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Editorial

Since its establishment in 2012, the Malaysian Music Journal has evolved as a publication that is unique in location and content, and increasingly valued as a forum for a range of music research spheres. At MMJ we aim for diversity and excellence, and to share and inspire ideas critical to a sustainable music research future. Our commitment to creating a vigorous community of researchers of high-level scholarship and ethics underlines our policy and processes, and we are pleased that both Malaysian and international researchers have contributed strongly to this development. Of critical importance in our articles is a linking of theory to research, and theory to practice. Questions of what might constitute research in a music setting are always re visited and tested within contexts such as connections of performance to the materials of sound, the processes of musical creation, the embodiment of the score through performance, the potentials of sound or music analysis for setting new parameters for understanding meaning and inspiring new knowledge, and in developing sustainability of musical traditions through documentation and innovation. Originality of ideas and approaches, and rigour and clarity of methodological perspectives are imperative – whether the research is practice-led, auto-ethnographic, qualitative or musicology based. As Chief Editor, it has been a pleasure to work with our contributors and reviewers on nurturing, producing and distributing the wide range of work that has been included in these publications.

In this issue, topics range from theoretical music analysis to auto-ethnographic descriptions of composition and performance methods. The first article, Spectromorphological Notation: Exploring the Use of Timbral Visualisation in Ethnomusicological Works posits ethnomusicology as a research discipline capable of informing and generating knowledge in disparate but connected fields, enriching and supporting creative music investigations. Authors Mohd Hassan Abdullah and Andrew Blackburn have employed transdisciplinary collaborations in their approach to sonic representations through challenging common description methods of instrumental sound definition. Using spectrographs of the sounds of traditional Malay instruments, in this case the Gedombak used by Wayang Kulit musicians, timbral characteristics have been documented and analysed to assist the understanding of performer choices in instrument selection.

The second article in this issue is a report on the processes of cross-genre arranging from an auto-ethnographic perspective. In *Extreme Arranging: An Autoethnographic Reconciling of Differences and Exploring of Similarities Between Seemingly Incompatible Genres*, Wesley Johnson presents an engaging personal account of his methods and influences, citing his own multicultural background as influential and beneficial in his endeavour to build bridges between disparate styles. Two of the

author's arrangements provide exemplars for reconciliation of differences and analysis of method. Continuing the, contemporary music theme, Yen-Lin Goh's article, *Toy Orchestra: Serious Art Instruments in the Performing of Melodramas* explores this genre in an account of her personal journey of constructing a performance from toys. Toy instruments have become common in new music performances, with the first recognised composition being John Cage's *Suite for Toy Piano* (1948). Goh's stories of explorations of new sounds, interviews with renowned performers, collaborations with the composer, assembling the orchestra and creating the performance of two works, provide a unique insight into process and practice in music.

Perhaps a more familiar research approach is taken in the following two articles. Zaharul Lailiddin Saidon and Shahanum Mohd Shah report on the establishment of pioneering assessment criteria for traditional Malaysian performance. An analysis of interviews and observations by practitioners and academics showed this to be a complex and challenging task, as a conflict of opinion about teaching strategies, assessment and selection of repertoire emerged. This article is published in Bahasa Melayu. The next article, *Variations as Thematic and Structural Analysis: A Closer Look at Mozart's K331*, presents a Schenkerian analysis of the first movement of this work. Nicole di Paola contextualises this analysis through an overview of thematic analysis by Schenker, Morgan and Cone, and suggests how analysis of variations might shape the interpretation of a theme. This article provides an exemplar of important links between theory and practice, realised through an analytical approach connecting performance, understandings of score structure and the use of *Umlinie*.

Finally, we turn to extant Malaysian compositions in the article Jimmy Boyle's *Sentiments as Revealed in the Manuscripts of Sketches of Songs and Instrumental Melodies* by Chan Cheong Jan, Lee Sze May, and James P. S. Boyle. This article discusses recently discovered sketches of compositions by Jimmy Boyle, connecting popular song, jazz idioms, ethnic music, and ideas of language and nationalism. This research is an important contribution to Malaysian musical heritage and provides insight into Boyle's unique multi cultural practice.

All of these articles in their different ways point toward the future. Processes of reflecting, rethinking, redesigning, and re-evaluating musical practices are threaded through different fields of enquiry – all of which represent aspects of innovation that are crucial to music research in this era.

Jean Penny
Chief Editor