COMBINATION OF MALAY TRADITIONAL AND CHINESE POPULAR MUSICAL ELEMENTS INTO A NEW MANDOPOP COMPOSITION

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Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours (Music) 2017
COMBINATION OF MALAY TRADITIONAL AND CHINESE POPULAR MUSICAL ELEMENTS INTO A NEW MANDOPOP COMPOSITION

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Projek ini merupakan salah satu keperluan untuk Ijazah Sarjana Muda Seni Gunaan dengan Kepujian
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Fakulti Seni Gunaan dan Kreatif
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2017
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(LAI KEE NEE)

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is well-known by the world as a multiculturalism country, build by over twenty different ethnics and race, customs, and culture. What make Malaysia really different from other nation is, there are cross-cultural exchanges in between. The term cross-cultural exchanges become the idea of mine to make something different in Malaysia’s Mandopop. Mandopop is Mandarin language pop in short (Moskowitz, 2010), it is one of the subgenres from Chinese popular music or C-pop (Lee, 2012). The possibility of the combination of Malay traditional musical elements into new Mandopop composition that could be done in current 21st Century and accepted by the Malaysian audiences is a question mark for me. Based on the studies of Jay Chou’s composition and Malay traditional music, I have combined the Asli Tune style melody and instrumentation into my new composition, and done determination of the feasibility of the new composition among Malaysian audiences, the cross-cultural exchanges have clearly formed through the composition.
ABSTRAK

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Mandarin language pop or Mandopop in short (Moskowitz, 2010), is one of the subgenres from Chinese popular music or C-pop, first imported from Shanghai to Taiwan during 1920s, then developed during 1950s. Although Malaysia’s Mandopop industry is not highly productive compare to other local popular music industry, there are still number of Malaysian Mandopop songwriters and singers who are active in the industry. Good examples like Nicholas Teo, Rynn Lim, Fish Leong, Z-Chen, Gary Chaw, Michael Wong, Victor Wong, Penny Tai, and A-Niu, they are the famous Mandopop songwriter, singer and producer who currently active in the industry. By briefly listening through the songs selected based on the profile, countries and publicity of them, they are different in individual singing style, musical composition and language (Lee, 2012).

The most outstanding Mandopop artists in current twenty first century, without any objection, are Jay Chou and Lee-hom Wang. There is unique musical style that make them outstanding yet connecting this two artist together which is cross-cultural exchanges. These two artist famous with their cross-cultural musical style exchanges between the western and eastern countries in their music composition especially mix genres by adding Chinese
traditional music instruments into western musical style like R&B, Hip Hop and more to form their own Mandopop (Lee, 2012).

Malaysia is well-known as a multiculturalism country, build by over twenty different ethnics and race, customs, and culture. What make Malaysia really different from other nation is the frequent occurrence of cross-cultural exchanges in between its people. Nowadays, Malay people give away angpau or red envelope with pocket money inside to elders or children during Hari Raya Puasa, which adopted from Chinese New Year celebrations, showing the cross-cultural exchanges did happen in Malaysia and the term cross-cultural exchanges become the idea of mine to make something different in Malaysia’s Mandopop.

In local Mandopop industry, there are only few number of trying done by the local artists. In year 2007, “Melodi”, a Chinese pop song written and sung by a Chinese pop singer Rynn Lim, consists of a lyric that is written in both Malay and Chinese. This song was collaborated with Sheila Majid (Lim, 2007). In terms of genres and musical style, there are few innovations have been done. During year 1988, A song named “Say I Love You with the Passion of Malaysian Weather” --让我用马来西亚的天气说爱你 rang wo yong ma lai xi ya de tian qi shuo ai ni is composed by Teoh Yang Khoon 张映坤 by adapting the popular folk song Rasa Sayang into the song, he then re-arranged the song by adding in Malay, Chinese, and Indian instruments including kompang, accordian, tradisional Chinese flute, guzheng and tabla for singer A-Niu in 2006 (Tan, 2012a).
1.2 Research Scope

The scope is set to accomplish this topic. Mandopop studies would be chosen from the composition by Jay Chou, while the suitable Malay traditional musical elements among the Malaysia popular music would be chosen and merge it into new Mandopop composition. The Malay traditional musical elements is scoped in terms of rhythm, melody, instrumentation, and harmony.

1.3 Problem Statement

A problem is found out after the studies regarding the matter has been done which is there are no more such cross-culture exchanges happened in the Chinese pop music industry. The Malaysian Chinese Mandopop songs that combine both Chinese and Malay musical elements which were popular since 1988, were not composed after year 2008. This has make me wonder how high is the acceptance by the Malaysian with the combination of Malay traditional and Chinese popular musical elements into Mandopop.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are to analyse the characteristics of Mandopop composition by Jay Chou, to compose a Mandopop with Malay traditional and Chinese popular musical elements and to determine the feasibility of combining both Mandopop and Malay traditional musical elements into a new Mandopop composition.
1.5 Research Hypothesis

The combination of Malay traditional and Chinese popular musical elements into Mandopop able to receive positive responses from respondents and expert panel from Malaysia pop music industry.

1.6 Importance of the Study

This research is important and necessary to be carried out as it is beneficial to the multi-racial community in Malaysia. By combining the Malay traditional and Chinese popular musical elements into the new Mandopop composition, Sinophone communities are given the opportunity to know more about the Malay traditional music. Through this composition, Mandopop is introduced to Malay speaking communities. Hence, cross-cultural exchanges are formed. This research able to reintroduce this type of composition to wider audiences.
1.7 Literature Review

In this modern age, pop music or pop songs have becoming a culture promoting tool or soft power, being exchanged between the world residents. The term soft power which coined by Nye (1990), a Rhodes Scholar and Oxford alumnus, is defined as the ability to attract and persuade. Shashi Tharoor further explained it as the “ability of a culture to tell a compelling story and influence others to fall in love with them” at TED talk during year 2013 (Wang, 2013). This soft power intensely influences people since its emergence during 1950s and 1960s. Without any dissent, pop music definitely bring the most impact towards people in current world, compared to other fact or issues. Pop music flavoured by the world regardless the races, social background, religious beliefs, language, and economics status. Stige (2010), suggests that people can become closer and form a connection with each other without saying or using any words through music. The current United Nation Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2012) said, with the power of music, people can better understand the culture and civilisations of other people in this instability and intolerance era. Pop music from all over the world included English pop from America and Europe countries, J-pop from Japan, K-pop from South Korea, Malay pop music from Malaysia and nevertheless, C-pop from China and other Sinophone communities. Chinese popular music or C-pop is a main genre include other subgenres like Cantopop (Chantonese language pop), Hokkien pop, and Mandopop (Mandarin Chinese-language pop).

Mandopop was first imported from Shanghai to Taiwan in 1920s but only started to develop in the Taiwan market at 1950s. It commands a greater market share compare to other subgenres under the umbrella category of C-pop. Mandopop musicians’ range is ranging from
mainland China to other Sinophone communities all over the world including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, United States and even Canada. Sinophone literally means "Chinese Sounds." Therefore, Sinophone communities refers to a Sinitic-language community whereby the Sinophone speakers are not necessary Chinese by nationality but they all connected by Mandarin which is the standard Sinitic language (Lee, 2012). These musicians use the main dialect, Mandarin dialect as the primary language in their music production and marketing. In mandopop industry, musicians released Mandarin-language albums, they only differentiate from each other by individual singing style, musical composition and regions of the world. Musicians included David Tao (Hong Kong), JJ Lin (Singapore), Nicholas Teo (Malaysia), Jay Chou (Taiwan), Faye Wong (Beijing), Lee-hom Wang (United States) and more, are the significant and well-known artists representing Mandopop and C-pop to the world. They all have their own singing style and have great achievement in their domain. Among these artists, Jay Chou and Lee-hom Wang are the bellwether in the world market.

Jay Chou or Chouchiehlun 周杰伦, a Taiwanese pop singer, songwriter, record producer, actor and director. Chou debut at year 2000 with his 1st full-length album, titled “Jay” and has gained acknowledgment throughout the Asia, such as Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, and other Asian communities in United States, Canada and Australia. Chou has titled as the King of Asian Pop at the cover story of Time magazine Asia version during year 2003 when he only debuted for 3 years. This has considered as big acknowledgement or success of an Asian singer whereby he brings big influence towards the Mandarin popular culture. Chou wowed the world with his unique cross-cultural musical style known as “Chou Style” or Zhou Shi Feng Ge 周氏风格. By regularly
merges the traditional Chinese instruments and style with western pop genre like Rhythm and blues (R&B), rap, and ballads, Zhong Guo Feng 中國風 or "Chinese Wind" style was formed which defined as "Chinese Style Music". Unlike the common pop music, this musical style mostly composed with Pentatonic Scales rather than common Diatonic scale. Besides of his "Chou Style", Chou is best known for his another musical style namely KUSO style and sophisticated melodies. KUSO which originating from Japanese slang kuso, has evolved in Taiwan as meaning of comedy or parody version of something. This musical style allows Chou to play around with creative word in Mandarin and Taiwanese dialect and uses atypical genres example country and ragtime in his music. Lyricist Vincent Fang, who is known for his traditional Chinese poetry writing style, works together with Chou created the best Chinese Style Music and recognised by the mandarin music industry and received nominations and won several awards as acknowledgement of his works. Qinghuaci 青花瓷 or "Blue and white porcelain" integrates poetically written lyrics with the combination of Chinese and western instruments, sending the message of longing between two person through the motifs found on blue and white porcelain. The lyrics of this song has been included into the ShanDong Higher Education Level Basic Test question and JiangSu Higher Education Entrance Examination question, recognising the impact brought by this popular culture towards the communities.

Another well-known musician from this C-pop industry Wang Lee-hom 王力宏, who is an American-born Chinese, having the same standing with Jay Chou in Mandopop music industry. As soon as Wang graduated from Williams College and Berklee College of Music, he started to contribute Mandopop albums since 1995. Wang best known with his "Chinked-out" musical style whereby he combine the Chinese musical elements such as Beijing Opera,