

Musical Practice of the Chinese Orchestra

Although the concept of a Chinese orchestra seems rather odd, it is a practice which has gathered sufficient momentum to emerge in its own inimitable way. We are not given much information of its emergence in Lee Tong Soon's description in Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Its initial association, as instrument/s of the Chinese community in Singapore to its present status as one of the few professional orchestral ensembles with an ever-expanding scope of performances and spaces for its performance, has only engendered gaps. This brief overview and description will do no more than invite scholarship on the emergence of the Chinese Orchestra in the present context and address socio-historical perspectives surrounding its presence and practice.

We are informed of some interesting facets surrounding the entertainment scene in 19th and 20th century Malayan and Singapore societies. One primary source has been written observations, *constructing detailed and often graphic narratives of the various activities...imported into Malaya from India, Java, China and Europe and then adapted and some transformed to suit local tastes and habits.*¹ While the cultural hybridisation is a logical consequence, Gullick notes the source of this early entertainment which seems to have been associated mainly *with significant religious festivals and events such as weddings and state ceremonies when rituals and entertainment, as spectacle and display of skills, dexterity and talents could scarcely be separated. The element of recreation and drama was part and parcel of the ceremonial event itself.* The most telling point is its site of purview, *performances of rituals ... were often held in open spaces, in the streets, where people can easily gather...*²

Two events across the 19th and 20th centuries in Singapore raise interesting issues of what defines a Chinese orchestra. The first identifies a Chinese concert. If the writer is familiar enough, the Chinese concert separates such a concertising ensemble from a wayang and the writer does that in a newspaper report on Monday, 30th August 1886 Singapore Free Press:

On Saturday night last night the 'spirits of the departed' were suitably entertained by the Hokkien Ghee Hin Kongsee, whose display of the good things of this part of the world was one of the largest and most magnificent that has been held this year. The whole affair was brilliantly illuminated with gas consisting of various devices. And with the good arrangements noticeable throughout, gave the show a remarkably pleasing effect. The weather was all that could be desired and the crowd mustered strong from an early hour to scrutinise minutely even the most trifling details. Several English-made toys

*placed at one end of the table served to amuse many of the ignorant Chinese to a considerable extent, who seemed astonished and puzzled at their well-timed motion and movements. There were altogether **21 sets of wayangs** in full play placed at a good distance from one another, including **several Chinese concerts**. Notwithstanding this unusually large number, there were enough spectators to see and criticise the merits of each. Their genial headman Mr. Gun Kum Lian, assisted by Mr. Gun Chok, received a large number of residents at the Kongsee house, who were most hospitably entertained. We understand that the amount expended for the whole affair exceeded \$3000. This closes the sumbayang season of 1886 which has been altogether very successful and creditable.³ (emphasis mine)*

The instance where one is informed of Chinese concerts is dependent on a definition of a Chinese concert as that represented by concerted efforts by a number of instrumentalists. It is also significant and instructive for us that Chinese Concerts are described in contradistinction to wayangs.

Singapore Free Press, 17 December 1892

*Once more the Chinese year is drawing to its close, once more the clash of cymbals, the squeal of fifes and the sound of tom-toms is heard in the land and once more according to a time honoured custom in the flowery land, the clans Teo-chews, Hailams, and Khehs and Macaus repair to the house of supremest Joss in Phillip Street there to join in united thanksgiving service. The prospect of fine weather is somewhat remote, but the Joss himself decreed it and his wooden will is law, for the time being in all events. All the streets leading to Phillip Street this morning were thronged with processions, with Chinamen with clean washed faces and gala costume children on horseback decked with endless frippery by indulgent parents, and gaily decorated conveyances **crowded with singing girls and instruments of fullest discord**, while the streets themselves were radiant with innumerable and costly silk banners and all manner of emblems and paraphernalia. The proceedings will be continued until the return of the different Josses to their respective temples during Chinese New Year....(emphasis mine)*

What was, in the previous account, clear descriptions of Chinese concerts is replaced by descriptions of sounds from *instruments of fullest discord* presumably accompanying *singing girls*.

In another instance, the music played is described in the most sarcastic tones:

Singapore Free Press

DISTURBERS OF THE PUBLIC PEACE (Tuesday) 31 October 1899

TO THE EDITOR

*SIR:--The inhabitants of houses in River Valley Road, Killeney Road, Institution Hill and that neighbourhood generally, have had a magnificent opportunity presented them, during the last few days, of studying the technical intricacies and intense beauties of Celestial music even when living in recognised European localities. The writer is informed that the occasion giving rise to this unusual order of things is the occurrence of Chinese nuptial jublations. The celebrations appear to be on a large scale, as is testified by the number of guests continually arriving at the house where the happy pair is staying. The civilised West prefers to spend its honeymoons in quietude and comparative solitude but the enlightened Celestial evidently likes to make as much show and noise as possible during such happy periods. After melancholy and irritating banging of gongs, interspersed with the accompaniment of drums, and lasting for some five days, the neighbourhood above mentioned was on Sunday (the quiet Sabbath of happier England) treated from 5.30pm to midnight, to the incessant charivari of a high Celestial order, varied occasionally by shrill Chinese songs. The latter appeared to be mainly comic, to judge by the shouts of boisterous laughter that greeted the various verses, especially towards midnight. **It is true that the monotony of the Chinese music, which to the uncultivated mind resembles the noise usually met with a working smithy, was interspersed with music given by a band of musicians playing European instruments. The two orchestras evidently vied with each other as to which could make the most bunyi-bunyi.** They followed each other in incessant rotation. The writer has just been awakened this (Monday) morning by more Celestial music from this same house at the hour of 5 am, and the intolerable row has already lasted nearly an hour. He trusts his "boy" is right when he states that to-day sees the close of this unexpectedly rich musical treat given gratis to the community at large. The un-musical and those whose ears do not appreciate the beauties of Celestial music, especially when such appreciation entails the total banishment of sleep during ordinary sleeping hours, will doubtless desire, with the writer, if they live in the neighbourhood in question that the enlightened Chinese would spend their honeymoon in European fashion, or in neighbourhood un-infested by the orang-puteh, or say at Selitar, by the sea, or any such places, so long as these be out of sight, out of hearing and out of mind.*

ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED

By the late 19th century, there was an increasing number of Straits Chinese⁴ who were adopting Western customs, taking on to European sports and past times. In 1885 a Straits Chinese Recreation Club was founded and in 1897, Lim Boon Keng, a third generation Straits Chinese born in Singapore who was the first Chinese Queen's Scholar and legislative councillor from 1895 to 1902, founded the Philomathic Society.⁵ In 1897 also, Lim, together with Song Ong Siang,

started the The Straits Chinese Magazine, published in English, which "*aimed to promote intellectual activity amongst the Straits - born people*" and will "*afford room for the discussion of useful, interesting and curious matters connected with the customs, social life, folk-lore, history and religion of the varied races who have made their home in this Colony.*"⁶

We know that both Mr. Salzman and members of the Straits Chinese community had been in contact. In 1898, he had written an article on Chinese music for the magazine as well as made no apology in attempting to harmonise a Chinese melody: *It is well understood that Chinese music is, as music, in quite a rudimentary state...the European orchestra of the present day...must be allowed to be a most beautiful combination of musical sounds, even if the music played be beyond comprehension. Judged by this standard, Chinese music cannot stand...it must be admitted that no beauty can be claimed for Chinese music at the present time...in the opinion of many people competent to judge, there is plenty of talent in music among the Chinese, if they were properly trained. Should they be begin to study the western system, there is little doubt but that before long a very great improvement would be heard.*⁷

What follows in this article is a footnote commentary by the Editors of the Straits Chinese Magazine of the "Chinese melody" harmonized by Salzman which makes the following observations:

*The above [music] is practically a popular Cantonese air usually played as an accompaniment to the singer's voice. It is commonly known by the name of "Ji Hong". A Chinese orchestra, it may be added, usually consists of a gong, fiddle, cymbals, drum, trumpet and flute. The effect to a sensitive ear can scarcely be called musical and forms a great contrast with the music here given as arranged and harmonized by Mr. Salzman.*⁸ Salzman had also been giving violin lessons for two years before the classes were "suddenly abandoned."⁹

The nonchalance of such a description is striking because there is no tone of surprise (neither is there enthusiasm!). The description also adds the word usually—which is telling of a familiarity of its practice. Given that the commentary is made by the editors of the Straits Chinese Magazine, it is likely there was such an orchestra in existence. Whether or not the Chinese orchestra was a name used by those outside it to refer to an ensemble of musicians supporting wayang or other festival occasions or an ensemble of musicians, numbers notwithstanding, is one that requires further research.

According to Joseph Peters,¹⁰ up to 1911, Chinese traditional music of the just-intonation-pentatonic variety had a strong foothold in Singapore in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This coincides with the period when Chinese migrant communities were living in clan-based communes and their social and cultural

needs were met through arrangements with hometowns in China. After the 1911 revolution in China, a tempered pentatonic form (from the equal-tempered diatonic system in Western Europe) became dominant in China and in Beijing. The indelible image of a western symphonic ensemble must have had considerable influence in relation to the conscious development of a Chinese Orchestra. This was to spread to other parts of China and overseas settlements. Both the just-intonation and Western-tempered practices were to be found in Singapore with the former, while being sustained by clan-based associations somehow diminished in stature and popularity to the latter. The notion of Chinese orchestra, according to Goh Ek Meng, seems to have begun as a number of other smaller groups, like the **tong luo** which reportedly began in 1939 when there was raised sentiment about Japan's invasion of China. This group then composed songs to rouse spirits of the Chinese against the Japanese. The second instance of a Chinese orchestra allegedly begins around 1953 where it appeared in large enough numbers to justify the label.

With the paucity of evidence, it is hard to reconstruct the dynamics of such a group and its attitude towards music-making. However, there are some indications that joining a Chinese orchestra was social and ethically not dissimilar to joining dance groups among the Mandarin conversant community. Subscribing to such activity was seen as the means to enabling a larger, noble purpose in life. It was this attitude that prompted Chua Soo Pong to identify such a group with its attendant characteristics in the Chinese dance traditions as *'wholesome cultural associations' and its participants were committed art workers...animated by the idea of creating dances which reflect social reality and their aim has been to pass their message to the people...adopting a kind of social commitment clearly different from that of women's clubs leisure classes...critical of the present social system arguing that their art should reflect the hard facts of life and encourage people to reform society...disapproved of individualism and advocated collective creation. They believed strongly that theatre dance must be created for the people and tried hard to establish a close relationship with the audience.*¹¹

It is suggested that such descriptions of those in the dance traditions are applicable to those in the Chinese Orchestra.

Purposes could range from making a political stand against the Japanese, to creating "good art" in the face of sentiments of "unsavoury" **yellow musics** generated through the Shanghai film industry. Usually not reflected but worthy of question is the reception of the Chinese who were performers in the Western art tradition by their larger community. Interestingly enough, in the 1950s, the wholesome culture association saw their movement as part of an anti-Yellow (anti-Colonial/Western influence) Culture Campaign. Dances performed in Singapore by both associations were reconstructed by using dance scores which

were imported from China or by repeatedly observing the choreography from the dance films. Several Chinese dance films in the early sixties indicated strong and direct influences from China. Many other documentaries from the same period include folk dances of different ethnic groups in China. These dances contained no explicit political message and the folk dances were presented in a light enough manner to appeal to a broad spectrum of the audience in Singapore. Given this seemingly unobstructed access, why was there a need to articulate an anti-yellow culture? One possible view is the lack of confidence in the Colonial government especially after the Japanese Occupation and disdain with all the value systems.

Another possible reason was the proliferation of popular form of music-making and dance in cabarets and dance bands. Arguably the most popular entertainment during the 1950s in Singapore was to be found in the New World which enjoyed massive crowds every night. 'Getais' enjoyed the best business in New World during the 50s. There was the "Man Jiang Hong" Getai, the Shangri-La, the New Nightclub, Feng Feng Song and Dance Troupe, and Broadway.¹² The Man Jiang Hong 'Getai' was used by the famous Zhang Lai Lai Song and Dance Troupe, which met with enthusiastic crowd response. Part of the show included the performance of a series of love ballads between Zhang Lai Lai and the male lead, which was a crowd-pleaser. Zhang eventually moved to the Hong Kong motion picture scene. Despite her considerable success and fame as a singer locally, the troupe was subsequently dismantled. The Man Jiang Hong Getai was then replaced by the Dong Fang Getai.¹³ Moreover, Joseph Peters' overview of musics in Singapore reveals¹⁴ that, **Bunga Tanjong** at the **New World Amusement Park, New World, Great World** and **Happy World** were venues around which a thriving nightlife in Singapore revolved in the 1950s. People flocked to these clubs every night to participate in contemporary popular dance crazes such as cha-cha, rumba, tango to name a few. Live popular band performances sufficed for all of these types of dances, thus making it economically lucrative and at the same time characterised variety and 'local' flavour in entertainment. It would not have been surprising to have speculated on the loss of 'wholesome' Chinese in the community to these popular forms.

In his article on Chinese Theatre Dance in Singapore from 1946-1976, Chua explains that in Singapore, different dance companies tended to identify themselves as either 'wholesome cultural associations' or 'art associations'; the former identifying themselves as *committed art workers...critical of the present social system arguing that their art should reflect the hard facts of life and encourage people to reform society*.¹⁵ These wholesome associations comprised students societies in the 1960s, old boys associations, the workers cultural troupes, student drama societies of the early 1960s, and many left-wing amateur

companies in the 1970s. Chua suggests that for this group, their art was a means with which to express their social thoughts and a means to promote a kind of social interaction and in the process educating themselves and their audience. The large audiences they attracted provided financial support for their continuing artistic creation.¹⁶

Art Associations on the other hand, viewed their activities as *a form of artistic endeavour rather than a means of promoting social reform*. Moreover, Chua says *art associations were well disposed towards and satisfied with the current political environment, often expressing pride in the economic success and social stability...achieved...art associations were dominated by individuals – teachers and choreographers*. Chua notes that despite their differences in social and political outlook, attitudes toward art and society, dance content and innovations, both associations saw themselves *playing a useful role in society and their work was appreciated by the different sections of the society*.

The turning point in the 60s was a variety show in 1962 by the Singapore Amateur Players which featured folk dance, folk songs, poetry recitation and dances choreographed by its members, which severely criticised the authorities for ignoring the needs of the people and neglected their duty to depict the peoples' lives and express their thoughts. In February 1963 the PAP government cracked down on left-wing extremism, trade unionists, student leaders and activists of the wholesome cultural associations; fuelling the speculation of the rivalry between the PAP and opposition party Barisan Socialis. Most of the groups within the wholesome cultural associations were abolished by law between 1964 and 1969 because of their political alliance with the outlawed Communist Party. As a result, wholesome cultural associations transferred their links to the 'art associations'.

It was also during this period that *a Chinese song book entitled "Revolutionary Songs" had been proscribed by the Singapore Government. Any person selling, distributing or possessing this publication is liable to prosecution. This publication consisting of 104 pages has red covers of which the front cover carries a picture of four armed men killing their enemy. Most of the songs are quotations from Mao-Tse-tung. The publication has been banned principally because it is intended for use by local pro-Communist elements as paraphernalia for organising riots and destruction of public and private property in Singapore. These songs call on people to resort to violence in order to establish a Communist regime and there is little of musical worth in them. This publication will therefore serve as a stimulus to get teenaged children to go on the rampage at the behest of adult pro-Communists who plan these disorders in the safety of their homes and offices.*¹⁷

On the other hand, when the National Theatre was first commissioned, there was support to initiate many practices found in the Chinese community in Singapore. Ho Hwee Long remembers, that *there was a strong concentration on Dance...there was a NT dance troupe...there was a NT choir but it was not very popular...because they sang mostly Mandarin Art songs and choral music...there was a National Theatre Chinese Orchestra...that started in 1963...it was a very strong Chinese orchestra...the conductor was a Chinese-born Hong Kong person (Mr. Cheng Si Sum—resigned from NTCO in 1971)...can't remember his name...he returned to Hong Kong....*¹⁸

According to the Annual Report of the National Theatre Company of 1968, the National Theatre Chinese Orchestra is mentioned for the first time under this description:

*After three months of intensive rehearsals, the three sections of the Company, viz. the Singapore National Orchestra, the National Theatre Company Chinese Orchestra and the National Theatre Company Choir performed to a very receptive audience at its inaugural concert in August. By the end of the year, plans were finalized to launch the National Theatre Dance Company. The possibilities of forming the National Theatre Malay Orchestra and Drama Companies were also under consideration.*¹⁹

In the annual report of 1969, the Chinese Orchestra seems to have grown:

*National Theatre Company Chinese Orchestra and Junior Chinese Orchestra
The Chinese Orchestra has at present 30 members but it is hoped that in the near future it will be expanded to 50. The strong support from the public has encouraged the Chinese Orchestra to present a series of outdoor concerts during the current year. In August 1969, the National Theatre Company undertook another project for the promotion of Chinese music. The Company organized instrumental classes for Er Hu, Pipa, Ku Ch'ng [sic] and Flute for both children and adults. The tutors were the conductor and leading members of the Chinese orchestra. As these classes were successful, the National Theatre Company now intends to organize new classes for beginners and at Intermediate levels jointly with the Adult Education Board. In addition to the staging of concerts, the Company also cut several discs. The first disc was "Chinese Festival Music" which was a selection of traditional Chinese orchestral music. The Company hopes to produce more recordings of other serious music in the near future.*²⁰

By the annual report of 1970, the reports have gone a step further:

*The music section of the National Theatre Company made further progress in its performing standard and crowned another year of success...Senior members of the Chinese Orchestra were invited to instruct the Youth Junior Chinese Orchestra of the Ministry of Education, the Nanyang University Chinese Orchestra and the Ngee Ann Technical College Chinese Orchestra. It was evident that Chinese instrumental music had gained a marked increase in popularity in our Republic.*²¹

A curious statement appears in the next year:

*After two-and-a-half years, the National Theatre Company has firmly set its foot in the cultural field and proved its importance in helping to promote and enrich culture in the Republic. The establishment of the Management Committee by the Board for the Choir and Chinese Orchestra had contributed to the improvement in the organization, discipline and performing standards of the two sections. For the first time, the Trust and the Peoples Association worked closely and jointly presented a variety cultural show “July Melody” and it is hoped that this co-operation would continue to avoid duplication in the Trust’s efforts of promoting a national culture.*²²

We are also informed of the appointment of Mr. Lee Suat Lian as Acting Conductor from 16 June 1971; the expansion of the Chinese Orchestra from 35 to 41, of which it is observed the majority came from the Junior Chinese Orchestra. It was hoped that *with new talents recruited and better instruments bought, the Orchestra was able to perform more sophisticated works.*²³

By March 1980 however, The Chairman’s foreword to the Annual Report of that year included the following:

*The Trust continued to provide a varied programme of cultural activities. The cultural units continued to have a good year...The Chinese Orchestra still provides an avenue for enthusiasts to participate in their musical interests.*²⁴

What is most curious is that under list of cultural activities, only Mr. Au Yong Puay could be seen to provide Ku Ch’ng classes.²⁵ However, under the National Theatre Club activities, we learn of a Chinese Orchestra concert with a very curious brief: In commemoration of its Anniversary, the two-year old Chinese Orchestra provided a concert on 27 March 1979 at the Singapore Conference Hall. Members consisted of amateurs from all walks of life who strived and made the concert a success.²⁶

From hereon, the Chinese Orchestra came under the purview of the National Theatre Club’s Activities, producing during the 1980 season A Chinese Wind Ensemble on 18 May 1980 at the DBS auditorium; a fund-raising concert for the Singapore Cultural Foundation on 29 June 1980 featuring five artists from Hong

Kong at the Singapore Conference Hall; and the Chinese Orchestra's third anniversary concert on 20 July 1980 at the Singapore Conference Hall; Chinese Instrumental Music Festival from 14-22 March 1981 and two performances by the Chinese Orchestra on 20 and 22 March 1981 at the Singapore Conference Hall.²⁷

The first noticeable absence of the Chinese Orchestra from one of the main sections into the National Theatre Club Activities is now replaced by an absence of the Chinese Orchestra from the Club activities by the 1987/8 Annual Report. Nothing is seen or heard of the National Theatre Chinese Orchestra after that.²⁸

The People's Association Chinese Orchestra (reportedly formed in 1968) which had worked together with the National Theatre Chinese Orchestra emerges towards the mid-1990s as the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. In 1996, with the recommendation of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, the Singapore Chinese Orchestra Company Limited was set up to transform the SCO into a national orchestral ensemble of high international standard. Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was named its Patron. In 1998, the Orchestra, under music director, Hu Bing Xu, toured Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen to critical acclaim. In January 2002, the SCO appointed Shanghai-born, US-based maestro, Tsung Yeh as its music director. A major initiative of the director of the SCO, according to its website,²⁹ is to reach out to new audiences, to win the hearts of non-Chinese music listeners and cultivate the affections of existing audience. As a non-profit professional organisation, the Orchestra has been extending its presence in the community with Community Series concerts at Community Clubs, Arts Education Programmes in schools and Outdoor Concerts at National Parks. The SCO has a current membership of 31 musicians and augments that when having to perform works requiring larger forces.

Besides the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, the City Chinese Orchestra has also emerged from virtual non-discourse. Originating from the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation Chinese Orchestra which was founded in 1974, the City Chinese Orchestra was established in 1993 and is today, according to its website information, a fully developed Chinese orchestra comprising 165 energetic and vibrant young musicians who are either undergoing tertiary education, or are at the commencement of their professional career. Most members started formal Chinese musical training in their secondary school days, and have extensive performance experience both in concerts and competitions. A large proportion of the orchestral members were known first as either solo or ensemble prize winners and grand finalists in the National Music Competitions. The conductor of the orchestra is Mr Tay Teow Kiat, recipient of the 1993 Cultural Medallion. Renowned Chinese composer, Mr Li Chongwang, is the orchestra composer. Since its founding, the orchestra has performed from

a repertoire of more than 600 compositions consisting of Chinese classical music, local folk music, and contemporary compositions. The City Chinese Orchestra remains firmly committed to its long-standing principle of “amateur organisation, professional standard”. Other groups include the **Hsinghai Arts Association**, another amateur group formed on 14 June 1973 whose members have, like the City Chinese Orchestra, distinguished themselves in the National Music Competitions. The Music and Drama Company has a Chinese Orchestra.

However, it is in the school system that the Chinese Orchestra has seen the critical mass. Together there are reportedly over 200 active Chinese orchestras in Singapore spread out among the schools, community centres and civic organisations. The success of this program is largely due to a system of operation, which has facilitated the process. Like the Euro-American system, replication, documentation and continuity are possible because of a numerical system established and practised in the manner of traditional Chinese music. From the point of view of orchestration, there has been a tendency to adapt the symphonic tradition found in Western Art music to suit a Chinese Orchestra. Anthetical concepts like counterpoint and a sense of vertical configuration arising from a harmonic view of the music (rather than melodic) prevail. However, the manner of expressing music in Chinese aesthetic practices, together with a reinterpretation of ancient scores, has allowed for its uniqueness and proliferation. Extended repertoire can only be described as tone-poems, suites and concertos while the smaller works are those of folk songs and theme and variations.

Some of these issues are poised between an ever-evolving state that continues to challenge the nature and identity of a Chinese Orchestra as a parallel Western orchestral ensemble while other means keep the tradition rooted to its original identity – although the question of authenticity roots it either in courtesan practice or even accompanying ensemble to staged or street-wayang or festivities or ‘sumbahyang’ rituals, rather than its later authenticated practice of being an ensemble of performing instrumental musicians. Perhaps these issues will be dealt with in further scholarship.

REFERENCES

- 1 Yung Sai Shing & Chan Kwok Bun, Leisure, Pleasure and Consumption: Ways of entertaining Oneself, In Chan Kwok Bun and Tong Chee Kiong, (eds.) Past times, A Social History of Singapore, Times Editions, 2003, pp.153-181, p.153.
- 2 Gullick, J.M. Malaya Society in the late Nineteenth Century: the Beginnings of Change. Singapore, Oxford University Press, in Yung and Chan, op.cit., p.153.
- 3 Singapore Free Press Monday, 30th August 1886.
- 4 For a fuller discussion on definition and identity of the Straits Chinese, Straits-born Chinese, Peranakan and Baba, see Rudolph, Jurgen. Reconstructing Identities: A Social History of the Babas in Singapore Vermont: Ashgate 1998 pp. 25 - 64. See also Tan Chee Beng. The Baba of Melaka: Culture and Identity of a Chinese Peranakan Community in Malaysia p. 44. Rudolph has argued that the terms 'Baba', 'Nyonya', 'Peranakan', 'Straits-born Chinese' and 'Straits Chinese' sometimes used synonymously have changed in meaning over time. From 1852, the legal definition of 'Straits Chinese' was that of a 'Straits born Chinese or 'Chinese British subject'. The Straits Chinese not only considered themselves native to their birthplace but also the legal identification by the British colonials and "subsequent self-identification as 'Straits Chinese' came to be associated with status, wealth and the availability of local-born 'Chinese' women'. (p. 43), cited in Phan Ming Yen, Music in Empire, Western Music in 19th century Singapore through a study of selected texts, Unpublished MA dissertation, Nanyang Technological University, 2004., pp.165-167.
- 5 Turnbull, C.M. A History of Singapore 1819 – 1988, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1989, p. 103, in Phan, Ming Yen, op.cit, pp.165-167.
- 6 "Our Programme." in The Straits Chinese Magazine (SCM) March 1897 Vol. 1 No. 1 p. 2, in Phan, Ming Yen, op.cit, pp.165-167.
- 7 Salzmann, Edward Charles. "A Few Remarks on Chinese Music" in SCM, December 1898 Vol. 2 No. 8, pp.169-170. in Phan, Ming Yen, op.cit, pp.165-167.
- 8 Ibid., p.170.
- 9 "Straits Chinese and Western Music" in SCM September 1906 Vol. 10 No. 3, in Phan, Ming Yen, op.cit, pp.165-167.
- 10 Peters, Joseph E.E., Evolving traditions of ASEAN, Chapter on Singapore, Malay Music segment on Traditional Music in Singapore, p.106.
- 11 Chua Soo Pong: Creative Process of Chinese theatre dance in Singapore 1946-1976, Journal of the South Seas Society Volumes 39, Parts 1 & 2, 1984., pp.89-90.
- 12 See Wang, Zhenchun, Gen de Xilie [Chinese source], Seng Yew Book Store 1988, p.34; Wan Chiew Inn, Hainanese Opera in Singapore: Case Studies through Oral History pp.17-18; Tyers, Ray, Singapore, Then and Now Edition 2, Singapore: Landmark Books 1993, p200.
- 13 Wang, Zhenchun, Gen de Xilie [Chinese source], Seng Yew Book Store 1988, p.34-35.
- 14 Peters, Joseph E.E., Evolving traditions of ASEAN, Chapter on Singapore, Malay Music segment on Traditional Music in Singapore, pp. 94-106.
- 15 Chua Soo Pong, op.cit., pp.89-90.
- 16 Ibid., pp.90.
- 17 Song Book Banned, June 9 1967 Ministry of Culture JUN 16/67 (CUL) Issued at 1700 hrs.
- 18 Interview with Ho Hwee Long May 29 2004.

19 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1968, pp. 10-11 under Activities.

20 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1969, p. 4.

21 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1970, p. 2.

22 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1971, p. 2.

23 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1971, p. 3.

24 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1980, p.4.

25 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1980, p.16.

26 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1980, p.26.

27 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1981 under National Theatre Club activities.

28 National Theatre Trust Annual Report 1987/8 under National Theatre Club activities.

29 www.sco-music.org.sg