



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***WESTERN FLUTE, DIZI, AND BANSURI FLUTE PLAYING PRACTICES
AND TEACHING METHODS FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF SELECTED
PRACTITIONERS IN KUALA LUMPUR***

CHAI YEM VOON

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By

CHAI YEM VOON

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

September 2015

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September 2015

Chair: Gisa Jähnichen, PhD

Faculty: Human Ecology

Living in a multicultural country like Malaysia, chances being exposed to experiences with different social and ethnic cultures are rather high in every aspect of life. From the basic need of life such as eating and living in the same neighbourhood, especially urban Malaysians cannot escape intercultural processes through their daily experience. Many of the joint spaces and situations may involve a wider field of intercultural impact. Cultural properties and connected views are outcomes of former and ongoing global exchange patterns that started in colonial times. Musical instruments played in present day Malaysia are musical instruments coming from cultures outside Malaysia. Flutes illustrate this situation very clearly. Though on the territory of present day Malaysia exist a number of indigenous flute playing practices that also include performance and transmission, the flutes that are performed and taught most are brought to Malaysia from Europe, that is referred to as western flute, from China (dizi), and from India (bansuri).

Considering that Malaysia is a country in which music education is apparently less privileged compared to other teaching subjects, the general understanding towards music is rather mono-cultural though an acceptance towards diverse music practices of local origin can be noted. However, the active and well-established professional orchestras like Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) and Malaysian National Symphony Orchestra (MNSO) are the top models in playing western classical music in the country. Likewise, there is no professional Chinese orchestra but a number of Chinese orchestras playing Chinese traditional music on amateur level while there is no Indian orchestra yet at the moment as orchestras as such are not an Indian tradition.

Based on the recent concerts happening in Kuala Lumpur, it seems that all ensembles are working well independently and thus crossover cooperation

does not seem being a necessity as the actual environment in Kuala Lumpur is discouraging intercultural activities. This is obvious when it comes to music learning especially on instruments which are symbolizing social and ethnic attachments. For instance, particular instruments are only learnt by the specific community to which they belong. For example, western flute is learnt in the school band or school orchestra by everyone, but Chinese dizi in a Chinese orchestra and Indian bansuri is taught only in the Temple of Fine Arts. Western flute is more widely promoted in the society since the number of bands and orchestras in need of flutists is far higher than the performance options of the other two flutes, though performance and concert possibilities exist thus generally a platform to perform is available to all. However, at the same time, there are very few performance opportunities for Indian bansuri and Chinese dizi.

Looking at the wider picture, music performances in Kuala Lumpur are not as widely promoted and considered economically necessary as in other large Asian metropolises. If music performances are generally regarded less necessary, the question is how to prevent extinction of diverse flute playing cultures and how to encourage cultural exchange at the same time.

This thesis aims at exploring the way of approaching western flute, dizi and bansuri, their cultural context, performance practice, and transmission methods. The cultural position of "flute players" and their learning situation in Malaysia will be covered from the viewpoint of selected practitioners. Finally, applications of flute playing in live performances will have to be observed and analysed as well as transmission methods that may give an insight on flute playing practices in Kuala Lumpur. Investigating transmission methods has to mainly focus on teaching materials used, class structures in terms of participants and sequence of teaching units. This is to understand the different social and cultural contexts of performance practice as well as the transmission methods of the three types of flutes and their mutual perpetuation as part of a multi-layered culture.

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

**FLUTE, DIZI DAN BANSURI; PERSEMBAHAN DAN KAEDAH
PENYAMPAIAN DARI SUDUT PANDANGAN PEMUZIK TERPILIH
MERANGKAP GURU DI KUALA LUMPUR**

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Rakyat Malaysia terdiri daripada pelbagai kaum. Maka, dengan tersendirinya masyarakat majmuk Malaysia mudah mengalami dan tidak terkecuali dengan pertukaran dan silang budaya antara satu kaum dengan kaum yang lain di dalam pelbagai situasi dan keadaan harian. Sebagai rakyat Malaysia, fenomena ini boleh dilihat dengan jelas sekali di dalam pelbagai segi kehidupan, iaitu dari aspek sosial seperti makanan dan pemakanan sehingga ke aspek peribadi seperti berkongsi ruang kehidupan dan pekerjaan. Oleh itu, proses interkultural dan impaknya terhadap kehidupan sebagai rakyat Malaysia tidak dapat dielak sama sekali. Mengikut sejarah, perhubungan interkultural ini telah wujud lamanya sejak dari zaman kolonial dan masih kekal sehingga kini. Di Malaysia, bidang seni muzik terutamanya menunjukkan pelbagai pengaruh dari budaya-budaya luar. Ini boleh dilihat melalui jenis-jenis alatan muzik yang wujud di Malaysia. Contohnya, instrumen flute yang diajar atau dipelajari dan dipersembahkan di Malaysia sebenarnya berasal dari Eropah (western flute), China (dizi) dan India (bansuri).

Namun begitu, kefahaman dan pengetahuan rakyat terhadap muzik di Malaysia lebih terhad kepada mono-kultural atau lebih memihak kepada satu budaya sahaja tanpa bersifat universal. Ini disebabkan oleh kemajuan dan penitikberatan terhadap pembelajaran dan pendidikan muzik di Malaysia adalah kurang berbanding dengan bidang pendidikan yang lain. Namun begitu, penerimaan terhadap karya-karya tempatan masih boleh diperhatikan. Contohnya, orkestra-orkestra utama di Malaysia seperti Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) dan Malaysian National Symphonic Orchestra (MNSO) mempersembahkan karya-karya muzik klasikal barat. Pada masa yang sama, tiada orkestra Cina professional yang wujud selain dari beberapa orkestra Cina amatour. Dan setakat ini, tiada juga wujudnya orkestra India kerana ini bukan tradition muzik Indian.

Berdasarkan jumlah persembahan muzik yang berlaku terkini di Kuala Lumpur, adalah dapat difahamkan bahawa fenomena interkultural tidak semestinya aktif berlangsung di dalam arena muzik Malaysia. Didapati bahawa setiap ensemble muzik lebih berjaya dan mudah berfungsi secara berasingan. Oleh itu, kerjasama merentasi sempadan budaya tidak dianggap penting, ditambahkan lagi dengan keadaan yang tidak menggalakkan aktiviti antara budaya di Kuala Lumpur. Masalah ini jelas dilihat di dalam kes di mana muzik tertentu hanya dipelajari oleh golongan yang tertentu mengikut etnik dan kawasan. Misalnya, flute dipelajari dalam kumpulan pancaragam atau orkestra sekolah, sementara dizi pula dipelajari dalam orkestra Cina, dan bansuri dipelajari di Temple of Fine Arts. Penerimaan flute didapati lebih menggalakkan berbanding dengan dizi dan bansuri kerana keperluan orkestra terhadap pemain flute adalah lebih berbanding dengan pemain dizi dan bansuri. Selain itu, peluang persembahan flute juga adalah sangat tinggi berbanding dengan peluang persembahan dizi dan bansuri.

Kegiatan muzik persembahan di Malaysia adalah tidak menggalakkan berbanding negara-negara Asia yang lain. Maka persoalannya kini, apakah yang boleh diusahakan untuk mengelakkan kepupusan permainan flute dari pelbagai budaya serta pada masa yang sama mendorong perhubungan interkultural di Malaysia.

Tesis in akan meneroka beberapa pendekatan terhadap flute, dizi dan bansuri melalui konteks budayanya, amalan persembahannya, serta kaedah penyampaian. Kedudukan pemain flute di dalam budaya dan tradisi serta situasi pembelajaran dan pengajarannya di Malaysia akan dibincangkan melalui sudut pandangan pemuzik yang terpilih. Akhir sekali, adalah diharapkan melalui pemerhatian dan penganalisan aplikasi permainan flute di dalam persembahan berserta kaedah penyampaian akan memberi suatu pemahaman yang mendalam tentang amalan permainan flute di Kuala Lumpur. Kajian mengenai kaedah penyampaian difokuskan kepada bahan-bahan pengajaran yang digunakan serta melihat struktur kelas daripada segi peserta dan turutan unit pengajaran. Kajian ini dilakukan untuk memahami tiga jenis flute ini yang telah berjaya wujud bersama-sama di dalam pelbagai lapisan budaya melalui konteks sosial dan budaya yang berbeza, serta amalan persembahan dan kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajarannya.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 11 September 2015 to conduct the final examination of Chai Yem Voon on her thesis entitled "Western Flute, Dizi, and Bansuri Flute Playing Practices and Teaching Methods from the Viewpoint of Selected Practitioners in Kuala Lumpur" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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This is to confirm that:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Living in a multicultural country like Malaysia, chances being exposed to experiences with different social and ethnic cultures are rather high in every aspect of life. From the basic need of life such as eating and living in the same neighbourhood, especially urban Malaysians cannot escape intercultural processes through their daily experience. Many of the joint spaces and situations may involve a wider field of intercultural impact. Cultural properties and connected views are outcomes of former and ongoing global exchange patterns that started in colonial times. Musical instruments played in present day Malaysia are musical instruments coming from cultures outside Malaysia. Flutes illustrate this situation very clearly. Though on the territory of present day Malaysia exist a number of indigenous flute playing practices that include performance and transmission, the flutes that are performed and taught most are brought to Malaysia from Europe, that is referred to as western flute, from China (dizi), and from India (bansuri). The distribution and acceptance of these three flutes differ according to their cultural and social attributes, which imply to certain extent a cultural economy that focus on status aspirations of a majority that leads to familiarity with the Western flute among all Malaysians. dizi and bansuri, on the other hand, are rather reflected as culturally attached to different ethnic groups, thus their practice correlates to the number of inhabitants respectively.

Despite of this, considering that Malaysia is a country in which music education is apparently less privileged compared to other teaching subjects, the general understanding towards music is rather mono-cultural. The number and type of local orchestras, bands and ensembles in the capital Kuala Lumpur shows the acceptance towards diverse music practices of local origin. However, the active and well-established professional orchestras like Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) and Malaysian National Symphony Orchestra (MNSO) are the top models in playing western classical music in the country. Likewise, there is no professional Chinese orchestra but a number of Chinese orchestras playing Chinese traditional music on amateur level while there is no Indian orchestra yet at the moment as orchestras as such are not an Indian tradition.

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does not seem being a necessity as the actual environment in Kuala Lumpur is discouraging intercultural activities. This is obvious when it comes to music learning especially on instruments which are symbolizing social and ethnic attachments. For instance, particular instruments are only learnt by the specific community to which they belong. For example, western flute is learnt in the school band or school orchestra by everyone, but Chinese dizi in a Chinese orchestra and Indian bansuri is taught only in the Temple of Fine Arts. Western flute is more widely promoted in the society since the number of bands and orchestras in need of flutists is far higher than the performance options of the other two flutes, though performance and concert possibilities exist thus generally a platform to perform is available to all. However, at the same time, there are very few performance opportunities for Indian bansuri and Chinese dizi.

Looking at the wider picture, music performances in Kuala Lumpur are not as widely promoted and considered economically necessary as in other large Asian metropolises. If music performances are generally regarded less necessary, the question is how to prevent extinction of diverse flute playing cultures and how to encourage cultural exchange at the same time.

In the thesis, the cultural position of "flute players" and their learning situation in Malaysia will be covered from the viewpoint of selected practitioners. Finally, applications of flute playing in live performances will have to be observed and analysed as well as transmission methods that may give an insight on flute playing practices in Kuala Lumpur.

1.2 Problem Statement

All three flutes are imported and not indigenous to Malaysia. However, what makes western flute has a wider acceptance among all Malaysians? At the same time, it seems that dizi and bansuri are restricted to particular communities. Thus, what makes western flute to be different from the other two instruments? How is the current educational infrastructure of flute learning and teaching situation and how does it reflect the different flutes' cultural position in Malaysia?

The assumption that western flute playing accommodates the needs of the majority most has to be clarified. At the same time, the association of dizi and bansuri with ethnic groups seems to be far too undifferentiated and speculative.

In order to get answers, informants have to be selected that can provide experiences as performers and teachers of western flute, dizi, or bansuri. Since the weight of each of these flutes in society is different, the selection of

informants cannot correspond to a representation of all involved audiences, learners, performers and teachers in Kuala Lumpur. The selection of informants has to follow the principle of effectiveness of the given information. Finding informants that are actually very active in both performing and teaching is crucial to the study, thus it needs a first pre-study to make a decision about the selection of informants.

These and further questions deriving from it may help to deepen knowledge on how cultural thinking, music making and objects used for it such as the three types of flutes are linked together. By finding a way to approach various “flute cultures” from different perspectives, one can learn to directly exchange expressivity and creativity. The outcomes of this study that will be based on qualitative research methods such as self-experiment, in depth interviews, participant observation and narrative analysis might be applicable on comparable reflective situations in Malaysian society.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

This thesis aims at exploring the way of approaching western flute, Chinese dizi and Indian bansuri, their cultural context, performance practice, and transmission methods. Investigating transmission methods has to focus on teaching materials used, class structures in terms of participants and sequence of teaching units will be closely looked at from the perspective of an observer. For that reason, the author will have to go through a personal experiment and study the three instruments playing with the students she observes at the same time. The study should lead to new insights into cultural transfer phenomena exemplarily observed with the three instruments playing in Kuala Lumpur.

The primary research questions of this thesis are:

- to understand the different social and cultural contexts of performance practice as well as
- the transmission methods of the three types of flutes.

Both aspects strongly depend on each other and cannot be separated during the process of observation.

1.4 Significance of Study

There are no detailed studies on the musical practice of western flute, Chinese dizi and Indian bansuri in Malaysia. Thus, this thesis aims at getting a better understanding of the cultural position of the flutes and the situation of local flute players. The study of different transmission techniques and performing arts can help raise awareness and hopefully prevent extinction of diverse flute playing cultures and encourage cultural exchange at the same time.

The study may also shed light on the degree of instrumental adaptations from abroad in the field of music, which help pave the way for further studies that focus on narrower details with other methods.

1.5 Limitation of Study

The study focuses on Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Klang Valley and surrounding) in the first decade of the 21 century. All flutes were brought to Malaysia either by larger groups of immigrants or by colonial rulers. They belong culturally to the dominating ethnic groups. Flutes of indigenous ethnic groups are excluded as their use in Kuala Lumpur is very limited and near to non-existent with very few exemptions.

The choice of informants follows the principle of representing practitioners who are actually active as performers and teachers, meaning that if one or two informants report about their experiences, these experiences can be also considered as true for the musical practice that is investigated and of which these representatives are an active part. It is not the aim of this research to achieve a comprehensive picture of the entire musical life or to examine every flute player in Kuala Lumpur. Also, the study cannot provide a numerical balance between all flute practitioners neither in an evenly measured contribution to the study nor the real number of practitioners in Kuala Lumpur. The chosen examples of representative informants are to give an overview about main issues that have to be discussed such as performance practice and transmission methods.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into six chapters. While the first chapter introduces background of the study, problem statement, objectives and research questions, significance and limitation of study, the second chapter introduces the most helpful literature reviewed, the applied methods and the materials used. The third chapter is the rough overview on flute playing in Kuala Lumpur and beyond, discussing public performance and career options of Malaysian flutists as well as teaching flute in Malaysia. Chapter four includes the analysis of interviews with performers and teachers of the three types of flutes. An in-depth discussion based on the research as a whole will be covered in chapter five and chapter six is the summary of the findings and thoughts that emerged in the process.

1.7 Remarks on Key Terms

Flute playing as used in this thesis relates practically to the use of the following instruments:

Western flute: It is mostly the modern concert flute used in symphonic orchestras. It is the type that was developed through the so called cylindrical Boehm-Flute. It has a mouthpiece and is mostly produced with a metal body.

Dizi: The dizi taught is mostly the C-dizi, mostly to ease the way of reading notation and explaining interval relationships. However, most of the dizi performers play on a set of dizi in many keys. The dizi used in Malaysia is in diatonic tuning, meaning a modernised type that is usually played in the modern Chinese orchestra. Some specific tunings used for local music practices in mainland China are compromised and cannot be played satisfactorily.

Bansuri: Carnatic bansuri that is most often used for the accompaniment of raga renderings in the South Indian tradition. It is usually a bigger bansuri that need hand size of an adult, though teenagers start to learn it.

Performance Practice (Aufführungspraxis in German): It means the way music is performed. Looking into performance practice, this actual study covers the repertoire played, performance conditions such as venues, supporting organisations, orchestras that are in need of flutists, and promotion of performances. Other usual features such as notation, publishing scores, ornamentation, special playing skills, or other elements that contribute to a supposed 'authenticity' are excluded since these features can only be explored in studies following this first overview.

Transmission Methods: Main issues to be summarized under transmission methods in this study are the teaching materials used that consist of sheet music, self-made teaching books, copies of teaching material obtained through networks, technical tools such as the electric tanpura for the emission of a drone tone, recordings, especially so called 'minus one' (accompaniment without the main solo part), and metronome. Other issues come under class structure which is characterized by its participants (single or groups) and the sequence of teaching units that can consist of exercises on breathing, shaping tones, dynamics, mobility of fingers/hands, posture, articulation, interpretation of musical pieces.

Kuala Lumpur: The geographical area includes the capital Kuala Lumpur, the federal administrative centre Putrajaya and, in its wider understanding, the entire Klang Valley that is also known as Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area or Greater Kuala Lumpur in recent years. It is the metropole of Malaysia and characterized by a fast developing multicultural centre of the country with strong social contrasts.

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