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SELECTED SOLO PIANO WORKS BY CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIAN AND
INDONESIAN COMPOSERS FROM 1979 TO 2007: AN INTRODUCTION

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By

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INDONESIAN COMPOSERS FROM 1979 TO 2007: AN INTRODUCTION

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY

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ABSTRACT**SELECTED SOLO PIANO WORKS BY CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIAN AND
INDONESIAN COMPOSERS FROM 1979 TO 2007:
AN INTRODUCTION**

by Charmaine Siagian

Major Professors: Edward Gates, D.M. and Jane Magrath, D.M.

This study provides an introduction to contemporary solo piano works by seven Malaysian and Indonesian composers. The composers from Malaysia are Chong Kee Yong, Ng Chong Lim, Tazul Tajuddin, and Tan Chee-Hwa. The composers from Indonesia are Slamet Abdul Sjukur, Michael Asmara, and Ananda Sukarlan. Seven solo piano works and three solo piano collections are discussed, all of which have been published, recorded, or premiered at a significant event. The pieces vary in difficulty and style, and they range from highly complex (*e.g.* Chong's *Metamorphosis III*) to pedagogical (*e.g.* Tan's *A Child's Garden of Verses*) to avant-garde (*e.g.* Asmara's *A Little Piece for Pianoforte*). Composer biographies represent a significant part of the study.

The purpose of the study is to bring attention to contemporary art music for piano by composers from Malaysia and Indonesia that is available to professional performers, students, and teachers for study. Much of this literature has been little known to date and yet is worthy of study.

The introduction to the document provides background information on the development of art music in Malaysia and Indonesia including a brief look at the challenges of colonialism as it pertains to art music. The review of related literature includes correlated studies and dissertations, as well as relevant books, articles, and internet sources that have explored similar study in Indonesia, Malaysia, and worldwide.

The discussion of each contemporary work includes comments from the composer obtained through a questionnaire and subsequent interviews and emails. Final chapters provide significant composer perceptions and opinions on the state of contemporary music in the two countries, and include observations from other prominent musicians familiar with the regional scene.

The appendices provide an unofficial list of known solo piano works by Malaysian and Indonesian composers, as well as a list of piano works by other composers who have been influenced by the music or culture of the region.

CHAPTER I

The Problem, Purpose, and Design of the Study

Introduction

In the equatorial Southeast Asian¹ countries of Malaysia and Indonesia, recent trends indicate that art music² is flourishing, even if usually relegated to more metropolitan areas. Yet much of the musical research conducted in the two countries has tended to focus not on its new music but, predictably, on the rich cultural traditions—including the famous Indonesian gamelan—that composers like Debussy, Messiaen, Bartók, and Britten were drawn to. The music indigenous to the region undoubtedly deserves the study and respect that continues to be conducted. Many of these traditional gong-chime ensembles continue to be played on cultural holidays, special occasions, and village celebrations (quite often for the benefit of tourists). Ensembles also continue to proliferate at elite academic institutions; these represent a devoted, albeit small, faction that will ensure its longevity abroad. However, the pedagogical inclination in both countries today seems to lean steadily towards instruments conceived of a few hundred years ago in Western Europe: the piano and the guitar, and it is apparent that this inclination has acutely influenced the developing interest in art music in Malaysia and Indonesia.

While the guitar tends to be a mostly self-taught instrument, it is almost expected for middle- and upper-class parents in many Malaysian and Indonesian

¹ Southeast Asia is made up of ten countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Burma, Laos, the Philippines, Cambodia, Brunei, and Vietnam.

² For the purposes of this paper, *art music* will generally refer to notated music in the style of the Western classical tradition, as opposed to traditional Indonesian or Malaysian art music.

towns to enroll their children in piano lessons. These students, like their counterparts around the world, often begin with American method books and then continue on by studying the masters. Because of this, the assumption that art music is only produced by Western³ composers is prevalent: many remain unaware that regional composers write serious, playable music that is artistic, and may in some cases be more relatable—more of a reflection of their own milieu. There also still exists a mindset of not truly “making it” until one makes it abroad, and this remains a detriment to the growth and progress of the local composer. That said, the nationalistic element should also be cast as positive: playing good and respected music by composers who seem more “real” and relatable to students of both countries would (presumably) serve as motivation for better practicing and performing habits and inspire better musicianship overall.

Background

Southeast Asia is a corner of the world that in the past century has seen multiple wars. It still grapples with a dichotomy between rich and poor, and it struggles to resolve social issues such as strained ethnic and religious tensions. While East Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and China are thriving on art music—“Asia’s rising musical sophistication,”⁴ as one TIME critic calls it—more recently formed Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia still tend to go on the defensive when labeled “developing” or, worse, “third world.”

Nevertheless, recent media trends indicate that the art communities and, to some

³ A note on the political correctness of the term *Western music*: Composer and gamelan expert Jody Diamond points out that “terms such as ‘Western music’ become suspect because of philosophies such as the East is only ‘East’ if you are living or looking at it from the ‘West’. World music is a dangerous idea. . . . If ‘world music’ means all music except Western music, it perpetuates a hierarchy of knowledge. It separates Western culture as reality from Other [*sic*] cultures as an exotic variation to be observed.” [From “There Is No They There,” *MusicWorks* 47 (Summer 1990), 12.] I respect and understand this viewpoint, but for the purpose of this study, Western music will continue to refer to the study and style of music in Western European countries over the last 400 years.

⁴ Jamie James, “The Rise of a Musical Superpower,” *TIME Asia*, July 5, 2004, <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501040705-658369,00.html>(accessed Feb 16, 2005).

degree, the government in both countries, are increasing support for local art musicians in their quest for recognition and respect from an elitist global music society. Although both countries only gained independence from their colonial successors in the mid-twentieth century—Indonesia from the Dutch in 1949 and Malaysia (then Malaya) from the English in 1957—the two countries have developed quickly in the last fifty years. But it is after all just that: a mere fifty years. While colonization carries negative connotations, one positive fact is that throughout the period of European colonial rule, a good portion of the population was exposed not only to technological and industrial innovations developing in the West, but also to the styles of music developing concurrently in Western Europe. For example, documentation shows that many traveling French and Italian opera companies toured the region for an extended period of time in the mid-1800s.⁵ In addition, European church music has been in existence in the region as early as the sixteenth century: during the Portuguese colonization, many intermarried and entire families were converted to Catholicism.⁶ Other Protestant denominations followed as different European countries came into power. Today many Lutheran congregations continue a tradition of singing German liturgical music in SATB form (mostly taken from Bach chorales). It is interesting to note that these hymns are sometimes sung to follow tradition “without understanding its meaning.”⁷

As mentioned before, composers from the West have long been fascinated by the different tuning and tonal systems, the rhythms, and simply the very different pace of life in the tropics. One of the most frequently documented instances is Claude

⁵ Tom Kaufman, “Indonesian Opera,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed June 15, 2005).

⁶ Franki Notosudirdjo (Franki Raden), “Music, Politics, and the Problems of National Identity in Indonesia,” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2001), 20.

⁷ Raden, 22.

Debussy's introduction to the gamelan orchestra at the 1889 World Expo in Paris; his good friend Paul Godet reports that "many fruitful hours for Debussy were spent in the Javanese *kampong* [village]. . . listening to the percussive rhythmic complexities of the gamelan with its inexhaustible combinations of ethereal, flashing timbres."⁸ Debussy writes with a sense of wonderment: "There used to be—indeed, despite the troubles that civilization has brought, there still are—some wonderful peoples who learn music as easily as one learns to breathe . . ."⁹ One other example of initial fascination is Benjamin Britten's reaction to this unique instrumentation after visiting Indonesia in the 1950s. After one particular performance, he wrote to Imogen Holst "extolling the music" as

fantastically rich—melodically, rhythmically, texture (such orchestration!!) & [sic] above all formally At last I'm beginning to catch on to the technique, but it's about as complicated as Schönberg.¹⁰

Conversely, a casual mention of the term *Western music* today comes with the assumption that *Western* is the music of MTV: Madonna or Beyoncé, the latest American Idol winner or hip-hop sensation. Today the top musical groups in the Malaysian network on the social networking site Facebook are the alternative pop groups Muse, Snow Patrol, Coldplay, and The Killers.¹¹ In the Indonesian network it

⁸ Brent Hugh, "Claude Debussy and the Javanese Gamelan," <http://brenthugh.com/debnotes/gamelan.html> (accessed January 30, 2006).

⁹ Ibid. The 100-plus gamelan groups in the United States today certainly owe much to Debussy. Most scholars agree that the gamelan orchestra contributed greatly to the rise of today's percussion ensemble, and composers continue to write for gamelan orchestras (in different forms) or to replicate the unique rhythmic elements on different instruments, including the piano.

¹⁰ Philip Brett, "Benjamin Britten: Transition and Triumph," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed June 15, 2005). NOTE: Britten also visited Malaysia on the trip. He and compatriot William Walton were in fact asked by the Malaysian Prime Minister to compose a national anthem for the new country. One sketch he submitted incorporated a familiar Malay folk-tune. Although another tune was eventually chosen, the world premiere of Britten's *Sketch for Malaya* by the London Sinfonietta occurred on November 14, 2007 at Cadogan Hall in London. [Source: The Britten-Pears Foundation website, "World Premiere of Britten's *Sketch for Malaya*," <http://brittenpears.org/?page=news/index.htm&id=112>" (accessed November 14, 2007)].

¹¹ An informal poll on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com> (accessed November 30, 2007). There are currently over 165,000 members in the Malaysian network.

is similar: Muse, Snow Patrol, The Fray, and The Goo-Goo Dolls.¹² The influence of Western media is amazing: Harry Potter is the top book, and (perhaps because of its multi-racial cast) the NBC show *Heroes* is the top TV show in both countries.¹³ Many music students are lured into the glitz and glamour of the pop world and often end up aspiring to play the popular songs on the radio and only the most appealing Romantic pieces. Certainly not all pop music is flawed, but with the dawn of high-tech synthesizers and keyboards the acoustic piano is progressively at risk of being treated as not much more than a piece of furniture.

Fortunately, several signs point towards a growing openness for both old and new traditions. First-rate performing centers have been built (or are currently being built) by several Southeast Asian governments eager to promote a sense of culture similar to that of more modern, industrialized countries. Malaysia and Indonesia are both mentioned specifically:

Ten years ago Asia's cities were all building cathedral-like airports; now, they must have their performing-arts palaces. Singapore has its two-year-old Esplanade complex, with a sonic environment created by the legendary American acoustician Russell Johnson, which is regarded by expert listeners as one of the best halls anywhere. In Kuala Lumpur, oil money built a stunning new hall at the base of the Petronas Towers for the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, which celebrates its sixth birthday in August. . . . In February, Jakarta opened a 1,500-seat mixed-use hall as a home for Indonesia's semiprofessional Nusantara Symphony Orchestra; Bangkok, too, is building a classical-music venue, an opera house on the sixth floor of a shopping mall.¹⁴

Today, more and more people in the region are being exposed to a new cultural experience by these newly-formed national orchestras. Although only a few members of Malaysia's Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) are currently Malaysian, part

¹² An informal poll on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com> (accessed November 30, 2007). There are currently over 70,000 members in the Indonesian network.

¹³ Ibid. In comparison, the top musical groups in the University of Oklahoma Facebook network are Jack Johnson, Coldplay, The Fray, and The Red Hot Chili Peppers. The Bible is the top book (Harry Potter is second), and *Grey's Anatomy* the top TV show (*Heroes* is tenth).

¹⁴ James, *Time* magazine article.

of the long-term educational initiatives includes members of the orchestra going into rural areas and local schools to perform and conduct classes.¹⁵ In an interview for *Classical Music* magazine conducted in 2004, the associate conductor of the MPO Kevin Field, himself a British citizen, talks about promoting and keeping local musicians in the orchestra:

We have five Malaysians in the orchestra already, but that will change. We've got another five on a scholarship scheme. They receive a fee and tuition. It's a stepping stone, to try to discourage them from going to Europe or America, to keep them here and nurture the talent. All musicians in the orchestra are required to take a student or two. We have a huge outreach program, accessing about 6,000 kids a year.¹⁶

Regarding the current level of music education he says,

There is little if any musical education—as we know it—in Malaysia. There is at primary¹⁷ and there is, of course, in international and private schools. It's been said that we're a support for that. It's a huge challenge to offer as much education outreach as possible.¹⁸

It should be noted that the caliber of the musicians and the existence of the MPO today is largely made possible by the sponsorship of the oil company Petronas. The MPO's home is at the base of the Petronas Twin Towers, until recently the tallest buildings in the world.¹⁹

In Indonesia, the Nusantara Symphony Orchestra (NSO) based in Jakarta is often labeled the country's "semi-professional" classical orchestra. Founded in 1988 by Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadja as a chamber orchestra, the conductor today is American, Edward Van Ness, but unlike Malaysia's, most of its members are

¹⁵ John Robert Brown, "Malaysian Modernity," <http://www.john-robert-brown.com/article3.htm> (accessed June 5, 2005). (The article originally appeared in *Classical Music* magazine.)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Primary schooling is similar to elementary school, made up of Primary 1-6 or Grades 1-6. In Malaysia there are eleven compulsory years of education. In Indonesia there are twelve. Music is not a required course at any level in either country.

¹⁸ Brown article.

¹⁹ Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra website, http://www.malaysianphilharmonic.com/orc_bio.php (accessed January 20, 2006).

indigenous.²⁰ The NSO was recently invited to participate in the Asian Orchestra Week in Japan, and Naomoto Okayama, a chief executive of the Association of Japanese Symphony Orchestras, observed:

I traveled to Jakarta to see them . . . Their quality and technique is weak but they are eager to play good music. Their achievement is not the same as Europe, but the music they make is good and attractive to audiences . . . You can see the character, society and humanity of the country through an orchestra and that is wonderful.²¹

While it is true that music conservatories of the caliber of those in East Asia or the western hemisphere are almost nonexistent in this part of the world, many local musicians study privately and then go abroad. Many composers and musicians eventually decide to settle overseas, the most successful being Indonesian-born conductor and pianist Jahja Ling, now a US citizen.²² In the last several years and particularly in the last decade, more have been returning to their respective homelands with newly learned ideas and techniques. These composers bring with them a distinct synthesis of functional Western harmony and Eastern tones and rhythms from the hundreds of different cultures of the region. Indications are that these new and energetic composers strive for a unique sound, usually a distinct blend of old and new, traditional and avant-garde. Some of their works may have regional influences unique to the area, while others may be categorized as compositions set completely in the Western tradition.

²⁰ Nusantara Symphony Orchestra website, <http://www.nusantaraorchestra.com> (accessed January 20, 2006).

²¹ Deborah Cameron, "Tough Test as Orchestra Heads to City Full of Talent," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 21, 2005, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/tough-test-as-symphony-heads-to-city-full-of-talent/2005/09/20/1126982057496.html> (accessed January 28, 2006).

²² Cleveland Orchestra website, "Jahja Ling," <http://www.clevelandorch.com/html/about/Jahja.Ling.Main.asp> (accessed April 12, 2004).

Purpose

The main purpose of this document is to provide an introduction to contemporary solo piano works of the region, and to bring together a diverse and exceptional collection of works by both Malaysian and Indonesian composers. It gives evidence for the growing quality of the compositions by means of annotation and discussion of a selected few. Accurate and updated biographies of the composers for the selected pieces represent an important part of the document. The study especially seeks to promote pieces that are published or have been given a significant premiere performance, and that are easily available for purchase from the publishers or the composer. Since published piano music by local composers in both countries is still relatively rare, a chief goal is to introduce these pieces and their composers to performers, students, and teachers in Malaysia and Indonesia as well as abroad, with the hope that due appreciation and recognition be given to composers of both countries, and with the anticipation that this new music be played, performed, and exposed to pupils of the instrument.

An auxiliary reason for the study is the author's personal hereditary connection with the two countries, along with an honest curiosity to discover current compositional trends and serious piano music that is, or can be, currently available to performers and students.

Need for the Study

The lack of collective or published material on Southeast Asian composers and piano literature in general establishes a basic need for this study. No formal study has attempted a compilation or analysis of solo piano works by Malaysian or Indonesian composers. While a compilation is not the main purpose of the study, the

document intends to provide evidence for the quality of composers in the region as well as to observe current trends in composition.

Procedures

To locate piano composers from the two countries, the following sources were consulted. The *New Grove Online Dictionary of Music and Musicians* profiled thirty-three (33) recognized Indonesian composers, and three (3) Malaysian composers.²³ An additional six composers were mentioned in a separate article on art music.²⁴ However, in both countries, the composers listed seemed to be recognized primarily for their work in the folk field. The most recent *Baker's Biographical Dictionary* provided a short list of fourteen (14) established Indonesian composers, but no Malaysian composers.²⁵ Again, most of these composers seemed to be recognized more for their work in the cultural and ethnomusicological field. Few composers listed piano works as part of their general oeuvre.

Internet searches proved the most productive. The Living Composers Project²⁶—“a non-profit database begun in 2000, which aims to provide composers, listeners, performers, and researchers with a source of information about the music of our time”—is constantly being updated and was especially helpful. Its criteria for inclusion are the following: “For this project, whose goal is to present as vast a spectrum of new music as possible, there are only three criteria: (1) the composer must have lived after the year 2000, the year in which the project started; (2) the composer must write principally *classical music* as opposed to *popular music* of any

²³ *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed June 15, 2005).

²⁴ Jack Percival Baker Dobbs and Patricia Matusky, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed June 15, 2005).

²⁵ Nicolas Slonimsky, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (Vol. 6), Centennial Edition (New York: Schirmer, 2001).

²⁶ The Living Composers Project, Dan Albertson, Ron Hannah, eds., <http://www.composers21.com> (accessed April 2, 2005).

sort; and (3) the composer must be at least eighteen years of age.”²⁷ As for who is eligible, in its guidelines is included this matter-of-fact statement:

No discrimination is made in terms of a composer’s ‘success’ or ‘popularity’ as opposed to ‘obscurity’. Composers who are not famous are often not famous due to a lack of skill, but rather other factors; conversely, composers who are famous are often famous because of good fortune and not necessarily the merits of their music. Thus, for this database, no judgment of a composer’s music is made or implied and no endorsements should be considered. All composers are equally eligible for inclusion.²⁸

This site initially produced four potential composers from Malaysia, and five potential composers from Indonesia.

Kakiseni.com, a trendy and slightly irreverent Malaysian arts website, provided a succinct directory of music composers with valuable email addresses, and it also differentiates popular composers from serious ones.²⁹ This website provided at least three possible piano composers.

Other online searches using databases like *WorldCat* also yielded concrete results and located musical scores by a couple of Malaysian and Indonesian composers owned by American university libraries. Google searches also uncovered personal websites of composers, which then led to email correspondence. Other recommendations and referrals from the composers obtained from the sources above further contributed to the search for even more composers and solo piano music from the two countries.

The criteria for pieces chosen include one or more of the following: (1) availability, (2) reputation of the composer, (3) the context and importance of the first or subsequent performances, and (4) aesthetic appeal. If contact information

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Kakiseni.com: A Foot in the Malaysian Arts Scene*, ed. Khee-Teik Pang, <http://www.kakiseni.com> (accessed January 10, 2004).

was publicly available the composer was contacted, then sent a questionnaire (Appendix V) by postal or electronic mail. Approximately fifteen composers with piano works in their oeuvre were asked to participate in the study. While eleven initially responded and agreed to participate, only seven composers ultimately completed the questionnaire provided and are included in the study.

Limitations of the Study

The scope is huge, and encompasses over 270 million people. Most of that number is in Indonesia which, with over 240 million people, is the fourth most populous country in the world (the United States is third), and is home to an astounding 742 languages.³⁰ Malaysia (population twenty-three million) itself is home to approximately 140.³¹ However, the study of classical music is still developing in both countries and this narrows the focus group to a more manageable number.

The study is limited to original compositions for solo piano that have been published, recorded, or premiered. Music publishing as an industry is still in its infant stages in both countries, and published works by local composers are rare because copyright laws are practically brand new. Indonesia, for instance, just passed (in 2002) stricter copyright laws in all areas including arts and literature, and even so, still struggles with piracy and unauthorized copying in all media.³² Malaysia passed copyright laws in 1987, and because of its smaller size and more stable economy is able to keep most unauthorized copying under control.³³ Many Malaysians and Indonesians currently purchase musical scores through local music

³⁰ Ethnologue: Languages of Indonesia, http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=indonesia (accessed July 9, 2004).

³¹ Ethnologue: Languages of Malaysia, http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=malaysia (accessed July 9, 2004).

³² "Indonesia: 2003 Special 301 Report," International Intellectual Property Alliance, 125-134, <http://www.iipa.com/rbc/2003/2003SPEC301INDONESIA.pdf> (accessed June 12, 2005).

³³ Malaysia Intellectual Property website, <http://www.lawyerment.com.my/intellectual/copyright.shtml> (accessed November 2, 2007).

stores and dealers that are supplied with standard performing literature from more established publishing companies overseas. It is hoped that this study will assist in promoting a more positive image of local composers in both countries.

Southeast Asia is made up of ten culturally diverse countries and thousands of different languages and dialects. Research was narrowed down to the two neighboring countries partly because they share a similar official language: Malay.³⁴ Most Malaysians and Indonesians of all ethnicities have no problems communicating in Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia, and in addition many speak another language. As a result of the British rule and compulsory English classes up to secondary school, almost all Malaysians speak some English. Because of globalization many Indonesians appear to be fluent in the language as well, including all the composers in the study. An interesting, blunt perspective regarding the use of English in the two countries:

Malaysia has a language identity crisis. In Malaysia, you really don't need to know any language except English: non-Malays (like the Chinese and Indians) speak their own languages among themselves, and English is the lingua franca for business, with Bahasa Malaysia coming in third. Indonesia, of course, was quite different, even on the main tourist trails: the English was generally very poor there, but Malaysians speak it amazingly well. If there's one reason that Malaysia will develop into a big Southeast Asian success story . . . it's because the population speaks the international language of business. Even Mahathir [former Prime Minister] speaks excellent English, even if he hates those who invented it.³⁵

Correspondence between the author and composers in both countries was for the most part conducted in English.

³⁴ Malay is an Austronesian language and is known as Bahasa Malaysia, or Bahasa Indonesia. According to Wikipedia, the difference between the two is greater than that of British and American English. Minor differences exist in spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation. ("Differences Between Malay and Indonesian," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Differences_between_Malay_and_Indonesian [accessed December 3, 2007]). Two other countries share Malay as one of its official languages: Singapore and Brunei.

³⁵ Mark Moxon's Travel Site, "Malaysia: Thoughts on Leaving," http://www.moxon.net/malaysia/thoughts_on_leaving.html (accessed January 27, 2006).

It must also be noted that there are significant differences in the background and current state of Western classical music in both countries. However, Indonesia and Malaysia were selected because in addition to a shared language, both countries also have similar cultural traditions. Additionally, both identify themselves as largely Muslim countries: Indonesia is eighty-six (86) percent Muslim and Malaysia is approximately sixty (60) percent.³⁶

Since a study of this nature and scope has not been conducted previously, it is inevitable that some fine compositions have been inadvertently left out. One-on-one interviews to discuss works and details with each of the composers would have been ideal; however, because of varying locations on three continents, a questionnaire (Appendix V), email correspondence, and phone conversations sufficed.

While compositions were undoubtedly being created as this document was being written, this study is limited to compositions written between 1979 and 2007.

Organization of the Study

This research project is organized in six chapters. Chapter II presents a review of the related literature that will include correlated studies and dissertations, as well as relevant books, articles, and internet sources that have explored similar study in Indonesia, in Malaysia, and worldwide.

Chapter III introduces various pieces of differing styles from Malaysian composers. It includes a brief biography of each composer, an annotation of a selected piano work for each composer, including its premiere date and other relevant details, and a summary of his or her piano works.

³⁶ The World Factbook at the Central Intelligence Agency (Malaysia and Indonesia), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html> (accessed October 7, 2007).

Chapter IV is similar to Chapter III, except that it will focus on Indonesian composers. As such, it also includes a brief biography of the composer, a brief annotation of a selected piece(s), and a summary of his or her piano works.

Chapter V provides views and opinions asked of the composers on the state of contemporary music in the two countries. It also includes views from other prominent musicians in the area.

Chapter VI provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

The appendices feature a list of known solo piano works by composers in both countries, as well as one by composers outside of Malaysia and Indonesia who have been influenced by the music or culture of the region. The questionnaire and an example of the initial email to composers are included. A current map of the region is also presented.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Piano Literature in Malaysia and Indonesia

Malaysia. Literature on piano compositions in Malaysia is generally difficult to track down, but Lim Pei-Sian's 2004 study involving the use of native folk music in piano teaching is worthy of note. Her DMA research involved beginning to early-intermediate arrangements of well-known Malaysian folk tunes, and aimed to "introduce piano teachers to folk music from different parts of the world."¹ In her summary chapter, she suggests that a piano method series better reflecting Malaysian culture be written, that more research be done to incorporate Malaysian folk music into private lessons, and that more original compositions for piano be written by contemporary local composers at all levels.² Jason Tye's DMA dissertation specifically focuses on current practices of Malaysian teachers in the state of Penang and how they prepare their students for the practical piano exams of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (London). His work provides an overall understanding of the current pedagogical practices in the country, and highlights the steadily burgeoning group of serious music students in the country.³ Tye's study is

¹ Lim Pei-Sian, "Incorporating A Student's Native Folk Music in Piano Teaching: A Survey and Original Piano Arrangements of Traditional Malaysian Folk Music" (DMA diss., University of West Virginia, 2004), 2.

² Lim, 52.

³ Jason Kong-Chiang Tye, "A Survey of the Current Status and Practices of Piano Teachers in Penang, Malaysia; Preparation for the Practical Piano Examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, London" (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2004).

revisited in Chapter III. In addition, a study on three Malaysian composers was completed in 2000 by Lam Ming Huey at Universiti Putra Malaysia.⁴

A relatively recent and noteworthy publication is *The Music of Malaysia*, originally published in 1997 in Malay and re-published and updated in English in 2004.⁵ The book offers recent studies on Malaysian music, while focusing heavily on ethnic music of the various cultures.

Indonesia. Franki S. Notosudirdjo's massive 2001 dissertation about Indonesian music, politics, and national identity is an excellent source and provides notable background information on the country's struggle after colonial rule.⁶ It also features examples of piano music by a few prominent musicians in the last fifty years. Dr. Notosudirdjo (he is better known by his pen name Franki Raden), wrote most of the articles on Indonesian musicians and culture in the most recent *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

Other studies include one by Andrew McGraw on experimental modern music by Balinese composers; particularly interesting is the chapter on the possible influence and cultural diffusion between "Euro-America" and Indonesia.⁷ Another related dissertation-in-progress that should be noted and marked for further reference is by ethnomusicologist and composer Chris Miller. It is titled "Nativist Cosmopolitanism and Radical Traditionalism: Making Modern Music in Indonesia."⁸ Its abstract begins this way:

⁴ Lam Ming Huey, "Art Music in Malaysia: A Focus on Three Composers" (MA Thesis, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2000). However, efforts to secure this thesis were unsuccessful.

⁵ Patricia Matusky and Tan Sooi-Beng, eds., *The Music of Malaysia: The Classical, Folk and Syncretic Traditions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

⁶ Franki Notosudirdjo (Franki Raden), "Music, Politics, and the Problems of National Identity in Indonesia," (Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2001), 19.

⁷ Andrew Clay McGraw, "Musik Kontemporer: Experimental Music by Balinese Composers" (Ph.D. diss., Wesleyan University, 2005).

⁸ Chris Miller, personal website "Warbling Elephant Music" under "Scholarship," <http://ejmiller.web.wesleyan.edu/> (accessed November 12, 2007).

Indonesian contemporary art music, or *musik kontemporer*, encompasses a broad range of creative activity by both Western-oriented and traditionally-based musicians. It is a relatively new development, with a critical mass of composers and continuous activity emerging only in the late 1970s. Like contemporary art music in most places where it is found, *musik kontemporer* has a certain amount of prestige and elite support while remaining marginal and esoteric. My dissertation examines how it is that *musik kontemporer* exists in Indonesia, from historical, synchronic, and ontological perspectives: how it came to exist; what institutions and conditions make its existence possible and how it relates to the culture at large; and in what sense it exists as a distinct category within the broader contemporary Indonesian musicscape.⁹

Other Countries. Also relevant are documents by scholars interested in various aspects of their individual countries’—usually newly independent—emerging art music. Yang Tzi Ming’s document on solo piano works of Taiwanese composers explored how these composers were impacted by Western influences. Comprising part of the document are the recordings of works which Yang hopes will “inspire people to discover and perform Taiwanese piano music” as well as “inspire Taiwanese composers to create more great music in the future.”¹⁰ You Liang Yun’s dissertation provides an in-depth study on the works of Chinese composer Ding Shan De.¹¹ You affords a look at all aspects of Ding’s life and demonstrates how the composer, who studied in Paris, combines Chinese idioms with Western atonal compositional methods. Another document that explores how traditional music has merged with the “Western” compositional style is You Sun Kang’s research of works by contemporary Korean composers. By analyzing four specific solo piano works You

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Yang Tzi Ming, “Selected Solo Works of Taiwanese Composers” (DMA diss., University of Maryland at College Park, 2002).

¹¹ You Liang Yun, “A Survey of Ding Shan-De’s Piano Works” (DMA diss., University of Houston, 2004).

addresses the “notion of a contemporary Korean music with cultural identity and originality.”¹²

Thai composer Jiradej Setabundhu’s dissertation concentrates on an analysis of his own works, and the objective is “to examine how various elements of Thai music influence the overall appearance of the works and how they are integrated into the Western compositional processes.”¹³ While the paper analyzes various orchestral pairings, his piece for solo piano *Eine schöne Zeit war Es*, in which he mingles Schönberg quotes with Thai musical concepts, is most relevant and particularly fascinating. Harsha Aberayatne’s doctoral project was equally interesting, involving a mixture of composition, analysis of Sri Lankan folk music, and pedagogical concepts which led to ten intermediate level piano pieces as a final product of the research.¹⁴

Bibliographical Studies. Several studies are compiled as bibliographies; Nancy Luzko’s recent study of Paraguayan music for piano is one. In her document, she included a brief history of the music of Paraguay, information on the composers, and descriptions of the music, including a composer biography, title and date of each work, duration, style characteristics, level of difficulty, performance procedure, pianistic challenges, and availability.¹⁵ Luis Gustavo Sanchez also researched a comparable project featuring Argentinian composers.¹⁶

Performance Projects. A few research studies are presented as performance projects. Huang Wei Der compiled fifteen scores (chamber music and solo piano) of

¹² You Sun Kang, “Toward the New Korean Musical Language: The Merging of Traditional Korean Music and Piano Works by Contemporary Korean Composers” (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2002).

¹³ Jiradej Setabundhu, “Aspects of Thai Music and Compositional Techniques in the Works of Jiradej Setabundhu” (DM diss., Northwestern University, 2001).

¹⁴ Harsha Dammika Aberayatne, “Folk Music of Sri Lanka: Ten Piano Pieces” (DA diss., Ball State University, 2001).

¹⁵ Nancy Luzko, “An Annotated Bibliography of Paraguayan Composers” (DMA diss., University of Miami, 2005).

¹⁶ Luis Gustavo Sanchez, “Piano Literature by Argentinian Composers from the Late 19th c. through the 20th c.: An Annotated Catalog” (DA diss., Ball State University, 2002).

composers from his native Taiwan and presented solo recitals of various combinations.¹⁷ Marcos Daniel Flores Caraballo's performance project on contemporary piano music (1963-2002) sought to promote works by Puerto Rican composers.¹⁸ Caraballo sent out a letter to various composers requesting a solo piece (published or unpublished) to be included in his research. From those, eleven pieces were highlighted and analyzed in a detailed fashion, and a recording of those pieces is provided in a sleeve.¹⁹ They include a mixture of different styles: those inspired by local rhythms and nationalism, and others written for "pure" music reasons.

Other Sources. A variety of other sources are interconnected. Elizabeth Axford's well-known *Traditional World Music Influences in Contemporary Solo Piano Literature* is a multicultural repertoire guide that identifies pieces in the contemporary solo piano literature that showcase world music influences not traditionally associated with the standard repertoire of Western European art music.²⁰ She has three "Eastern"-influenced chapters: chapter five on India, chapter six on China, Japan, and the Orient, and chapter seven on Indonesia (although out of 17,500 islands she focuses only on the main island regions of Bali and Java). While this collection is useful for locating solo piano literature that has been *influenced* by the Indonesian culture, it is unfortunate that she does not include even one local composer (she does in other chapters, for example, Eastern European). Her justification for this is that her research was limited to pieces and collections which have been printed and distributed "internationally."²¹

¹⁷ Huang Wei Der, "Solo Piano and Chamber Music of Contemporary Taiwanese Composers" (DMA diss., University of Maryland College Park, 2001).

¹⁸ Marcos Daniel Flores Caraballo, "Puerto Rican Contemporary Piano Repertoire: A Performance Project" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2004), 6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Elizabeth Axford, *Traditional World Music Influences in Contemporary Solo Piano Literature: A Selected Bibliographic Survey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 1.

²¹ Axford, 2.

Southeast Asia Art Music Sources

In most articles about Western art music in Southeast Asia, the discussion of serious classical music is presented in a way that seems almost overwhelmed by the diverse culture that surrounds it. Many modern composers seem to wrestle with the specifics of blending influences learned overseas and those learned at home:

As a cultural expressive form, music composition in Asia has been practiced as a means of striving for national identity ever since it was imported from the West The Asian composer feels a strong responsibility to transmit and enhance the collective national heritage through his or her creation.²²

Similarly, articles like Harold S. Power's look at classical music and colonial rule in the Muslim world provided helpful background information, since both Malaysia and Indonesia are heavily Muslim. It categorizes "classical" music more in the realm of "traditional art music," and barely mentions Western classical music that may have been available during the colonial period.²³ Another article about the beginnings of the classical movement in Malaysia is James D. Chopyak's article on how music (traditional, pop, classical) and music education played an important role in the formation of the Malaysian national culture and was, simply put, somehow orchestrated by a newly-formed government to foster national pride by way of media and public schools.²⁴ The government influence was similar in Indonesia. According to the *New Grove*,

Indonesians were caught between the desire to identify themselves with regional arts and the need to create a unified pan-Indonesian art. Responding to this dilemma, Indonesian nationalists and intellectuals promoted various ideas, ranging from the notion that national art should consist of the pinnacle of regional music (namely Javanese court gamelan) to the suggestion that Indonesia's national music should be a form of indigenized Western music, such as *kroncong*. The definition and

²² Li Wei, review of "New Music in the Orient: Essays on Composition in Asia since World War II," ed. Harrison Ryker, *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994), 518-521.

²³ Harold S. Powers, "Classical Music, Cultural Roots, and Colonial Rule: An Indie [sic] Musicologist Looks At The Muslim World," *Asian Music*, Vol. 12/1, Symposium on Art Musics in Muslim Nations, 1980, 5-39.

²⁴ James D. Chopyak, "The Role of Music in Mass Media, Public Education, and the Formation of a Malaysian National Culture," *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (Autumn, 1987), 431-454.

redefinition of what constitutes 'national' music continues to influence government policy in the construction of Indonesia's national image through the performing arts.²⁵

Another article, written by a Singaporean,²⁶ explores to what extent newly-formed governments might use music to band a nation together. The abstract states:

Music is used by the ruling elite to perpetuate certain ideologies aimed at political socialization and to inculcate a civil religion that directs favor and fervor towards the nation. Music is also a form of cultural resistance against state policies and some social-cultural norms.²⁷

These sub-topics are important and deservedly have their own area of study and discussion. Other articles about Indonesian music tend to focus on the popularity of the gamelan, such as Vincent McDermott's "Gamelan and New Music," which explores the mixing of gamelan and Western instruments and includes a short section on *New Music in Indonesia*. However, very few of these articles mention solo piano literature.

²⁵ Dr Sumarsam, "Indonesia: Post-Colonial History," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (accessed June 10, 2005).

²⁶ The self-governed city-state of Singapore was originally part of Malaysia from 1962-1965 before separating because of racial riots and disagreements over unequal rights for different races (between the native Malays and the immigrant Chinese).

²⁷ Lily Kong, "The Place of Music - Music and Cultural Politics: Ideology and Resistance in Singapore," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1995. (As a sidenote, it is interesting to observe that Singapore is known for producing catchy pop nationalistic jingles.)

CHAPTER III

Selected Solo Piano Works from Contemporary Malaysian Composers

In the idealistic and newly-formed Malaysia of the 1950s and 60s, composers of the time like Johari Salleh, Alfonso Soliano, Gus Steyn, and Tan Chong Yew represented the diverse foundation of a contemporary art music movement in Malaysia.¹ All were musicians for the government-controlled broadcasting corporation Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). These composers used both gamelan and Western instruments in their works, blending the different Malay, Chinese and Indian traditional music with Western musical forms and harmony, and lending “a Southeast Asian, and in fact, a Malaysian flavor to the music.”² The music was broadcast to homes all over Malaysia, and perhaps played a subtle part in uniting the new multi-racial country. Unfortunately, piano works written in this same period and even up to the 1990s are rare. This trend appears to be reversing; several pieces of quality now exist and a selected few are detailed in this chapter.

Pedagogical Trends in Malaysia

Because of the influence of Great Britain during the colonial period, a large number of music teachers in the country still require their students to enter the British music educational examination systems. The most popular of these are those conducted by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). Since

¹ Patricia Matusky and Tan Sooi-Beng, eds., *The Music of Malaysia: The Classical, Folk and Syncretic Traditions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 393.

² Ibid.

1947 over a million students have gone through the system.³ Malaysia, along with Hong Kong and Singapore, is one of the ABRSM's top three clients among countries outside of Great Britain.⁴ In the year 2000, well over 15,000 Malaysian entrants—91% of them pianists—enrolled.⁵ The ABRSM system culminates in a diploma (comparable to three years of college or university) with concentrations in performance, teaching, or directing.⁶ In his research Jason Tye suggests that many piano teachers in the country do not adopt effective pedagogical approaches. In an educational system that places so much emphasis on examinations as a measure of musical achievement and development, there is a clear lack of support for professional development and few resources of teaching materials.⁷ While the curriculum does provide a working knowledge of technique, repertoire, theory, and aural skills to the student, the program does not necessarily encourage teachers to be creative with a student's repertoire, and instead focuses much time on required repertoire and even mindless repetition. All four composers featured in this chapter went through at least part of the ABRSM examination system, and all have mixed opinions about it.

Malaysian Musicians Abroad and at Home

The lack of music conservatories in Malaysia, along with Tye's conclusions, may explain in part the reason for the explosion of students leaving the country

³ Jason Kong-Chiang Tye, "A Survey of the Current Status and Practices of Piano Teachers in Penang, Malaysia; Preparation for the Practical Piano Examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, London" (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2004), 15.

⁴ Tye, 15.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Most serious pianists are encouraged to complete at least Grade 8, of which the repertoire consists of pieces at an American freshman college level: it requires the compulsory performance of a Baroque piece, a classical sonata, and a romantic or twentieth century piece, as well as sections in technique (scales and arpeggios), ear training, sight-reading, and rhythm.

⁷ Tye, vi.

towards the latter part of the twentieth century to further their studies and careers overseas (mostly in the United States and Great Britain). As noted by Matusky and Tan:

During the 1980s and 90s young Malaysian performers and composers returned home from their studies abroad at the major international conservatories and universities in the United States and Europe. The composers of these recent decades were trained in 20th century music composition, with particular attention to techniques developing in the post-World War II music world. These techniques include attention to the use of serial composition, atonality, polyrhythm, new formal structures, and electronic and other new tone colours. In addition, these composers reached out to the musical and philosophical elements from traditional Asian music cultures, finding new ways of using and playing traditional musical instruments, using computers and other elements of modern technology. In effect, these young composers have begun the process of developing a new musical style that reflects their own personal taste and, at the same time, attempts to maintain a continuity in establishing an Asian and indeed, a Malaysian identity. Their outlook generally is global, drawing on sound resources and ideas from all cultures of the world, and also looking toward Asian aesthetics and sensibilities as the basis for a piece of music.⁸

Many of these young talents then chose to remain overseas, including pianist Bobby Chen, who studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School in Great Britain. He now plays regularly at the Royal Concert Hall and Wigmore Hall, and has also toured with the late Yehudi Menuhin and the Warsaw Sinfonietta. Yet he agrees that the challenge is for his to be a household name in Malaysia, and admits that he is “working towards this.”⁹ Ng Kah-Ming is another musician/scholar who first studied and ultimately remained abroad. He was most recently a lecturer in the Early Music Studies division of Oxford University (UK) from 2004-06 and also penned the entries on English and French ornamentation in the *New Grove*.¹⁰ Ng, a competent

⁸ Matusky and Tan, 393-4.

⁹ Niluksi Koswanage, “Notes of Solace and Strength,” Global Malaysians Website, <http://globalmalaysians.com/feature/story.asp?file=/2006/7/2/feature/14623858&sec=feature> (accessed June 2, 2007).

keyboardist and director, is recognized for his work with Charivari Agréable, a well-known early music ensemble based in the United Kingdom.¹¹

Others returned to Malaysia. Two out of the four of the composers who agreed to participate in this study still live and work primarily in Malaysia. The other two are permanent residents of the United States and Great Britain, although they make frequent trips back for both professional and personal reasons. These four composers are young (currently in their thirties and forties), highly creative individuals who seem enthusiastic and thoroughly dedicated to their chosen careers in music. They appear keen for recognition and respect in their field, and have a healthy and positive outlook in terms of their future and that of music in general.

Biographies and discussion of select piano pieces from four important contemporary Malaysian composers follow. They are Chong Kee Yong, Ng Chong Lim, Tan Chee-Hwa, and Tazul Izan Tajuddin. A partial listing of piano pieces from several other Malaysian composers is listed in Appendix I.

¹⁰ "The Artist—Dr. Kah-Ming Ng," The German Embassy website (Kuala Lumpur), <http://www.kuala-lumpur.diplo.de/Vertretung/kualalumpur/en/06/Hausmusik.html> (accessed November 12, 2007).

¹¹ Charivari Agréable official website, <http://www.charivari.co.uk> (accessed November 12, 2007).

CHONG KEE YONG
Metamorphosis III (2001)

Premiere:	Participants of the 8th International Mozart Piano Competition in Salzburg, Austria, 2001.
Publishing Information:	Universal Edition, London, 2001 (UE 31 901). Available at www.universaledition.com and may be ordered from local music stores and dealers.
Recording Information:	Amy Lin Interprets Contemporary Piano Works, ABW Classics 1001, Germany, 2005. Amy Lin, pianist. Order at: abwclassics@aol.com , or at www.amy-lin.com .
Duration:	Approx. 10 minutes (9 pages of music)

Composer Biography

Chong Kee Yong is one of Malaysia's fastest rising contemporary composers. Born in 1971, he grew up with Chinese parents who worked as farmers in a small rural town in the southern state of Johore and was not exposed to art and music until high school. His friends played him some recordings and he says he was immediately enchanted: "I felt weird sensations."¹² His parents wanted him to study economics, but against their advice he enrolled instead as a music student at the Malaysian Institute of Art in Kuala Lumpur. His main instrument was the guitar. From there he went on to study at the Xi'an Conservatory in China. A professor there recommended him to the Royal Flemish Conservatory of Music in Brussels, Belgium, where he completed a Masters in Composition in 2001, graduating with highest honors.

While in Brussels, he lived a typical struggling music student's life, working late nights as a waiter and dishwasher at a Taiwanese restaurant. Soon his hard work paid off, however, and he began winning competitions, including the Prix Marcel

¹² Rastam, "The Professional Prizewinner," *Kakiseni* website, <http://www.kakiseni.com/articles/people/MDQ3Nw.html> (accessed March 10, 2007).

Hastir from the Belgique Academie Royale des Sciences for his String Quartet No. 2 (1999), first prize at the eighteenth Concorso Internazionale di Composizione in Turino, Italy (2000), first prize at the fourth International Andrzej Panufnick Competition for Young Composers (2002), the Grand Prix at the Seoul International Competition (2002), first prize at the Max-Reger-Tage International Competition (2003), and the Prix Special from the Academie Internationale de Lutece at the Grand Concours International (2003). One of his professors jokingly nicknamed him “the professional prizewinner.”¹³ In 2004 Chong won the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra’s International Composers Competition, beating out competitors from Japan, Australia, and the United States, to become the MPO’s first resident composer. He recently received the BMW prize in the 2007 Isang Yun Music Prize in Seoul, Korea, for his chamber work *Splattered Landscape III*.¹⁴

Chong is a full-time composer and lists Bach, Ligeti, Lutoslawski, and Peter Eötvös as inspirations. He is also a fan of contemporary piano works, mentioning Ligeti, Kurtag, Rihm, and Stockhausen, as well as impressionists Debussy and Ravel, as his favorite piano composers. He regularly travels between Malaysia and Europe for various forums, seminars, festivals, and performances of his music. As of this writing, Chong is in New York City on a six-month visiting artist fellowship from the Asian Cultural Council of New York.¹⁵ In an email promoting an upcoming recital, violist Stephanie Griffin of the Argento Chamber Ensemble describes how she discovered Chong’s music and exudes her new-found admiration of his work:

This past Easter weekend I had an incredible experience. While waiting on the subway platform after a long day of rehearsals and

¹³ Rastam, “The Professional Prizewinner” article.

¹⁴ 2007 International Isang Yun Music Prize website. Only two prizes were given: the grand prize and the BMW prize. More finalist details at http://www.yunmusicprize.org/e_home.htm under “Notice” (accessed September 15, 2007).

¹⁵ Personal email from Chong Kee Yong, June 16, 2007.

teaching, I chanced upon my former viola teacher from Belgium, Paul DeClerck. He was only in town for two days, rendering this encounter all the more improbable. . . . Paul waxed poetic about a Malaysian composer who had studied in Brussels and had written him a piece for solo viola. Paul insisted that I absolutely needed to become familiar with this man's music, and promised to email me his contact information. The email never came and I forgot about the whole thing. Two months later I received an email from the Asian Cultural Council saying they had a visiting composer from Malaysia whose music I would probably enjoy. They sent him to one of my concerts with Argento. He introduced himself to me and gave me a CD. At that moment I realized that he was one and the same composer that studied in Brussels and wrote a piece for Paul. His name was Kee-Yong Chong. I was truly blown away by his CD September 6th will be my first performance of the piece "The thousand ripples of a lonely bell." The theme from J.S. Bach's *The Art of Fugue* resonates throughout the work, and in his program note Kee-Yong describes the pieces as his personal tribute to Bach's creative genius.¹⁶

The New York Times reviewed the event, calling the viola piece "thorny and dissonant" and describing another of Chong's pieces:

Mr. Chong's "Lost Psalm of the Abyss," a Sept. 11 tribute that [Chris] Mannigan adapted for solo alto saxophone from the flute original, featured soulful, jazzy riffs and incorporated breathy vocalizing and whispered fragments from the 23rd Psalm.¹⁷

Chong's newest works are *Hidden Eternity*, a piano duet and ensemble written for pianists Inge Spinette and Jan Michiels and the Prometheus Ensemble, and *Concerto for Four Chinese Traditional Instruments and Orchestra*. Both were performed in 2007 at various music festivals in New York, Germany, Holland, and Belgium.¹⁸ Other works that received premieres in 2006 and 2007 are his *String Quartet No. 3* by the Spiegel Quartet,¹⁹ *Endless Whispering* for chamber orchestra,

¹⁶ Personal email (from Stephanie Griffin) forwarded by Chong, August 29, 2007. The concert was titled "A Musical Offering from Southeast Asia" and was held at the Gallerie Icosahedron in New York City on September 6, 2007.

¹⁷ Vivien Schweitzer, "Bach With A Southeast Asian Accent," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/08/arts/music/08arge.html?ref=arts> (accessed September 8, 2007).

¹⁸ Personal email from Chong, July 13, 2007.

¹⁹ More information on the Spiegel Quartet at <http://www.spiegelstringquartet.com>.

premiered by the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin (KNM Berlin),²⁰ *Tearless Moon* by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (full orchestra), and *Timeless Metamorphosis* by the Estonia Symphony Orchestra (full orchestra).

Chong was once asked if his parents (who had wanted him to be an economist) would be attending an important concert in which one of his works would be premiered. He answered:

No, they are not used to these sorts of occasions. They have never heard my music. They think I compose songs [laughs]. I would never play them my recordings—I'm afraid they would have a big shock! My father is still not so happy, maybe because of the financial [aspect]. He always says, 'You made the wrong choice!' I don't come from a musical family. [However,] my grandfather on my mum's side was a musician, a storyteller who traveled from village to village. I never heard him but saw him when I was little. I remember an image of him, lonely, with his instrument. [When I was] in Europe I dedicated a piece to him, [but the rest of] my family is [still] ashamed of him.²¹

Chong regrets that no transcriptions of his grandfather's music or stories exist today. In the future he hopes to devote time towards field research on musical art forms in Malaysia and other Asian countries that have nearly disappeared, in order to preserve and transform these art forms "onto another level."²²

Chong's music is featured on his official website at www.chongkeeyong.com, and excerpts of his other music can be found on his Myspace page at www.myspace.com/keeyongchong.

²⁰ More information on the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin at <http://www.kammerensemble.de/>.

²¹ Rastam, "The Professional Prizewinner" article.

²² Personal email from Chong, August 31, 2007.

Metamorphosis III (2001)

Metamorphosis III
for piano solo

Tempo rubato ($\downarrow = c.40, approx.$)

Kee-Yong Chong
(1971)

Piano Solo

PII → * Keep the PII until the release sign.

PI → ** Release the pedal gradually.

PI → *** Release the key according to the indicated rhythm.

$\downarrow = c.54$

furioso e sonore

PII →

PII → * Play the grace-notes as fast as possible.

poco a poco cresc. e accel.

PII →

FIGURE 1

Chong Kee Yong, *Metamorphosis III*, p. 1

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for Universal Edition A.G., Wien

Chong's *Metamorphosis III* won second prize at the 8th International Mozart Competition held in Salzburg in 2001, and was selected as a compulsory piece for the piano competitor division of the competition. It was subsequently published by Universal Edition in the same year. Pianist Amy Lin, a professor at the Conservatoire

National in Strasbourg, France, recorded the piece in 2005, and worked with Chong closely before the recording. She thinks highly of his music and writes that although “[his music is] usually quite difficult to play, [it] is very sincere, expressive, and exciting.”²³ She also reports that he is “very precise” about what he wants in the music.²⁴

FIGURE 2

Chong Kee Yong, *Metamorphosis III*, p. 3 (excerpt)

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At first glance, the piece may seem intimidating to perform. It explores the deep sonority of a grand piano and might best be performed by a mature pianist with sufficient reading skills who is looking for a challenge and an appreciation for new sounds. Long measures of silence and resonance alternate with a broad range of dynamics; Chong is fastidious with his directives. Proficient pedaling is required (all three pedals are used, often simultaneously), and syncopated rhythms suffuse the entire score (see figures 1 and 2). The piece also has a brief section for prepared piano, in which a pasteboard is inserted, right before a languid and hauntingly

²³ Personal email from Amy Lin, September 17, 2007.

²⁴ Personal email from Amy Lin, September 27, 2007.

beautiful nocturne (see figure 3). At various points, the performer also plays inside the piano, using the left hand to mute the strings while plucking the strings with the right.

Tempo in Nocturna (♩=c70)
"Dreamlike"

ppp f ppp pppp

espr. e dolce

Con ped. -->

* Place the pasteboard in the indicated register: c-fi (approximately), also see the performance's note

FIGURE 3

Chong Kee Yong, *Metamorphosis III*, p. 2 (excerpt)

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Chong also indicates that there is an influence of Chinese percussion and traditional instruments in the piano writing, although the association may not be at all obvious to a listener.²⁵

The piece is literally a metamorphosis of a previously written work for piano called *Battarie*. Its purpose is to

express the beauty of the acoustic sound in space after hitting and striking something . . . the resonance is prepared by each attack—and then without realizing it we are surrounded by this silence (a ‘sound’ in itself). It is more than just a variation; it is a sublimation or mutation from the same musical idea or emotional condition evident in [*Battarie*]. *Metamorphosis III* proceeds from the percussions to the piano playing not only percussively but also expressing the metamorphosis of the

²⁵ When once asked how Chong would create a unique Malaysian sound, he answered, “I don’t believe we should try to make a ‘Chinese sound’ or an ‘Indian sound.’ What does it mean when you say this is a ‘Chinese theme’? George Crumb—his music is full of ‘Chinese’ sensations, like the moon. If you want to categorize, I would categorize him as a Chinese composer!” (Rastam interview)

subtle melody, dynamic, gesture and spatial acoustics of the percussions.²⁶

Although *Metamorphosis III* is discordant and obviously difficult to memorize, it appears to be challenge worth taking. The piece offers a myriad of things to listen to, to explore, and to question. Chong encourages future performers to contact him with questions about the score, and indicates that he is especially thrilled when a pianist plays the piece without score.

Additional Piano Compositions by Chong Kee Yong

Like *Metamorphosis III*, most of Chong's other piano works are highly advanced and look daunting at first glance. All pieces are available by contacting the composer at kychongcom@gmail.com.

- *Battarie* (1998, revised 2000) for piano solo. Duration: Approx. 9 minutes.
- *Illusory Angel* (2003) for piano solo. Duration: Approx. 8 minutes and 30 seconds (13 pages of music). The piece was premiered by pianist Xenia Pestova at the 2004 Xavier Montsalvage International Competition in Girona, Spain. (Pestova won.²⁷)
- *Splattered Landscape* (2005) for piano solo. This was the compulsory piece in the semi-final division of the 2005 Max-Reger-Tage piano competition held in 2005. Duration: Approx. 7 minutes (7 pages of music).

²⁶ *Metamorphosis III* piano score, iii.

²⁷ Personal email from Chong, September 30, 2007.

NG CHONG LIM
Two Preludes (1999)

Premiere:	March 15, 2000 in Ipoh, Malaysia. Performed by the winner of the National Piano Festival, Wong Shuen Da.
Publishing Information:	Not currently published. Copies may be obtained by contacting the composer at chonglimng@yahoo.com.
Recording Information:	None available.
Duration:	<i>Prelude 1</i> —approx. 1'45" (3 pages of music) <i>Prelude 2</i> —approx. 2' (3 pages of music)

Composer Biography

Pianist and composer Ng Chong Lim currently lives and works in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Born in 1972, Ng began playing the piano at age four. Although neither of his parents were serious musicians, his father loved music and Ng grew up listening to “jazz, Latin, and a lot of oldies.”²⁸ He composed actively in his teenage years, representing Malaysia twice (1986 and 1988) at the International Junior Original Concerts held in Japan. In 1993 Ng won first prize at the Malaysian National Piano competition. He went on to receive piano and composition degrees from the Royal College of Music in London (1994-97) and the University of Music and Fine Arts in Graz, Austria (1997). In 1994 he was a prizewinner at the International Newport (Wales) Piano Competition. The same year he also received the Philip Crashaw Memorial Prize for Outstanding Overseas Musician in the Royal Overseas League Competition held in London.

During his student years Ng maintained an energetic schedule as a performer, playing Tchaikovsky’s first piano concerto with the Royal College of Music orchestra

²⁸ Personal email from Ng Chong Lim, August 10, 2007.

in 1995, and the Schumann piano concerto with the Kharkov Youth Symphony Orchestra in Ukraine in 1998.

Ng currently maintains an active schedule as concert pianist, appearing as both soloist and chamber musician globally, including in Germany, Spain, Holland, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia.²⁹ Solo and duo recitals are planned for 2008 in Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan. He is also a Visiting Lecturer in Piano at both the University of Malaya in Malaysia and at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore, commuting regularly between the two countries. He has written occasional articles for local media, including an article on his thoughts of pianist Ivo Pogorelich.³⁰ In 2004 Ng premiered his own works, including *Three Sketches* for two pianos, in Taipei, Singapore, and Malaysia. *Rimba* for chamber orchestra was premiered at the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra's 2006 forum for new composers, and in 2007, two more of his orchestral works were premiered by the MPO: *Windows* for chamber group, and *Xiang*, for the entire orchestra.

Ng credits many of the German masters as his inspirations—Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert—but also Ligeti, Boulez, and Kurtág. He also includes performers like Rubinstein, Lipati, Horowitz and Gould: “They inspire me with their distinctive personality, their individuality, and their dedication to music, whether new or ‘conventional’.”

Ng credits the support of his family and friends for his successes and is candid in his assessment of his composing career and compositional style: “I won’t say I have found my own voice or style yet. Each work I compose feels different in both approach and idea, but I continue to take risks in search of something close to my heart.”

²⁹ “A Romantic Evening of Cello and Piano with Miranda Su Lan Harding and Ng Chong Lim,” http://www.geocities.com/sms1998.geo/concerts/miranda_chonglim.htm (accessed July 20, 2007).

³⁰ Ng Chong Lim and Jason Cheah, “Passionate Genius, Erratic Performer,” *The Star Online*, <http://star-ecentral.com/news/story.asp?file=/2005/10/9/soundstage/12261613&sec=soundstage> (accessed July 20, 2007).

Two Preludes (1999)

FIGURE 4
 First pages of Preludes 1 and 2 from *Two Preludes*
 (All excerpts are used by permission of composer)

Ng's *Two Preludes* were commissioned by the National Piano Festival of Malaysia in 2000 to introduce new music to younger pianists, most of whom “do not tend to play music written after 1920.”³¹ Six semi-finalists in the competition had one month to learn both preludes.

Both preludes are accessible to a college-level performer. The first prelude is highly dissonant and in a free-flowing style. There are four main tempi: *freely*, *presto*, *allegro maestoso*, and *lento*. Ng weaves the various tempi throughout the short piece. The second prelude is more diatonic and more accessible harmonically.

³¹ Composer questionnaire.

It is also *lento* throughout. It is clearly in the key of A Major, although various dissonances are still heard. The pianist has freedom to improvise in the middle section.



FIGURE 5
Part of the improvisatory section in Ng's second prelude

Ng writes, "I employ some new techniques and sounds, and use markings and symbols different from [what's used] traditionally. There are also mood changes affected by unexpected changes of tempo, dynamics, and a wide range of colors and textures."³² He suggests the following for the performance of these pieces:

1. Creative reading [that is still] faithful to the score;
2. Freedom to express different soundscapes, careful observation of tempo changes and dynamic ranges;
3. Room to explore the pieces' unique qualities.

He adds that the freedom of interpretation is what inspires him to write for the younger generation in Malaysia.³³

³² Composer questionnaire.

³³ Ibid.

Additional Piano Compositions by Ng Chong Lim

All of the piano works listed below are available by contacting the composer at chonglimng@yahoo.com.

- *Khatulistiwa*³⁴ (2001) for piano duo and two percussionists. Premiered in Graz, Austria. Duration: Approx. 10 minutes.
- *Klavierstück. . . Warna*³⁵ (2001) for piano solo. Duration: Approx. 6 minutes.
- *Daun*³⁶ (2002) for solo piano and electronic CD. Premiered at the KLPAC in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2005. The piece mixes gamelan mode with contemporary Western techniques and was premiered on August 11, 2005. A reviewer wrote:

Chong Lim incorporates digitally recorded sounds of gamelan gongs and whispering voices as subtext to his main composition themes. The piano plays rippling melodies of calm and chordal crashes, indicating thunderstorms and huge winds.³⁷

Duration: Approx. 7 minutes.

- *Three Sketches* (2004) for piano duo. Premiered in Taipei, Taiwan. Duration: Approx. 5 minutes.

³⁴ Khatulistiwa is Malay for equator.

³⁵ Warna is Malay for *color(s)*.

³⁶ Daun is Malay for *leaf/leaves*.

³⁷ Lisa Ho, "Six Players in Search of a Piano: Ornate Decadence and Beautiful Ugliness," <http://www.kakiseni.com/articles/reviews/MDCzMg.html#top> (accessed July 24, 2007).

TAZUL IZAN TAJUDDIN
Torrent of Images (2003-05)

Premieres:	The first movement, <i>Irrational</i> , was premiered in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2003 by Ananda Sukarlan at a memorial for the Bali bombing victims. In 2005 the second movement, <i>Mediasi Masa</i> , was premiered by Thorsten Kuhn at Kettles Yard in Cambridge University at a Sunday Concert Series. A third movement is currently being written.
Publishing Information:	Not currently published. Copies may be obtained by contacting the composer at his website www.tazultajuddin.com or by email at tazultajuddin@hotmail.com .
Recording Information:	None available.
Duration:	<i>Irrational</i> —approx. 6 minutes (10 pages of music) <i>Mediasi Masa</i> —approx. 9 minutes (11 pages of music)

Composer Biography

Tazul Izan Tajuddin was born in 1969 in Selangor, Malaysia. At age eight, he taught himself how to play the piano on an aunt's new ebony American upright. He later taught himself the guitar, which eventually became his main instrument. He remembers practicing long hours every day. Seeing how much he loved to play, and with some cajoling by his aunt, his parents allowed him to study music. Tajuddin also began exploring the increasingly diverse music scene in Kuala Lumpur, playing electric guitar in a rock band and *gambus* (a traditional Malay stringed instrument) in a traditional Malay ensemble. He began composing at age twenty-four.

Tajuddin obtained a bachelor of music degree in 1991 from Universiti Teknologi Mara in Malaysia, studying voice, counterpoint, and Malay traditional music. He then began working and arranging folk songs for the National Choir of Malaysia. He eventually sent these arrangements to Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh) and composition professor Leonardo Balada accepted him as a student.

It was at Carnegie Mellon that he discovered contemporary styles of music and composition and found himself especially intrigued by composers such as Xenakis, Ferneyhough, Ligeti, Dutilleux, Donatoni, Boulez, Stockhausen, and Takemitsu, to name a few.³⁸ With the help of a scholarship from the Malaysian Ministry of Culture initiated by the Prime Minister, Tajuddin graduated with an M.M. in composition from Carnegie Mellon (Pittsburgh) in 1996. He went on to complete his Ph.D. from the University of Sussex (United Kingdom) in 2002. That same year he won the celebrated Takemitsu Award in Japan. Other prizes include the Molinari Quartet Composition Competition (Canada) in 2004, first prize at the Lutosławski Composition Award (Poland) in 2005, and the New Millennium Composition Commission Award (UK) in 2005. His music has since been performed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, and the London Sinfonietta.

When asked about his musical philosophy, Tajuddin answered, “There are two elements in my composition: structure (physical), and sound (spiritual). These two elements exist in Islamic philosophy, and dealing with the question of music in Islamic terms is important because of my Malay background.”³⁹ His output includes over thirteen orchestral and ensemble works, nine choral works with orchestra and over twenty chamber and solo works. Early in his career he also arranged twenty-seven Malay folk songs for choir and piano on a commission by the Ministry of Culture in Malaysia. Unsurprisingly, he considers himself a full-time composer. Tajuddin recently completed a piano concerto titled *Warna Yang Bernada*⁴⁰ that was premiered by Malaysian-born pianist Bobby Chen and the London Sinfonietta on

³⁸ C. H. Loh, “Dr Tazul, I Presume? Another Award-Winning Talent Out of Malaysian Sight,” *Off the Edge*, Feb. 2007, 50.

³⁹ Loh, 51.

⁴⁰ Roughly translated “color tones.”

November 14, 2007. The piece was commissioned by the Malaysian Ministry of Culture for the country's fiftieth year of independence.⁴¹ Other noteworthy recently performed works include *In Liquid Praise of Sound Refraining*, for narrator, four singers (SATB) and electronic media, using text written by Alistair Appleton, premiered by members of the BBC Singers at the Spitalfields Music Festival in London in 2007, as well as *Azan (Call to Prayer)* for mezzo soprano, baritone, and three sound sculpture players, premiered in 2007 by the Sculpted Sound Ensemble at the Guildford International Music Festival with the composer conducting. Although Tajuddin is busy with commissioned works, at some point in the future he would like to devote time to composition for stringed instruments, *i.e.*, string quartets, and pieces for solo guitar.⁴²

Tajuddin mentions Xenakis (whom he met briefly), Ligeti, Scelsi, Sciarriano, and Ferneyhough as inspirations, and is especially intrigued by the concept of sound as a living organism.⁴³ In the performance notes to *Mediasi Masa* he writes, "In music or sound, silence has a unique character where it becomes nothing when there is nothing happening, but it also mediates sound because it starts and stops the sound." French composer Henri Dutilleux has said that Tajuddin is "a finely gifted composer, and reveals a daring personality, both innovative and rigorous in spirit."⁴⁴

Tajuddin's official website is at www.tazultajuddin.com.

⁴¹ Royal Music Association Events website, <http://www.rma.ac.uk/conferences/event.asp?id=54> (accessed July 28, 2007).

⁴² Personal email from Tazul Tajuddin, September 2, 2007.

⁴³ Composer questionnaire.

⁴⁴ Tazul Tajuddin's official website, <http://www.tazultajuddin.com>.

Torrent of Images (2003-5)

The composition of this three-movement work illustrates the supportive nature of many artists between the neighboring countries of Malaysia and Indonesia. On October 12, 2002 twenty suicide bombers targeted the peaceful island of Bali, killing 202 people from various countries, the deadliest terrorist bombing in the history of Indonesia.⁴⁵ (The day is sometimes referred to as “Australia’s September 11” because of the high number of Australian tourists that perished.)⁴⁶ Pianist and composer Ananda Sukarlan (featured in Chapter IV) commissioned the first movement for a special memorial concert for the victims of the Bali bombings, and the Fenton Arts Trust of Cambridge University commissioned the second. The third movement, *Rational*, is in progress as of this writing.

Tajuddin writes in the performance notes that the title is a metaphor for the tragedy that took place. The work is written in the mode of the gamelan scale. Despite the circumstances in which it was conceived, the composer reiterates that it is not programmatic.⁴⁷ Tajuddin encourages the performer to contact him with questions regarding the performance of the piece. Both movements may be performed independently. Both are best suited to a mature performer.

Irrational (First movement). The first movement was completed in London. There is an inscription (credited to Jacques Derrida) that alludes to the tragedy:

DYING – awaiting (one another at) the “limits of truth”
MOURIR – s’attendre aux “limites de la vérité”

⁴⁵ “Bali Death Toll at 202,” BBC news website, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2778923.stm> (accessed March 30, 2007).

⁴⁶ “Bali Bombings 2002,” The Australian Federal Police website, http://www.afp.gov.au/international/operations/previous_operations/bali_bombings_2002 (accessed March 30, 2007).

⁴⁷ Unless otherwise specified, all composer references and quotations in this section are from the Tajuddin’s responses to the questionnaire.

Ananda Sukarlan specifically requested a piece constructed from the Balinese pentatonic scale: C, C#, D#, G, G#. The completed piece builds from this scale and is ultimately “transposed, permuted, and dislocated—eventually becoming only a shadow of the original scale.” Tajuddin explains that *Irrational* consists of twelve small sections (patterns) in which the scale in various forms is distributed. To add to the complexity, the composer adds that a veiled structure created around a series of five numbers is also built into the piece. The resulting erratic feel and randomness of the piece are all intended to be associated with the word *irrational*.

Torrent of Images - A Memorial
I: Irrational
Tazul Izan Tajuddin

1] always delicately, with virtuosity, decoratively and meditatively
extremely slow, always flexibly and flowingly

FIGURE 6
Torrent of Images, Irrational, p. 1
(All excerpts used by permission of composer)

He elaborates further:

As the title suggests, metaphorically, it is like a torrent of images that floods one's mind after such an irrational tragedy. . . . The piece transforms, almost unreasonably, from an obvious Balinese pentatonic scale to more obscure suspended clusters where the scale is played a doubling shadow and the sustaining pedal. The images sometimes keep coming back, reflecting the Balinese mode (memories of Bali) until at the end it becomes more intense and eventually the tension is released, with a loud chord played in the lower register. This gesture is complemented by a solemn, repeated octave which ends the section. The gesture (repeated octaves) is symbolically (and perhaps metaphorically) intended to be a thoughtful reflection, a meditative and mourning gesture for the tragedy and lost ones.

The piece is highly dissonant and challenging rhythmically, at times with complex rhythmic ratios between the hands, for example, 5:4, 6:4, and 7:4. Tajuddin is clear and precise in his musical directions. Common terms throughout include *reflectively*, *flowingly*, *meditatively*, and *ritualistic*.

Mediasi Masa–Raja Satariah Memoriam (Second movement). This movement is a “short study of a reflection of time, a meditative gesture of tragedy and death” *Mediasi Masa* (mediation or reflection of time) is dedicated to the memory of the composer’s grandmother, Raja Satariah, who passed away during the writing of the piece. It includes an inscription, which is attributed to Silesius:

Kein Tod ist ohn ein Leben (No death is without life)

The movement begins with thirty seconds of silence as a gesture of respect. In the performance notes, Tajuddin indicates that: “For any Muslim audience/listener, please ‘sedekah’ a surah Al-Fatihah (recite silently).” This movement is built around sound gestures using the same Balinese scale used in the first movement. Tajuddin explains in the performance notes that these “sound gestures” are based on a technique called “tenunan” or weaving, a system the composer uses in some of his other works where he takes a variety of elements, *e.g.* the notes of the scale used,

dynamics, tempo, or its overall balance, and then weaves them together to create sound gestures. These are then organized randomly throughout the piece, mostly through cascading waves of sixty-fourth notes, which create a unique and almost unpredictable sound effect.

The movement has no barlines and is instead divided into ten small sections (plus a concluding section).

II: Mediasi Masa [Mediation/Reflection of Time]
Raja Satariah Memoriam

Tazul Izan Tajuddin

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-24) begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 40-45$ and includes the instruction "intense meditation, contemplatively". It features a piano introduction with the instruction "When the performer is ready, he or she may start the piece with about 30 seconds silence as a gesture of respect. For any Muslim audience/listener please 'sadaqah' or 'salam' to Allah". The score includes dynamic markings such as *pppp*, *pp*, and *pppp*, and performance directions like "agitated", "flowingly, like trickling water", "intense", and "let the sound die away". The second system (measures 7-24) includes markings for "agitated", "rapid", "crescendo", and "flowingly". The third system (measures 9-24) includes markings for "agitated", "rapid", "flowingly", and "intense".

FIGURE 7
Torrent of Images, Mediasi Masa, p. 1

In the performance notes Tajuddin explains the precise dynamic markings throughout the movement and the importance of the sound gestures, “The function of dynamics is to create a shade effect, meaning different dynamics to different sound

gestures. The most important aspect is the overall realization of sound gestures in the gaps between silences. The way of listening is unconventional and needs to be adjusted according to the perspective suggested above.”

Additional Piano Compositions by Tazul Izan Tajuddin

All the pieces except *Sebuah Pantun* are unpublished. The works are available by contacting the composer at tazultajuddin@hotmail.com.

- *Piano Sonata—Sketch* (1994) for solo piano. Duration: Approx. 15 minutes.
- *Etudes* (1995) for solo piano. Parts of the work were eventually orchestrated for chamber orchestra and performed by the Carnegie Contemporary Ensemble at Carnegie Mellon University. Duration: Approx. 15 minutes.
- *Sebuah Pantun* (2005) for solo piano (see figure 8). Tajuddin was one of two Malaysian composers⁴⁸ that were asked to compose short piano miniatures for the fourth Spectrum collection⁴⁹ published by ABRSM in 2005. *Sebuah Pantun* (A [Malay] Poem) was composed in London in October 2002. It is a short contemplative piece where all the notes are accented: this allows the player to think and listen to the sonority of each one. Tajuddin writes in the performance notes, “Strike the notes with conviction but in a calm and meditative state of mind, with a feeling of timelessness.” Graham Ross premiered the piece at the Royal Academy of Music in London on November 21, 2002. Duration: Approx. 2 minutes.
- *Warna Yang Bernada*⁵⁰ (2007), piano concerto for solo piano and orchestra. The concerto was commissioned by the Malaysian Ministry of Culture for the country’s

⁴⁸ The other composer is Adeline Wong, with a piece titled *Mind the Gap*. Wong initially responded to the study, but ultimately was not available to participate.

⁴⁹ *Spectrum 4*, compiled by Thalia Myers (London: ABRSM, 2005), 63. [*Spectrum* is a series of books focusing on accessible contemporary music for the piano. According to Thalia Myers website (www.thaliamyers.com), “these one hundred and forty one pieces in four volumes have been set for competitions and examinations, used as reference works by professors of composition and entered the repertoire of student, amateur and professional pianists around the world.”]

⁵⁰ Malay for “sound colors.”

fiftieth year of independence and was premiered by Bobby Chen and the London Sinfonietta at Cadogan Hall on November 14, 2007. Duration: Approx. 20 minutes.

63

for Thalia Myers
Sebuah Pantun

Calm and sensitive, very slowly $\text{♩} = c.50$ TAZUL IZAN TAJUDDIN

lunga

Ped. →
or
Ped.

7

Ped. →
or
Ped.

13

Ped. →
or
Ped.

18

Ped. →
or
Ped.

London,
October 2002

The composer has written: 'A pantun is a traditional Malay verse form, commonly two or four lines long. My piece is derived from five series of notes and seven cycles of numbers. These weave around a hidden structure which is based around four small proportions, intentionally related to the four-line pantun. These elements are distributed throughout the piece.
Strike the notes with conviction but in a calm and meditative state of mind, with a feeling of timelessness. For bars 2-22, two pedalling options are given.'

* Depress the pedal just after the chord is played, to catch the resonance.

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AB 2917

FIGURE 8
Sebuah Pantun

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TAN CHEE-HWA
A Child's Garden of Verses (1994)
Through the Windowpane (2005)

Premiere:	<i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> —Piano preparatory recital at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas on March 8, 1992.
	<i>Through the Windowpane</i> —Studio recital in Colorado Springs, Colorado on December 2005.
Publishing Information:	<i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> was published in 1994, and <i>Through the Windowpane</i> in 2004. Both books are published by Frederick Harris Publishing Co. The books are easily available by ordering at www.frederickharrismusic.com and at various online stores. They are also available at local music stores and dealers in North America.
Recording Information:	None currently available.
Duration:	Each piece is less than 1 minute long and 1-3 pages long (most are two pages, with illustrations). <i>A Child's Garden</i> has a total of 20 pages of music and performance notes. <i>Through the Windowpane</i> has 16 pages.

Composer Biography

Tan Chee-Hwa (born 1965) is recognized in North America as a published composer with the Frederick Harris Music Company, the foremost educational piano publisher in Canada. Tan spent her childhood in Johore, Malaysia, and grew up with a family who supported her musical endeavors. She describes her mother as “a fine soprano,” but adds ruefully that her parents lacked many of the opportunities that they were able to provide for her, including good teachers and the experience of hearing a variety of musical performances at concert halls.

Tan came to the United States as a student, and overcame many financial hardships in pursuit of a music career. She received undergraduate degrees in piano performance and English from Oral Roberts University (1988), and two master's

degrees in piano performance (1990) and piano pedagogy (1992) from Southern Methodist University.

Tan has served on the piano pedagogy faculties of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and Southern Methodist University and presently conducts workshops throughout the United States and Canada. She was also an associate editor of the now defunct *Piano Life* magazine. She currently resides in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with her family while balancing an active performing and teaching career.

Tan lists her musical influences as Mozart, Bartok, Debussy, and Ravel, as well as noted American children's composer William Gillock: "[He is a] writing genius when depicting musical miniatures of standard classical forms They are accessible technically and emotionally to the young pianist."⁵¹ She describes her own compositional style as "lyrical, yet eclectic."⁵²

When asked about her teaching philosophy, and how it relates to the composing process, Tan is enthusiastic:

I believe in the importance of teaching music literacy skills to develop music-making for a lifetime of enjoyment. I love passing on advanced performance skills and developing those skills from the very beginning. I believe that it is crucial to provide a pathway for pianistic success for the students through sequential technical and musical concepts and creative choices of repertoire. Most of all, I believe that EVERY student can play musically, and that music study is for nurturing a lifetime love of music.⁵³

⁵¹ Composer questionnaire.

⁵² Personal email from Tan Chee-Hwa, August 25, 2007.

⁵³ Ibid.

A Child's Garden of Verses

According to Tan, *A Child's Garden* came out of “an assignment by David Karp⁵⁴ to compose a collection of teaching pieces” for a pedagogical composition course.⁵⁵ Tan also had a group of eight-year-old pianists she was teaching, whom she felt needed music that would help them transition technically and musically from the late elementary level to the early intermediate level of playing. All eight pieces in the collection are programmatic and are written as tone poems. The pieces are pianistic interpretations of the eight poems by Robert Louis Stevenson⁵⁶ from his collection of poems by the same title. Tan elaborates: “Each is conceived to teach a certain technique or musicianship skill with the specific goal of inspiring the student to focus on experimenting with the sounds of the piano to depict the mood of the poem. Each piece is, in essence, an etude in disguise.” Helpful performance hints are listed in both books (see example in figure 10), and artist William Kimber illustrates most of the pieces.

The pieces below are listed in the order they appear:

Keepsake Mill

Tempo directions are “churning steadily,” an effect that the left hand provides in repeated patterns under a lyrical melody. Key: D minor.

The Moon

This piece provides hand-over-hand practice in an effectively mysterious sounding piece. Key: D minor.

⁵⁴ Karp was her pedagogy professor at Southern Methodist University.

⁵⁵ Composer questionnaire.

⁵⁶ Stevenson apparently wrote the poems when he was in ill and in his thirties, recalling fond memories of his childhood in Scotland. Interestingly he dedicated the set of poems to his childhood nanny, Alison Cunningham.

Pirate Story

A lively piece in a jolly 6/8 rhythm provides practice in contrasts and articulation and will excite most students (see figure 9). Key: Ambiguous—ends with a “knuckle roll” that leads up to a D minor chord.

The Wind

Quick eighth-notes lend a gusty feel to the piece. Tan also mixes 3/4 with 4/4 meter making the sound painting of blustery weather effective. Key: A minor.

At the Seaside

The most interesting feature of this short piece is the use of different key signatures for the treble and bass clefs not often seen in the elementary level. The right hand is presumably in C Major while the left hand has a key signature of three sharps: A#, G# and F# (three-black-note grouping on the keyboard). There is effective musical translating of “digging” in the first section, as well as “the sea comes up” in ascending eighths at the conclusion. Key: Ambiguous.

Where Go The Boats?

A leisurely, languid piece in rolling perfect fifths. Key: G Major.

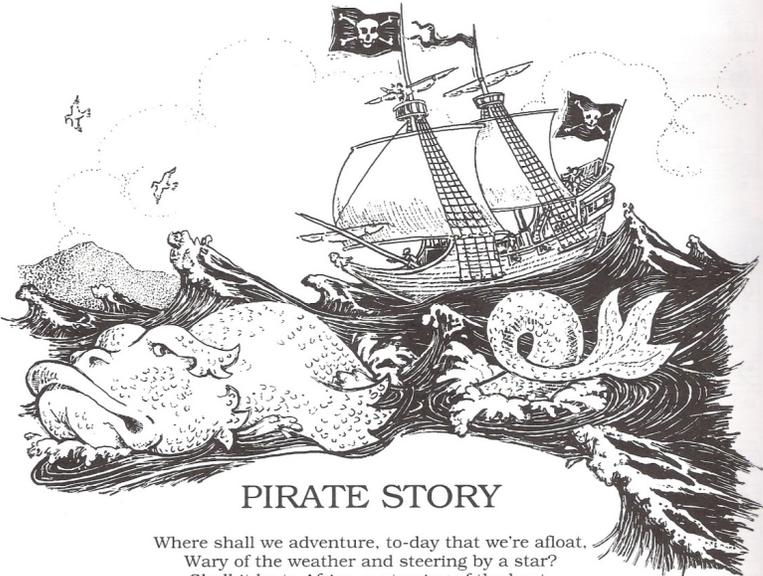
My Shadow

Impish-sounding and fun—an exercise in articulation. Key: D Major.

The Land of Nod

The longest piece of the book. Dreamy and pleasant with the directive: “getting sleepier . . . and sleepier . . .” in the last few disappearing measures. Extensive use of triads is employed (mostly in root position). Key: G Major (implied).

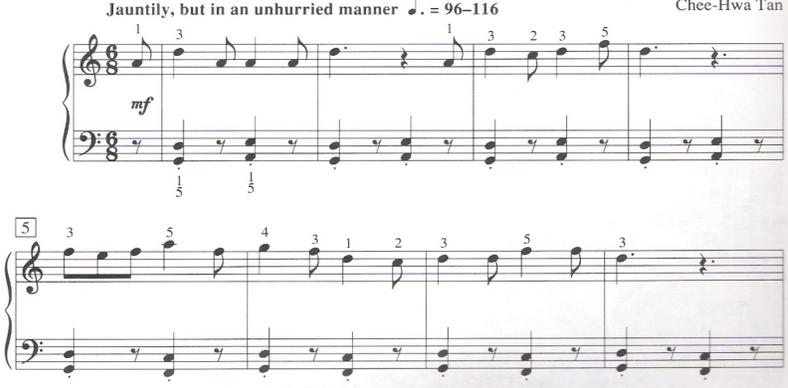
8



PIRATE STORY

Where shall we adventure, to-day that we're afloat,
Wary of the weather and steering by a star?
Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the boat,
To Providence, or Babylon, or off to Malabar?

Jauntily, but in an unhurried manner ♩. = 96-116 Chee-Hwa Tan



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FIGURE 9
Pirate Story (excerpt) from *A Child's Garden of Verses*, p. 8
Used by permission of The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. All rights reserved.

The collection on the whole is well edited, although some teachers might consider it to be slightly heavy on fingering. All the pieces are appealing, and *Keepsake Mill*, *Pirate Story*, and *The Wind* stand out as the most effective miniature tone paintings that blend music and text almost seamlessly.

Through the Windowpane

In 2005 Tan published *Through the Windowpane* (also with Frederick Harris). Written as a set of eight pieces, this set is similarly based on text from Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. The pieces in this subsequent collection are also appealing and pedagogically-friendly tone poems that paint sound pictures. They are slightly easier than the earlier set.⁵⁷ Pieces that are notable include *Shadow March* and *The Swing*, which are especially effective as tone-paintings.

Looking Glass River

Hand crossings abound, although hand positions remain in easy five-finger position. The continuous pedal throughout assists in giving the illusion of a smooth-flowing river. Key: G Major (implied).

Rain

Although the appearance of accidentals throughout the two-page piece may seem intimidating to an elementary student, the piece falls well in the hands and features repeated patterns throughout. Key: C Major.

Shadow March

Slightly reminiscent of Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, this spooky-sounding piece could very well be a favorite on Halloween recitals. Key: D Minor.

Night . . . and Day

Two companion pieces that may be performed separately or together. Both are written in the same style, with flowing legato eighth notes that focus on effective phrasing. Keys: D Minor and F Major (relative keys).

⁵⁷ There appears to be a publisher error with the listing of the levels of the two books. *Through the Windowpane*, although composed later, is meant to be easier than its precursor. However, it is marked "Elementary Level" while *A Child's Garden* is marked "Early Elementary." Tan suggests later elementary to early intermediate for *A Child's Garden* and elementary for *Through the Windowpane*.

Winter-Time

Tan's directions say: "Carefully stepping through freshly fallen snow." As with *Rain*, the accidentals may initially seem intimidating until the patterns fall into place—the entire piece is played on the black keys. Key: Ambiguous.

The Swing

Tan treats the last (and one of the most popular) poems in a lyrical, uncomplicated manner (see figure 11). It is a fitting end to the collection. Key: G Major.

14

THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Chee-Hwa Tan

Soaring as high as your imagination takes you ♩ = 108 - 132

© Copyright 2005 The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

FIGURE 11

The Swing (excerpt) from *Through the Windowpane*, p. 14
Used by permission of The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. All rights reserved.

Tan says that this collection was inspired by the success of *A Child's Garden of Verses*, and she believes both books are necessary tools for “teaching specific musical elements at an elementary level.” To a teacher she writes:

The collection exposes the student to a variety of modes (mixolydian, whole-tone, dorian, minor, major, and pentatonic). Each piece explores an essential technical/musical concept necessary for advancing music study, while keeping the structural elements simple for learning success. All the pieces utilize a full range of the keyboard (four to five octaves) to encourage the use of lateral movement from an early age. The main goal is always to make the piece sound like the poem.⁵⁸

Additional Piano Compositions by Tan Chee-Hwa

- *Circus Sonatinas* (1997) for early intermediate piano solo, published by Frederick Harris, 1997. This collection features playful sonatinas inspired by Tan's trips to the circus with her children. Duration: Each piece is approximately one minute long.
- *Toccata Fantasia* (1999) for piano solo, published in the intermediate-level collection *Discovering Piano Literature* (Vol.2) by Alfred Publishing, 1999. Tan says that the toccata was written to explore perpetual motion and touch of the toccata, and “to give students the opportunity to express themselves musically while sounding ‘big’.”⁵⁹ The piece features rubato and left-hand melody. The piece was inspired by the music of Ravel and Debussy, as well as gamelan rhythms.

⁵⁸ Composer questionnaire.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

**Selected Solo Piano Works from
Contemporary Indonesian Composers**

The rich textures and mystical sounds of the gamelan put Indonesian music on the map at the Parisian World Expo held in 1889. However, well over a century has passed and still the country is by and large associated with gamelan and traditional music. This is not wrong or misleading—especially because Indonesians are known for being extremely proud for their traditions and heritage—but the country’s contemporary composers and musicians often have to make more than a considerable effort for recognition. According to Dieter Mack, renowned musicologist and professor of composition at Musikhochschule Lübeck in Germany, “Normally people believe that these traditional musics do not change. The opposite is the case, and there is a quite significant contemporary music scene [in Indonesia]. . . .”¹

Indonesia has produced classical musicians of international renown such as Jahja Ling, music director of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, former resident conductor for the Cleveland Orchestra and current conductor laureate for the Florida Orchestra, and Eduardus Halim, Horowitz’s last student, currently on the artist faculty at New York University. Other musicians receiving recent recognition include pianist and recording artist Esther Budiardjo, the first-prize winner of the William Kapell International Piano Competition in 1996,² Ayke Agus, violinist and close confidante of Jascha Heifetz (and author of *Heifetz As I Knew Him*, published in

¹Dieter Mack, *Asia Piano Avantgarde Indonesia* CD recording liner notes (MDG 613 1322-2), 2004. Mack is also an established composer, and his oeuvre includes two published piano pieces that were influenced by an extended stay in Indonesia: *Basah* (1990), and *Surya* (1992).

² More information on Budiardjo at <http://www.estherbudiardjo.com>.

2001), and concert pianist Ananda Sukarlan, currently based in Spain and featured in this study.

Indonesian composers are less known than performers. This could be explained by the “overall notion that individual composers are not very common in Indonesia because [it is assumed that] the collective is still the main issue in art production,” says Mack. Franki Raden’s 2001 doctoral dissertation and subsequent Grove entries detailing the lives and careers of over thirty Indonesian composers—and the burgeoning contemporary music scene—is a considerable step in awareness in introducing the musicians of Indonesia to the world.

Additional Published Composers from Indonesia

Three important contemporary composers with pieces that have been published, recorded, or premiered responded to the request to participate in this study. They are Michael Asmara, Slamet Abdul Sjukur, and Ananda Sukarlan. However, a few other important composers with published music initially contacted were not able to follow through. This included pioneer composer Amir Pasaribu, who this year turns ninety-two. Pasaribu (born 1915) was the first Indonesian to study classical music abroad, studying piano and cello at the Musashino School in Japan.³ After the Japanese occupation, he was one of the first to publish his own music. A partial listing of his piano music and articles he has written can be found at <http://people.zeelandnet.nl/gtpasaribu>, a website devoted to his music.⁴ Pasaribu is credited with the initial awakening of interest in classical music to the first generation of Indonesian musicians.⁵

³ Franki Raden, “Amir Pasaribu,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, www.grovemusic.com (accessed September 9, 2007).

⁴ The website is written and maintained by his granddaughter Gonny Pasaribu.

⁵ Raden, in Grove.

Pianist and composer Trisutji Kamal (born 1936) is another published composer who deserves mention. Unlike many of her contemporaries, her piano collections *Sunda Seascapes*, *Indonesian Folk Melodies*, and *Younger Years (Selected Compositions)* are all inspired and heavily influenced by lyrical folk melodies and highlight the diversity of Indonesia. Kamal's recent piano collections have been recorded and championed by pianist Ananda Sukarlan. More information on Kamal can be found on her website at www.geocities.com/trisutji.

Composer Paul Gutama Soegijo (born 1934) left Indonesia to study in Amsterdam in the 1950s and later became moderately successful in Germany, where he still lives.⁶ In 1968 Soegijo published a piano piece *Klavierstudie* with Bote and Bock: the piece is still in print as of this writing.

Asia Music Avantgarde Indonesia: A Recording

Three of the selected pieces featured in this chapter have been performed and recorded by pianist Stephen Schleiermacher, a specialist in contemporary repertoire.⁷ The CD, *Asia Music Avantgarde Indonesia*, features seven piano works by contemporary Indonesian composers, with excellent liner notes by Dieter Mack. The music may perhaps be described as ponderous and intelligent rather than virtuosic and exciting, so it is not surprising that there is a tinge of puzzlement in the reviews, though they also seem receptive. Its analysis in *Fanfare* magazine begins:

I hope I may be excused for never having heard this music before, nor having heard of any of these composers. This collection is pretty far from the beaten track Our Western sense of Indonesian music begins and ends with the gamelan, where the act of composition is traditionally collective rather than individual, but that is a limiting notion: there are composers in Indonesia, same as everywhere else, and

⁶ Franki Raden, "Paul Gutama Soegijo," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed September 15, 2007). *Klavierstudie* can be ordered online at www.booseyandhawkes.com, or at any music retailer.

⁷ Schleiermacher is also known for his recordings of John Cage's complete piano music (ten volumes), as well as multiple recordings by Erik Satie, Philip Glass, and "avantgarde piano music" from Japan, the Czech Republic, and Russia.

the sound of their music is not necessarily location specific These works are not simply exotica. It seems to me that an Asian sensibility comes through most strongly in the feeling of time suspended; of musical motifs growing organically at their own pace, undisturbed by human concerns.⁸

Records International Catalog is a website that touts itself as a place where unusual music and recordings can be found. Their reviewer writes:

The five Indonesian composers here have all had thorough exposure and training in Western contemporary music, but all retain strong ties to their native culture as well. However, the piano is a Western instrument, so unsurprisingly it is to the Western avantgarde piano schools that these works are most obviously connected. . . . The general impression given by this selection is that when Indonesian composers remove themselves from the traditional collective approach to indigenous Indonesian music, they are most drawn to sonorous pointillism and reductivism in the Scelsi-Feldman axis. Interesting.⁹

Biographies and discussion of select piano pieces from three important contemporary Indonesian composers follow. As mentioned, they are Michael Asmara, Slamet Abdul Sjukur, and Ananda Sukarlan. The three composers selected represent different areas of maturity—Sjukur was born in the 1930s, Asmara in the 1950s, and Sukarlan in the late 1960s. Like their Malaysian counterparts, they are enthusiastic and thoroughly dedicated to their music careers. A partial listing of known piano pieces from several other Indonesian composers is listed in Appendix II.

⁸ Philip Scott, *Fanfare* magazine online (Jan/Feb 2006), <http://www.fanfarearchive.com/> (accessed September 12, 2007).

⁹ “Review of Asia Piano Avantgarde,” Records International website, <http://www.recordsinternational.com/archive/RICatalogJano6.html> (accessed September 10, 2007).

SLAMET ABDUL SJUKUR
Svara (1979)

Premiere:	Paris, 1979 by the carillon of the St. Germain L'Auxerrois church, for which it was originally written. It was transcribed for piano by the composer in 1989 for pianist Ananda Sukarlan, who premiered it at a recital in Amsterdam during the 1990 International Composers Workshop.
Publishing Information:	Not currently published, but is available by contacting either the composer at <sjkr_slmt@yahoo.com.sg> or Dieter Mack at <kamasan@t-online.de>
Recording Information:	Two recordings are available: 1. FONTEC/FOCD3452 Japan. Yuji Takahashi, pianist. 2. MDG 613 1322-2. Asia Piano Avantgarde Indonesia. Steffen Schleiermacher, pianist.
Duration:	Approx. 15-17 minutes (6 pages of music)

Composer Biography

Many regard Slamet Abdul Sjukur as the “father of modern contemporary music” in Indonesia.¹⁰ Sjukur¹¹ is a professor and composer living in Jakarta, Indonesia and is the only composer in this study with his own entry in the *New Grove Dictionary*.¹² Born 1935 in Surabaya, Indonesia, he has led an extraordinary and interesting life, admitting that to support his career as a composer he had to “do nearly everything.”¹³ This resulted in an eclectic resume that includes being a music

¹⁰ Mack, *Asia Piano Avantgarde Indonesia* liner notes.

¹¹ Although “Abdul Sjukur” is technically the composer’s surname, for personal reasons he prefers “Sjukur” (personal email). In daily conversation he insists on being called Mas Slamet [see Chris Miller blog under “Monday, 6 June 2005,” <http://cjmiller.web.wesleyan.edu/indonesia2005/20050606.html> (accessed November 10, 2007)].

¹² Franki Raden, “Slamet Abdul Sjukur,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed June 4, 2007).

¹³ Composer questionnaire.

journalist, a masseuse, and an I-Ching fortune teller.¹⁴ Interestingly, he also once made an attempt to have ‘music’ listed as his religion on his identity card.¹⁵

He is reserved about his early musical memories: “It was a dreamlike experience, and I do not want to [disparage] it by any explanation.”¹⁶ An article detailing his early childhood describes how he began learning the piano amidst challenging circumstances:

Slamet Abdul Sjukur, the figure-head of modern Indonesian music, appears an unprepossessing man with a paralysed foot. Had it not been for this physical disability, resulting from polio in childhood, he might never have become a musician. His parents had little interest in the subject, his father being initially a teacher and later a trader, but his grandmother had loved hearing a Dutch neighbour play the piano, so, at the age of nine, the family removed the young Sjukur from the taunts of other children and put him in front of a piano at home. From that time the piano became his refuge and consolation.¹⁷

Then World War II broke out. Because of the Japanese occupation during World War II his family was forced to flee from their home; consequently, he was without a piano for almost five years. When he was seventeen, Sjukur enrolled at the Sekolah Musik Indonesia (Indonesian Music School) where his concentrations were in piano performance and composition (1952-1956). Because of his involvement in the founding of the Alliance Française in Surabaya, the French ambassador provided grants for him to study in France. Thus began a long and fruitful stay in Paris. For two years he studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris (1962-63), taking analysis with Messiaen and organology with Madame de Chambure. From 1962 to 1968 he also studied piano, harmony, chamber music and

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Duncan Graham, “Slamet Abdul Sjukur: Of Maths and Music, Sex and Education,” *The Jakarta Post*, March 31, 2006 (accessed online at duncangraham.blogspot.com, January 8, 2007.) He was unsuccessful in his attempt.

¹⁶ Personal email from Sjukur, September 23, 2007.

¹⁷ Heike Gatzmaga, “The Music Ecologist: Slamet Abdul Sjukur,” Culturebase.net (The International Artist Database), <http://www.culturebase.net/artist.php?3718> (accessed October 2, 2007).

composition at the École Normale de Musique de Paris; his composition teacher there was Henri Dutilleux. Sjukur continued living and working in Paris for a total of fourteen years.

After his return to Indonesia in 1976, Sjukur became active as teacher and composer, and also as a “sharp-tongued cultural critic”:¹⁸

The main target of his ongoing criticism is the increasing ‘acoustical pollution’ in public, created by any sort of speakers and other sources making an every-day-hell of senseless noise. Consequently Slamet [Abdul Sjukur]’s music suggests a certain educational element. With his music, a human being should be able to find [his way] back to the natural, to nature. He should love again the excitement of experiencing details and should even get back to a playful mind full of curiousness. And all these aspects have, according to Slamet, actually been strongholds of the rich traditional Indonesian music itself.¹⁹

Sjukur was a founding member of several important music societies that sought to promote the serious study of music in Indonesia. They include the Pertemuan Musik Surabaya, the Yayasan Musik Laras, and the Assosiasi Komponis Indonesia. He was also the head of the music committee of the Jakarta Arts Council, and this in particular produced diverse learning opportunities for local musicians. Sjukur invited numerous performers and composers to Indonesia for concerts, lectures, and workshops, and also organized the first festival of contemporary French music in Southeast Asia.²⁰ From 1976-87 he was a lecturer at the Jakarta Institute of the Arts, and he was dean of the music department from 1981-83. Since 2000, he has been a lecturer in the postgraduate program of the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI).

¹⁸ Mack, CD liner notes.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “Slamet Abdul Sjukur” entry on The Living Composers Project website, <http://composers21.com/compdocs/sjukursa.htm> (accessed September 1, 2007).

Sjukur produced weekly contemporary music programs for the Radio Suara Surabaya (1991-97), and he gave a lecture series that was broadcast on the station *Wereld Omroep* in the Netherlands (1987).

Sjukur's musical inspirations are Thomas Tallis, Josquin des Prez, J.S. Bach, Anton Webern, György Ligeti, Pierre Henry, and François Bayle. His compositions are varied and encompass several genres, from traditional to experimental. He has written at least six works for stage, including *Sangkuriang*, a miniature opera for mixed chorus (1958), *Latigrak*, a ballet with gamelan and tape (1963), and *Marsinah*, incidental music for a play by Ratna Sarumpaet featuring an ensemble of specially-made instruments²¹ (1994). Two recent orchestral works are *Õm* for fourteen strings (based on the first fourteen overtones of the note 'A', and written in 1995 for the fiftieth Jubilee of Indonesian independence) and *Concerto*, for arpeggina²² and string orchestra (2002). Chamber music includes *Bulan Hijau* (Green Moon) for clarinet and piano (1960), *Point contre* for trumpet, harp, and percussion, in which the players also speak (1969), *Lesung* for synthesizer (1992), *Jawara* for percussion (1993), and *The Source, Where the Sound Returns* for clarinet, cello, and piano (1999).

His experimental works are generally for multimedia: "Anything that makes a sound can get a place in his scores, from ambulance sirens to wood blocks."²³ Such works include *Parentheses I-II* (dance music to choreography by Denis Carey) featuring a female dancer, a suspended chair, piano, and lights (1972); *Parentheses III* for two dancers, coloratura soprano, male speaker, a choreographed conductor,

²¹ When asked what the specially-made instruments are, the composer replied, "Anything to make a special kind of sound—like bamboo, stones, or buttons." (Personal email from composer, September 25, 2007).

²² A five-string viola.

²³ Duncan Graham, "Slamet Abdul Sjukur: Of Maths and Music, Sex and Education," *The Jakarta Post*, March 31, 2006 (accessed online at duncangraham.blogspot.com, January 8, 2007).

flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, string quartet, and a large sculpture by Elizabeth Gleason (1975); *Jakarta 450 Tahun* (Jakarta 450 Years) an environmental work featuring city sounds of Jakarta (1977); and *Wangi* (Fragrant), featuring a female dancer, a specially made *gender* with two keyboards, and lights (1999). In 1996 Sjukur composed and directed a film score called *Aku Perempuan dan Laki-Laki Itu* (Me—a Girl, and That Boy).

Author Heike Gatzmaga writes about the spare quality of his music:

[Sjukur] strips music of all its trappings to reveal its naked allure, with sound reduced at times to a barely audible level. He calls this an ecological measure, used to counter ghetto-blasters, as Indonesian towns succumb to ‘musical environmental pollution.’²⁴

Journalist and music critic Duncan Graham’s 2006 article in *The Jakarta Post* provides an informative and intimate insight into the composer. In a description of Sjukur’s music, he writes:

It’s esoteric and uncompromising stuff, minimalist and elusive. His music pushes the listener to sweat brain cells. To call it contemporary is like grouping Monas [a modern monument built to symbolize Indonesia’s independence] with Borobudur [the country’s world-famous ninth century Buddhist monument]. They’re both monuments so what’s the problem?²⁵

Graham also mentions Sjukur’s numerous lovers, and his fascination and use of numerology in his music. When asked about the article Sjukur said simply, “Graham is remarkable. He knows me better than myself.”²⁶ The article begins:

Indonesia has a problem with talented eccentrics. They’re tolerated, but sidelined—unlikely to become national icons. Those positions are usually reserved for politicians and the military So there’ll probably be no state funeral or heroes’ cemetery for composer and musician Slamet Abdul Sjukur, even though he’s done more to raise the intellectual profile of Indonesia overseas than a file of bureaucrats or a parade of generals.²⁷

²⁴ Gatzmaga, *Culturebase* article.

²⁵ Graham, *Jakarta Post* article.

²⁶ Personal email from Sjukur, September 25, 2007.

²⁷ Graham, *Jakarta Post* article.

Svara (1979)

S V A R A

à Renand Gagnaux

Slamet A. SJUKUR
1979

$\downarrow \pm 42$
Sangat longang / in a state of zeitfulness

#ening: G.P. intensely silent

PPP a legatissimo sempre

③

VAN TREESLING NINEGOTY

FIGURE 12, *Svara*
Section A (and beginning of B)
 (All excerpts used by permission of composer)

Svara was originally composed for a type of carillon of (at least) twenty-three cup-shaped bells played on a keyboard using fists and feet.²⁸ It was inspired by the birth of the composer's son Svara as well as the loss of his friend Istvan Wischnegradsky. Commissioned by the Festival in Paris Organization, the first

²⁸ The Guild of Carillonneurs in North America website, <http://www.gca.org/index.html> (accessed September 27, 2007).

carillon performance in 1979 was neither promoted nor even announced, because its aim was “to attract the attention of passersby and streetwalkers to new music in unexpected places.”²⁹ The piano version was transcribed eleven years later at the request of pianist Ananda Sukarlan, who subsequently premiered the piece in Amsterdam for an international composers’ workshop organized by the Gaudeamus Foundation.³⁰

The piece is calm and introspective, almost hypnotic, based on the repetition of several notes and motifs. According to *Fanfare*, the piece is

built around the chiming of a single tone in the keyboard’s middle register, eventually joined by the minor third above. These “chimes” occur seemingly at random as if driven by a breeze, with no hint of any underlying pulse until the very end when the struck note settles into a regular rhythm, then abruptly ceases. Soft chords reminiscent of Messiaen add a gentle harmonic haze. (Rain began to fall outside my window as I listened, which seemed perfectly apt.) This kind of writing requires from the pianist a hypersensitive touch plus an ability to think in long paragraphs³¹



FIGURE 13, *Svara*
Section C

The duration of the piece may be anywhere over twelve minutes, depending on two improvisatory sections (the Schleiermacher recording is over seventeen

²⁹ Composer questionnaire.

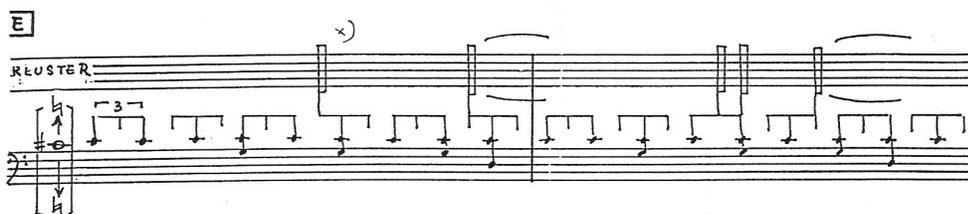
³⁰ According to their website (www.gaudeamus.nl), the Gaudeamus Foundation is a renowned center for contemporary music based in the Netherlands. It promotes and organizes contemporary musical activities and concerts both in the Netherlands and abroad.

³¹ Philip Scott, *Fanfare* magazine online (Jan/Feb 2006), <http://www.fanfarearchive.com/> (accessed September 12, 2007).

minutes). The piece is divided into five sections clearly marked A-E. Despite its seemingly serious nature, the composer indicates that the piece was written as an invitation to play a game. According to the performance notes sections A, C, and E should be played as written. Parts B and D are improvised, with B played with a “premonition” of what is to come in C and E, and D as a “remembrance” of A and C (see figures 12-15).



**FIGURE 14, *Svara*
Section D**



**FIGURE 15, *Svara*
Section E (improvised)**

Sjukur’s advice is valuable: “The consistency of concentration in a slow tempo from the beginning to the end [is important]. It is like painting with only one color: white, enriched by very subtle nuances; not the easy contrast of many different colors.”³² He says that Sukarlan—the pianist who premiered the piece—was initially troubled by the improvisatory sections: “I solved the problem by writing one of

³² Composer questionnaire.

possibilities fully, and he performed it marvelously.”³³ Sjukur is not one who believes that notation should be wholly definitive. He strongly believes that if music is to be imaginative and lively, the performer should consult and interact with the composer and realize the notation in a clearly individual way.³⁴

I.
TONAL ELEMENTS: Two NON-OCTAVE SCALES

1. Not transposable:

2. Transposable:

II.
RHYTHMICAL ELEMENTS: Superposition of 2 or 3 different REGULAR-PATTERN

6:9 = 2:3 6:8 = 3:4

9:8

9:8:6

FIGURE 16, Svara
Performance Notes: Tonal and Rhythmical Elements Used

The piece is based on the formal structure (rather than the harmonic intervals) of a Javanese gamelan, and concentrates on various single notes and special harmonic sound complexes. In the performance notes Sjukur lists two non-

³³ Personal email from Sjukur, September 25, 2007.

³⁴ Gatzmaga, *Culturebase* article.

octave scales (see figure 16) to create his harmonic sounds and linear melodies. The rhythmic patterns are also interesting, and are “derived from super-positions of different metrical pulse levels.”³⁵ The composer briefly describes these patterns in the performance notes.

Additional Piano Compositions by Slamet Abdul Sjukur

The composer can be contacted with questions about his music and his pieces through email at sjkr_slmt@yahoo.com.sg. Durations for the following pieces were unavailable as of this writing.

- *Tobor* (1961) for piano solo.
- *Cucuku-Cu* (1992) for 5 pianos, 20 hands. Originally for guitar.
- *NZ* (1992) for prepared piano solo.
- *Yu-Taha* (1997) for solo piano. Duration: Approx. 14 minutes (5 pages of music).

³⁵ Mack, CD liner notes.

MICHAEL ASMARA
A Little Piece for Pianoforte (2000)
A Piece for Piano No. X (2001)

Premiere:	Not available.
Publishing Information:	American Gamelan Institute distributes many of his piano pieces. Available at www.agi.com .
Recording Information:	MDG 613 1322-2. <i>Asia Piano Avantgarde: Indonesia</i> . Steffen Schleiermacher, pianist. To purchase, email: info@mdg.de . Website: www.mdg.de . Also available on www.amazon.com and www.cduniverse.com .
Duration:	<i>A Little Piece for Pianoforte</i> —approx. 2 minutes (one page of music) <i>A Piece for Piano No. X</i> —approx. 4 minutes (3 pages of music)

Composer Biography

Michael Asmara, currently a resident of both Indonesia and Japan, was born in 1956 in Jakarta, Indonesia, to a large extended family. Both parents were classical music enthusiasts; his father played the clarinet, trumpet, piano, and pipe organ, and the children all had to listen regularly to Bach and Wagner.³⁶ The family was also very proud of their Javanese heritage, and again, the entire household was required to learn traditional Javanese classical music and dance.³⁷

Although Asmara came from a family of musical enthusiasts, they were not initially supportive of a career in music. From 1980 to 1983, he attended the Indonesia Academy of Music (now Indonesian Institute of the Arts) in Yogyakarta but never finished, clashing with several of his professors and finally opting to seek

³⁶ Personal email from Michael Asmara, September 18, 2007.

³⁷ Ibid.

his own path.³⁸ Asmara went on to win first prize for his composition *Clapping Dance* at the Humorous Dance Festival held in Jakarta in 1986. Since then his music has been performed in countries around the world, including Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Thailand. He has also been guest lecturer at the University of Osaka (Japan), and has presented workshops and performances at the Asian Composers League annual convention.³⁹

Asmara is a full-time composer and regularly receives commissions for his works. As influences, he lists Ki Warsitodipuro, Philip Corner, Toru Takemitsu, and Pierre Boulez. “I was inspired by their ideas and philosophies,” he says, “and [by] the way they treat sounds and silences and make it their own.” He considers himself a Javanese-Indonesian on one side and an international citizen on the other, and says that he is as influenced by his own culture as the new cultures he comes in contact with.⁴⁰

His diverse oeuvre includes several published piano works as well as compositions for assorted ensembles. His Symphony No. 1 is written for strings, horns, winds, percussion, and gamelan. He has also written a quartet for guitar, flute and two *gendens* (traditional Indonesian instrument). *Homecoming* is written for thirteen readers and thirteen pitched instruments; the poem is by Wistawa Saymborska. *The Resistance of Substance* includes radio, siren, “noises,” percussion, actors, tenor, and signal lights. All the pieces mentioned above can be purchased from the American Gamelan Institute website (www.gamelan.org). Asmara has also written staged works and performance art pieces, including *Interaction*, which

³⁸ Personal email from Michael Asmara, September 18, 2007.

³⁹ According to their website, the Asian Composers League is “the most vibrant and active contemporary music organization in the Asia-Pacific region today.” [Asian Composers League website, <http://www.asiancomposersleague.com/ACLOverview.html> (accessed September 15, 2007)].

⁴⁰ Composer questionnaire.

features a motorcycle, any number of gamelan instruments in mixed tunings, an audience volunteer, and a participating audience. *Cooking Music* (2004), which consists of eleven pieces involving the preparation of food, also includes audience participation.⁴¹ His latest work is *Lament (for the victims of rape)* for mixed ensemble, commissioned by Germany's Omega Ensemble and to be premiered in November 2007 at the Art Summit of Indonesia. Mack writes: "When using Western instruments, Asmara tends to apply serial techniques, creating a unique poetic expression that reminds us of the early music of Pierre Boulez around 1950, but also the reductive style of Slamet Abdul Sjukur, and perhaps Morton Feldman."⁴²

He sums up Asmara's achievements thus:

With intensive individual studies and a lot of foreign contacts, he was able to develop a remarkable individuality as a composer. . . . In his compositions for gamelan ensemble, Michael Asmara was able to create a quite new and unique symphonic-style which seems to be quite path-leading, but unfortunately is almost unknown in his own country.⁴³

A Little Piece for Pianoforte (2000)

The piece was inspired by the *gamelan sekatan* of Yogyakarta. Once a year, at a religious celebration called Maulid Nabi, an ensemble plays non-stop for three days outside a mosque, at a tempo so slow that to the composer it seems that the notes "come out one by one."⁴⁴ Asmara's one-page piece is both visually and harmonically interesting. It would be a fine introduction to twentieth-century reading and performing and is suitable for both student and accomplished performer.

⁴¹ "Michael Asmara" entry on The Living Composers Project website, <http://composers21.com/compdocs/asmaram.htm> (accessed September 15, 2007).

⁴² Mack, CD liner notes.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Personal email from Asmara, March 23, 2003.

There is an obvious philosophical bent to the piece—Asmara includes the following instructions between measures with fermatas:

Take your shirt off.
Stand up, look into the strings.
Clean the body of the piano.
Put your shirt back on.

A little piece for pianoforte

Largo/very slow Michael Asmara
(1956-)

Notes:
You may make your own version of activities for the empty bars.
+ Pluck the indicated string.
^ Short hold.
• Short pause.

© 2000 Yogyakarta

FIGURE 17
A Little Piece for Pianoforte
(Used by permission of the composer)

Asmara leaves the interpretation of “taking off the shirt” up to both the interpreter and audience, saying that for him, it shows the performer caring for the instrument “as one would a human body or lover.”⁴⁵ This might also be interpreted simply as a respectful tribute to the piano, although the indications might currently seem to be geared more towards a male performer (“shirt”). However, Asmara indicates:

You may create your own version of activities for the empty bars.

Either way, it is likely that both cynical and amateur listeners would be intrigued at a performance. The performer would need a grand piano to successfully perform the piece: in measure 6 there is an indication to pluck four notes inside the piano. Harmonically, the piece develops out of an improvisation of the first phrase. The moments that follow were developed from that opening motive using “serial permutative techniques.”

Asmara does not intend the piece to be programmatic. His performance directives are concise: “*Every* note is very valuable.”⁴⁶

A Piece for Piano No. X (2001)

This is slightly longer than *A Little Piece* (lasting approximately four to five minutes), and even more dissonant, therefore entailing more concentration and listening effort. The piece opens with evocative minor second intervals, first in the high register, then echoed lower. The lingering feel continues throughout, and it evokes the Javanese *gamelan sekatan* which inspired it. Mack writes, “The music of *gamelan sekatan* is signified by a serene quietness, elegance and balance. And this is

⁴⁵ Personal email from Asmara, April 2, 2003.

⁴⁶ Composer questionnaire.

the aura which Michael Asmara tried to create with a contemporary musical language for piano.”⁴⁷ If played without a sense of hurry, the quiet sounds disseminate a soothing ambience of tranquility. Analytically, the piece is based on the scale: G#–A–B–C–D, which, as Mack points out, is similar to a scale used by Messiaen (second mode).

Michael Asmara
Clara - >

A Piece for Piano No. X

FIGURE 18
A Piece for Piano No. X, p. 1
(Used by permission of the composer)

⁴⁷ Mack, CD liner notes.

Additional Piano Compositions by Michael Asmara

Asmara says that he wants his piano pieces to be accessible to as many people as possible. The pieces, heavily influenced by gamelan rhythms and timbres, are mostly comprehensible. Many of his pieces are notated in his own hand, and Asmara is open to teachers and performers contacting him for questions or comments on his music. He can be reached at sounds05@gmail.com, and his pieces can be purchased at the American Gamelan website (www.gamelan.org). According to the composer, the duration for all of the following pieces is open to interpretation.

- *The Drunken Waltzer* (1984) for piano solo.
- *For an Orphan in the Battle* (1986) for piano solo.
- *The River* (1986) for piano solo.
- *Moving* (1996) for piano solo.
- *After the Dreams* (1997) for piano solo.
- *Lamentation for Maya Devi* (1997) for piano solo.
- *A Short Piece for Pianoforte* (2000) for piano solo.
- *A Little Piece for Pianoforte No. 2* (2001) for piano solo.

ANANDA SUKARLAN
Just a Minute! 13 Pieces for Left Hand (2000-7)

Premiere:	Various. <i>Gentle Darkness</i> , which was commissioned and included in the collection Spectrum 4, was premiered at the launching of the collection in London, 2004.
Publishing Information:	According to the composer, the entire collection is slated to be published by The Jakarta School of Music in 2008. The piece <i>Gentle Darkness</i> is published in <i>Spectrum 4: an international collection of 66 miniatures for solo piano</i> . Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 2005. (www.abrsmpublishing.com)
Recording Information:	Seven pieces from the collection were recorded by pianist Jeffrey Jacob: according to the composer the entire collection will be released in 2008. <i>Gentle Darkness</i> was also recorded by Thalia Myers on Spectrum 4: 66 Miniatures for Solo Piano USK Recordings, USK1227CDD.
Duration:	Approx. 13 minutes—as per the title, all the pieces in the collection are approximately one minute long. (All are approximately 1-2 pages long.)

Composer Biography

The name Ananda Sukarlan has already been mentioned twice in this study as the premiere pianist of the respective works. Sukarlan (born 1968 in Jakarta, Indonesia) has in fact premiered more than 300 works by leading contemporary composers around the world and is better known in the classical world as a pianist and recording artist than as a composer. He was the first Indonesian pianist to be included in *The International Who's Who in Music*. He is also listed in the Indonesian Record Museum (MURI) as the Indonesian pianist who has performed in the most number of countries.⁴⁸ Composer Michael Tippett enthused:

⁴⁸ "Sunda Seascapes and Music for Films," CD liner notes, Ananda Sukarlan, pianist and Trisutji Kamal, composer. (CD is marked for private distribution only. For information on obtaining the CD contact Sukarlan's manager, Chendra Panatan, at ycep@yahoo.com.)

... I was taken aback by the freshness and vitality of the playing. Mr. Sukarlan's interpretation [of Tippett's First Sonata] gave it a strength and poetry that elevated it onto a new plane. Technically, his playing was impeccable and his tone-control and variety of colour quite admirable.⁴⁹

Sukarlan was the youngest of seven children, and began piano lessons at age five, initially learning to read music from an older sister. While he says that his first classical love was the Rachmaninoff second piano concerto, he lists his early musical influences as “rock music: Queen, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and the Beatles.”⁵⁰ Although Sukarlan eventually received bachelors (1993) and masters (1995) degrees in piano performance from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Den Haag, Holland, his academic and performance achievements were not without obstacle.

His parents earned average incomes in Indonesia and were unable to afford the steep tuition at conservatories abroad. However, he was able to begin his college music education at University of Hartford in Connecticut on a Petrof Piano scholarship. Then, for reasons unknown to Sukarlan, the scholarship was terminated, and he found himself back in Indonesia. Not long after he returned, however, the Dutch government offered him a scholarship to The Hague Conservatory. He excelled in his studies and the new environment. Then in 1993, the cultural cooperation between the two countries became strained, and his scholarship was again terminated. This time he was driven to succeed. To support his studies and living expenses, from 1993-1996 he began entering and winning competition after competition. Competitions in which he won first prize include the Nadia Boulanger competition (France), the Xavier Montsalvatge competition (Spain), the Blanquefort Piano Competition (France), and the City of Ferrol Piano Competition (Spain), in which he also won a special prize for “Best Interpreter of Spanish Music.” He was in the top three of the Sweelinck-Postbank competition (Holland), the Fundacion

⁴⁹ Letter of recommendation from Sir Michael Tippett, dated October 24, 1994.

⁵⁰ Personal email from Ananda Sukarlan, September 25, 2007.

Guerrero competition (Spain), and the Vienna Modern Master Performer Recording Award (Austria).

Sukarlan is currently a resident of Spain and is a strong advocate for new Spanish music, performing and appearing on various musical recordings of the composers Jesus Rueda, Juan Jose Mier, Santiago Lanchares, and David del Puerto, all of whom he counts as close friends. In February 2007 he gave a lecture on Spanish contemporary music at Middlesex University (UK). It is evident that Sukarlan is also deeply passionate about promoting contemporary works by Indonesian composers. He has recorded two discs of Trisutji Kamal's piano music, as well as a recent CD of Amir Pasaribu's piano music (2007). Sukarlan has also recorded music influenced by Javanese and Balinese gamelan.

As a composer, Sukarlan's output is still relatively modest. It includes twenty songs for diverse voices and piano based on poems by Walt Whitman, William Blake, and Indonesian poets such as Ilham Malayu and Sapardi Djoko Damono. The collection is slated to be published by the Jakarta Conservatory of Music in 2007.⁵¹ In the past couple of years, Sukarlan has begun writing music for the stage. *You Had Me at Hello* is a flute solo premiered in September 2006 by flautist Elizabeth Ashford and dancer/choreographer Chendra Panatan.⁵²

I found myself ready to compose my own full-length ballet, where the music and the choreography are totally inseparable. *You Had Me at Hello* is a small fragment of this project. I hope I succeeded in capturing Chendra's child-like approach to body movements—a strange mixture of some Indonesian traditional dance with classical ballet. Chendra shares my fascination of the mosaic structures and sudden changes in my music, as if the music score were cut and pasted with scissors.⁵³

⁵¹ Personal email from Sukarlan, September 25, 2007.

⁵² Sukarlan and Panatan (Sukarlan's manager) have frequently collaborated on works for music and stage.

⁵³ Chendra Panatan website, under *Choreography*: "*You Had Me at Hello*," <http://www.chendrapanatan.com> (accessed September 1, 2007).

Panatan and Sukarlan collaborated again on *The Sleepers*, which is performed with body movements to a violin and piano duo, with slides by photographer Dian Rosita. It premiered in August 2007 at the Goethe Haus in Jakarta. Sukarlan is looking forward to beginning work on an opera commissioned by the Indonesian Opera Society titled *Mengapa Kau Culik Anak Kami* (Why Did You Kidnap My Son?), with a libretto by Seno Gumira Ajidarma and choreography by Panatan. The drama is based on “the kidnapping, torture, killings, and disappearance of many people during the Suharto era.”⁵⁴ The opera is scheduled to be premiered in Jakarta in August 2008 to coincide with Indonesia’s Independence Day.

When asked how composing fits into his professional life, he answers contritely: “‘Fits’ is exactly the contrary word for my double life. Sometimes I have the urge to compose but am busy performing, and sometimes I have time to compose but have run out of inspiration!” Lately he has resorted to one-to-two-month sabbaticals from performing, using that time to focus entirely on composing. Sukarlan lists Schubert, Beethoven, Bach and Britten as inspirations, as well as modern-day composers such as Michael Tippett, John Cage (“his ideas about music, but nothing compositional”), and Toru Takemitsu.

Sukarlan appears to be a strong advocate for peace. After the horrific Bali bombings in 2002, he felt compelled to protest against these repeated acts of violence. He commissioned works from composers from countries around the world, including Australia, Austria, France, New Zealand, Scotland, Spain, Japan, Malaysia,⁵⁵ Mexico, and Italy, and he performed in concerts in memory of the victims in Bali and in Sydney. Sukarlan believed the concerts “express our demand to governments all over the world to fight against terrorism” and wanted the

⁵⁴ Personal email from Sukarlan, September 25, 2007.

⁵⁵ Tajuddin’s *Torrent of Images*, featured in Chapter III.

performances to speak out “on behalf of all the victims of terror, including the victims of the war in Iraq.”⁵⁶

Sukarlan has an official website at www.anandasukarlan.com, but also maintains an informal and rather fascinating blog at andystarblogger.blogspot.com in which he posts his intense thoughts on his music, intermingled with more mundane things such as his various experiences while traveling. Various YouTube performances of his vocal works are also available.

Just a Minute! (2000-7)

Each one-minute piece⁵⁷ in the entire collection was written for the left-hand only, and was composed during Sukarlan’s travels between 1998 and 2007. The collection is slated to be published by the Jakarta Conservatory of Music in early 2008. One of the pieces, *Gentle Darkness*, was commissioned by pianist Thalia Myers and was recorded and published in 2002 in the collection *Spectrum IV* by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

This collection is also highly personal to the composer. The pieces were written as “musical postcards” for friends and family, and Sukarlan says that the time spent composing “meant a moment for me (not quite a minute) to think and write for the people I care about and love.” He continues, “They also represent birthday presents, in memoriam pieces, other significant events, or just [reminders] saying that I care.”⁵⁸ Although many of the pieces were inspired by one or two lines by poets

⁵⁶ “Concert for Bali,” State of the Art News, <http://www.stateart.com.au/sota/news/default.asp?fid=2749> (accessed September 1, 2007).

⁵⁷ The composer recently acknowledged in an email that while he originally intended each piece to be approximately one minute long (hence the title), a more conceivable timeframe for many of the pieces is two to three minutes.

⁵⁸ Composer questionnaire.

such as Whitman and Poe, the pieces are not intended to be programmatic, and “the dedicatees were always the ‘raison d’être’ of each piece.”⁵⁹

According to the composer, each piece (with the exception of newly composed *Haydn Seek*) was premiered at a different location and time. The three pieces marked with an asterisk (*) are under revision as of this writing. All excerpts used below are from the composer’s original score.

Baby’s Got the Groove, composed April 2001 in Seville, Spain.

Marked *senza espressione, molto rigoroso*, the piece is a dazzling and adventurous technical study for the left hand. The mixed meters—almost each measure is different—require a steady rhythmic pulse.

Fantasia Quasi Una Sonata (“Twilite”), composed 2000 in Maastricht, Netherlands and Frankfurt, Germany.

Referencing the title, Sukarlan has written a familiar quotation in the music from Stravinsky: “Good composers don’t borrow; they steal!” The piece is similar in style to Beethoven’s *Moonlight*, especially the first ten measures (see figure 19). At measure 11, Sukarlan switches to 5/4 and suffuses the piece with dissonances uncommon to the *Moonlight*.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the first eight measures of 'Fantasia Quasi Una Sonata'. The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system shows a left-hand part in 4/4 time with a 'pianissimo, with pedal' marking and a handwritten note: 'Good composers don't borrow; they steal! - I. Stravinsky'. The second system shows a right-hand part with a 'cresc' marking and a 'piano subito' marking.

FIGURE 19, *Fantasia Quasi Una Sonata*, mm.1-8
(All excerpts in the collection have been used by permission of composer)

⁵⁹ Composer questionnaire.

**Fasten Your Seatbelt*, composed 2000 in Nice, France.

According to the composer, the piece is “very difficult. . . . [It was] inspired by a not-so-nice plane trip with a sudden turbulence lasting only a few minutes.”

Flirting Fingertips on E-F, composed 2004.

The composer includes a quotation here as well—this one is by Walt

Whitman: “I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy.”⁶⁰

Marked *presto leggiero*, the piece starts as another quick virtuoso-like piece, crescendos into a rubato section before accelerating quietly and then finally sinking chromatically into a trilled E-F in the low bass (see figure 20).

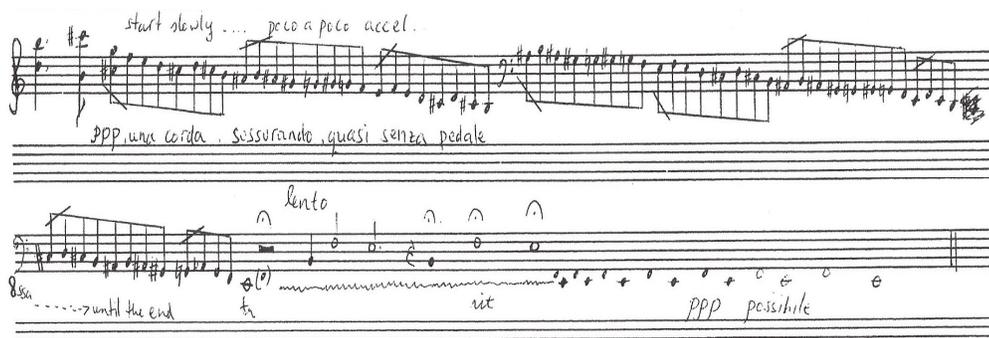


FIGURE 20, *Flirting Fingertips on E-F*, final measures

Gentle Darkness, composed September 2002 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The relative accessibility of the piece is due to the fact that this piece was written with a pedagogical intent. It is composed exclusively in the interval of the fifth, and Sukarlan indicates in the footnotes that while it was initially written only for the left hand, the pianist may also choose to use two hands (see figure 21). Like his piano and violin duo, *Gentle Darkness* was also inspired by a few lines from a Walt Whitman poem, “The Sleepers” that

⁶⁰ From Walt Whitman’s poem, “Song of Myself.”

includes: "Darkness, you are gentler than my lover." The piece is quiet and soft, and the effects of the blurred pedals suit the title perfectly.

written for Thalia and dedicated to the memory of my father

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Gentle Darkness

ANANDA SUKARLAN

Edinburgh, September 2002

Be careful, darkness . . . already, what was it touched me?
I thought my lover had gone . . . else darkness and he are one,
I hear the heart-beat . . . I follow . . . I fade away.
Walt Whitman: The Sleepers

The composer has written: 'Gentle Darkness was written to be played by the left hand alone, but it can also be played by two hands. If using two hands, there are two ways of playing it: with the left hand playing only the low B, and the right hand playing the tune in 5ths; or with the left hand playing the low B and the lower part of the tune. Neither the *una corda* nor the sustaining pedal should be changed during the piece; in spite of the blurred effect this creates, and the dynamic not exceeding *pp*, the top note of the tune should be articulated clearly. The tempo is free, but a crotchet should not exceed 120.'

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AB 2917

FIGURE 21, *Gentle Darkness*
© 2002 by The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music
Used by Permission

Haydn Seek, composed 2007 in Cantabria, Spain.

According to Sukarlan, the piece is in two sections: “a cantabile, dreamy first part, and a dry and funky second part.”⁶¹ In an apparent tribute of sorts to the German composer, Sukarlan spells out the five notes H-A-Y-D-N in the opening measures along with a 5/4 time signature (see figure 22). He then plays with the original motive in retrograde, inversion, and retrograde inversion. However, he clarifies: “I think the music is enjoyable enough to listen to (and play) without knowing when HAYDN is exposed or in disguise.”

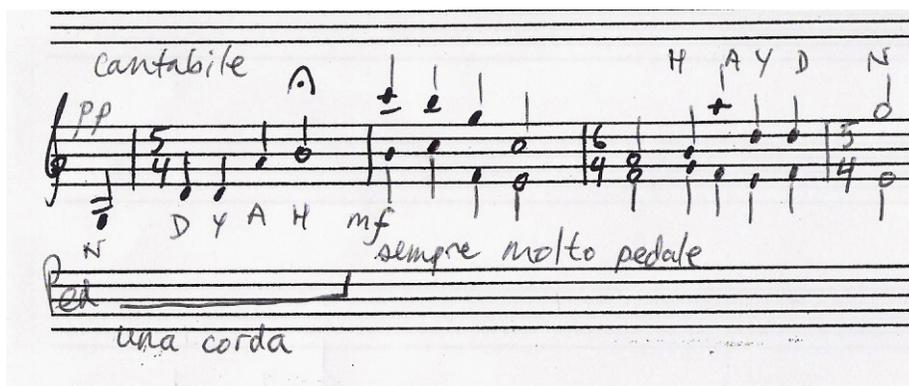


FIGURE 22, *Haydn Seek*, opening measures

Hung Bao, composed March and April, 2001 in Amstelveen, Netherlands.

Despite its Chinese title,⁶² this piece was inspired by Alfred Lord Tennyson:

And the nightingale thought,
 “I have sung many songs, but never a one so gay.
 For he sings of what the world will be
 When the years have died away.”⁶³

⁶¹ Personal email from Sukarlan, September 26, 2007.

⁶² *Hung bao* are traditional little red packets filled with cash given to children and singles by married adults and the elderly, usually during Chinese New Year, but also on special occasions such as weddings and birthdays. This was dedicated to “Alex and Siska on their wedding”, so presumably the piece was a wedding gift.

⁶³ From Tennyson’s “The Poet’s Song.”

The piece is composed only on black keys. The cluster C#-D#-F#-G# is held soundlessly by the middle pedal throughout the entire piece. Parallel perfect fourths, which are often associated with traditional Asian music, are used as embellishments in several measures (see figure 23). The piece employs mixed meters.



FIGURE 23, *Hung Bao*, mm.15-16 (perfect fourths)

The Magic Solitude, composed March 1, 2002 in Vienna, Austria.

Inspired by a line from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Valley of Unrest*: "Nothing saves the airs that brood, over the magic solitude." To be played freely, this piece is quiet and mysterious, and Sukarlan indicates recitative-like measures.

**New Love Is Here to Stay*, composed 2004 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Based on the Gershwin song *Love is Here to Stay*.

Pretty in White, composed December 16-18, 1999 in Madrid, Spain.

The piece was inspired by the composer's daughter, Alicia, when she was a few months old and dressed all in white, hence the title. It is the only one in the set that is to be played on all white keys. This is also the only piece written on two staves (both treble and bass clef). Rhythmically, this is one of the more manageable pieces of the collection. Although the rhythm switches between 3/4 and 4/4, if played with correct top-voicing technique, the melody will carry through beautifully.

Take It Easy, composed October 22-23, 1999 in Girona, Spain.

Sukarlan indicates the piece should be played “rigorous but relaxed, *legatissimo*.” At first glance, another very technical exercise. Sukarlan indicates that the right pedal should not be used at all. Like *Hung Bao*, there is a note cluster in the bass to be held by the middle pedal. The sonority builds to a particularly exciting climactic ending.

Those 30 Left Behind, composed April 2001 in Granada, Spain.

Marked *liberamente, molto cantabile*, the piece is another that is influenced by poetry of Whitman. This one is from *O Me! O Life*: “. . . that the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.” The piece is based on a two-note figure (F#-G#) that begins the piece and is heard thirty times throughout (see figure 24). Sukarlan writes that the figure should be played “pianissimo, like a celesta far away.” The melody over the repeated figure is melodious and romantic. The pedal is also held for the entire piece.



FIGURE 24, *Those 30 Left Behind*, mm.1-17
(repetition of F#-G# in bottom voice)

**Tinkering, Twining Little Star*, composed 2001 in Madrid, Spain.

According to the composer, this is a counterpoint of three pieces: the famous children’s tune *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, Tchaikovsky’s first piano concerto, and an Indonesian children’s tune, *Bintang Kecil* (Little Star).

As an aid to performing the entire set of thirteen pieces, Sukarlan advises: “[*Gentle Darkness*] should be played as precisely as possible, while the more ‘free’ [pieces] should be played with a bit more *rubato* without being romantic.”⁶⁴

Additional Piano Compositions by Ananda Sukarlan

Sukarlan is in the midst of completing several solo piano works with Indonesian influences. The works are available by contacting him at alicia_pirena@yahoo.com.

Love on Screen (2007) is a newly-composed romantic, albeit humorous, piece based on Spanish tele-novelas the composer was “forced to watch” while staying in dreary hotel rooms on a recent tour of Mexico.⁶⁵ He is also currently putting finishing touches on his first piano rhapsody—*Rapsodi Nusantara*—the first of a collection of Lisztian rhapsodies based on Indonesian folk tunes. He credits the idea of these rhapsodies to noted conductor/composer/pianist Yazeed Djamin (1951-2001), with whom he often spoke “about the identity of Indonesian classical music in general.”⁶⁶ The piece is based on two folk tunes from Jakarta, “Kicir-Kicir” and “Jali-Jali.” It is also influenced by the inversion and retrograde techniques of Schoenberg, as well as Salvador Dali’s idea of the transformation of two elements. Like the Liszt rhapsodies, *Rapsodi Nusantara* (and those that follow) is meant to end a recital with virtuosity and flash.⁶⁷

Sukarlan is currently working on a piano concerto tentatively titled “Mahabharatha.” The first movement (duration: approx. 8-9 minutes) is based on the fascinating Sanskrit character Draupadi—a woman of eternal youth who is

⁶⁴ Composer questionnaire.

⁶⁵ Ananda Sukarlan’s personal blog, <http://andystarblogger.blogspot.com> (accessed October 26, 2007).

⁶⁶ Personal email from Sukarlan, September 25, 2007.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

married to all five brothers of Pandava. The movement is scheduled to be premiered in April 2008 with the Junge Salzburg Philharmonic and the composer at the piano.

CHAPTER V

Composer Opinions on the Contemporary Music Scene in Malaysia and Indonesia

All the composers in this study were posed the same questions (reprinted below) regarding their personal views on new music in their respective countries.¹ They were encouraged to answer, but also given the liberty of not answering, any or all the questions asked in the section. A few chose to skip certain questions; however, all appeared to have strong opinions on at least one aspect of composing for the contemporary music scene. Several views from other musicians in the region were also solicited.

Since the composers selected here represent only a small portion of those in both countries, note that the opinions here are not meant to reflect those of all composers or musicians from either Malaysia or Indonesia. Also, it is important to be aware that while all the composers are at least bi-lingual (many speak three or four languages), for some, English was not a first language, yet all managed to provide thought-provoking and significant responses. However, in some cases it has seemed to the author more effective to paraphrase the responses.

COMPOSERS

Malaysian

Chong Kee Yong
Ng Chong Lim
Tazul Tajuddin
Tan Chee-Hwa

Indonesian

Michael Asmara
Slamet Abdul Sjukur
Ananda Sukarlan

¹ See Appendix V, Section III. (Composer questionnaire)

QUESTION 1. Have you composed with nationalism in mind?

This question was posed because musical nationalism has often been linked with movements towards independence in newly emerging countries.

Tan, Chong, Sjukur, and Tajuddin all answered “no.” Sjukur adds: “I cannot escape being spiritually Indonesian, however.”²

Asmara concedes: “Yes, but not superficially.” Ng also answers yes, and then lists several pieces that he wrote with nationalism in mind. Sukarlan answers yes as well, but explains, “I don’t deliberately write ‘Indonesian music’—although I somehow let some modes and rhythms of Indonesian folk music creep into my music.”

QUESTION 2. What are your general thoughts on the current and future state of serious music in your country? (For purposes of this paper, serious music = contemporary and usually classically based music, but feel free to discuss other genres you feel are relevant.)

Responses to the question were equally fascinating.

Sukarlan answers: “Good, because many more people are interested in it. Audiences always fill the halls. But,” he continues, “some ‘composers’ have just discovered the avant-garde music of the sixties, and it gives a bad reputation to ‘contemporary’ music. Now there are many untalented, unemployed people who become ‘avantgarde’ composers.”

Sjukur is philosophical: “Let it find its own way. I trust life.”

Asmara writes: “I want the musicians and composers in my country [to] like to see Asian composers and musicians; otherwise [we] will be left behind.”

The four Malaysian composers are somewhat more vocal. Chong makes a comparison with the more recently progressive art scene in neighboring Singapore and mentions the progressive and supportive attributes of the Gaudeamus

² All quotes from the chapter are from the composer questionnaire.

contemporary music foundation in the Netherlands. “When,” he asks, “will we be fortunate enough to own our own [contemporary] art libraries and put on our own [contemporary] art festivals?” He then praises the newly established MPO Forum, a program recently established by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra to encourage local composers by way of mentors and competitions, which he thinks is a step in the right direction. However, he posits, “What about universities with music departments, national orchestras, music colleges? If composers or performers are without a platform to showcase their talents, where do they have to go? As an artist, I wish that our country can show appreciation for what we do in our field and are willing to provide a positive environment for [musicians at home and abroad].”

Tajuddin, who currently maintains permanent residency in England, seems to agree with much of what Chong is saying: “In Malaysia, serious contemporary music is new and relatively unknown. If the government and cultural institutions would be more supportive and serious about promoting contemporary music, the future [for musicians] would be better.”

Ng takes a more moderate approach, “Although there’s definitely room for improvement, today there are more opportunities for ‘new music’ here,” referring to the recent formation of the Malaysian Philharmonic and a newly formed music society for composers.

QUESTION 3. Do you see the potential for a locally nurtured Beethoven, Horowitz, or other globally respected musician in our future?

Four of the composers—Chong, Ng, Asmara and Tan—answered in the affirmative. Tan elaborates, “Most certainly. The Malaysian culture with its inherent color, creativity and artistry should be a fertile nurturing ground for great musical talent.”

Tajuddin, Sjukur, and Sukarlan are more cautious. According to Tajuddin, “Only if there is serious support from government and cultural institutions and music becomes part of society—with properly functioning programs in all levels to nurture and find young talent. There has to be continuity from one stage to the next.”

Sjukur wrote, “Not necessarily,” and reiterated the fact that there may be other traditional musics in the region that may be more or as important. According to Sukarlan, “No—the problem of the Indonesian audience is that they appreciate more ‘foreign’ (white) musicians and composers. That’s why a native, however talented, is always underestimated and unappreciated.”

QUESTION 4. Although both Malaysia and Indonesia have rich diverse histories, both are also relatively new countries when thought of in terms of independence from Western colonialism. Has this history affected your musical philosophy or composing process?

The topic of colonialism may be likened to addressing an “elephant in the room” situation. The responses are again all remarkable, and all different.

Chong was the only one that answered with a straightforward “no.”

Sjukur (born 1935) is the oldest and is the only one of the group who has actually experienced life under the colonial system. He answers, “As an independent country from Western colonialism, yes, [the country is] new. But our culture is much older than Western colonialism itself.” He reasons, “The sea is always blue.”

Sukarlan admits, “My problem is that I have lived in the West for more than half of my life. The western compositional technique is exploited in all my works, however heavily influenced it is by gamelan modes or other Indonesian artistic and aesthetic elements.”

Asmara muses, “I’m not sure if Indonesia is already independent from colonialism today. But Javanese culture is affected, [and] my musical philosophy [has been] affected for sure.”

Ng believes that his musical philosophy comes from his own background (race, culture, philosophy) as well as from the “guidance and influences received while studying abroad.”

“Colonial history is based on political and economical [factors],” Tajuddin writes. “Perhaps culturally the influence is more varied. In a way, it helped to shape my thoughts and to integrate and mediate between East and West. It informs my musical philosophy and composing process in a cross-cultural and multi-cultural way.”

Tan elaborates, “Obviously, the musical training I received while growing up in Malaysia was a direct result of the British system of musical education and philosophy (ABRSM). Probably the reason I desire to write pedagogical music that is musically inspiring and tailored to developing specific technical needs is in response to the many who studied music and failed at the ‘one size fits all’ approach. I strongly believe that music study should be for a lifetime pursuit of music making and that there should be joy in the journey. The same joy that is inherent in school children singing and responding to the verses of *Rasa Sayang*³ and all the many beautiful folk songs, poems and dances of the Malaysian culture.”

QUESTION 5. Where are your ideal places to work/live as a musician? Also, do you believe that your home country allows you the freedom and inspiration to work to your potential as an artist?

Many of the composers are seasoned world travelers, so these responses were particularly enlightening.

³ “Rasa Sayang” is a well-loved Malaysian folk song, roughly translated: “Feel Love.”

Chong says he prefers to live in Malaysia, but to work in Europe. He hopes that Malaysia will continue to build a more positive environment for its rising composers, and suggests inviting more established composers to share their expertise with local artists, and to establish a professional institute for these artists in order to provide a performance platform and proper funding that would benefit upcoming young musicians in Malaysia.⁴

Ng is positive about living and working in Malaysia. “I love living here, although I do travel to different places to search for new inspiration and ideas.”

Tajuddin, who currently lives in London, answered, “My ideal place as a composer is where there is a lot of support and opportunity for composers. This [would allow me] to work towards my fullest potential.”

Tan is enthusiastic about her current home, “The Rocky Mountains in beautiful Colorado, U.S.A.! I would not be able to comment from personal experience on [whether Malaysia allows the freedom and inspiration to work to my potential as an artist] since I was offered faculty positions at both Southern Methodist University and Oberlin Conservatory right after graduate study. However, it was my goal to be a competitive and contributing professional musician nationally and in the local community and to be able to have equal opportunity for the top jobs academically, regardless of race, religion, or creed. I do not know if I could have achieved the same in my home country.”

⁴ In an interview with the Malaysian arts website kakiseni.com, Chong was asked a similar question by Saidah Rastam about where an exciting place to be for a composer would be: “Germany. [It’s] open-minded, with good financial support. In the conservatories of Berlin and Cologne, it’s very difficult to get in, and you need to speak German well. But it’s a bigger scene, more people are doing things, and there are more chances to have your work performed. And in Germany, when somebody is hired as a composition teacher, they need to be very active in making contemporary music. So students can follow their teacher to festivals and meet people in the contemporary music world.” He continues with an assessment of other European countries, “For good money, Switzerland, because of government support—also the place for a good life. Holland is a [mix] of the avantgarde and the very traditional. Sometimes great composers come out, such as Louis Andreissen. Also I want to go to Finland. The landscape there makes you change your sound—many harmonic tones, and the weather is so cold.”

Asmara, who currently lives in Indonesia, wrote, “Anywhere. And I believe that my home country allows me the freedom . . . but the extent to which they appreciate [my work] is a different case.”

Sukarlan travels regularly as a concert pianist, and is based in Spain where he lives with his family. He answered, “Europe. There are several efforts to give opportunities to artists in Indonesia, such as the Jakarta Conservatory of Music,⁵ but one cannot work to the fullest because of the misconception that foreign ‘white’ musicians are more talented.”

Sjukur currently lives in Jakarta, Indonesia. Again, the oldest and perhaps most experienced of the group, provided a particularly thoughtful response. He answered astutely: “The quality of the composer is much more [of a determinant] than any external condition.” His response in particular begs the question whether an aim for the composers (and the music community in general) is to be better known as simply a “composer” rather than a “Malaysian composer” or an “Indonesian composer.”

Other Views on the Contemporary Scene

Thalia Myers was the pianist who commissioned works from both Tajuddin and Sukarlan for *Spectrum 4*, the collection of contemporary piano miniatures.

When recently asked her thoughts on both composers, she wrote:

As musicians who have been educated in more than one great musical tradition, it is fascinating to hear how they have absorbed and fused the experience into their own individual musical language. It is arguable that the Arts have little to communicate what is actually new. What we respond to in our creative artists—be it in music, painting, sculpture, literature, dance—is the ability to couch the much-repeated Universal in their own, personally evolved language. Fine composers whose education

⁵ Sukarlan co-founded the conservatory.

is richly cross-cultural perhaps have an outstandingly good chance of achieving this!⁶

C.H. Loh has been a musician, composer and music columnist for over fifteen years, and has written for Malaysia's *The Sun* newspaper and *Off the Edge* magazine. He has long advocated the support and nourishment of Malaysian musicians, and recently responded to a request for his views on the state of contemporary art music in the region:

Contemporary art music has definitely taken leaps and strides in the past seven years since the new millennium. It is a happy coincidence, I think, but visibility contributed by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra Forums and media interest has fuelled it significantly. There was considerable interest and admiration amongst the delegates of the Asian Composers League when I showed some of our music off during the 2007 ACL festival in Wellington, and our composers are definitely getting more notice regionally. The challenge, though, will be to sustain this and build on it.⁷

He continues:

I think Malaysia has a lot of potential for new music because our listeners are new to everything. The MPO contemporary music series was a huge success with the local audience—who wouldn't know Telemann from Torke—everything is new and interesting to them, which in a way is an easier audience to play new music to than Singapore where the classics have a strong tradition and new music is seen as too elite or intellectual and where classical music listeners are often the privileged Of course in terms of performance opportunities and commissions Malaysia still hasn't got the right infrastructure. But [a positive is] that composers themselves are beginning to make things happen in this direction, and this is something we can build on for the future.

Loh also discusses his personal thoughts on the possible effects of colonialism:

⁶ Personal email from Thalia Myers, October 1, 2007. When asked to elaborate on her concept of "Universal", she replied, "I'm actually referring to the simple and essential fundamentals of animal communication, which has always seemed to me the prime motivators of good Art, whatever its 'surface concerns' might appear to be."

⁷ Personal email from C.H. Loh, October 24, 2007.

[Colonialism] did introduce classical music to our shores. In my interview with Bob Gomez, a jazz legend, he mentioned how Yap Ah Loy⁸ himself tried to learn the piano, so that is positive. Also good is perhaps the effect of rejecting colonialism that leads our composers to dig deeper into our own cultural identity [and traditional music and dances]—*wayang kulit*, gamelan, *makyong*, *ramayana*, local scales/modes, etc. What is unhealthy is the current neo-colonialism represented by the MPO wherein the Western culture is upheld as the ideal, and the local one represented as subservient.⁹

John Sharpley is an American composer who has lived in Singapore for over twenty years. He was composer-in-residence of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 2003 and has been visiting lecturer at several local colleges. His opera “Fences of the Heart”—about the doomed love affair between lovers of different ethnic races set in the sixties—is to be premiered in both Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in the coming year. He also recently responded to a request for his opinions on the music in the region:

Western classical music would seem to be ever-receding in the world at large. Contemporary Western classical music is an even smaller arena. However, I believe that in Southeast Asia, a fascinating metamorphosis is unfolding. . . . There have been a continuous and growing number of young Southeast Asians to formally study music in Western countries, especially the U.K., the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand and to a lesser degree France, Germany, Austria and Russia. Many continue towards a master’s degree and even a doctorate in music. They do not always return immediately after studies. However, those who do return contribute significantly to their respective communities. From performers to arts administrators to music teachers to composers, the impact is manifested. This translates into more performance opportunities for new music.¹⁰

As with other critics, he points to the recent formation of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, the government-funded Singapore National Arts Council,

⁸ Yap (1837-85) was an important figure in Malaysian history. He was an immigrant and one of the Chinese leaders responsible for maintaining peace among the Malays and immigrant Chinese in the colonial era. Yap is also recognized as one of the founders of the country’s capital city, Kuala Lumpur.

⁹ Personal email from C.H. Loh, October 24, 2007.

¹⁰ Personal email from John Sharpley, August 4, 2007.

and the Thailand Composition Festival (held in mid-2007), as proof of growing support by the government. He continues,

Nevertheless, this is still a fledging development. Underlying this is the search for national identity. I observe that in Southeast Asia, the press, patrons, sponsors, institutions and possibly audiences are allured to Southeast Asian new music because it presumably holds some kind of key to national and/or ethnic identity. (At least, this is a partial if not major reason.) This trend towards national/ethnic identity has deeply influenced the wide diversity of compositional languages. Since the 1990s there has been a greater tendency to blend Contemporary Western music techniques with those of various Southeast musics and cultures.

With globalization making the world smaller and less intimate, Sharpley also makes an intriguing point about the potential loss of a sense of culture:

It is a curious and ironic phenomenon that many Southeast Asian composers returning home from overseas have to start from scratch when learning about their own native music cultures. If the composer is self-directed in such a way, then it may be best for them to work and live (at least for some time) in their home country. Even though nationalism itself is a political construct, it may be the very impetus in Southeast Asia to breathe new life into new music. It is definitely a struggle for a composer to function as a composer in Southeast Asia. But where is it not?

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

Summary

This study provides an introduction to contemporary solo piano works by seven Malaysian and Indonesian composers: Chong Kee Yong, Ng Chong Lim, Tazul Tajuddin, and Tan Chee-Hwa from Malaysia, and Slamet Abdul Sjukur, Michael Asmara, and Ananda Sukarlan from Indonesia. Seven solo piano works and three solo piano collections are discussed, all of which have been published, recorded, or premiered at a significant event. The pieces vary in difficulty and style, and range from highly complex (*e.g.* Chong's *Metamorphosis III*) to pedagogical (*e.g.* Tan's *A Child's Garden of Verses*) to avant-garde (*e.g.* Asmara's *A Little Piece for Pianoforte*). Composer biographies represent a significant part of the study.

The purpose of the study is to bring attention to contemporary art music for piano by composers from Malaysia and Indonesia that is available to professional performers, students, and teachers for study. Much of this literature has been little known to date and yet is worthy of study.

The initial information surrounding piano works from these countries evolved from numerous internet searches as well as recommendations from professional musicians and composers. Approximately fifteen composers with piano works in their oeuvre were asked to participate in the study. While eleven initially responded and agreed to participate, only seven composers ultimately completed the questionnaire provided and were included in the study. In each case, at least one prominent solo piano work or collection was examined. In addition, a portion of the

questionnaire specifically solicited composer opinions on the contemporary music scene in his or her country; the eventual responses provide insight which can lead to a healthier and more conducive music environment in the region. Views from additional prominent musicians familiar with the regional scene are also included.

Pieces or collections discussed here that have been published to date are *Metamorphosis III* by Chong Kee Yong (2001), *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1994) and *Through the Windowpane* (2005) by Tan Chee-Hwa, *Gentle Darkness* (2002) by Ananda Sukarlan, and *Sebuah Pantun* (2002) by Tazul Tajuddin. Michael Asmara's gamelan-influenced works are distributed by the American Gamelan Institute, and Ananda Sukarlan's *Just a Minute* collection is slated to be published in 2008. Professional recordings are available for Chong's *Metamorphosis III*, Asmara's *A Little Piece for Pianoforte* and *A Little Piece No. X*, and Sjukur's *Svara*. Also, both Sukarlan's *Gentle Darkness* and Tajuddin's *Sebuah Pantun* from the Spectrum series were recorded by pianist Thalia Myers, who commissioned the pieces. Almost all the pieces have been given a significant premiere. Premieres that stand out include Chong's *Metamorphosis III* and Ng's *Two Preludes*, both which were compulsory pieces in piano competitions, Tajuddin's *Torrent of Images*, premiered at a bombing memorial for the Bali victims, as well as Sjukur's unique carillon premiere of *Svara* in Paris.

All unpublished piano works that are discussed here are available by contacting the composer. Contact information is provided in each case.

The use of the internet was significant as an aid to this study, since the author currently resides in the United States, and six of the seven composers live in countries spanning three continents—Malaysia, Indonesia, Spain, England, and the United States. Most correspondence between author and composer was conducted electronically.

Overview of the Document

The first chapter defines the problem, purpose, and design of the study. It is without question that the region's culture and traditional music (including the gamelan) are staples of academic research and study. Yet although the piano is one of the top instruments studied in many middle class households in both Malaysia and Indonesia, compositions by local composers are not readily available. The lack of published material on Southeast Asian composers and piano literature establishes the basic need for this study.

Chapter I also provides a brief background of the culture in both countries as it relates to the development of the music scene. Both Malaysia and Indonesia are relatively new in terms of independence from Western countries—Malaysia from Great Britain in 1957 and Indonesia from The Netherlands in 1949. Mention is made to Debussy's and Britten's fascination with the musics of the region a century ago as well as the fact that currently Western and Western-styled pop music dominate the listening habits of many in the two countries—this, regardless of the fact that both countries have a variety of cultures and are primarily Muslim (Indonesia over 80%, Malaysia over 60%). Music is without a doubt one of the most useful tools that can be used to connect and influence different cultures. Art music is blossoming: both countries have relatively new national orchestras, elegant performance venues have sprung up, and musicians indigenous to the land are beginning to be recognized at home and abroad.

Music publishing as an industry is still in its infancy in both countries, and most published music found in retail music stores originates from established publishing companies in the United States and Europe. Obviously there is little demand for music by "local" composers that is rarely seen or heard, and it is hoped that this paper brings awareness to this issue.

A brief discussion of related literature is presented in Chapter II.

Dissertations by Malaysian nationals include Lim Pei-Sian's DMA dissertation on incorporating folk music into piano teaching and Jason Tye's DMA dissertation on how Malaysian teachers from the state of Penang prepare their students for the ABRSM examinations. Both dissertations were completed in 2004. A brief chapter in the book *Music of Malaysia* by Patricia Matusky and Tan Sooi-Beng provides a concise but informative chapter on contemporary music in the country.

Indonesian sources were more difficult to locate. However, ethnomusicologist Franki Raden's 2001 Ph.D. dissertation provided helpful background information of the history of the contemporary music scene in Indonesia. Raden's work led to multiple *New Grove* entries on Indonesian music and musicians.

Other sources include similar studies conducted in Taiwan, China, Korea, Sri Lanka, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Argentina, and Thailand, where music is almost always influenced by a combination of cultures. For an overview, Southeast Asian art music sources were also sought. While journals like *Ethnomusicology* and *Asian Music* often include articles on Malaysian and Indonesian arts and culture, most focus on the traditional aspect.

In Chapter III, four contemporary Malaysian composers and solo works of each are introduced. They are:

Chong Kee Yong	<i>Metamorphosis III</i> (2001)
Ng Chong Lim	<i>Two Preludes</i> (1999)
Tazul Tajuddin	<i>Torrent of Images</i> (2003-5)
Tan Chee-Hwa	<i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> (1994)
	<i>Through the Windowpane</i> (2005)

Additional piano music from each composer is also listed. An introductory section provides background of pedagogical trends in Malaysia and includes a brief discussion on the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)

examination system that many teachers and students consider a necessary measure of musical achievement.

Three contemporary Indonesian composers and solo works of each are introduced in Chapter IV. They are:

Michael Asmara	<i>A Little Piece for Pianoforte</i> (2000) <i>A Little Piece for Piano No. X</i> (2001)
Slamet Abdul Sjukur	<i>Svara</i> (1979)
Ananda Sukarlan	<i>Just a Minute! 13 Pieces for the Left Hand</i> (2004-7)

Other significant piano music from each composer is also included. A short introductory section mentions emerging Indonesian musicians of international renown. It also includes a brief segment on other piano pieces by Indonesian composers not featured in the study.

In Chapter V, candid and compelling composer opinions on the state of the contemporary music scene in both countries are presented. A questionnaire queried the composers on a variety of topics related to their work, including their thoughts on nationalism, the state of serious music in their respective country, Western colonialism, and ideal places to work as musicians. Opinions were also solicited from other prominent musicians familiar with the contemporary music scene in the area and include British pianist Thalia Myers, Malaysian journalist C.H. Loh, and American composer John Sharpley.

A Synopsis of the Composers

The featured composers come from diverse backgrounds. For example, four are primarily pianists, but three—Asmara, Chong and Tajuddin—are primarily guitarists. Most were brought up in musical families that included many different influences; however, some, like Chong, were introduced to art music later in life. They list musical influences from Mozart to Boulez, Takemitsu to Warsitodipuro.

Interestingly, Ligeti came up as an inspiration for several composers. English is not the first language for several of the composers, and yet all composers speak at least two languages. Judging from the responses to the questionnaire a consensus emerged that more opportunities for serious musicians exist in North America, Europe and East Asia than in Malaysia or Indonesia. Approximately half live and work outside their country of birth, and a few maintain residences in several different places throughout the year (like Chong and Asmara). A sentiment emerged from many of the composers of being underappreciated in their homelands, both from those abroad and those currently in the native region. Although some of the composers seem content at where they are, all seem somewhat torn about ideal places to live and work as a composer. For most, the choice seems to be between their country of birth and North America or Europe. Sukarlan's comment in Chapter V about Indonesian audiences appreciating foreign musicians more than local ones was both candid and upsetting, and yet it is the opinion of the author that Sukarlan is more right than wrong. While strides toward equality continue to be made, this perception is prevalent in the region and remains a detriment in music as well as in other facets of business and society.

Most of the composers seemed eager to participate. All had unique and sometimes similar experiences to share. Some composers overflowed with stories and incidents, and others were understandably more reserved. Chong's recollection and regret of his grandfather's struggles as an unrecognized village musician was poignant, as was Sjukur's ability to overcome his childhood challenges through music. Ng's quiet determination in his career as both pianist and composer and Tan's dedication towards motivating her students are equally inspiring. Asmara's slightly unconventional style is refreshing, as is Sjukur's positive and unique outlook on life. Tajuddin's presence in the London music scene is frequent, and yet compositions

such as his recently premiered piano concerto with the London Sinfonietta—written in honor of the fiftieth year of Malaysian independence—reveal strong ties to his home country. Similarly, Sukarlan lives with his family in Spain; however, he spends months away on the road concertizing. He in particular must be commended for tirelessly promoting new music and works by Indonesian composers.

Several composers utilize the power of the internet to promote their works, and Chong Kee Yong, Tazul Tajuddin, and Ananda Sukarlan all have official websites.

A Synopsis of the Compositions

Locating the solo piano works featured in the study was a time-consuming process and involved Google and WorldCat searches, the New Grove Dictionary, recommendations from music websites and composer-friends of composers, as well as numerous emails. The final list was shorter than expected, but the variety of pieces found and the contact that was established with the composers proved rewarding and satisfying.

All the pieces featured in the study appear to belong firmly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While many of the pieces have traditional influences—for example, those by Sjukur, Asmara, Sukarlan, and Tajuddin have gamelan influences and Chong's has Chinese percussive influences—they are far from being arrangements of traditional folk songs (although, in the author's opinion, a need exists for pieces of this nature). Instead, the composers are attracted to the avant-garde (*e.g.* Asmara's *A Little Piece for Pianoforte* which involves taking off a shirt to clean the piano), to complex harmonic construction (most of the pieces), and to experimentation with sound (*e.g.* Chong's *Metamorphosis III*). Sjukur and Ng's pieces have elements of improvisation. The more experimental pieces are clearly not aimed at pleasing the palates of a crowd used to pop music; in fact, a couple of the

composers wrote that they would be content to compose for themselves, with no audience required.

A contagious sense of vigor and excitement emanates from many of the composers when they discuss the concepts and ideas used in their pieces. In retrospect, one-on-one interviews with each of the composers would have been preferred. The author was slightly disappointed that no lush romantic or melodic pieces emerged (although Sukarlan's Lisztian rhapsodies currently in progress are promising in this respect). However, it was illuminating to discover the variety of styles that exists, to learn with pride about the multiple accomplishments and life stories of the composers, and ultimately, to discover that unique and fascinating composers in both Malaysia and Indonesia are coming into their own and thriving.

Recommendations for Further Study

Studies on the contemporary music of the region should continue. The following represent some perspectives and recommendations for further thought and study:

1. A more extensive annotation or compilation of piano works by Malaysians and Indonesians needs to be published in both countries. Also, studies on the various genres of contemporary art music in each country are highly recommended.
2. Some of the composers included in the study already have well-designed websites. This is positive, especially because music publishing is still in its infancy in both countries. Perhaps the same objective (as in No. 1 above) could be achieved with an easily accessed joint website that features streaming audio files or downloads of the composers' music and biographies of each composer.
3. Additional in-depth interviews should be conducted with the older generation of composers. Their

perspective is particularly unique, as they have lived through both colonialism and the rebirth of their countries under new governments and new ideals. This includes Slamet Abdul Sjukur (born 1935), as well as both Amir Pasaribu (born 1915) and Trisutji Kamal (born 1936) who are mentioned in the introduction of Chapter IV. Although those mentioned are all Indonesians, research must continue also with the growing number of young and idealistic contemporary composers in both Malaysia and Indonesia currently making a name for themselves, who perhaps sometimes struggle with identity in a world that may be leaving many of its traditions behind.

4. Local schools and musical societies in both countries should be encouraged to recognize and promote homegrown talent in the arts by performing music from local composers as well as inviting these composers/musicians to interact with the students by way of masterclasses or speaking engagements.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I List of Known Solo Piano Pieces by Malaysian Composers

[NOTE: Pieces are unpublished, unless specified.]

Abdul-Aziz, Razak (b. unknown)

Five Etudes, 2006

(According to the composer, published by The Asian Centre, 1-C Jalan Delima, Island Glades, Gelugor 11700, Penang, Malaysia. The author was unable to obtain a copy.)

Ang, Minni (b. 1966)

(The composer has a website at <http://www.musicmall-asia.com/minni/>)

Let There Be Light, 1982

Miniature No. 1, 1994

Nostalgia, 1982

Scherzo No. 1, 1997

Chan Cheong Jan (b. 1968)

Mubarak, 1995

Chong Kee Yong (b. 1971)

(The composer has a website at <http://www.chongkeeyong.com>)

Illusory Angel, 2003

Metamorphosis III, 2002 (see page 26 for publishing information)

Splattered Landscape, 2005

Ng Chong Lim (b. 1972)

Daun (with electronic tape), 2005

Klavierstück. . . Warna, 2001

Two Preludes, 1999 (see page 34)

Pragas, Peter (b. 1926)

Music from Sabah, Land below the Wind (2002)

[15 original piano solos based on folk themes. Published by Natural History Publications Borneo, Kota Kinabalu (Malaysia). Website is at <http://www.nhpborneo.com>]

Ross, Valerie (b. unknown)

Jigsaw Blues

Mysteries of the Orient

Tajuddin, Tazul Izan (b. 1969)

Etudes, 1995

Piano Sonata—Sketch, 1994

Sebuah Pantun (A Malay Poem), 2002 (see page 39 for publishing information)

Torrent of Images—A Memorial (see page 39 for additional information)

Irrational, 2002-03

Mediasi Masa—Raja Satariah Memoriam (The Mediation of Time), 2004

Rational, *in progress*

Tan Chee-Hwa (b. 1965)

A Child's Garden of Verses, 1994

Circus Sonatinas, 1997

Through the Windowpane, 2005

Toccata Fantasia, 1999

(See page 48 for publishing information on all pieces)

Wong, Adeline (b. 1975)

Alternating Current, 2001

Mind the Gap, 2003

(Published in *Spectrum 4*, by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in 2005. Go to <http://www.abrsmpublishing.org>)

Paces, 2005 (with electronic tape)

Appendix II
Partial List of Known Solo Piano Pieces by Indonesian Composers

[NOTE: Pieces are unpublished, unless specified.]

Abdul Sjukur, Slamet (b. 1935)

Tobor, 1961
 Svava, 1979 (see page 61 for additional information)
 NZ for prepared piano, 1992
 Yu-Taha, 1997

Asmara, Michael (b. 1956)

A Little Piece for Pianoforte No. 2, 2001
 A Piece for Piano No. X, 2003
 A Short Piece for Pianoforte, 2000
 After the Dreams, 1997
 The Drunken Waltzer, 1984
 For an Orphan in the Battle, 1986
 Lamentation for Maya Devi, 1997
 Moving, 1996
 The River, 1986

(See page 71 for distribution information on all pieces)

Besin, A. F. Kau (b. unknown)

Lagu-lagu Indonesia untuk piano tunggal (Indonesian songs for solo piano),
 1978 (12 pieces, originally published by Arnold Frans, Indonesia)

Ekagustiman, Dody Satya (b. 1961)

Langendria, 1997

Embut, Mochtar (b. unknown)

Kamajaya (Demi Cinta) [Goddess of Love], 2005

Kamal, Trusutji (b. 1936)

(The composer has a website at <http://www.geocities.com/trisutji/>)

Three sets/collections of folk melodies for solo piano:

Indonesian Folk Melodies (7 pieces)
 Younger Years: Selected Compositions (10 pieces)
 Sunda Seascapes (7 pieces)

(all published by Yayasan Mitra Budaya, Jakarta in 2002)

Marching, Soe Tjen (b. 1971)

Kenang, 2001

Pasaribu, Amir (b. 1915)

(More information at <http://people.zeelandnet.nl/gtpasaribu/about%20opa%20pappie.html>)

Rabanara Dances, 1961 (originally published by Bagian Penerbitan Lembaga
Kebudayaan Rakyat, Indonesia)

Raharjo, Sapto (b. 1956)

Malioboro Blues, 2003

Soegijo, Paul Gutama (b. 1934)

Klavierstudie, 1968 (available at the Boosey and Hawkes website,
<http://www.boosey.com>)

Sudharnoto (b. 1925)

Fantasia Harum Bunga di Waktu Malam (A Fantasy of Fragrant Flowers at
Night)

Angsa Bermandi (The Bathing Goose)

Sukarlan, Ananda (b. 1968)

(The composer has a website at <http://www.anandasukarlan.com>)

Just a Minute! (13 pieces for the left hand), 2000-07

Love on Screen, 2007

Rapsodi Nusantara (*in progress*)

Suprana, Jaya (b. 1949)

Fragment, 2006

Paramnesia, 1970

Tembang Alit (A Little Song) [Listed in a 2005 recital programme by
pianist Esther Budiardjo, Kuala Lumpur]

Wullur, Sinta (b. 1958)

(The composer has a website at <http://www.xs4all.nl/~swjr/flashEng/index2e.html>)

Bali in Blue, 1999

Appendix III
**Partial List of Piano Pieces by Other Composers
 Believed to be Inspired by the Region**

Bartok, Bela (Austro-Hungarian, 1881-1945)

From the Island of Bali from *Mikrokosmos*, 1926

Beath, Betty (Australia, b. unknown)

Merindu Bali (Yearning for Bali), 2004

Burgess, Anthony (England, 1917-1993 – author of *A Clockwork Orange* and *A Malayan Trilogy*)

Various sonatas for piano

Song of a Northern City for piano and orchestra

Cage, John (United States, 1912-92)

The Perilous Nigh

Sonatas and Interludes

Canright, David (United States, b. unknown)

Fibonacci Suite for retuned piano, seven hands, 2001

Debussy, Claude (France, 1862-1918)

Pagodas from *Estampes*

Farr, Gareth (New Zealand, b. 1968)

Jangan Lupa (Do Not Forget)

Godowsky, Leopold (Poland, 1870-1938)

Phonoramas - Java Suite, 1925

Mack, Dieter (Germany, b. 1954)

Surya, 1990

Basah, 1992

Martin, Robert-Charles (United States, 1877-1989)

Ecoutez Cette Java from *Après la Classe*

McLeod, John (Scotland, b. unknown)

Two Balinese Rituals, 2005

McPhee, Colin (Canada, 1900-64)

Balinese Ceremonial Music for 2 pianos
Tabuh-tabuhan for 2 pianos and orchestra, 1936

Poulenc, Francis (France, 1899-1950)

Concerto for two pianos

Stevens, Halsey (United States, 1908-89)

Four Improvisations on Javanese Themes, 1951

Tansman, Alexander (Poland-France, 1897-1986)

Novelletes for piano
No. 3 Exotique Danse Javanaise

La Tour der monde en miniature for piano
No. 9 La Flute de bamboo Bandoeng
No. 10 Le Gamelang de Bali

Pour les Enfants
Music of Bali

Appendix IV

**EXAMPLE OF INITIAL EMAIL
SENT TO POTENTIAL COMPOSERS**

Dear _____:

Hi, my name is Charmaine Siagian, and I was born and raised in Malaysia (However, the paternal side of my family has roots in Sumatra, Indonesia). I'm currently a DMA (ABD) candidate in piano performance and pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma and am currently working to put together a study of solo piano music by both Malaysian and Indonesian composers. One of my goals is to end up with a potential reference point of piano music for teachers and students in both countries, as well as abroad. A positive consequence of this is that your music may be exposed to a slightly wider audience.

I came across your name via _____ (*website or journal*) and am writing to find out your level of interest in participating. If you have composed, published, or had a particular piece premiered and/or reviewed and are open to participating in this study, I hope that you respond to this email. I would be thrilled to answer any additional questions you may have, and would also be happy to pay for postage and handling of any music you submit.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Charmaine Siagian
(Contact Info)

9. Were any aspects of the piece specifically influenced by your culture, other cultures, or a collective global culture? If yes, please elaborate.

10. Are there any other comments you would like to bring to the teacher or performer's attention about the piece(s)? (E.g.: *form, structure, technical difficulties, and/or specific performing needs, etc.*)

III. Personal Thoughts on New Music in Malaysia and/or Indonesia. (NOTE – While I am very interested in your thoughts about the current and future state of serious music in these countries, if there is a question on this page that you would rather not answer, simply leave the space blank.)

1. Have you composed with nationalism in mind? *If yes, please elaborate.*

2. What are your general thoughts on the current and future state of serious music in your country? *Please elaborate.* (For purposes of this paper, *serious music* = contemporary and usually classically based music, but please feel free to discuss other genres you feel are relevant.)

3. Do you see the potential for a locally nurtured Beethoven, Horowitz (or other globally respected musician) in our future? *Please elaborate.*

4. Although both Malaysia and Indonesia have rich diverse histories, both are also relatively new countries when thought of in terms of independence from Western colonialism. Has this history affected your musical philosophy or composing process? *Please elaborate.*

5. Where are your ideal places to work/live as a musician? Also, do you believe that your home country allows you the freedom and inspiration to work to your potential as an artist? *Please elaborate on any or all of these questions.*

*** If you have additional comments, please write them on the back of this page. You may also wish to attach a more extensive bio/resume to this questionnaire. I sincerely appreciate your participation. – Charmaine Siagian, December 31, 2006.**

Appendix VI

MAP OF INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA (2006)

