

FROM THE EDITORS

The *Malaysian Journal of Performing and Visual Arts* (MJPVA) is a new, fully blind peer-reviewed research journal that focuses on Asian performing and visual arts. It is a forum for scholars in the fields of Asian music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. Published by the University of Malaya Cultural Centre, it appears once a year in December, and is working toward indexing by a number of international indexing services in the performing arts and humanities as well as local indexing by MyCite. As an online e-journal, available at <http://e-journal.um.edu.my/publish/MJPVA>, we see a projected global dissemination through the open access policy on the University of Malaya e-journal website. Readers can also obtain hardcopy on demand by sending their requests to info.mjpva@um.edu.my. We invite submissions (via ScholarOne Manuscripts) of original articles from the entire scope of Asian performing and visual arts fields. Please see our website for further information, and the section INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS near the end of this volume.

The current issue of MJPVA (Volume 1, December 2015) contains articles on the traditional Balinese *barong* music and dance, on music of a Malay traditional dance theatre (*mak yong*), on characterization of figures in shadow play (*wayang kulit*) theatre in Malaysia and Indonesia, and on hybridity, cultural identity and other issues among select Nanyang artists.

The articles on music focus, firstly, on the relatively new paradigm in music research referred to as ‘music ecology’. The anthropocene (an epoch when human activities began to have a significant impact on Earth’s ecosystems) is the context for discussion on the survival of the Balinese Hindu mythical animal effigy *barong* within mock-purification rituals, professional music and dance competitions as well as children’s street entertainment, in spite of the destruction of the natural environment and urbanization influence on the *barong*’s traditional performance habitat. Another music article examines the music of the Malay *mak yong* theatre focusing on the concept of musical form and periodic formal structures, this music element sometimes contesting with other elements of the musical content in order to produce a highly efficient musical soundscape in which we hear beautiful melodies negotiating with rigid periodic formal structures in this ancient Malay theatrical.

We read yet about a different form of traditional Southeast Asian theatre, the shadow play (*wayang kulit*) from Kelantan in Malaysia and from Java in Indonesia, both traditions using elements from the ancient *Ramayana* epic, but both developing characterization of the *wayang* figures in very different ways. A comparative view of the characterization of specific figures elucidates not only difference in these theatrical traditions but also the difference of cultural contexts in which these two forms of *wayang kulit* are found in Southeast Asia.

A final article focuses on paintings of the 1950s and 60s by select Nanyang artists and how their works tend toward hybridity as a means of expressing their being as a diasporic community. Most artists discussed in this article had immigrated from parts of China to the ‘South Seas’, mainly to Malaya and Singapore, while travels took some of them to other parts of ‘Nan-Yang’, such as Bali and Java. This article also considers the notion of ‘play’ as a way the artists have understood their experimentation on Chinese and western approaches to art. The article is richly illustrated with examples of works by the artists discussed.

The book and exhibition reviews reflect varied aspects of Southeast Asian traditional performing arts and culture, including commentary on papers given at the Puppetry Festival and Seminar held in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia in September 2013 (*Puppetry for all Times: Papers Presented at the Bali Puppetry Seminar 2013*). Another recent book is reviewed in substantial detail on the Chulia peoples and culture of Penang, Malaysia, a local publication documenting the culture of these South Asian peoples from the 19th through the mid-20th centuries and their contribution to multi-culturalism in Malaysia (*The Chulia in Penang: Patronage and Place-Making around the Kapitan Kling Mosque 1786-1957*). An audio review on the well-known UNESCO Collection of music from around the world, is reviewed here to acknowledge the

importance of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's efforts in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of mankind, and to inform readers of the recent availability of nearly the entire collection of some 115 CDs in various digital formats (*UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music*). Finally, a review of an exhibition on the famous Malay dance drama known as the *Mak Yong* and the efforts of its prime researcher, Dato' Prof. Dr. Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof, at the Piyadasa Gallery in the Cultural Centre, University of Malaya, details the content and importance of this exhibition. The commentary focuses on the background of personal field research and documentation by Dr. Ghulam in the 1970s, and the extraordinary black and white photographs of the *mak yong* artists of the mid-20th century now gone but leaving a legacy of artistic excellence, creativity and the "magic" of *Mak Yong* (*A Mak Yong Odyssey*).

Finally, this Volume includes a section 'In Memorium' of two renowned scholars of Southeast Asian music and theatre. Stunning tributes to the late Hardja Susilo (1934-2015, Javanese musician and dancer) and the late James Brandon (1927-2015, foremost Western scholar of Asian theatre), both of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, are presented by dancer Garrett Kam (Ubud, Bali, Indonesia) and Asian theatre scholar Kathy Foley (University of California at Santa Cruz), respectively.

The Board of MJPVA Editors wishes to thank all contributors of articles and reviews appearing in this first volume, as well as the many blind-reviewers whose recommendations resulted in the collection of articles and reviews contained herein. Thanks also go out to all scholars on the Editorial Advisory Board, representing excellence in scholarship from Southeast and South Asia, Australia, Europe, the USA and the UAE. Special thanks also go out to Editor Dr. Emelia Ong, coordinator of the visual arts department of the Cultural Centre University of Malaya, who provided the design for this journal.