any part of the meaning carried by the musical structure. Therefore, I argue that tranquillity is not an innate meaning of the piece, the effect is nuanced by different interpreters.

“Structural concern” is a theme that only presents in Text 2a and 2b. Both texts emphasize on the changes of mood especially in the middle section of the piece to indicate the changes to different sections in the music. Text 2a focuses on a visual illustration that dramatized the music and presents it in a series of tableaux, as compared to Text 2b, which provides an auditory experience that accentuates on the delicate changes of tone color.

Delving in to the theme of “Structural concern” that is absent in Text 1 that represent composer’s point of view, this theme seems essential to both Text 2a and 2b that approach the piece through the lens of someone who learns it from scratch. Both texts are aware of the mood changes and focus intensely on the structural details that contributes to the subtle changes in tone color. By comparing the two perspectives, sparks an insightful discourse on how the

theme manifests on different sensory stimulations, creating different contexts towards understanding the music. Generally, it is logical to identify that the piece could be divided into four main sections, (bars 1-25, bars 26-46, bars 47-64, and bars 65-81) where the third section is the most distinctive section with contrasting tempo, articulation and tonality. However, the sensory experience of visual and auditory is remote from the musical structure. How accessible is the sensory experience featured in the work itself? Apparently, there is no evidence showing a direct relation of the structure to sensory elements, it is merely a personal interpretation that serves as a complement to enrich understanding towards the work.

4.4 “Life • Awareness”

“Life • Awareness” is a composition by Tee Xiao Xi for piano solo. The piece lasts roughly 6 minutes.

4.4.1 Structure of “Life • Awareness”

This piece is basically composed on the C and B whole tone scales, where the interval between the two adjacent notes in the scale is always sounding a tone or a major second apart. As shown in Figure 4.13, in the beginning, the performer is instructed to prepare himself or herself with a sense of mindfulness, and the piece is to be performed with a little freedom of time, where a preparation time of five seconds is given before the music starts. Additionally, the usage of all three pedals requires agile control of pedaling, as well as an astute comprehension of signs used for the pedals, with P1 for the

sustain pedal (right pedal), P2 for the Sostenuto pedal (middle pedal), and P3 for the una corda (left pedal).

Life. Awareness
(生活, 觉醒)
(Dedicated to Lean Hin Chong)

TEE XiaoXi 郑晓曦

Mindfulness, Poco Rubato $\text{♩} = \text{Ca. } 60 - 70$

Copyright 2016 TEE XiaoXi 郑晓曦

Figure 4.13 : Music Extract from Bar 1 to Bar 12 of “Life • Awareness”

With a contemplative mode, this piece explores the extreme range of the piano and the sound effect of the muted notes, where the strings inside the piano are dampened with hand or fingers. Several rests are indicated with duration in seconds, some are with instructions of “Don’t move” or “Wait until resonant sound completely inaudible”. The moment of silence and fading sound cast an ethereal and spiritual value to the music, exquisitely enriched by the stretches of the whole tone scales. However, the atmosphere is interrupted at times by the muted notes.

In Figure 4.14, “Tempo Guisto” is indicated in the middle section of the piece, which requires a strict tempo to be implemented in this section. The diamond-shaped notes are the keys to be depressed silently on the piano, to explore the harmonic series and the resonance of the piano sound. The usage of una corda enshrouds the sound effect in a penumbra. However, the una corda is not pressed throughout, the passages without una corda are filled with notes of staccatissimo, shown in the sign of wedges, adding to the transparency and clarity in the sound, hence, generating a sound effect of in and out of a shadow.

The musical score extract shows two systems of music. The first system, labeled 'Tempo Guisto' with a quarter note equal to 70, covers bars 22 to 26. It features diamond-shaped notes and staccatissimo passages. The second system, also labeled 'Tempo Guisto' with a quarter note equal to 70, covers bars 27 to 30. It continues the musical themes with similar notation. The score includes dynamic markings such as p, pp, and ppp. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering bars 22 to 26 and the second system covering bars 27 to 30. The score includes a large watermark 'UPM' and a large watermark 'YPM'.

Figure 4.14 : Music Extract from Bar 22 to Bar 30 of “Life • Awareness”

In Figure 4.15, the dreamy atmosphere continues with whole tone scales that come in ascending and descending manner.

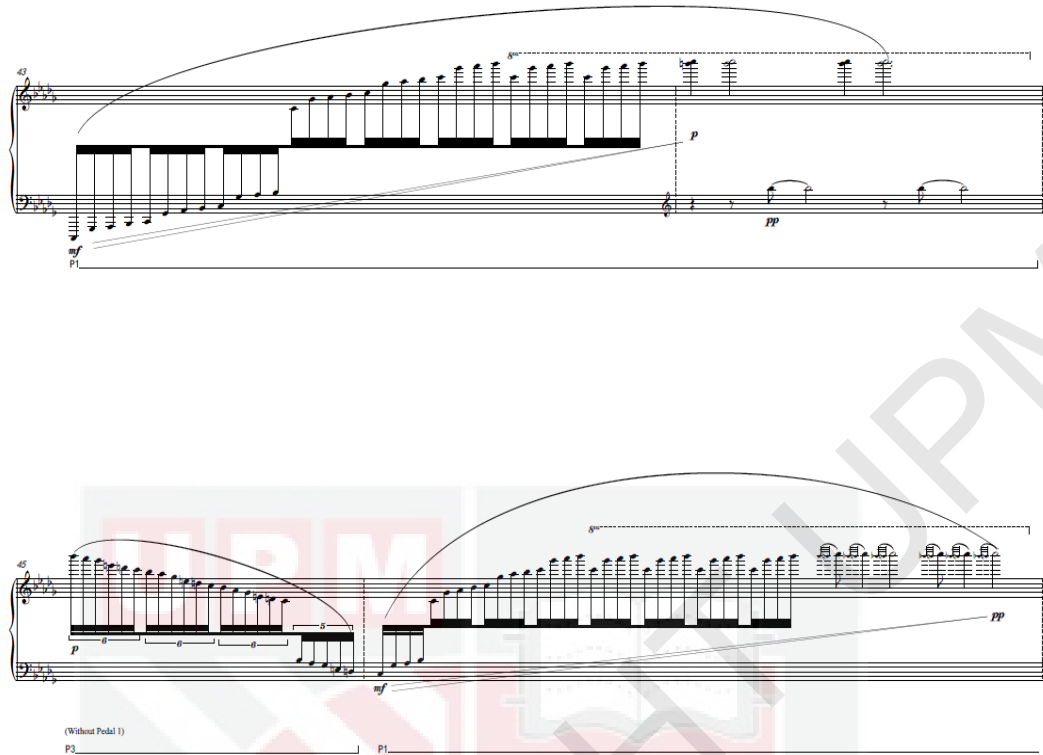


Figure 4.15 : Music Extract from Bar 43 to Bar 46 of “Life • Awareness”

Towards the end (see Figure 4.16), the performer is required to play the lowest four notes in the piano as muted notes, and in a very loud dynamics level (fortississimo). Then the music gradually subsides to a very soft dynamics level (pianississimo) in the notes of the highest range, with a speed that gets gradually slower till the end.

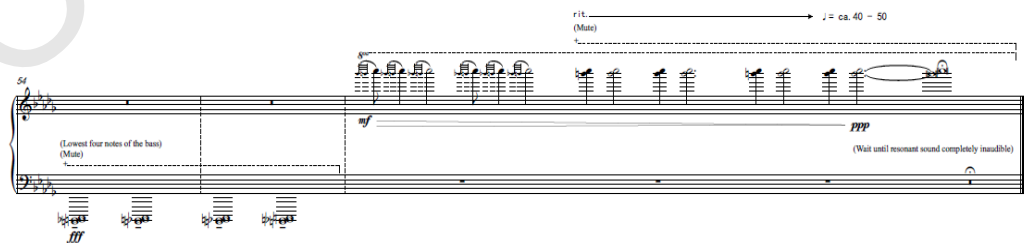


Figure 4.16 : Music Extract from Bar 54 to Bar 56 of “Life • Awareness”

Generally, the piece is interwoven by arrays of whole tone scales, intervals of silence, and muted notes, that display a tableau of the moments in life.

4.4.2 Text 1: Prologue of “Life • Awareness”

The prologue of “Life • Awareness” written by the composer – Tee Xiao Xi, is as follows:

This piece draw inspiration by ascending and descending linear texture to create a feeling of searching and solitude but yet with life awareness for the entire piece. The extended technique which is muted the strings inside piano with palm or fingers in very low and high register occurring in the entire piece is used to create a deep impact of life awareness. The resonance sound of the piano could be let it vibrate without changing sustain pedal to create a drone sound unless the instruction of changing pedal is indicated. This whole piece is composed with C and B whole tone scales. The middle section is played with depressed notes silently to explore the harmonics series which is created by the vibration from the resonance of the piano. “Focuses on what is occurring and the way it is occurring” is one of the major features of process metaphysics in Buddhism. The process in producing sound of this piece is more important than the consequence to listen the whole piece.

The composer also wrote the prologue in Chinese, translated to English by the researcher as shown below:

生活.觉醒

佛陀（Buddha）在梵文里是“觉醒”的意思，也是修行佛法里的重要过程。此曲灵感启发于上升至最高点和下降至最低点的线条织体以

营造探索和疏离的氛围，并运用现代乐钢琴扩展技术如把手按在最底和最高的钢琴弦内以弹奏如钟声或锤子打击不同平面的音色，以达到让人警惕和思考觉醒的作用。

全曲只用了 B 和 C 全音阶，中间乐段运用了左右手按静音并振动钢琴弦内的泛音以让演奏家探索钢琴泛音和共鸣的音响效果，所有的踏板需遵守作曲家指示，以达到不同音色和音响的变化效果。此曲着重在让演奏家聆听音响和音色变化的过程，而并非以完整的旋律性作为主轴，专注在弹奏和聆听整体音乐的不同音响和音色的变化过程会比表演结果来得重要。

“Buddha” in Sanskrit means awakened, this is also an important process in the practice of Buddhism. This piece is inspired by linear concept of ascending to the highest point and descending to the lowest point, in order to create an atmosphere of exploration and detachment. It also utilises the extended techniques of contemporary piano compositions, such as, dampening the strings in the piano of the lowest and highest register to produce a bell-like effect or the tone color of hammering on different surface. This is to create an alert and to ponder over the awareness of mind.

The entire piece only uses the B and C whole tone scales. In the middle section, the performer is required to explore the sound effects of the harmonics and the overtones of the piano by depressing the notes silently. The usage of pedal is according to the composer's instruction to achieve the variety of tone color and the changes of sound effects.

This piece focuses on the process of perceiving the changes of sound and tone color by the performer, rather than concentrating on the wholeness of the melodic structure. Giving attention on the process of the performance and

listening to the sound effects and changes of tone color are more important than the result of the performance.

The prologue represents the composer's intent. Both versions of prologue are divided into shorter sections for analysis and commentary.

English version:

This piece draw inspiration by ascending and descending linear texture to create a feeling of searching and solitude but yet with life awareness for the entire piece. The extended technique which is muted the strings inside piano with palm or fingers in very low and high register occurring in the entire piece is used to create a deep impact of life awareness.

Chinese version:

"Buddha" in Sanskrit means awakened, this is also an important process in the practice of Buddhism. This piece inspired by linear concept of ascending to the highest point and descending to the lowest point, in order to create an atmosphere of exploration and detachment. It also utilises the extended techniques of contemporary piano compositions, such as, dampening the strings in the piano of the lowest and highest register to produce a bell-like effect or the tone color of hammering different surface. This is to create an alarming alert and to ponder over the awareness.

In the Chinese version's prologue, the meaning of the word "Buddha" and the concept of Buddhism are employed in the beginning to interpret the piece, hence the implication of awareness and awakened are constituted and being upheld throughout the piece, however, this concept was only mentioned towards the end of the English version's prologue. The composition

techniques and elements, such as, the ascending and descending linear texture, the bell-like muted sound, are related to the practice of Buddhism – having self-awareness and knowledge to discover more on life, having a deliberative and meditative mind, and to foster inner peace as well as calmness (Tanabe, 2016). Through the concept of Buddhism, exploration, detachment, and sense of awareness, are part of the experience in life to achieve enlightenment.

English version:

The resonance sound of the piano could be let it vibrate without changing sustain pedal to create a drone sound unless the instruction of changing pedal is indicated.

This whole piece is composed with C and B whole tone scales. The middle section is played with depressed notes silently to explore the harmonics series which is created by the vibration from the resonance of the piano.

Chinese version:

The entire piece is only using the B and C whole tone scales. In the middle section, the performer is required to explore the sound effects of the harmonics and the overtones of the piano by depressing the notes silently. The usage of pedal is according to the composer's instruction to achieve the variety of tone color and the changes of sound effects.

The composer gave specific instructions on playing the piece to achieve the required sound effect. This includes the usage of pedal to create a drone sound and varying tone color, and the silently depressed notes to explore the resonance of the harmonic series. This sound effect could be associated to the concept of mind in Buddhism, where the mind and perception are closely

depended and affected by the social factors that are surrounding us, such as, culture, tradition, upbringing, religion, and many more (Tanabe, 2016). This is relatable to the harmonics and overtones that build up to the fundamental note, it is a combination of all harmonics that produces a note that is the end result of a complex vibration and resonance; analogous to that of the surrounding factors of the mind. Additionally, the up and down linear whole-tone scales effect is emancipating the piece from tonal sense, displaying an impression of vagueness.

English version:

“Focuses on what is occurring and the way it is occurring” is one of the major features of process metaphysics in Buddhism. The process in producing sound of this piece is more important than the consequence to listen the whole piece.

Chinese version:

This piece focuses on the process of perceiving the changes of sound and tone color by the performer, rather than concentrating on the wholeness of the melodic structure. Giving attention on the process of the performance and listening to the sound effects and changes of tone color are more important than the result of the performance.

The importance of being able to focus is emphasized, and this is highly related with the capability of having good concentration and mindfulness (Tanabe, 2016). This is one of the doctrines in Buddhism, for instance, a monk would focus and comprehend distinctively on his body, his feelings, and his mind as different entities, at the same time not affected by any cravings and dissatisfaction towards the world (*The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A*

Translation of the Digha Nikaya, 1995). Furthermore, according to Buddhism, the world is full of impermanence, everything is subject to change. The changes of sound effects and tone colors during the performance of the music, and considering evanescence as the immanent quality of live music performance, the process of a performance is construed as allegorizing the impermanence in Buddhism. It is more important to appreciate the changes, unfold the music through time, and experience the creation of music by closely engaging with the process of performance; than to just concern about the result of the performance.

4.4.3 Text 2a: Program Notes of “Life • Awareness”

The program notes of “Life • Awareness” as shown below was written by the performer – Wong See Yee, for her performance on 21st May 2019 in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall.

The three elements that are being used in the composition:
The muted notes effect which is played by dampen the strings with the palm or fingers, the whole tone scales and the sostenuto pedal.

Before we start, we have to first sit down and calm ourselves down for approximately five seconds. Questions creep into our mind and we could not find a solution. We keep on looking and searching but to no avail. We feel helpless and constantly being haunted by loneliness, uncertainties, and confusions. The muted notes effect is like a hammer in our head, it awakes us whenever we feel lost or fickle-minded.

This whole piece is composed with C and B whole tone scales. The whole-tone effect depicts the struggles and calls from my inner self.

My mind is trying to send me messages which are against my actual actions. So, it is important to always listen to ourselves and feel our hearts.

In the middle part, the slightly depressed notes sustained with the sostenuto pedal, is to explore the harmonic series which is created by the vibration from the resonance of the piano. Similarly, in our lives, the choices or decisions we make will have an impact or influence to us and indirectly lead us to our next moves and directions.

The message that the piece is trying to convey: Focus and move beyond self-centred egoism. That will be the ultimate goal to achieve awareness in life and finally free from fear.

The program notes represent the performer's interpretation. It is divided into shorter sections for analysis and commentary.

The three elements that are being used in the composition: The muted notes effect which is played by dampen the strings with the palm or fingers, the whole tone scales and the sostenuto pedal.

The performer acknowledged the main composition elements and playing techniques that were composited to acquire the style of the piece.

Before we start, we have to first sit down and calm ourselves down for approximately five seconds. Questions creep into our mind and we could not find a solution. We keep on looking and searching but to no avail. We feel helpless and constantly

being haunted by loneliness, uncertainties, and confusions. The muted notes effect is like a hammer in our head, it awakes us whenever we feel lost or fickle-minded.

Instead of using the theories in Buddhism, the performer approached the piece in a personal way by giving it sense of individualism. The few seconds before starting the performance is a crucial moment for preparation, as a clear and calm mind is needed to affirm the awareness and enlightenment entailed in the piece. However, the prerequisite to that, is a long journey of doubt and questioning, where one constantly faces that of misdirection and emptiness. Life in itself, is transient and ephemeral, it never stops to fit what people seek, it is an evolving process which nothing could last forever; hence, becoming an action of exploration in this impermanent cycle. The performer is optimistic about this journey of exploration, metaphorically, the muted notes serve as a reminder that will lead her back to the right track, and help her to refocus if her mind begins to flutter.

This whole piece is composed with C and B whole tone scales. The whole-tone effect depicts the struggles and calls from my inner self.

My mind is trying to send me messages which are against my actual actions. So, it is important to always listen to ourselves and feel our hearts.

The performer is using the whole tone scales effect as a metaphor to symbolize the toil and hard life that lie subconsciously in her mind. Her subconscious will is against her conscious moves, the things she does might

be an opposition to her original intent. She encourages herself to realise the conflict and to understand her own needs. According to the performer, facing one's emotions and feelings positively is an essential action that might result outward actions that align with core expression.

In the middle part, the slightly depressed notes sustained with the sostenuto pedal, is to explore the harmonic series which is created by the vibration from the resonance of the piano. Similarly, in our lives, the choices or decisions we make will have an impact or influence to us and indirectly lead us to our next moves and directions.

The performer draws semblance in life to the exploration of harmonic series on the piano. Each decision in life will lead to a chain of consequences in the future, which are all closely interconnected. This could send a series of influences down the line and the impact snowballs to a continuous repercussion that will keep affecting one's life. That also explains the reason that life is dynamic and ever-changing, and the future is unpredictable. Hence, decisions are to be made prudently.

The message that the piece is trying to convey: Focus and move beyond self-centred egoism. That will be the ultimate goal to achieve awareness in life and finally free from fear.

According to Zimmermann (2015), his view on interpreting objectively was clearly enunciated as "...we need to focus less on ourselves and turn our attention more towards the object we seek to understand." Self-centred and egoism are two main factors that confine one's rational thinking and narrowed down the mindset which is a total opposite of interpreting objectively. By

moving away from self-centred mentality, one is more likely to be aware on how the actions affect others and become more passionate in achieving the intended life, without being intimidated easily. Ultimately, life is about obtaining greater wisdom, free from fear, and embrace life with passion.

4.4.4 Text 2b: Interview Verbatim Text of “Life • Awareness”

An unstructured interview with the pianist – Jaskeerat Singh Gill was conducted online via Zoom on 17th July 2022. The interview was about his preparation, experience, and his interpretation on his public performance of “Life • Awareness” on 29th October 2018 in Big Hall of the University of Music in Lübeck. The interview verbatim text is shown in Appendix 4.3. The commentary of his interview presented in a meaningful structure is as follows:

This was the pianist’s first exposure to Malaysian contemporary music. To him, the experience was fun and it opened up his exposure towards new playing techniques, such as, the muted notes effect, and the exploration of the harmonic range of the piano by silently depressing certain notes. He also mentioned about the composer’s advice on specific sound effects, especially the high notes are to be played as crispy birds chirping sound, and the low notes as the sound of a gong or something growling.

In this initial encounter, he discovered significant changes in his playing. He is able to perceive the changes of sound effects caused by the instrument and the venue’s acoustic quality. This became a vital factor on his control of dynamics, considering the time required for dissipation of sound and

reverberation caused by the qualities of the hall. Furthermore, he managed to be more versatile in his performance's style, as his touch used to be wild and harsh which contradicted the tranquillity of this piano piece. His dedication in the performance inspired his potential in displaying the delicacy of nuance in the music. This include planning the fingering and hand position which fits the best in the whole-tone scale patterns to establish a better grasp of the rapid scales; be meticulous in the vary of dynamics, be it obvious contrast or subtle changes; and prudent planning for the intricate usage of all three pedals to ensure a smooth transition.

There were several aspects he found challenging in this piece. Firstly, the pauses in the piece are not just indicated by rests, there are timing stated in seconds, some are with the instruction "Don't move" on the bars, and also with usage of comma. The duration of the pauses is ambiguous and personal. Hence, he presented the pauses and breaks between phrases as gestures of artistic interpretation that conform to the performance. Secondly, the pianist also encountered complex rhythmic pattern and unconventional grouping of notes. In order to refine his timing and precision in counting, he referred to another pianist's performance on "Life • Awareness", which is not to his liking as the playing demonstrated too much of flexibility in the rhythm. Thirdly, keeping the tension and stillness is highly demanding mentally and physically, especially in the midst of a performance on stage, the body might tense up due to pressure and anxiety, especially at the places where "Don't move" is stated. If the stillness in the music is not handled calmly, it might lead to

physically taxing, causing difficulty to keeping focus and to stabilize the fluctuation of emotions.

Basically, the pianist did not intend to convey any specific meaning. Since Buddhism or metaphysics are beyond his understanding, he only focused on the music where his interpretation mainly aims to feature the tranquil atmosphere of the piece, with a sense of meditative and solitude. Therefore, he performed the piece without wearing shoes, without a page-turner, and with careful acts, to minimize the movements and to smoothen the flow on stage. He tried to immerse the audience in the tranquil atmosphere, engage them with the meditative state, and present the music coherently to them.

Overall, this experience is a new encounter that serves as a catalyst for the pianist to venture into new playing techniques and to discover new approach towards new music. He quoted “focusing on what is occurring and the way it’s occurring is one of the major features of the process of metaphysics in Buddhism”, which is a phrase from the prologue that inspired him to break away from the norm of the European classical music approach and to do something different from the usual way. Instead of presenting the whole structure of the music, every single detail of the music is being savoured. Through this method, the pianist is able to enjoy and appreciate the intricate musical elements that constituted the work. Moreover, he gained a deeper and profound understanding of the piece that helped to present a unique and rich performance, leading to a better engagement with the audience. Additionally,

his interpretation on the piece reminded him of nature, a connection that resonates deeply with his personality.

4.4.5 Cross-item Comparison between Texts

Comparisons were made between Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b. The themes that occur in two or more texts are taken into account (see Table 4.3). There are three main themes that are closely intertwined with each other. Firstly, “Awareness” is presented in Text 1 and Text 2a as something related to the feeling of searching. The second theme “Focus” is found in all three parties, though it is most prominent in Text 2b. Both the composer and the performer focus on achieving awareness through the sound effects created, where the pianist focuses more on the performing process that concerns his technical skills and the ability to keep the stillness in the piece. Thirdly, “Extended techniques and whole tone scales” is also a common theme in all texts, where the exploration of sound effects is an essential purpose. The practice of Buddhism is juxtaposed by the composer on the first and second theme in Text 1. In Text 2a, the performer relates the second and third theme to the semblances in life.

Table 4.3 : Themes and Sub-themes of “Life • Awareness”

Themes	Sub-themes	Text 1	Text 2a	Text 2b
Awareness in life	Feeling of searching, sound effects, Buddhism, semblance in life	✓	✓	
Focus	Buddhism, changes of sound effects, semblance in life, achieve awareness, technical skills	✓	✓	✓
Extended techniques and whole tone scales	Technical skills, sound effects, semblance in life, achieve awareness	✓	✓	✓

4.4.6 Musical Narratives of “Life • Awareness”

The theme “Awareness in life” is clearly exhibited in Text 1 and 2a but rather vague in Text 2b. In Text 1, the composer employs the concept of Buddhism throughout the entire piece, where all themes that emerged stem from the religion rooted in her mind. Awareness is presented in the work via some composition elements, to symbolize the doctrines advocated in Buddhism. In Text 2a, the theme is endorsed by the performer, yet not related to any religious beliefs. In fact, the “awareness” mentioned here is a positive attitude towards life, and a state of a well-prepared mind prior to the performance. This theme is not clearly associated with Text 2b, however the personal feedback from the pianist renders slight relation, in which he attained inspirations on performance and interpretation, that could lead to an awareness in mind.

“Awareness in life” is a common theme for Text 1 and Text 2a, but presented through different concept. The theme encompasses spiritual context and personal insights, displaying the prominent status to be achieved, during the performance as a mode of transcendence, and outside of the performance as a realization to be achieved. By comparing with Text 2b, multi-dimensional viewpoints of obvious and obscure perspectives are observed. By examining the scores, it is hard to detect either any spiritual intention, or reflecting any tides in life, both are contexts implied through personal perception. Reasonably, it is difficult to link “Awareness in life” to the musical structure, as the pursuit of awareness is only achievable with employment of personal interpretation, instead of a musical narrative ingrained in the structure.

“Focus” is a theme clearly conveyed in the three texts. As mentioned previously, the composer derived the theme from practices of Buddhism and presented through the intended sound effects; whereas in Text 2a, the performer brought up semblance of life experiences and the purpose of some sound effects. Yet, in Text 2b, the pianist neither convey any message, nor relate to any religion, in fact, he focused on presenting the sound effects, following the instructions written on the score, and preserving the tranquillity of the music. The act of focusing and creating stillness caused pressure, anxiety, and a tensed-up body that is totally opposite from the intended tranquil and calm feeling. Nevertheless, the act of “focus on the music” also prompted him to have a new approach towards classical music.

Being a theme that resonates throughout the three texts, “Focus” is interpreted, expressed, and embodied in different context, where Text 2b serves as an antithesis of Text 1 and Text 2a. This is a theme that comprise religious influences, individual’s mindfulness, to artistic challenges. From the score, detailed instructions are given to allow clearer understanding on composer’s original intent, for instance, the length of the rest written in seconds, the frequent changes of tempo with metronome indications, the text “Don’t move”. The complex subdivision of note values also needs prudent approach and dexterity. All of the above are closely related to concentration of mind. Hence, the theme “Focus” is possible when attention is given to the musical structure per se, evading any specific messages or religious dogma. However, this led to an unforeseen consequence to the pianist in Text 2b, creating a paradox that involves emotion and physical control during performance.

“Extended techniques and whole tone scales” is another theme found in all texts, which is also the composition elements that constitutes the basic structure of the piece. Similar to the first two themes, in Text 1 the composer utilized the composition elements to represent the concept of Buddhism, in Text 2a the performer used metaphorical examples to connect the theme to personal experiences. In Text 2b, the pianist seemed to choose a meticulous approach to bring out the sound effects created by applying the extended techniques, and by complying to the composer’s advice. This became an initial move to encourage him to explore more extended techniques in contemporary compositions.

The common theme “Extended techniques and whole tone scales” forms an axis, where the other two themes, and the essential factors – Buddhism, semblance of life experiences, and sound effects, revolve around it. Consequently, the theme has been integrated from structural component to exploration of symbolic functions and creative artistry, that differs in manifestation of contexts in the three texts. A few examples to be pointed out, such as, the ascending and descending whole-tone scales represent feeling of searching and solitude, the muted notes effect represents a hammer that wakes up the lost mind, creating specific sound effects through exploration of harmonic range on the piano. Logically, extended techniques and whole tone scales are palpable in the work, however, it is obscure to link the said theme to Buddhism and semblance of life experiences.

4.5 Member Checking

Member checking is used in this research to validate and verify the interpreted data of the six informants. The textual analysis of composer’s prologue and the emergent themes and sub-themes were sent to the three composers. The meaningful structure constructed from each interview verbatim text was sent to the three pianists. The informants were required to read said documents and return with feedback to the researcher. The results of their feedback are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 : Results of Feedback from the Six Informants

Informants	Returned with no annotation	Returned with annotation	Remarks
Wong Chee Wei (composer of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”)	✓		
Chee Su-yen (pianist of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”)	✓		
Teh Tze Siew (composer of “JI”)		✓	The meaning of “folk-flavor” inclined to the folk music characteristic, rather than ethnic identity, due to the composer’s close association with Chinese orchestra, but she mentioned that interpreters are free to imagine.
Kenneth Teh Kien Huat (pianist of “JI”)	✓		
Tee Xiao Xi (composer of “Life • Awareness”)	✓		
Jaskeerat Singh Gill (pianist of “Life • Awareness”)		✓	He agreed with the analysis, except for the phrase that described his comment on other pianist’s approach as “not to his liking”. He mentioned that his disagreement towards different approach from other pianists is not his display of disfavor.

4.6 Dedicatee

These three piano works are dedicated to the composers’ piano teacher – Lean Hin Chong. Born in 1960, Lean was their piano teacher during their college years in Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), with Teh’s tutelage was from the early 1990s, whereas Wong’s tutelage spanned from 1996 to 1998, lastly

Tee's tutelage was from the early 2000s. Albeit having a classically trained background, Lean has always encouraged his students to move out of their comfort zones, to keep pace with the times, and constantly strive for modernity and innovation. At the same time, he was also the researcher's piano teacher from 1993 to 2004, and continues being her guiding figure till now. The researcher's participation on Malaysian contemporary art music's performance is heavily influenced by Lean's support towards this field.

The composers' dedication is an act of appreciation and respect towards their teacher's guidance on them throughout the years of learning in MIA. This is a wonderful gesture to pay tribute to a teacher that has been a mentor and a significant figure on their music learning path. Moreover, this is a way to show the strong bond between teacher and students, where his influence has played an important role in their composition skills development, as well as their career paths in general.

4.7 Brief Summary

The results of the study reported in this chapter include a brief presentation of the structure of the selected works as an introduction towards the said works, result of textual analysis on the interpretants of the works (Text 1 – composer's prologue, Text 2a – performer's program notes, Text 2b – pianist's interview verbatim text), themes and sub-themes derived through intertextual analysis on the three said texts, and musical narratives that emerged after comparing with the musical structure in notation (Text 3).

In the process of obtaining result for “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”, the historical context of genre, geographical location and the development of Sibuluan and Kuala Lumpur during 1970s and 1980s was taken into account in the research. From the aspect of social context, rapid development and urbanisation that caused environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation, and the decline in usage of angklung due to lack of material, was regarded as essential factors. The results also displayed the inherent meaning of the data, such as, the evocative title, the anthropomorphic and metaphorical elements, the discussion on technical and interpretation that reflects sense of nature and Chineseness.

Social context was given more attention for “JI”. Information on the percussive instruments such as gongs, mu-yu, Chinese castenets are obtained, moreover, the sound effects on how to present a better portray of the said instruments, and the sense of multiculturalism is presented. Besides, the innate meaning of the texts is obviously shown, such as, the rhythmic drive, and fast energy in the piece.

The result of “Life • Awareness” displayed different insights and different point of view from the three parties. The composer applied the doctrine of Buddhism to achieve enlightenment and she emphasized that the process is more important than the product. For the performer, instead of Buddhism, there is more sense of individualism and personal views towards achieving awareness in life. There are also some musical elements that bear semblance to the challenges in life. The pianist relates the piece to the feeling of nature and he

emphasized on the intended sound effect and the challenges he faced when focusing during performance that caused stillness in his body. He also discovered certain level of awareness through this piece where he learned to enjoy the process and this has changed his style of playing. However, the three different perspectives came to be in syzygy, where they converged to impart message of the impermanence in life as well as the ephemeral phenomenon in music performance, the exploration of sound effects, and the feeling of awareness.

The results of member checking are reported and the dedicatee for the three selected works is introduced.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

Engaging the hermeneutic concept, musical narrative is an alternative approach to analyze a piece. It is common to receive voices of ambiguity for embarking on a method acquiring new knowledge or cognition, particularly in subverting the structural analysis that only prioritizes composer's intent, a concept that has been dominating music analysis. This suggests a pivotal shift to accepting multi-angle perspectives that also gives prominence to the performer's interpretation, creating a nuanced understanding towards the works, where musical narratives emerge. It underscores personal experiences and the gradual changes of social dynamics, as these factors delve into trajectory of insights that give rise to the meaning of the works. From the three texts (Text 1, Text 2a and Text 2b) that represent three different perspectives, interpretants from multifaceted viewpoints are essential to encourage a more nuanced and balanced way of understanding contemporary compositions, hence, contributing to the finalised themes that represent the musical narratives resulted from diverse interpretants. The relation between the composer and the performer has been misunderstood as – the performer is only the medium to reproduce the music from the scores by obeying instructions of the composer (Cook, 2001). This research emphasizes on the significant role of the performer, and the reciprocal relationship of the composer's intent and performer's interpretation in the context of musical narrative.

5.1.1 Discussion of “Poetic and Pictorial Splendor”

Through conducting cross-item comparison between the three texts that involved examining the intricate interaction of cultural influences, concept of diasporic identity, and personal perspective, the themes "Nanyang," "Expressiveness," "Angklung," and "Social Message" are unveiled. This acknowledges subjectivity is presented in every different individual, and as a nature in music interpretation. However, not every theme is exhibited in the musical structure, only “Nanyang” and “Angklung” are explicitly displayed in the piece.

Despite all being Chinese descendants, the composer, the performer, and the pianist showed different cultural background due to different upbringing, generating interpretants that reflect the uniqueness of their hometown. This helps to reveal the cultural elements embedded in the composition, facilitating further understanding of the work beyond the boundaries of cultural influences limited by single ethnicity. Moreover, each party displays distinct aesthetic values that is presented in various manifestation, for instance, the “poetic” and “pictorial” setting of the piece is thought to be the village lifestyle in Sibuluan for the composer when he was small, but the performer set the calm and tranquil background as a traditional Malay village, whereas the pianist relates the feeling to the nature that is akin to Chinese influences. These personal preferences create interpretants that provide a spectrum of artistic performance that could be realised through a possible range of interpretations. Additionally, the emotions and feelings evoked by the music are closely related to the societal and historical context applied, where in this case, the different

origin of hometown resulted in different level and intensity of detestation towards environment pollution that could be dated back to the evolution of Sibuh and Kuala Lumpur from 1980s.

Angklung is the instrument chosen by the composer to build the groundwork of the musical narratives and to embody the themes. The imitation of the sound of angklung is found throughout the whole piece, serving as a symbol that weaves all the themes together seamlessly. Performer plays an important role as a story teller to convey composer's intent to the listeners through the contingent act of performativity that is influenced by many factors, including performer's personal insights and interpretation. In this case, the embodiment of angklung differs in level of intensity of the themes embedded in the musical structure, when compared to performer's interpretation. Moreover, the detailed performance directions on the scores, such as, the dynamics and tempo markings, represent composer's intent to shape the musical narratives. However, the performance directions are only considered as guidance, where certain level of freedom is given to the performer for margin of variance, creating subtle differences with composer's intent.

5.1.2 Discussion of "JI"

The interrelationship between the three texts is investigated through performing comparison on the texts to find out the reciprocal juxtaposition of multiculturalism, sense of identity, portrayal of sound effects, and imagery metaphor. As a result, the themes "Excitement", "Folk-flavor", "Percussiveness", "Tranquillity of mind", and "Structural concern" are

revealed. However, by analysing the musical structure, only "Excitement", "Folk-flavor", and "Percussiveness" are clearly displayed in the piece.

The three texts represent three independent individuals of Malaysian citizens, whose degree of integration into the multiculturalism and sense of identity vary on a wide scale, where the influences can be seen respectively, rendering interpretants from the multiangle of Malaysian Chinese with and without hints of diaspora. Through showing different level of importance in structural concern, the intentions of the composer as well as the artists who perform this piece are disclosed, allowing a more comprehensive approach towards the piece. This include providing a wide range of expression and emotional reaction; suggesting appreciation of artistry that enriches the broad variety of tone colors and sound effects. The imagery metaphors are holistic in nature, providing a broad visualization that varies not just from the perspective of the performer and pianist, but also acts in shaping a more holistic image to the audience, allowing for them to have a clearer grasp in the nature of the works.

Consciously or subconsciously, the composer displayed her intent to centre the piece upon the concept of duality, linking the themes together as musical narratives. Visible even in the title itself, despite consisting of two letters, the word, "JI" originated from a Chinese word "击", that presents its own literal meaning, and additionally shows sense of Chinese diaspora. Duality is also expressed by choosing Chinese and Malay percussion instruments as her composition ideas. This focus on localization and hybridization in the composition, which acts as another representation of that duality, intertwining

together to create a diverse semblance between the two. This concept is conveyed through the theme of “Structural concern” in the performer and pianist’s interpretation, presenting the contrasts of energetic and calm, chaotic and zen-like feeling. In the context of musical narrative, the joint perspectives of composer and performer result in convergence as well as diversity.

5.1.3 Discussion of “Life • Awareness”

The three themes presented by the texts are “Awareness in life”, “Focus” and “Extended techniques and whole tone scales”. These themes are closely related to each other and generate narratives that are inseparable from all themes. Yet, by examining the scores, only “Focus” and “Extended techniques and whole tone scales” are related to the musical structure of the piece.

Considering the three themes are juxtaposed throughout the three texts, the synergy among the themes is to be investigated, as they could be discursive in the context of religion, life experiences, and musical effects. The composer presented strong influence of Buddhism rooted in her composition idea, however, this is not shown in any of the parties who performed the piece, instead, they displayed more on an emotional employment and aesthetic engagement in their interpretation. The diversity of perspectives produces interpretants that encourage deeper exploration in creative approaches towards the work. Furthermore, suggesting semblances in life evokes the feeling of empathy and brings resonance for different individuals. The technical challenge highlighted by the pianist is somehow contradictory with the composer and performer, nevertheless, this situation helps to elucidate the

importance of having insights from various angle for a better comprehension. Additionally, the diverse interpretants constitute valuable resources to enhance a more analytical appreciation on contemporary compositions.

The musical narratives of the work are embodied through the usage of extended techniques and whole-tone scales that could be found throughout the piece. The explicit instructions by the composer enhance better understanding on her original intent, that is fundamentally build upon the philosophy of Buddhism. By infusing the performer's interpretation, customized musical narratives are created, through performer's perspective. From the viewpoint of the pianist, the themes caused certain impacts to him, evoking the feeling of anguish and uneasiness, that might lead to diminish of expression and craftsmanship. However, the impact from extended techniques is positive, providing motivation for the pianist. Therefore, the relationship between composer and performer is reciprocal, collaborative, and mutual, in the context of musical narrative that resonates with the individuals.

5.2 Conclusion

This thesis analyses the musical narratives of the selected Malaysian contemporary piano solo works from year 2000 onwards. By claiming that these works are difficult to understand and not having enough acceptance, I argue that presenting the relationship between composer's intent and performer's interpretation do affect the perception towards the work, providing a more holistic understanding. How to establish a comprehensive framework to interpret the said works? This was achieved by revisiting the key literature

on interpretation and applies it on the collected data to explore the musical narratives of the works. Similar research are also investigated to study the effectiveness of understanding the works.

Peirce's semiotics provides a convincing foundation for comprehending the intricate relationships that exist between the interpretation of signs, objects and individual experience. "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else," writes Peirce (1998, 478), "called its object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former." The interconnection between the tripartition of sign, object and interpretant suggest a subjective cognitive process that occurs to different individuals, creating various possibilities of interpretation towards a particular sign. This process happens during a music performance, where the listener or audience interprets the meaning of the music, causing an effect created by the sign-object relation, then producing an interpretant, which is an individual's subjective response to the music. How effective is this theory when it is applied in the context of music? The conceptual framework of this study employs Peirce's theory of semiotics, where the composers' prologues, performer's program notes and the pianists' interview verbatim texts are considered as interpretants from different perspectives.

Hereinafter, Nattiez's semiology of music (1990) is used as an extension of Peirce's semiotics when applied in the context of music. The tripartition has been developed to a multifaceted approach to derive the meaning of the music

through the interrelation of the poietic, neutral and esthetic, which encompass the process of producing the idea of composition to the interpretation of the music. This theory explores the interpretants that arise from the interlocking relationship of the composer, performer and the audience, that contributes a broader and more diverse range of perspectives from different angles. In this study, the feedback from audience is not included, however, it is replaced by the interpretation from another pianist. How does different interpretants contribute to a more balanced way of understanding contemporary compositions? Through textual and intertextual analysis conducted on the interpretants, the meaning of the works and the musical narratives that emerged through cross-item comparison are constructed. The contribution of different interpretants is profound as it takes performer's interpretation into account on shaping the meaning of the work, instead of only relying on the intent of the composer as the only conduit to understand the work.

Being one of the early research projects that is pivotal in introducing Malaysian contemporary solo piano works, Siagian's research (2007) provides information on the selected composers' background, composition elements, and composers' notes about the composition. Yet it did not open up much a comprehensive approach to analyze and to enhance interpretation. The unidirectional flow of introducing the works without further analysis lend little help in understanding contemporary compositions. Khoo's research (2014) on three Malaysian contemporary solo piano works engaged a more extended set theory method to analyze the formal structure of the compositions that includes the pitches, motifs, intervallic relationships, and more. Despite

providing information on composers' intention and background surveys, as well as the adaptation of Malaysian cultural elements in the works, the research only focus on the synchronic structural analysis that hardly reflects the meaning of the work, not to mention the viewpoints influenced by social dynamics. The composers' intention was brought up without considering the performers' interpretation, that displayed a single dimensional view, lacking the nuances in the interrelation of two different perspectives.

Referring to the "creative role of the performer" advocated by John Rink (2018), the performer's interpretation presented during a performance is the bridge to convey composer's intent to the listeners, and the three parties are comprehended as a reciprocal interconnection instead of a single way relationship. The role of the performer is significant due to the ephemeral inherent quality of a performance. The situation is also contingent on the factors affecting the performativity process, such as the acoustic of the venue, instrument's condition, performer's skills, and more. This is a diachronic and temporal process that reveals the meaning of the composition through time, subjected to the influences of social dynamics. By omitting the feedback from the listeners that might cause ambiguity in reliability, this research focuses on the narrativity resulted from the interrelation between composer's intent and performer's interpretation.

Tham's article (2019) about a Malaysian contemporary composer's piano solo work written in 2018 – Tazul Izan Tajuddin's "Kabus Pantun", is research that adopts Rink's theory of performer's creative role. As a pianist himself, Tham

is in the ideal position to explore the multifaceted viewpoints included to understand the narrativity of the work. Tham's study emphasizes on the capability of a performer for being able to identify the essence of a work through creativity, and display variety of potential interpretations in order to generate musical narrative that suits the work. Through structural analysis, Tham shared an experience embodied in the music that can only be revealed in a diachronic process of performativity. However, Tham gave priority to technical aspect, lacking insights on the musical narrative. What is the relationship between composer's intent and performer's interpretation in the context of musical narrative? Through the findings from this study, the relationship of the two perspectives is closely intertwined, as they could act as the stimulus to each other to produce another interpretants, and ongoing continuously. Yet, the advancement in the role of the performer is not replacing the significant role of the composer, it serves as a complement to understanding the work.

According to Tokumaru's theory of intertextuality (1997), music could be posited as "text", where the interpretation of the "text" highly depends on the environment setting applied, posited as "context". This theory highlights the dynamic interaction between various elements found in the music, such as, the composing technique, the featured culture, the required technical skills, where the comparison might lead to convergence or divergence, based on the context of the music. Hence, by using composer's prologue to represent composer's intent, and performer's program notes to delineate performer's interpretation, the two texts are analyzed to investigate the interrelationship

between them while engaged in different contexts. Intertextuality becomes a viable concept to understand the intricate and rich tapestry of interconnection among different perspectives, and finally resulted in the musical narratives that emerged from this process. Nevertheless, another issue that arose is the validity of the musical narratives from the findings. How convincing are the results? Therefore, another pianist's interpretation is obtained, and the musical notation is used as another text to compare with the musical narratives constructed from the interpretants.

A book written by Almen (2008) clarified that musical narrative is a hermeneutic approach towards the compositions that takes cultural impact and social dynamics into account, where it serves as an alternative to structural analysis. Yet, instead of an alternative, both hermeneutic and formalist approach could be employed simultaneously as a complementary to each other. There tends to be meaning manifested in the music as an extramusical representation, but at the same time, musical structure carries meaning as in its phrases, harmony, tonality, and more, which is the innate nature of music (Bohlman, 2006). Hence, musical narrative is a combination of subjective and objective agency that functions as a more holistic understanding towards the works.

5.3 Limitation of Study

This study is deliberately limited to Malaysian Chinese composers, in order to give a focused analysis of how their cultural heritage influences contemporary music. The exclusion of other cultural and geographical composers is not

meant to diminish their significance; rather, it is a way to maintain a manageable and profoundly illuminating research scope. This paradigm could be expanded in future studies to include additional Malaysian cultural groups, leading to a more thorough comprehension of the varied contemporary music scene in Malaysia.

This research is conducting hermeneutic study that involves varied forms of texts where it focuses on depth and particularity. Through interpretation that requires careful and repetitive scrutinization with much sense of reflexivity, exploratory comments are attained. This is also consistent with other studies that employ hermeneutic style, for example, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis studies (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Hence, with a small sample size of three composers, the information is adequate for master's research. In narrow sense, this research can be defined as an analysis of the piano solo works composed by Malaysian Chinese contemporary composers, but in broader sense, it is yet to be representative enough. Instead of claiming that the results are indicative of Malaysian Chinese contemporary composers, the primary goal of this research is to ascertain how these specific works are perceived and understood.

The intended works are confined to piano solo pieces composed from year 2000 and onwards. Piano solos are given particular focus because of their unique ability to intimately and vividly convey a composer and a performer's musical narratives. Solo piano compositions provide a direct and distinctive manifestation of a composer's intention and a performer's interpretation, in

contrast to ensemble pieces, which entail several levels of cooperation and interaction. Although they are important in and of themselves, other formats—like chamber or symphonic music—are outside the scope of this study. This focus ensures that the analysis remains valid and in line with the goals of the study.

Moreover, Malaysia Chinese composers have written a significant number of compositions for piano solo, which were well-documented in studies by Siagian (2007) and Khoo (2014). This has attracted more instrumentalists to perform said works, for instance, Free Hand Contemporary Composers Piano Festival (Free Hand, 2019), SoundBridge Festival (SoundBridge, 2023), where piano compositions by Malaysian composers are featured and promoted, underlining the instrument's important role in Malaysia classical contemporary music scene.

This study is by no means a manual of interpretation for contemporary piano solo works or a comprehensive source of contemporary piano compositions in Malaysia. The contemporary piano solo works are classical based, excluding pop, rock, or jazz genres.

5.4 Significance of Study

This study analyses the musical narrative of selected local contemporary piano solo works and data compiled from interviews and written texts. Musical narrative refers to the interpretation and understanding of the meaning of the

work. This process is done by obtaining different insights through the perspectives of composer and performer.

This study serves as a pioneer study on the relationship of composer's intent and performer's interpretation. This is a novel approach in finding the explicit and implicit meanings of the compositions, at the same time reorient and revise our understandings towards local contemporary works. As a documentation, this study provides evidence for the development and current trends in composition in Malaysia. Theory wise, the study contributes towards the discourse of appreciation of local compositions and recognition of local composers. Moreover, it adds to the value of the study where the real performance experiences of selected pianists were revealed, disclosing how they learn, interpret, and perceive the meaning of the works.

From the aspect of methodology, this study explores the hermeneutic approach of understanding local contemporary works through analyzing the interpretants and musical narrative. This presents a more comprehensive understanding towards said works, instead of solely based on structural analysis. The sharing of personal experience of the pianists implies an apt application of the methodology.

In addition, this study plays an indispensable part in putting local contemporary works at an accessible and approachable position. Lack of passion and lack of understanding towards these works is resolved through a more balanced way of interpretation suggested and analyzed in this study, which further

evokes attention from the public. In a larger perspective, the study is a significant piece that bears its impact on cultural identity of Malaysians in relations to the issues of individualism, acculturation, music advocacy and music education.

5.5 Future Recommendations

With the current obtained results, it will be interesting to do studies on different compositions of the same composers to further discover more interrelationship between the works and the composers' unique style of composing. Future research on compositions by Malaysian composers of other ethnicity and different lineage is also viable to discover the influences of multiculturalism towards style of composition.

The methods employed in this study to approach Malaysian contemporary piano solo works can be applied to other compositions, and not limited to piano works, to create a more comprehensive record on the development of Malaysian contemporary works. This may promote contemporary works to a wider acceptance and at the same time enhance recognition of the role of performer in constituting the meaning of the works.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 2.1

Twelve Piano and Violin Compositions Performed in Compositions Exchange 2019

Composer	Title	Instrument
Chiew Keng Hoon (Singapore)	Wujiang Pavillion (乌江亭)	Piano
Liu Bin (Singapore)	Drunken Fishermen Singing at Night (醉渔唱晚)	Piano
Lin Ah Leck (Singapore)	Romance (浪漫曲)	Violin and piano
Lian Sek Lin (Singapore)	Echo of Wind (风的回响)	Violin and piano
Xiao Chun Yuan (Singapore)	Waltz (华尔兹舞曲)	Piano
Ng Eng Thong (Singapore)	Dream (梦)	Violin and piano
Tan Chan Boon (Singapore)	Dorian in G (G 多利亚调式)	Violin
Lee Yuk Chuan (Singapore)	Autumn Melancholic (秋)	Violin and piano
Soh Kay Cheng (Singapore)	Caprice on the Theme of Jasmine (茉莉花随想曲)	Violin
Wong Chee Wei (Malaysia)	Stirrings of the Heart (颤动心弦)	Violin
Chow Jun Yan (Malaysia)	Illusory (幻)	Violin and piano
Neo Hup Hiang (Malaysia)	Les Nuits Blanches (失眠)	Piano

Note: "Compositions Exchange 2019: A Singaporean & Malaysian Music Compositions Recital" was organized by Association of Composers (Singapore) on 4th September 2019 in the Esplanade Recital Studio in Singapore. This was an exchange program between the organizer and the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers. Twelve compositions for piano and violin were featured. The performers were violinists Siew Yi Li, Nadine Ng, Mac Chang and Elaine Xu; and pianists Wu Lei and Tsai Gin Tsu. A pre-concert talk conducted in Chinese titled "Looking Back: Music Compositions by Malaysian Ethnic Chinese Composers" was held in the Library at Esplanade.

Appendix 2.2

Twelve Piano and Violin Compositions Performed in Rendezvous of the Chordophones

Composer	Title	Instrument	Performer	Remarks
Yeo Chow Shern (Malaysia)	Dark Light	Piano	Tong Hui Pin	
Goh Yen Lin (Malaysia)	Fantasia on a Vendor's Folk Song: Any Wine Bottles for Sale	Piano	Tong Hui Pin	
Wong Chee Wei (Malaysia)	Stirrings of the Heart (颤动心弦)	Violin	Yi-Li Chang	Malaysia premiere
Lee Yuk Chuan (Singapore)	Rondo	Violin and piano	Yi-Li Chang, Wong See Yee	Malaysia premiere
Chin Hong Da (Malaysia)	Lost in Time	Piano	Wong See Yee	
Neo Hup Hiang (Malaysia)	A Distant Sadness (遥远的悲伤)	Violin	Yi-Li Chang	World premiere
Wong Chin Hsien (Malaysia)	Romance in the Dark	Violin and piano	Yi-Li Chang, Wong See Yee	World premiere
Teh Tze Siew (Malaysia)	Growing Scene 1&2	Piano	Wong See Yee	
Liu Bin (Singapore)	Drunken Fishermen Singing at Night (醉渔唱晚)	Piano	Tong Hui Pin	Malaysia premiere
Chow Jun Yan (Malaysia)	Illusory (幻)	Violin and piano	Yi-Li Chang, Wong See Yee	Malaysia premiere
Chiew Keng Hoon (Singapore)	Wujiang Pavillion (乌江亭)	Piano	Tong Hui Pin	Malaysia premiere
Tazul Tajuddin (Malaysia)	Sebuah Pantun II	Violin	Yi-Li Chang	

Note: "Rendezvous of the Chordophones", a performance featuring twelve selected piano and violin contemporary compositions by Malaysia and Singapore composers was held on 30th November 2019 in the Kong Choi Exhibition Hall of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall. This event was organized by Chin Yong Music Festival and the Cultural & Education Committee of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, co-organized by Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers. There was a pre-concert talk by the composers for a better understanding and interpretation among the audience. List of repertoires was retrieved from the program sheets distributed in the concert.

Appendix 2.3

Nine Piano Compositions Performed in the Evening Concert of Free Hand Festival (2019)

Composer	Title	Year of completion
Tazul Tajuddin	Kabus Pantun	2018
Raja Mohamad Alif	Dol Said	2019
Adeline Wong	Herringbone	2018
Samuel Cho	Vatni	2017
Choke Yuan Teng	The Woodcutter's Song	2019
Chow Jun Yan	In the Absence of Silence	2019
Chow Jun Yi	Deep in the City	2019
Lee Chie Tsang	Sympathetic [re]sonance	2015
C H Loh	Morning at Klang Harbour	2019

Appendix 2.4

Nine Piano Compositions Performed in the Concert of Beyond Borders

Composer	Title	Year of completion
Chen Zhangyi (Singapore)	<i>Clima</i>	2018
Samuel Cho (Malaysia)	<i>Vatni</i>	2019
Chow Jun Yan (Malaysia)	<i>In the Absence of Silence</i>	2019
Americ Goh (Singapore)	<i>black or white or red (with a tinge of white and blue)?</i>	2019
Hoh Chung Shih (Singapore)	<i>Reef Weave</i>	2019
Joyce Koh (Singapore)	<i>la pierre magenta</i>	2000
Joyce Koh (Singapore)	<i>Piano Peals</i>	2002
Lee Chie Tsang (Malaysia)	<i>Sympathetic [re]sonance</i>	2015
Adeline Wong (Malaysia)	<i>Herringbone</i>	2018

Note: On 18th February 2020, "Beyond Borders" was held in the Orchestral Hall of Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music under the conservatory's Visiting Artist Series, as a sequel of "Free Hand Festival" in Kuala Lumpur. A forum before the concert was included as part of the event, featuring pianist Foo Mei Yi as the presenter and the performer.

Appendix 2.5

Piano Compositions Performed in The Colours of Malaysia 1.0

Composer	Title	Year of completion
Tee Xiao Xi	Life • Awareness	2016
Teh Tze Siew	Growing Scenes I	2014
Teh Tze Siew	JI	2010
Chin Hong Da	Lost In Time (revised version world premiere)	2013
Wong Chee Wei	Poetic and Pictorial Splendor	2013

Note: The Colours of Malaysia 1.0 and 2.0 are a series of lecture-recital by Wong See Yee, featuring Malaysian piano solo compositions. The first one was held on 21st May 2019 in SEGi College Subang Jaya Recital Hall. The general idea of the compositions and the performer's interpretations towards the works were shared before the performance of every piece for a better understanding.

Piano Compositions Performed in The Colours of Malaysia 2.0

Composer	Title	Year of completion
Tee Xiao Xi	Life • Awareness	2016
Teh Tze Siew	Growing Scenes I	2014
Teh Tze Siew	JI	2010
Chin Hong Da	Lost In Time (revised version)	2013
Wong Chee Wei	I'll Wait for You (piano only)	2017
Neo Hup Hiang	Sentimentum (world premiere for a complete five movements performance)	1997

Note: The second performance was on 4th November 2019 in Department of Music in Malaysian Institute of Art. "I'll Wait for You" from Love Poetry op.45 is originally for voice and piano. After gaining permission from the composer, the performer was allowed to perform only the piano part in the said performance.

Piano Compositions Performed in The Colours of Malaysia 3.0

Composer	Title	Year of completion
Chin Hong Da	In the Same Breath (Malaysia premiere)	2022
Chin Hong Da	Lost In Time (revised version)	2013
Teh Tze Siew	Growing Scenes I	2014
Teh Tze Siew	Growing Scenes II Pony Ride	2019
Teh Tze Siew	JI	2010
Wong Chee Wei	Crystal Mountain (world premiere)	2021
Wong Chee Wei	Poetic and Pictorial Splendor	2013

Note: The third performance was on 25th June 2023 in Kong Choi Room of the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall.

Appendix 3.1

Biodatas of the Six Informants

Composer – Wong Chee Wei

Born in Sibu, Sarawak, Wong is an active composer, arranger as well as a choir conductor in the classical music scene in Malaysia. He graduated from Department of Music in Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), with major in composition and minor in piano. Later, he furthered his studies and achieved his Degree in Music in Xi'an Conservatory of Music in China, under the guidance of Professor Rao Yu-Yan. In 2014, Wong was granted with a scholarship from Nanjing Normal University, and he obtained his doctorate award in 2018, under the tutelage of Professor Xu Yuan Yong.

Wong is an active advocator of Malaysia's new music through organising concerts, talks, workshops, and also through publishing music scores and producing recording. His effort to promote local new music has started as early as year 2009, where he was one of the invited participants to take part in "Forumplus" – a local composer music concert organized by Malaysia Philharmonic Orchestra. In year 2011 and 2016, Wong was commissioned by Malaysian famous contemporary dancer Lee Swee Keong, as the music director and the pianist of a dance performance – "Butterfly Lovers for Music, Dance, Video Art". In year 2012 and 2014, he was one of the featured local composers in Chin Yong Music Festival, together with other local composers, their new art songs for solo and choir were published in an anthology named "Hark! the songs of homeland". He is actively engaged in Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC) and he premiered several works in SoundBridge music festival organised by SMCC.

Wong's compositions have been performed in many countries, such as, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and many more. Wong is currently a full-time lecturer in MIA.

Composer – Teh Tze Siew

Teh Tze Siew was born in Penang. She is currently a music teacher and composer. As a Diploma graduate majoring in composition and minoring in piano from Malaysian Institute of Art, she then continued her music education in composition with Professor Rao Yu-Yan in Xi'an Music Conservatoire, China. In year 1994, Teh accomplished her Bachelor degree and started her sojourn in China for more than ten years by teaching harmony, music theory and piano. Throughout her stay in China, her knowledge and understanding about Chinese culture and Tibetan culture had developed immensely, this becomes one of her important elements in her composition. Teh's composition style of combining the western and eastern cultures creates a juxtaposition of two contrasting colors which creates a unique identity.

Teh was one of the finalists of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra Forum for Malaysian Composers II in 2007. Her compositions are performed locally as well as in other countries, for example, Bamboo Forest for chamber orchestra, was performed by the Reykjavik Chamber Orchestra in Iceland, and conducted by Vladimir Stoupel in The Women from The East concert, and the other version for Chinese orchestra was premiered in Penang. As an active member of the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (SMCC), Teh's composition was performed and premiered in many local events, and in SoundBridge Music Festival.

Composer – Tee Xiao Xi

Tee Xiao Xi is a composer raised in Seremban, with a wide range of works that have been performed throughout multiple notable events and festivals, in countries like China, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Germany as well as Italy. Under the tutelage of Tan Chin Ho and Lean Hin Chong (the former being her teacher in composition and the latter in performance), she graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Arts. Her composition studies were further sought under the guidance of Yii Kah Hoe, and she obtained her bachelor's degree in music studies from York St. John University, located in the United Kingdom. Soon after, she attained her Master of Music in Composition under the tutelage of Professor Dieter Mack and with the support of Stipend by Förderergesellschaft in Germany. In 2020, Tee received a full scholarship courtesy of the China Scholarship Council, allowing her to further her PhD in music composition with Professor Wen Deqing in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Besides, Tee has also attended various masterclasses and workshops held by renowned composers, as well as is owner to a long list of awards under her name (being one of the finalists in the Young Composer Competition, Southeast Asia held by Goethe Institute in 2013, an excellence award in the 2017 China-ASEAN piano composition competition, the third prize winner of the 2014 China-ASEAN arts song composition competition in Nanning, Guangxi, as well as a selectee in the Invisible Inaudible Workshop with Christina Kubisch and received a full sponsorship from Goethe-Institut Malaysia to participate in the "Darmstadt International Summer Course 2018").

Pianist – Chee Su-yen (performed "Poetic and Pictorial Splendor")

Malaysian pianist Su-yen has established herself both as a soloist and chamber musician. She has given solo and collaborative recitals in the United States, Hong Kong, Japan, China, Korea, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. She has given many solo performances both locally and abroad, and is also in demand as a collaborator, working extensively with both instrumentalists and vocalists. Besides performing, she dedicates her time to teaching. Her students have won prizes in local and regional competitions and she is also sought after as an adjudicator, most recently for the Virtual International Music Competition 2020, E-Artium Piano Competition 2022 and UCSI University International Piano Festival and Competition (2014, 2016, 2018, 2022) Su-yen is a graduate of Indiana University (Bloomington) and the Hong Kong

Academy for Performing Arts, where she completed her MMus and BMus (1st class honours) degrees respectively. Her major teachers include Karen Shaw, Michel Block and Gabriel Kwok. Currently, she is an adjunct lecturer at UCSI University, ASWARA and maintains a private studio

Pianist – Kenneth Teh Kien Huat (performed “JI”)

A native of Petaling Jaya, Kenneth is a graduate of the Moscow State Conservatory named after Tchaikovsky, where he studied under Professor Natalia Trull. Whilst in Russia, he performed regularly in Moscow and St Petersburg. He collaborated in various ensembles with musicians from the Russian National Orchestra (RNO) and the chamber orchestra “Moskoviya”, and also made appearances on stage with singers and soloists from the Bolshoi Theatre, Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Music Theatre, Novaya Opera Theatre, and the Galina Vishnevskaya Opera Centre. After graduating in 2010, he made his Malaysian debut at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas where he performed with the Prima Vista String Quartet (Poland) at the Gala Opening Ceremony of the 4th ASEAN International Chopin Piano Competition. Since then, he has been actively performing around the country as a soloist, chamber pianist, and accompanist. Kenneth is currently a part-time lecturer at UCSI University.

Pianist – Jaskeerat Singh Gill (performed “Life • Awareness”)

Jaskeerat Singh Gill started his first piano lessons at age of 5 in his hometown Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At the age of 12 he started to take part in recitals and concerts in school as well as in music school. In 2015 he attained distinction in his Piano Examination from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and thereafter started taking lessons from Joyce Ho in Kuala Lumpur in piano, theory and aural. Jaskeerat took part in piano competitions such as the UCSI University International Piano Festival and Competition 2016 and achieved a Preliminary Gold Award, received the 3rd Prize in the Piano Competition of the Ipoh Music Festival 2017 and won the 1st prize as he represented Malaysia in the 1st Malaysia, China and Korea International Friendship Piano Open Competition 2017. From April 2018 he secured a place in the Lübeck Academy of Music (Musikhochschule Lübeck) in Germany and commenced his studies with Prof. Konstanze Eickhorst. In 2019 he was a recipient of a scholarship from the Ad Infinitum Foundation for 2 consecutive years. Jaskeerat has also received masterclasses with several pianists and piano professors such as Shuenda Wong, Kenji Fujimura, Hinrich Alpers, Jakob Leuschner and Antti Siirala, to name a few. Performing as a soloist has been an important part of his studies in Germany in developing as a pianist as well as the valuable experience he has had as a chamber musician. Apart from several concerts within and outside of the university, Jaskeerat has also given concerts in the Brahms Festival in Lübeck as well as the Schleswig Holstein Musik Festival.

Appendix 3.2

Procedures and Semi-structured Interview Questions for the Three Pianists

1. Music scores, recording and composer's prologue are sent to the pianist.
2. A brief introduction of the research will be given to the pianist for a basic understanding of the study.
3. The pianist is required to recall the process of learning the piece and how that affects his/ her interpretation towards the work. This includes the challenges he/ she faced while learning the piece, his/ her favourite part of the piece, the message or meaning in different parts of the piece, the most important message brought out by the work, and the message he/ she tried to bring out.
4. Questions from the interviewer will be used as a prompt for the pianist to further elaborate her views:
 - i. How did you first come across Malaysian contemporary works?
 - ii. How often do you play Malaysian contemporary works?
 - iii. What is your interpretation towards this work?
 - iv. Do you tend to impart any messages through your performance to the audience?
 - v. Does your interpretation reflect your life /thinking /perception towards life?

Appendix 4.1

Interview Verbatim Text of Chee Su-yen

I think notation wise, it's not too bad, considered quite traditional, compared to the more avant-garde kind of writing, you know. Notation wise, not too much problem, it's also relatively, quite, I'd say, not too difficult to understand, for me. And of course, like small details, the composer will tell you what to do, like how you take time, more free, in certain places.

I think we only worked on one occasion, can't remember, like only once or twice the most. He would give me advice on certain things, and then, other than that it was just mostly my interpretation. I guess he just told me some important things. If you are talking about technique wise, I think trying to maintain the repeated notes, you have to be very sensitive, otherwise it is not so difficult, what do you think?

Interpretation wise, I don't think it is that difficult, the music itself kind of tells you, kind of gives you a certain atmosphere, I guess it could be anything, from his prologue, he said it reminds him of his childhood, where he grew up and things like that. So I think even without knowing that, it could be a lot of things also, like describing a calm scenery, like nature, something very calm. A lot of possibilities in this, it could be like a scenery in China, or something with mountains and lakes, it can conjure up a lot of things.

And then he mentioned that it's related to the angklung, right? The instrument. I guess it's quite obvious that the repeated notes, is trying to imitate the angklung sound. But then, if I didn't know that, it could also remind me of the pipa, the Chinese instrument things, because of the technique, I mean, it could, if he did not write in the score, it could be the pipa, right? I can't remember if he gave me the prologue, he probably mentioned about angklung, and I didn't write on my score when I looked back. Because I find that when we are playing, unless you have the chance to work with the composer himself or herself, it's really up to our interpretation, and if that's no prologue or no explanation given, it could be anything. And also, this piece is kind of based on traditional Chinese influence, I think naturally the Chinese instruments will come in to your mind, I think so.

My favorite part of this piece, I think, maybe it's the part where with the left-hand ups and downs, in page three, where the left hand comes in, to me it's like waves, ups and downs. It's different from the first section. This one, gives me a feeling like, water or something. I also find that this piece is kind of, largely based on fourth interval, like there's a lot of fourth interval, a lot of places, I noticed. And also, it's kind of based on certain five-note motives, that he always uses, for example, like the beginning, you have G, A flat, C, D, which he always uses those, I wouldn't say it's strictly pentatonic, does he base on certain scales or motives? Javanese, right?

And also, it's very similar in the part that I said, the rubato section, page three, I was just trying to analyze, he uses B flat, C, D flat, F, G flat, ya, these notes. And I was trying to compare it with the first section, I don't know if it has any similarities, maybe it's a transposition or something. Another thing I realized is that he juxtaposed the sharp and flat, can you see, in the right and left hand, and that makes it very interesting, so the treble is all in sharps, and then the bass is all flats, you know, it's quite interesting, right?

And those arpeggio kinds of figures appear in the treble now in page four, so he kind of like flips it, so now the left-hand figure comes back in the right-hand. And the left-hand in the second system has semiquaver grouping, which will then come back again in page seven, this time is like opposite, he flips it over, and now the right hand plays the semiquaver grouping, and the way he writes it, although it is played two against one, but the way he grouped it makes it looks like a hemiola but it doesn't sound like a hemiola, kind of four against three. Maybe he's trying to create a feeling of four against three. Rhythm wise when you hear it, it's just two against one, but if you look at the score it looks different.

And of course, it gets more complicated and more stormy, compared to the first part. I guess this are his motives. And then I guess the climax would be page five and six, right? So, I guess here, he's trying to create tension, as he wrote there, from more relax to compact, means from slow to faster, like getting faster. It's not written in the score but he told me to play faster as it goes along.

I think the writing is quite obvious in a way, like for example the first section with the repeated notes and give a more spacious feeling, I guess, more spacious means more space less notes, not so thick, the writing not so busy. So that one maybe I would create a more kind of openness, more spacious, more free, because the rhythm is very free. Then you come to the second section, the rubato, you have some sort of pulse already, so for that you can think of waves, or water or something. That one was very flowy. And then in page four, it gets a bit more complicated between the right and left-hand. And then you go to the chordal section with all the chords, that would be more intense. And then it goes back to the rubato section, but this time, I think it would be more stormy then the first time, because there's more notes in both parts. And then the first section kind of come back at the end. So, I would say this is almost like a ABCBA kind of form, like an arch form. I guess the sections are kind of clear, with the rubato coming back after the chordal section.

It can be anything actually. For me the first section is more free, more spacious.

I guess to me, it's trying to describe nature, the landscape, or something like that. Maybe because we know the title and the meaning of the music, like I said, if you have read the prologue, we will stick to that, if you didn't have the prologue, then, it can be, I mean, I would still think it's like trying to describe nature and stillness, especially the beginning section. It's like looking at a Chinese painting, that kind of feeling.

I wouldn't say there is any message, I think it's just, I try to portray the different characters and the mood, you know, so I try to create the difference between the first and the second section, the rubato, is more moving, flowing, and then, of course, the chordal part, the climax, you have to create the climax, more intensity and tension in that part. I guess I'm just trying to show the different characters. And, again it's also up to the listeners to think of what they want to think about the music, because it's so abstract. I guess I just want to create a mood, there's no particular, a message, you know.

I guess it's just our experience, like from what you have seen, travelling or, as the composer said, the place where he grew up, or what we see around us, I guess it does have, from our own experience.

I think I have played five or six local composers' works, and from overseas also. I wouldn't say it's quite frequent. I don't think I am expert at that, really, I think it's a whole different language. I mean, if you talk about the difference, the technique, contemporary music technique, that I'm not so familiar, like those extended technique, you know, then I'm not so familiar because you have to know really well the notation and all these things. If the work is good, then it's worth all the learning, otherwise it's a lot of time, and very difficult, I mean for me, who don't have a lot of experience playing that, I find it quite hard to understand, like even learning the notes, takes a lot of time. I think it's just the language that we don't do a lot, we don't play a lot, so it's hard. But I think it's very interesting, I find from my experience, it's very good to work with composers, because for me, I think it teaches us to look from a different perspective, not only from performer, but from the composer's side of view, I think it's very good. This is just like in general what I think.

Appendix 4.2

Interview Verbatim Text of Kenneth Teh Kien Huat

I had samples of recording which I did when I had a discussion with the composer, we actually had a Skype session for her to give a general idea on what the piece is about and what not, it was just once over Skype, later on through WhatsApp messages, if everything was fine, tempo was ok.

One reason why I initiated the Skype session with her was to get a better understanding of the work since I don't speak Mandarin, even though she did provide a prologue in English as well in the score, but I just want to double-check with her which instruments did she have in mind specifically because I'm in having a look-through in her piece, the score, the piece is not very long, but it looks like having a lot of clusters, so I'm just curious if she has some percussive instruments in mind or tonal ones, those in pitch, then plus the middle section that's contrasting section.

Technically not really challenging, at first, maybe the only challenge was to memorize the notes, because to play in tempo and she did put a metronome marking, it's quite impossible to do it while reading the score, so I had to know the notes really well, the score really well, so that I can execute it in tempo, with the right effect, I mean, all the hack-ins, the dynamics, the accents. If I recall, that was the main challenge, then I memorized it and played it from memory, because there was no time for page turn, the music was so fast, it was impossible to read while playing, you have to look at your hands, like there's a lot of cross hands and jumps.

In relation to memorizing, there was also a slight challenge to memorizing the patterns, because as you can see, in the outer sections, it's mostly just clusters of seconds, minor seconds, so there were no harmonies to base my memorization on. Because for me, I don't have perfect pitch, I actually memorize via the harmony or the melody or combination of both. So, to play a completely, I mean, simile atonal piano piece with a very specific rhythm, and the meter changes a lot, that was quite a challenge to me.

I did quite a lot of research but I can't find my old text unfortunately, I was asking for her advice on which percussive instruments to look at, for inspiration. I believe she gave a few, because the title alone doesn't see much, isn't it, and I recall going through a lot of YouTube recordings on Chinese traditional instruments, percussive and pitched ones, just to get a better feel of the tonal color and style required. I did record also a few samples recording for her to check, since at that time I played it, it wasn't a premiere, she already played it before, so I have to make sure it met her satisfaction. I recall she mentioned she played it somewhere before, she had a recording of it, of herself playing.

Of course, it's important for every pianist to have your own interpretations, your own personal input, but since that was the first time I was engaged to perform a local contemporary composer's piece, so I had very little experience in that, I was seeking quite a bit of guidance from her, the composer.

I did enjoy the very short middle section, trying to find the right gong-like sounds, because you are supposed to play all of it with the palm of your hand, pretty much of just a huge cluster. But it is not just about making noise, you have to somehow layer it, get a nice effect, and moreover it's on an open pedal, *una corda*.

I recall I played this at the KL and Selangor Assembly Hall, which is also very echoey, so I had that all in mind when playing this piece to get the right effect for the middle section, and also to achieve the right, dry articulation for the outer sections, because if I'm not mistaken, in one of the conversations with the composer, she wants it really crisp with minimal pedal.

It's a live performance, you always think to count the acoustic of the venue, isn't it, the instrument and the venue itself, like if you are to be in a very dry hall, you won't play Debussy, nothing will sound, for example, or if it's a very echoey hall, you can't play something with a lot of fast notes, like Bach, you will just sound like porridge. My favorite part of the piece was the middle section, because for me that was something relatable with colors, rather than just dry clusters on the outer sections. The outer sections I think she mentioned she only wanted, it was more like energy, conveyance of energy.

I recall asking her whether there's a main picture or message that she wanted to convey, and I think she said she just wanted the energy for the outer sections, and the middle section more like a layering of different colors. I hope I didn't miss out anything.

She did attend the concert, she came all the way, it was extra stressed for me. I think she seemed quite satisfied with it, she was surprised that I memorized it. Also, when the stand is up, it kind of changes how you hear the sound from the piano. When the stand is up, or down, or fully removed, you hear the piano differently. With the stand up, the audience can hear much better than you actually. This is one of many reasons why I memorized it. Maybe also my training at the Moscow Conservatory, they really insist on you to memorize everything, even you know, really avant-garde music. With this piece, really contemporary piece, and by local composer who is still alive, I think it was late last year, December I think, the last time I did another various local composition was by UiTM, another festival for contemporary composers. I can't remember the names of the composers, from SMCC, something like that. I played a bunch of ensembles, a bunch of local compositions, two of them were solo piano pieces, which I also memorized, one was tonal and the other one was not entirely tonal, by Chong Lim, it was "Voices from the Rainforest". It had like eleven different segments and you choose the order, that one I had to memorize, because his score requires to play in the piano, play the strings, if with the stand is up, I can't reach the strings, with such modern music, you have to memorize. I also have played ensemble works by rather contemporary

composers also with similar techniques, either clusters or what not, and with a lot of string plucking or what not technique inside the key strings itself. For ensemble of course you do need the music there because it's not just your own part to remember and it was really hard to manage the space, somehow find your space around the stand to pluck or play. So, it's easier to memorize. You have to remember which string and the position.

I tried to bring out the energy in the outer sections, we have a mixture of irregular rhythms, constant changing of meters, irregular accents, a lot of dissonances, clusters, with ornaments, grace notes and a lot of cross hands, so exciting energy. That's my interpretation, I'm not sure if that's what she wants, but she seems to approve it. For the middle section, I took this kind of impressionistic kind of approach, like Debussy's sunken cathedral. Try to achieve variants gong-like tones.

I heard other Malaysian works before that, have not performed that, was just an audience. I think it was in a Chopin competition, in the final round, the contestants had to play a particular piece, that year they commissioned Ng Chong Lim, I think it was "Dragonfly(s)". That was the first time I heard local composers. Tze Siew's piece was the first local piece I actually played.

We can't be full time performer in Malaysia, the scene is too small, so for financial support, most of us teach to survive, I'm only a part-time performer, I only get to play if I get offers or invitations, and even rarer if it's contemporary local works, isn't it. I haven't had any students who need to play any local contemporary pieces yet, it is not compulsory in UCSI or any other place I think, you have to play a modern piece, composed after 1945, if not mistaken, but it does not specify local composer, any modern piece, I do give my student choice to look at, so far none has chosen local.

That was the first time I played really modern piece, I didn't have much experience in that, I mostly rely on the composer's guidance. More like did my best to convey the rhythmic energy for the outer sections, and more mysterious, colorful, or zen-like, I mean like depends on how you perceive it, the middle section, in contrast. It was a very short piece, it's rather fast moving, the change. You can't give very profound message, and I don't think that's the composer's intention, it was more rhythmic and tonal colors, like a very brief but colorful engaging exciting fireworks, of sound and rhythm.

When we play a piece, we have some interpretations, I don't have any profound messages to convey, how I perceive and perform the piece was regarding to the composer's advice, just to give a very exciting ride, roller coaster ride, colors and rhythm. Each performance will enrich our playing, and our ability to read music better, whether modern or traditional.

Appendix 4.3

Interview Verbatim Text of Jaskeerat Singh Gill

From what I remember, I was doing a lot of, with the timing, I think, that was quite a challenge, and also, I was in my second semester here in Germany and I had actually not played any new music before, this is actually my first new music piece, from Xiao Xi. I see a lot of numbers, because I was working on a lot of counting and everything, and because some of the counting was not based on rests and all that, but it was based on seconds, sometimes you see like five seconds, four seconds, and then in bracket don't move, and you wait for the sound to finish, so it's a very individual performance based on the hall that you are playing in, based on the acoustics and the piano and everything.

So, you can see a lot of numbers, which I have circled, just to memorize on how long to wait, how many seconds to wait, it's like time blocks sort of a thing, to wait before I play the next phrase, I mean "phrase", but like sort of in gesture, as what Xiao Xi was telling me about interpretation of it, like the start of the piece.

A lot of it is also, there are some patterns which are quite visible, also with how the piano is built with the black and white keys, how it's played, it's very economical for the hands to play because of how it was composed. And also, I was with my professor, as we were looking at the piece together on how to, like how left hand and right hand take over which part, you know, and a lot of looking at the notes and seeing what exactly is that because like all the helping lines that has been used and everything.

And a lot of interesting things also with the pedals because Xiao Xi wants to use all three pedals on the piano, including the middle pedal where it really explores the harmonic range. And there are a lot of places where I have to highlight with different colors just to make sure it's visible to my eyes when I'm playing, you know when you are on stage and then you forget where you are, so just something for the orientation.

Dynamics also I think if I remember correctly, was also quite specific, it finds between the piano, pianissimo and the pianississimo. There's something also I remember I did was the high notes, she wanted more crispy, like imitate the birds chirping. It's a very interesting piece, like the lower notes especially, how she imagined it was like gong, like the lowest A on the piano.

I think the biggest challenge was the rhythm and to make sure it's rhythmically correct, because there was another pianist that I watched that also played this piece, but and then I realized the rhythm was not exactly the same as what was written down, and I ask Xiao Xi about it and she said it can vary a little bit but not too much. So, counting and everything was a challenge, holding the tension in the piece, like in between each gesture, like where she wrote "Don't move" or where it's also obvious that you cannot move because if not it just disturbs the tension when you are on stage.

Also, because I was performing that piece, I remember I didn't play with shoes, I played just with socks because there are a lot of parts where I have to stand up and reach inside the piano and sit back down. It makes too much noise if I would have to wear shoes. A lot of these aspects, which I have to also look at them, even physically sometimes a little bit difficult because you are trying not to move so your body is kind of tensed you have to make sure that you don't tense up too much because then you are trying to reach into here and then you are playing on the keyboard, physically it's also a bit of a challenge, because especially at the end I think, when you are holding the last note at the end, you just wait for the sound to die off. You have this very loud clusters, and then you have birds chirping at the top, which slowly goes off, and when you are playing in a hall with very good acoustics, it takes a very long time for the sound to really die off while you are holding the pedal down. It's not just about the sound, but because if you are standing up already, and you have to mute the top strings, I couldn't reach them while sitting down, so I have to stand up and while standing up to wait for the sound to die off without standing up straight, because when I was at the piano I was already bent down this way, and to wait for the sound to leave, I couldn't just stand up and wait for it, if not it would just disturb the whole atmosphere, so I have to be in this position for half a minute or maybe one minute, it's kind of physical thing to keep that tension, I think it's also quite a challenge but something that the listeners really enjoy, I think.

My favorite part of the piece, I think I really enjoyed at the end, with the type of scales that she uses, it just fits the hand better, and it's also fun to play. And also because of how the, like muting the lowest four notes in the bass and really hitting that hard, I think that was a lot of fun to listen to the contrast of the lowest really loud notes and the top where it goes from mezzo forte and dies off slowly to pianississimo. And I think that's sort of like the fun part for me because this is also my first time playing new music so discovering this different kind of approach to music, especially in the start of the piece, it said something about "process of producing sound of this piece is more important than the consequence to listen to the piece as a whole", which is something very important in the European culture for classical music, you have the music as a whole, you have understand the entire structure but for this piece, for me, it was a lot of fun to have this process of going through the piece and without having to rush through and say we have to show the entire structure of the piece but rather to really enjoy every small detail and not worry about having to show a big structure, let go of the structure a little bit.

For me it could be a little bit of meditative, but I'm not sure if it's the right interpretation according to Xiao Xi, but there was something that she wrote, I'm sure you probably also have it, the program notes. It was "focusing on what is occurring and the way it's occurring is one of the major feature of the process of metaphysics in Buddhism", which is of course something that I never really fully understood, which I try to understand but it's very complicated because the field of metaphysics is obviously a very very wide field, but for me, I focus more on the music, and creating this tension, and creating this atmosphere because it was also very difficult to have this stillness, I think it was the stillness that was a challenge for me, also because I remember my first and second

semester I was very wild on the piano, and for me to really bring that down just to have that tranquillity to play this piece was also quite a big challenge for me, but it was really fun because I have to really dive in to something that I was not used to, and very still.

And also I didn't want anyone to page turn because it would just disturb the atmosphere, doesn't matter someone if the person is very still or anything but for me it's just the fact of being alone on stage, solitude, I think, sort of just helps the idea of this meditative state that you are trying to share with the audience, like to bring this atmosphere, to be the only one there, no shoes on because of the noise, very careful movement to not disturb the atmosphere, I think that would be my interpretation. I won't interpret it so deeply because I know Xiao Xi also had her own ideas of Buddhism, which I say I'm not super familiar with, but I try to bring out the music, more than the interpretation.

This was the first time where I play contemporary works at all, in Malaysia I never actually had contact with contemporary music, and when I was in Germany, it was somewhere between my first and second semester, that's when Xiao Xi asked me to play this piece, for me it was something completely new because I had never ever done something like this before, it was actually something very special. And after that a lot of other composers also asked me to play for them, some chamber music works, and with bigger ensemble, but this is the, I think, so far, the only work that I played from the composer in this university where it's just piano solo. It was a very special experience, just to really come out of my comfort zone, and to play something completely different to what I'm used to. Then after that a lot of other composers in our university will ask me to play for them, and a line of request that I have to say no to them, I didn't have the time, because I'm also working on a lot of other pieces for piano. But when I have the time, I will try to make it, maybe one or two pieces per semester for the class concert.

I don't have anything in specific but it's just the whole atmosphere of tranquillity that I have been trying to produce and the little gestures every time it comes in the higher notes, as Xiao Xi had told me like the birds chirping and the bottom is like something really growling, you know, personally I would say it's something more connected to nature, something very natural, far away from the big cities. And something going on with the right hand communicating with the left hand, sort of like these creatures, but I wouldn't describe these creatures as something specific, something just there in nature and that could be very ambiguous, it's not specific, something that's just a suggestion of something. Probably I would describe it also with the idea of the gong in the lower notes, but nothing very specific, but very connected with nature.

I think for me as a person, I love nature, and I love being in nature, to go out to be alone in nature sometimes, just lie down on the grass, sort of get away from the city, is something that I've been wanting to do more and more, especially since the pandemic started, it's something that's been very important to me. This idea of being in nature and letting go from the struggles of daily life. A lot of other pieces I played like Beethoven or Schubert, not just

contemporary pieces, I also have a very nature related interpretation to these pieces, because I guess it's how I am.



BIODATA OF STUDENT

Wong See Yee was born in Malaysia. In 1996, she achieved her first diploma –Licentiate of London College of Music (LLCM). She pursued her studies in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and graduated as Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering in 2001. Two years after she graduated, she achieved another music diploma award – Fellowship of London College of Music (FLCM), and Licentiate of Royal School of Music (LRSM) in the subsequent year.

See Yee has been teaching piano since 2002 and established her music studio “Mein Music Leben” in 2018. She is an active advocate of Malaysian contemporary compositions, with her support to said works standing strong since 2017. She has performed a multitude of contemporary works, most of which being world premieres or Malaysia premieres. Notable debuts include “Romance in the Dark” by Wong Chin Hsien – for violin and piano, “Sentimentum” by Neo Hup Hiang – a five-movement piano solo, “Lost in Time” and “In the Same Breath” by Chin Hong Da – for piano solo, and most recently “Endless Darkness” by Wong Chee Wei – a chamber opera. She has conducted talks and lecture-recitals on Malaysia contemporary piano solo works, all of these being a testament to how devoted she is to the scene.

See Yee is currently pursuing her master’s degree in Universiti Putra Malaysia under the supervision of Dr. Loo Fung Chiat and Dr. Camellia Siti Maya. She is also under the mentorship of Dr. Chan Cheong Jan.

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