

URBANITY AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY; A PERSPECTIVE FROM SINGAPORE¹

Eugene Dairianathan

Abstract: *Although Bruno Nettl's reassurances that concerns within ethnomusicology have not necessitated the addition of the prefix "new" to the discipline, we are reminded that the discipline, exemplified in fieldwork and musical practices explored and examined, could benefit from continued questioning of underlying assumptions (Stock 2008). Ethnomusicological studies, for example, tend to situate the affects and effects of urban/ity in particular ways that pose considerable challenges for an inevitably heterogeneous urban setting.*

On the other hand, an urban environment studied qualitatively is a potential revelation of intersections of socio-cultural, political, economic and musical trajectories. Urban environments can therefore be studied as interactions between sites of dwelling and acts of dwelling. If musical practices and communities-of-practice are embodied relationships, then the body as sensorium is a potentially rich site and act of heterogeneous dwellings, making soundscapes ways of understanding embodiment of practice/s in urban/ity. If ethnomusicology claims involvement and observation in and of musical behaviors, musical practices can be discerned through spatial dynamics between acts of dwelling and sites of dwelling. Studies in ethnomusicology could then be extended to cultures whose points of origin are sites and acts of urban/ity.

Using two musical practices, Xinyao and Vedic Metal, from the city-state Singapore, I offer a perspective on the prospects and challenges in negotiating urbanity in ethnomusicology in theory and practice.

Keywords: *Xinyao; Vedic Metal; Singapore; urbanity; ethnomusicology*

¹ Much of the research material was obtained with funds from a research grant awarded by the National Arts Council of Singapore in 2002.

A recent Mandarin print media article (Chen 2010) attempted to stimulate interest in a local musical practice *Xinyao* among a wider and younger audience drawn around prominent practitioners like Liang Wern Fook, Loi Fei Huay and Xing Cheng Hua. This article highlighted results of a questionnaire about what *Xinyao* was or could be defined as and took on board a brief account of its prominence. A larger question loomed in the article pertaining to continuation, what it meant to have continuation, what about *Xinyao* might be continued, who might be identified in the continuation and the ways such continuation might take place. While Liang Wern Fook suggested “continuation” might be too onerous a term, he deferred towards finding ways to maintain the vitality and energy *Xinyao* brought through its prominence and practice as well as its advocacy and accessibility to a younger and larger audience who might not know of its coruscating past or its impact on Mandarin language popular music in Singapore. Later in 2010, Liang was awarded Singapore’s highest artistic award of Cultural Medallion in 2010 for his contribution to *Xinyao*.

On 16 and 17 November 2010, a local Extreme Metal group performed their original compositions – a genre they call Vedic metal – at the Esplanade Outdoor Theatre, Singapore’s prestigious performing space (<http://www.kalaautsavam.com/2010/microsite/17nov.htm> – accessed 22 October 2010). Some of their original compositions this time were adapted to suit collaboration with a group of dancers from the Maya Dance Theatre Group which was used as the finale to their performing segment (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFuiXe1IWxl> accessed February 23 2011). This Esplanade gig was linked to Rudra’s self-financed music-video production, which was premiered at the Substation Theatre involving an earlier collaboration with the ‘Maya Dance Theatre Group’. As K.Kathirasan explained:

“During the music video shoot, I bounced off this idea [of a metal opera with Maya Dance Theatre representatives]... We decided to approach Esplanade [concerts project personnel] if they would be willing to stage this during *Kalaa Utsavam*² [which they were].....the performance on the actual day drew a standing ovation from even the metalheads...others came to us with commendations and appreciation for the performance” (K. Kathirasan, personal communication, 27 December 2010).

² Kalaa Utsavam is an annual festival featuring prominent protagonists in Indian classical, folk and popular/ised Art forms. This event is usually held at the Esplanade Theatres at the Bay.

Despite their locality, the soundscapes of Xinyao and Vedic Metal are revelations of multiple ascriptions and identities: Chinese, East Asian, American, Mandarin conversant, politically expedient (including American anti-Vietnam war culture and anti-Japanese influenced culture), South Indian, Hindu, Youth, Singaporean, South Asian, anti-establishment-praxis and Extreme Metal musicians to name a few. Secondly, as global and local identities *through* music, these soundscapes are revelations of extra/musical secretions forming *in* and *through* themselves, points of homage and departure in their praxis. Thirdly, such soundscapes *in formation* are not only functions of time and space, but also of their *use* of time and space. Finally, in their *use of live/d* time and space, Xinyao and Vedic Metal cannot avoid their provenance at urban/ity which has net impact on the haecceity of their soundscapes.

Ethnomusicological musings

If Xinyao and Vedic metal are revelations *of* and *about* soundscapes *in formation* and are expressions of the dynamics between sites and acts of dwelling, a more fruitful discussion of them is initiated through ethnomusicological inquiry considering how “music” is considered “*both the observable product of human intentional action and a basic human mode of thought by which any human action may be constituted*” (Blacking 1995: 224–225). Moreover, Jonathan Stock observes Bruno Nettl’s remarks in an interview that, *while our discipline has been subject to the same intellectual trends as areas like...music history, they have not sparked a....new ethnomusicology....We have always been concerned with a critical view of the observer’s relationship to the observed and identity (ethnic, national, gender)...aware of social inequalities in the arts...and we looked beyond the “great” arts of all arts* (Nettl 2002: 202, 222 in Stock 2008: 188).

Nevertheless, Stock identifies seven areas that could provide the basis for *continued questioning of underlying assumptions* (Stock 2008: 188):

1. Music analysis – “*constructedness of personal experience...empowerment of the people whose music is studied*’ and accessing ‘*consistencies in the past practices*’” (Stock 2008: 190–191)
2. Music Criticism – expressed in “*multiple genres alongside numerous...forms of expressive and symbolic action*” (Stock 2008: 195)
3. Writing – “*discussing the ethical, methodological and technical considerations*” (Stock, 2008: 196)

4. History – by approaching *historical depth that always surrounds music, using the individual's ongoing life story as a lynchpin or narrative vector for a wider-ranging assessment of musical life* (Stock 2008: 196).
5. Urban and professional traditions – specifically the concerns of carrying out ethnographic research “*without giving much attention to the particular challenges of these locations*” (Stock 2008: 202).
6. Ethnomusicology at home – distinguishing a view of ethnomusicology not as “anglophone ethnomusicology” translated into a native language but a *situated* ethnomusicology with its own emphases and norms (Stock 2008: 203).
7. Comparison – to enable one to look further at existing trends in analytical, critical and historical work and to develop further modes of writing (Stock 2008: 204).

Considering that the discipline of ethnomusicology promotes inclusivity and diversity through *a critical view of the observer's relationship to the observed and identity*, Stock's allusions are curious. Why would there be a need for a continued questioning of underlying assumptions? How and why are these seven areas pertinent to continued questioning?

Firstly, Stock's seven areas for renewal may be seen in two larger yet overlapping categories; those involving exegetical commentary (analysis, criticism, writing and history) and those articulating practice (urban and professional traditions, ethnomusicology at home and comparison). Underlying both forms of documentation is a fear – in difference and diversity in musical practice/s – of fragmentation in ethnomusicology as a discipline. Continued questioning of assumptions is useful if “*we are to fully exploit wider-ranging research agendas and explanatory genres while still holding together as a coherent discipline, we will also have to become more practiced at reading and taking in this research*” (Stock 2008: 204, emphasis mine).

Diversity and difference affecting coherence in discourse/s reveal observations of a central tenet in the ethnomusicological tradition: “*a sense of endogamy – of musical expressions emanating from within relatively unique social landscapes, rather than interacting with outside flows, consuming and reproducing the product of others, or mimicking international sounds*” (Connell and Gibson 2003: 20). This sense of endogamy engenders a need towards conservation or preservation of music of these “traditional” societies who have “*despite the odds, been transported, even rescued from distant and vulnerable places*” (Connell and Gibson 2003: 20–21). Differing views of and about ethnomusicology as

a discipline are instructive for identifying tradition's adversarial others, notably urbanity. Stock observed deprecating views of urban versions of "traditional" practices such that "*we should take urban conditions....less seriously than rural ones.*" (Stock 2008: 199)

But urbanity is as much a function of contemporaneity as history and is connected with discussions of rural/ity. Edward Soja informs us of the irrelevance of historical or chronological arguments to separate urbanity and rurality; that "*the early historical development of human societies pushes back the beginnings of urbanization and urbanism as a way of life...to at least ten millennia ago*" (Soja 2000: 4). Secondly, *live/d* practices point towards a rich description of space and place; of urbanity less as form and more as content. A more critical understanding of urbanity and urban environments Malcolm Miles suggests, should begin with provenance of the term urban: "*city and urban both derive from Latin: city from civis (citizen), and urban from urbs (city). One implies an act of dwelling, the other a site*" (Miles 2007: 9).

Acts of dwelling in lived and living practices are functions of in/transience of activities, en/actors and factors attached to meaning-making in sites of dwelling. These are expressed as *difference* (measured as individual, collective and systemic support) and *distance* between or among practices which may be directly or inversely proportional to the f/actual physical distance separating these practices. Human intentional practices are discernible through these spatial dynamics between acts of dwelling and sites of dwelling. Understanding *urban/ity* is contingent therefore, on apprehending the *difference* and *distance* between acts of dwelling and sites of dwelling.

If urbanity is a realization of the dynamics of acts and sites of dwelling, they are not much different from settings that have witnessed the beginnings and developments of "traditional" communities of practice. If urbanity and rurality are about the dynamism between acts and sites of dwelling, can there not be communities-of-practice (Wenger 1998) beginning at urban settings hitherto inconspicuous to scholarship in much the same as ethnomusicological explorations of practices in remote sites of dwelling out of urbanity?

What is needed is to engage in and with the sounds of these musical practices to enable a study of the implications these sounds have for communities-of-practice as local and global entities. Canadian composer and music educator, Murray Schafer suggests that "*we focus on individual sounds in order to consider their associative meanings as signals, symbols, keynotes or soundmarks...to call them sound events...in line with the dictionary definition of event...a context is*

implied” (Schafer 1977; 1994: 131). The soundscape emergent in Schafer’s view is seen as “*a field of interactions, even when particularized into its component sound events. To determine the way sounds affect and change one and another (and us) in field situations is immeasurably more difficult...than to chop up individual sounds...but this is the important and novel theme now lying before the soundscape researcher*” (Schafer 1977; 1994: 131).

Ethnomusicological discourse can be enriched by an exploration of the soundscapes of communities-of-practice (Wenger 1998) whose points of origin begin at urban settings by examining soundscapes and exegetical commentaries evident in urban practices and how urban musical practices connect key concepts such as indigeneity, authentication and conditions of tradition, modernity and urbanity. While Stock’s seven areas for renewal make relevant connections with the *live/d praxis* of both Xinyao and Vedic Metal, informing theory *through* practice informs this paper.

Singapore – a brief chronology

Most academics and writers have regarded the history of modern Singapore as beginning with its founding as a trading settlement by Thomas Stamford Raffles for the East India Company in 1819 (Phan 2004: 18–20). By 1824, the East India Company had control over the entire island, and Britain’s sovereignty in Singapore was acknowledged. From probably only around a thousand inhabitants known as “orang laut” (sea gypsies), Malays and Chinese arrived around 1819 and increased the population of the island to 226,842 by 1901. By the end of the 19th century, Singapore became regarded as the most cosmopolitan city in Asia, comprising nearly three-quarters Chinese and sizeable minorities of Malays, Sumatrans, Javanese, Bugis, Boyanese, Indians, Ceylonese, Arabs, Jews, Eurasians and Europeans. Singapore surrendered to the Japanese army in February 1942 but became a separate Crown Colony in 1946, obtained self-government in 1955 and internal autonomy in 1959. In 1963, it gained independence as part of the new Federation of Malaysia but was expelled in 1965, following unrest between political parties and individuals in Singapore and Malaysia, to become a fully independent nation from then on to the present (Phan 2004: 18–20).

Currently there are 5,183.7 million people resident in city-state Singapore (land size 714.3 km² and population density 7257 persons/km²), of whom 3,789.3 million (about 73.1%) are Singapore citizens or permanent residents (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/latestdata.html>, accessed 28 January 2012). Slightly more

than one in every four persons (26.9%) living in Singapore is neither a citizen nor a permanent resident. Demographics among the citizens and permanent residents indicate the amalgamation of all Chinese-dialect-speaking groups to comprise 74.2% of the population while the Malay and Indian communities comprise 13.4%, and 9.2% respectively. An odd description for a community of citizens, *Others* (anyone not of Chinese, Malay or Indian ascription), comprise 3.2% of the remaining citizen/permanent residence population (Statistics Singapore 2011).

Given the heavily urbanized nature of city-state Singapore, how does one come to understand practices aligned with those of more homogeneously formed “traditional” societies? Given the population density and the likelihood of plurality and diversity of communities, how does one acknowledge individuality of communities as well as interaction and exchange among these communities?

Since Xinyao and Vedic Metal’s situatedness in Singapore constitute an urban phenomenon, this article focuses, first, on the spatial opportunity and dynamics in coming to terms with their practice and prominence. Secondly, this article focuses on musical practice/s as they pertain to soundscapes and the dynamics between acts-of-dwelling (musical practices as expressions of urban/ity) and sites-of-dwelling (sites where musical practices are un/seen spaces) in terms of *e/mediated* space. Musical practices – as expressions of musical and human behaviors in these practices – are therefore discernible through these spatial dynamics between acts-of-dwelling and sites-of-dwelling. Third, while I suggest that Xinyao and Vedic Metal’s enablement towards prominence cannot deny the contribution of forms of mediation available in urban environments, their practices remain essentially a variation of intentionally material communication through different and innovative instruments and techniques, as well as musical practices around them. Stock’s seven areas for renewal will form the backdrop while I reflect on the levels of interaction and interchange via the soundscapes of Xinyao and Vedic Metal.

Xinyao

The **Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians** entry on music in Singapore identifies **Xinyao** (新谣) as a Mandarin vocal genre accompanied by guitars, which began in the early 1980s among teenage students (Lee 2001). Xinyao is derived from “*Xin jia po nian qing ren chuang zuo de ge yao*” (songs composed by Singapore youth, Xin from *Xin jia po* [Singapore] and yao from *ge yao* [songs]). Practitioners in this niche community of youth *use/d* Mandarin as a *live/d*

language and for whom Mandarin *informs/informed* their lives. This musical practice was reported in the local English-language newspapers as a name coined by young singers, lyricists and song-writers for themselves although the name reportedly emerged during a forum organized by a local Mandarin newspaper. Moreover, personal interviews and anecdotal accounts reveal that many students, particularly from secondary schools and junior colleges (age-group 13–18), formed groups and performed their own “ballads” in their schools well before this musical practice appeared in newspaper articles (Dairianathan and Chia 2010). Many recordings, radio broadcasts of songs or live recordings remain as potential subjects of further and future research in an attempt to understand the soundscapes of a musical practice some time before it acquired a name.

Oral accounts refer to the practice of amateur music-making by students but without a specific name or label to this practice. According to Mindy Lin’s (2004), oral and aural modes of communication and transmission distinguished this practice which was rooted in the everyday experience. Lyrics were available via cipher notation and cassette tape recordings, while tunes were sung by students who were able to recall what they had listened to and disseminated it. Transmission of repertoire took place through school exchange programs like a concert, with the lead singer using guitars or other portable instruments as accompaniment. Concerts of this nature in schools were likely to have been organized by the Chinese [Mandarin] Literary and Dramatic Society. Although the term **Xinyao** had not yet appeared, its practice had been advertised through concerts featuring students’ own compositions. Secondly, their songs indicate a predilection for secondary processes of music as primary motivation for appropriating musical structures to suit their usage. Given their informality of learning through oral and aural transmission, choice of simple constructions, simple chords and memorable melodic lines, **Xinyao** practitioners were enabled to be effective in creating and performing their own songs. There were other sources of influence. For principal protagonist Liang Wern Fook, training for him was about listening to previous models:

“I learnt about other forms of music through avid listening to different genres of songs...songs from my parents...Chinese art songs....“O Sole Mio” and “Come Back to Sorrento” sung with Chinese [Mandarin] lyrics...pop songs in secondary school [aged 13–16 years]“我家在哪里？”(Where is My Home?)....songs by 刘家昌 (Liu Jia Chang) or songs from Hong Kong drama serials...songs from Taiwan written by undergraduate students on campus 民歌 (Mingge) somewhere in the late seventies...songs like “兰花草” (Orchid), “恰似你的温柔” (Just Like Your Gentleness), “外婆的澎湖湾” (Grandmother’s Penghuwan)...very catchy

and simple...I started to write my own songs" (Oral Interview with Liang Wern Fook, January 2004). Liang's recollections mirror the creative pathways of many like him who studied Mandarin as a first language and who engaged with and consumed music of similar influences. Both amateur and professional practitioners drew influences from both art song and entertainment songs but distinguished their songs by a more sophisticated understanding and use of Mandarin as prosaic and poetic language, motivated by the power of their collective experience and facilitated by directness of musical material.

Xinyao practitioners recalled that the local Mandarin radio station broadcast a selection of college campus songs from Taiwan known as **Mingge** (民歌). Benjamin Ng's study of Japanese popular music in Singapore makes a similar observation, that Taiwanese songs of popular culture and mass entertainment were *Mandarin covers of Japanese enka (urban nostalgic and emotive songs) or kayokyoku (early Japanese pop)* (Ng 2002: 1–2). This goes some way to explain **Mingge** practitioners' aversion to a popular/ized culture not entirely of their ownership despite the provenance. The predilection for college campus songs therefore represented a repertoire which Taiwanese could identify with and call their own in terms of music-creating, performing and listening. Yet other influences for **Xinyao** at a more local level of influence included the musical practice of **Shiyue** (诗乐) by students from the former Nanyang University (Nanyang Technological University today). For Liang, **Shiyue** was very refreshing and different and had a strong influence and impact on him because songs in **Shiyue** placed emphasis on literary themes espoused in Mandarin poetry.

For Koh Nam Seng, a member of the most outstanding **Xinyao** group **The Straw**, musical influences were more than just regional in re/sources:

"During my time in Singapore Polytechnic...friends liked to sing American pop songs like 'Blowing in the Wind' and we liked to sing in harmony, three parts, like Peter Paul and Mary, Bob Dylan....because they gave me a sense of what is alive in a song...'Where have all the flowers gone'...we just liked the music...guitar..and voices that harmonize....it captured me...that is how I came to music" (Oral interview with Koh Nam Seng, December 2003).

Given their early beginnings in classrooms or campus spaces, much of this *extra/musical* learning began with the use of language. Many who came to participate in **Xinyao** were Mandarin conversant either as a native language or a subject in a school where Mandarin was a niche academic subject (Mandarin began as a first language option for students but by 1979 had become a language equal

to English in the school system). Ironically, Xinyao's rise to prominence in the 1980s in Singapore coincided with a national **Speak Mandarin Campaign** initiated in 1978 which resulted in the use of Mandarin in official communication, extending to commercial endeavor and eventually affecting use of Chinese dialects among family and friends. For a niche community steeped in Mandarin and live/d practice, this would have made no difference *to* or *for* them.

Themes in Xinyao songs included reminiscing the departure of childhood, school life, the excitement of special moments, the camaraderie shared at campfires, friendships, and the laughter and tears of innocence; protests against the pressures of academic excellence and material comfort; plight and inner struggle of teenage victims of an education streaming system and broken families during the 1980s; infatuation, falling in love, naïve optimism, true tests of friendship, being lost in the process of growing up, the life of a shopping mall punk called *Ah Ben*; and even exhorting the Singapore brand (Dairianathan 2004: 254–257).

Many of the initial songs in the musical practice of Xinyao resonate with Liang's accounts of his days of self-discovery and "apprenticeship" in music and text understood the processes of writing *through* music:

"These kinds of songs [Xinyao]...were more personal, more approachable.... simple chords, simple structures and simple compositions and later on, because I began writing...poetry and prose, I tried to put in words for [my] own music" (Dairianathan 2004: 259–260).

This grew to a stage where *"this special way of writing songs...constitutes an important part of my Xinyao compositions; to me at least, it was a most natural form of expression with no commercial motive. Xinyao opened the doors for diverse people from different training and backgrounds to participate in it, even when some of us didn't have proper training. Some of us sang because they liked to sing their own compositions...in the 1980s, none of us ever thought that we could cut an album or sign a professional recording contract. If it had not been for this Xinyao movement, I would never have done it...the music industry...established itself because of Xinyao...[t]he younger generation...in the 1990s would have had a better start benefitting from...many Xinyao songs"* (Dairianathan 2004: 261).

Liang's musings are instructive; recalling Blacking's (1973) observation between accomplished and beginning participants (children) in the Venda tradition of **tshikona** where children's songs were less sophisticated versions of the community's experience and expression of it but observed to be identical in substance (Blacking 1973: 101–102). Similarly in Xinyao, there is little to suggest systematic or comprehensive or drill-style training for music-creating,

performing and responding by neophytes to the practice of Xinyao other than watching and attending to performances older and more experienced local and international peers. Yet beginning Xinyao practitioners were enabled in ways that were immediate, engaging and enthusiastic sharing of songs they composed, reflecting a personal and unique expression no less substantial than older and more accomplished members. It was in sharing musical performances in a variety of ways that amateur Xinyao practitioners were capable of understanding, applying and attending to substantial thinking processes not very different from their older and more accomplished peers that gave these amateur music-makers the confidence to articulate their heightened awareness, vindicate their self-esteem, not to mention the pleasure of singing their own compositions. Secondly, Liang informs us that this flurry of amateur activity in Xinyao gave rise to excellence in quality of performances which enabled many amateur music-makers towards professionalizing their practice, which led to the signing of recording contracts by some of their principal protagonists, Liang being one of many notable names as well as groups like **Di Xia Tie** (地下铁) and **The Straw**.

In terms of proliferation and public performances, the first reported **Xinyao** concert, “Sounds of Teens” was held at the Singapore Conference Hall in 1983 while another took place at Hong Lim Green in 1984 as part of Singapore’s 25 years of nation-building and yet another at the Botanic Gardens in 1985. There was sufficient interest created for the then Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (Mediacorp today) to run a radio program called “Our Singers and Songwriters,” a half-hour program which was aired on the then Radio 3 (95.8 FM today) on Sunday evenings at 7:30 pm. The introduction of an amateur vocal group category in the Chinese singing competition resulted in increased participation by a number of **Xinyao** groups. The release in May 1984, of a first **Xinyao** compilation album, “21 Tomorrow,” yielded sales of 20,000 copies creating a heated surge of interest in print and broadcast media. **Xinyao** songs gained their first entry into the Singapore Chinese Billboard charts followed by solo recordings from 1985 onwards. Locally organized Chinese singing competitions in 1985 also introduced a “local compositions” category. An inaugural two-night **Xinyao** Festival was held at the World Trade Centre Auditorium in 1985 with help from the Boon Lay Community Centre Readers Club. This was further boosted by the formation in May 1986 of the Young Songwriters Society, which had for its aims the promotion of **Xinyao** artistes and activities. Interest in **Xinyao** also engendered strong support at community centers around Singapore, not to mention **Xinyao** camps which encouraged the creative and recreative endeavor. By 1987

however, a forum yielded the view that **Xinyao** as amateur re/creative endeavor need not hinder songwriters' creativity *beyond* such endeavor. The 1987 annual **Xinyao** Festival featured "newcomers" such as strobe lights, back-up dancers, four-piece bands, performers' outstanding outfits and slick presentation (Low 1987). Towards the end of the 1980s, prominent **Xinyao** songwriters took to singing their own songs; Liang Wern Fook and Loy Fei Huei being the most notable. The early 1990s however, seemed to have been marked by ebbing of interest in the movement. The 1990 annual **Xinyao** Festival was "reduced to a school concert playing to a half-empty hall" while the Sing Music Awards in 1990 was scrapped because "too few **Xinyao** albums were submitted for nomination" (Chin 1994).

Interest in the practice of **Xinyao** continued into the 1990s albeit from consumption through the public and media. In 1993, a venue for **Xinyao** enthusiasts and aspirants to sing and present their songs became possible with the opening of 'The Ark Lounge' (based on a well-known lounge chain in Taiwan bearing the same name but not amounting to a franchise). Other lounges followed suit, like one called "The Fifties." In 1994, a radio program called "Station of Music" was launched through the joint efforts of a local radio station, "Radio 100.3FM" and a **Xinyao** organization called "Feeling Associates" (reportedly initiated in 1989 with a membership of 10,000 including those from Malaysia). The aim of being selective with aired songs was to introduce "*the better songs to overseas record companies. Hongkong, for example, is greatly in need of songs for its many stars*" (Chin 1994).

Not much more was accounted for in the **Xinyao** movement until a "Xing-Pop" concert materialized as one of the opening celebrations at the newly commissioned Arts space, the Esplanade in 2002 (Lee 2002). Subsequently, a two-night sold-out concert at the University Cultural Centre of the National University of Singapore featured **Xinyao** and Taiwanese **Mingge** (民歌) practitioners, another **Xinyao** reunion concert on 22 March 2003 featuring Eric Moo and Friends, the launch of a book and CD-compilation of **Xinyao** songs by Liang Wern Fook in 2004.

Discussions of **Xinyao** in the present context have to take cognizance of a musical practice that began in a venue – *school* – providing *avenues* for many young aspiring songsmiths and lyricists for whom Mandarin was re/source as a first academically-based language (meaning all subjects were taught and learned in Mandarin). **Xinyao** marked a coruscating beginning, consolidation and consummation in the public domain signaling homage to and consolidation of a community-of-practice and, in 1987, extending it towards a professional commercial-based practice.

1987 arguably marked the beginning of Xinyao submitting to apparatuses associated with professional and commercial-based endeavor in popular music practices; moving away from the school/campus as site and symbol of creative endeavor. Some of its principal protagonists continued their new found endeavor given the impetus of commercialization while others reverted to Xinyao almost as a *rustic school yard* (rural) practice. In events leading into the 1990s, Xinyao supporters it seems had made decisions large enough such that fewer albums were released and a potential industry of awards for album releases ground to a halt because of a lack of album releases rather than lack of creative endeavor. Nevertheless, as quickly as Xinyao came to prominence in the early 1980s, it reportedly came to an end within a decade (Dairianathan and Chia 2010).

There is an alternative reading to the apparent demise of Xinyao. Given the disproportionate number that reverted to *nostalgia as live/d praxis*, much of Xinyao repertoire took on a different trajectory and became the subject of tea lounges where anyone who was interested in creative activity was given as much space as recreations of older favorites. Perhaps those that supported its endeavor sanctioned greater proliferation from the point of amateur activity stopping short of commercializing such endeavor.

Its principal protagonists returned in the millennium in both senses, as the outstanding performers of Xinyao they were and their repertoire which soon found consensus and consolidation. Many reunion concerts – as they were dubbed – were quickly sold out and despite the professional atmosphere of the music accompaniment, these concerts became events also featuring a niche crowd of Mandarin-proficient supporters who were about the same age group as their principal protagonists, knew the lyrics of the songs and fully appreciated the subtlety of the verbal exchanges in the concert.

Use of language in Xinyao – meaning textual content – is a crucial characteristic of its “authentic” and “indigenous” state where music acted as a vehicle for the subtlety and nuanced articulation of Mandarin prose and poetic text. The simple chord constructions were there to ensure vehicular access and efficacy. The portable keyboard or more popular “strum-and-sing” guitar were instrumental as vehicles to accompany the voice/s. Lyrical content seemed the more important in the agglomeration of music and text. As argued in the earlier setting, Lefebvre reminds us of “*a contradiction between technology (know-how) and technicity (modus operandi)...although all music or poetry has a technical—even a technological—aspect, this tends to be incorporated, by means of appropriation into the qualitative realm*” (Lefebvre 1991: 391–2).

Simplicity of melodic and harmonic construction therefore is not to be confused with commensurate simplicity of textual material in Mandarin as Liang explains:

“There is a certain rhythm that is inherent in a poem itself. If you can match these rhythms and place the emphases in the right places, repeating certain syllables, putting the emphasis on certain repeated words, it can help to convey the message more effectively. Another method is through the use of homophones. In the song that I wrote called Worrying Heart [担心], I had this verse ‘worrying – dan xin for your lonely heart – dan xin [单心]’. The first dan refers to ‘worry’ and the second dan xin refers to ‘a lonely heart’...collectively...‘I worry for your lonely heart.’ Because of this homophony, you can unearth two ‘layers’ of meaning. Thus, I think that language [use] is very important...If one wishes to adopt such a technique, it has to culminate in a certain characteristic of the work and achieve a certain effect. It shouldn’t be the case that one just sloppily adds in the words for the sake of finishing the work in haste” (Oral Interview with Liang Wern Fook, January 2004 – emphasis in original).

Here the “voiced sound” in Liang’s exemplar acts in double counterpoint: first of musical homophony against homophony in language (same sounding but different meaning); secondly, the technique of Mandarin as language against technology of musical creation and performance. Given the complexity of language use, a sensible strategy on their part would naturally involve a technology (what people do) of memorable melodic lines supported by simple chord construction and simple and clear textures for **Xinyao** practitioners to be most effective with the sophistication of proficiency (technique as learned and conditioned behavior) they clearly possessed in Mandarin. It is also quite clear that this sophisticated use of Mandarin language would also set them apart from white Anglophone-influenced commercially available Mandarin popular music. This description of Xinyao’s soundscapes has similar parallels with Stock’s urban and professional traditions albeit the professionals as the amateur “authentic” practitioners while the urban musicians were in the field of commercial activity.

But while Xinyao began as a musical practice as a vehicle for the subtle nuances of text in Mandarin, changes in the educational landscape in Singapore would result in Mandarin as language of instruction for all taught academic subjects being supplanted by English as a language of instruction for all academic subjects in all Singapore schools from the 1980s onwards to the present. Mandarin would continue to exist as a compulsory second language option equal to the English language but would never assume the role it had nor engender learners as would have been prior to the 1980s.

Xinyao seems to exist in the present as bifurcated identity:

“No longer...the raw, folksy and school-like songs that guitar strumming students sang in the past. It has now come to encompass a varied and sometimes more sophisticated range of songs that even Taiwanese and Hongkong stars are crooning to” (Chin 1994).

This view of Xinyao as “folksy” vs “sophisticated range of songs” parallels Stock’s observations of deprecating views of urban practices vs “traditional” practices (Stock, 2008: 199). But are they both not manifestations of something which was common to both practices across space and time? Liang and his cohort of first language speakers of Mandarin represent the last of their kind in Singapore in the present. Much of Xinyao continues to exist in music recordings, reunion concerts, scholarship (Dairianathan and Chia 2007; 2010) and as a lesson topic in a music textbook for secondary schools (Stead and Dairianathan, 2008). Xinyao’s proliferation and sustenance will depend on further and future attempts to better comprehend this coruscating phenomenon.

Vedic Metal – Rudra

An entry on music in Singapore in the *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* informs us that:

“The majority of Indians in Singapore speak Tamil ... temple music from the Carnatic tradition ... is performed to announce daily prayer times and during festivals such as Thaipusam and Thimithi. Other genres include Bhajanas (Sanskrit bhajans), film music and Hindustani and Carnatic classical music” (Lee 2001: 421).

Considering Rudra’s existence and presence since 1992, absence of mention is instructive either as exclusion (considering that the others are musics of traditional and religious practices) and second as neglect, given that the more ubiquitous film music (popular and mass-consumed culture) seems not to have been missed.

According to their own promotional materials, *Rudra* is a name for the God of Storm in the Vedic period (and in later Hinduism, *Shiva*, God of Destruction). According to the group, the name *Rudra* symbolizes the aggressive character of its music and unique identity epitomized in a genre of Extreme metal (Death metal) they call ‘Vedic metal’ (Dairianathan 2009: 585). Vedic Metal’s unique identity through Rudra is induced and inspired by texts and lyrics that *“deal with the philosophy found in the Vedas called [Advaita] Vedantas”* and, as one band member has observed, *“we are very much inspired by that school of thought*

and hence, we call our music ‘Vedic metal’ (Dairianathan 2011: 168). Rudra’s members are of south Indian ascription (except for Alvin Chua who was with the band from 1996–2000).

Despite their dominant use of and being conversant in English, Rudra’s band members consider themselves third generation Indians in Singapore who studied Tamil as a second language in the Singapore school system (Metal-Rules 2004). They also claim affiliation with Hinduism as their “innate cultural (not just religious) identity” (interview with K. Kathirasan of Rudra, 2002).

While Tamil as live/d language and Hinduism as innate cultural identity create impressions of south Indian identity in Singapore, they were for Rudra members sources and resources for their own meaning-making, as recalled by K. Kathirasan:

“I grew up listening to South Indian film music but developed a kind of aversion [to it]...such commercial music (including English pop music) lacked the integrity of self-expression. So in the late 1980s we dumped both South Indian and English music for Extreme metal which took serious themes that we could relate with. Moreover, I didn’t like the fact that South Indian songs were based on movies with pathetic storylines which were surreal. That complicated the issues we had with commercial music. However as I grew up, I appreciated A. R. Rahman’s music because it was really relevant to the times and I liked the good sound engineering that went behind his productions” (Email communication with K. Kathirasan of Rudra, 2007).

In fact, their introduction to the world of Extreme metal and early formation came via another cultural re/source:

“The Malay community I associated myself with was a committed bunch and rockers. Their lifestyle gave a lot of importance to rock music ... I loved hanging out with them. Listening to Metal seemed to me like...every Malay boy’s rite of passage. We shared many kinds of rock music from glam rock to thrash/Death metal...my proper initiation into the world of metal. Plaza Singapura [shopping mall] on Saturday night was popularly known...as metalhead/bandboy hangout night...right outside the McDonald’s then. Mostly musicians, listeners and group-ies hung out at these places. In terms of community size it was in descending order: Malay, Chinese, Eurasian and Indian. There was another place at The Forum [former Forum Galleria shopping mall]...the metalheads were supposedly more elite...supposedly only listening to more obscure underground metal...this attitude of being non-mainstream among a few cliques. Talking about bands others didn’t know would always make them ‘more’ underground although

I found such attitudes childish” (Email communication with K. Kathirasan of Rudra, 2007).

Their musical formation through socio-cultural interaction was also instructive of the ways in which their immersion was equally function of *use of* that immersion:

“Rudra members shared an affinity for the soundscapes of rock music with the Malay community, yet nothing more than the music itself seems to have been ingratiated” (Dairianathan 2011: 176).

Like Xinyao, musical formations in Vedic Metal had other sources for provenance; notably the *white Anglophone* world of popular music including Extreme Metal. This is some distance removed from socio-cultural influences from their communities of provenance in the Singapore context where *the South Indian classical tradition (Carnatic) emerged as a primary re/source for the musical practice of South Indian film in India and Singapore* (Dairianathan 2005, Dairianathan 2009: 593). Music of South Indian film was to become by the 1990s into the present, re/sources for the imbibing of *African-American and African-Caribbean musical influences, such as rap, R&B, soul and reggae* (Dairianathan 2009: 599).

Rudra’s subscription to white-Anglophone re/sources had special significance in the Singapore context where such practices of popular music were caught in fraught relationships with state apparatuses and *subjected to high levels of surveillance and policing because of its association with drug abuse, devil worship, permissive lifestyles and anti-establishment behavior* (Dairianathan 2009: 586). Rudra members recalled evidence of such anxiety in their formative years:

“Every other day when we left our jamming place, the police would stop us and check our IDs [identification cards]. And the public would watch us as though we were criminals because we wore black all the time.” (Email communication with K. Kathirasan of Rudra, 2009).

However, this eventually capitulated to Rudra’s prominence in public performances by these very same state apparatuses who sought to curtail and limit its practice in the preceding decades because of alleged associations with substance abuse, hippyism and inappropriate social and moral values. In 2007, Rudra were offered partial sponsorship for their tour of three American cities by the locally established performing rights group (COMPASS) affirming local (Rudra) creative and intellectual output (Dairianathan 2009: 604).

By 2001, with the release of their second album *Aryan Crusade*, Rudra’s soundscapes had a label, “Vedic Metal,” which members felt more strongly about than being just another Death Metal band:

“In the initial years we [were] trying to sound like the bands we loved. Over the years we have found a sense of purpose [to] what we have been doing...and redefine our existence in terms of Vedic metal or Vedanta [philosophy]...our style of Vedic metal will reflect the opposites of nature, trying to find that which pervades both the profane (growls and loud guitars) and the sublime (Vedic chants/philosophy). The oscillations which are very much evident in all our albums reflect the nature of reality we perceive, both unpleasant and pleasant...closer to what Death metal is right now musically although lyrically we do not conform much to...We prefer to call ourselves a Vedic metal band or maybe an Extreme metal band. Death metal...limits what we are” (Email communication with K. Kathirasan of Rudra, 2008).

As with communities-of-practice (Wenger 1998) traditional or otherwise, Vedic metal cannot escape the authentication of their own soundscapes, their textual and musical re/sources and reception of their music and genre. Moreover, it would be difficult to deny the indigenous characteristics of a musical practice that is Vedic Metal. On the other hand, that indigeneity acknowledges Sanskrit text and the Advaita Vedantas, South Indian cinematic soundscapes which acknowledge both Indian classical and more contemporary black Anglophone secretions, the musical practices of Mat Rock among the Malay community in Singapore which also acknowledges the more worldwide phenomenon of Extreme Metal. Moreover, these intersections of soundscapes among communities also acknowledge urban, cinematic, traditional, religious and historical soundscapes which represent compressions of time and space. But evident in their performances on 16 and 17 November 2010, Rudra have gone further to collaborate with a contemporary dance theatre group to engender choreographed responses to their original compositions; with different/differing meaning for Rudra as a Vedic Metal group. There is even the ironic possibility of mapping their praxis onto musical theatre not very dissimilar to cinematic soundscapes; the very soundscapes they had come to express disdain for.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have indicated how Xinyao and Vedic metal have had their points of origin in urbanscapes. Their *live/d* soundscapes are far more problematic than a simple urban label. But it is through these urban soundscapes, Xinyao and Vedic Metal are seen to select “traditions” from a past for their present and future discourses; selecting practices from “traditions” from *an/other* place which may or may not have links with point/s of origin; and, reveal

how im/migrant communities who, when navigating their way into a different environment, adopt and adapt practices belonging to other cultures in their “new” environment. Observations of both practices indicate how cultures viewed without question as relatively stable *indigenous* communities, in the same space and time, have also learned to adopt and adapt to change over time.

Musical practices then, are more likely to appear more *cohesive* than coherent even as *systemic* modes of practice carry their own sense of logic. Encouraging comprehensibility among difference/s will necessitate a dialogic relationship between praxis and exegetical commentary as well as between *systemic* and *systematic* consolidations of live/d practices. Blacking made the observation of such tensions in attempts to systematize and formalize systemic practices:

“While musical systems are related to social institutions, the relationship is dialectical, dynamic and highly problematic” (Blacking, cited in Byron 1995: 23–24).

As soundscapes however, Xinyao and Vedic Metal secrete keywords familiar in ethnomusicological discourse that need questioning.

Tradition seems a sacrosanct keyword in ethnomusicology and is germane to a discussion of systemic and systematic understandings of musical practices. In his chapter on unities of discourse Michel Foucault (2002: [1972]: 1969) identified properties associated with the concept of tradition:

“It is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same; it allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin; tradition enables us to isolate the new against a background of permanence, and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to the decisions proper to individuals. Then there is...influence, which provides a support...for the facts of transmission and communication; which refers to an apparently causal process...the phenomena of resemblance or repetition; which links, at a distance and through time – as if through the mediation of a medium of propagation such defined unities as individuals, œuvres, notions, or theories” (Ibid: 23–24).

To invert Connell and Gibson’s suggestion that traditions (read “ancient” practices) remain in the contemporary world and may be entirely contemporary in authorship (Connell and Gibson 2003: 21), I argue that Xinyao and Vedic Metal as present day urban practices are manifestations of “tradition” from a selection of traditions that precede them chronologically and geographically.

Such perceptions of the connotations of tradition on *lived* and *living* musical practices connect with another keyword, temporality. Temporality can be thought of in at least two ways; functions of time, and that which is predicated – even prescribed – as a result of consolidated practice. Practices contingent on time rely on participant observation in the present tense which renders readership of previous accounts. Predications through time arrive as consolidated practice which then presumes derivation, provenance and, as Foucault articulates, difference proper to every beginning, to impute continuity. Continuity can be perpetuated by practices evident in the present which rely on ethnography in the present taking precedence. Continuity can also be predicated on arborescence: ascriptions of lineage, pedigree, pre/dominant theme, person/ality or social collective which precipitates solidification of conventions. But continuity may also emerge through rhizomatic processes where a plethora of ascriptions which have little to do with lineage or pedigree but are seen to achieve coherence as a *cohesive totality* greater than the sum of its parts.

When *re/gained* from solidified conventions – or mindsets – of teleological derivation, predilections of ethnicity, clan or class being more dominant, continuity may ascribe endogamous value and/or right of access to musical repertoire via specific instruments, persons or persons representing ethnicity or community. Endogamy then functions as metaphor for every possible approach to tradition which either views “*social inequalities in the arts*” as mindset or an agenda for affirmative action or exacts heritage as criteria of lineage or pedigree for inclusion, with ramifications for the concept of coherence and by default, exclusion.

Coherence in musical practices is problematized by im/migration and urbanization to name only two. Cohesiveness renders *in/coherent* a musical practice which raises questions of authenticity, especially for establishing or consolidating what constitutes a tradition. Tradition may potentially act as a divisive tool depicting in musical practices around the world notions of insider/outsider roles. Tradition can also engender – through intervening institutions seeking coherence – outsider-dominated discourse dictating what defines these musical systems and practices within. If musical practices are more realistically *cohesive* rather than *coherent*, achieving coherence through ethnomusicology as a discipline can become potentially dissonant with lived and living outcomes in musical practices of communities. This is because of the way perpetuation of systemic behavior in musical practices in contemporary settings engenders different meaning and use/r value for diversity. If coherence of *systemic praxis* in the community-of-practice is rendered into *systematic practice*, coherence representing the discipline of

ethnomusicology potentially *re-presents* as institutionalized practice, musical practices by individuals, and individuals representing communities-of-practice. Are practiced readings and readership in the discipline of ethnomusicology cognizant of the consequences of *mis/construing* cohesiveness for coherence, unwittingly privileging discourses as well as discursive strategies to engender what Hobsbawm called *the invention of tradition?* (Hobsbawm 1983).

But Connell and Gibson's observations of *a sense of endogamy* as central tenet in the ethnomusicological tradition has more than one trajectory, especially in relation to *musical expressions emanating from within relatively unique social landscapes* (Connell and Gibson 2003: 20). Blacking argues "*what is ultimately of most importance in music...is there in the body, waiting to be brought out and developed*" (Blacking 1973: 100). If music is enacted, performed and evident through individuals *and* communities, it not only reveals something about music being brought out of *self/s*, but also ways such embodied expressions cannot be ignored as *indigeneity* at the most basic anthropological level.

Returning to Blacking's suggestion of 'music' as emergent, "*we ought to be able to learn something about the structure of human interaction...structures involved in music, and so learn more about the inner nature of man's mind... observation of musical structures may reveal some of the structural principles on which human life is based*" (Blacking 1973: 115).

Expressions of an individual – as individual *and* community-of-practice – authenticate this indigeneity in at least two ways. First, rurality, urbanity and modernity are therefore seen as *authentications of indigeneity over space and time*. This has positive value for the discipline of ethnomusicology if it engages and authenticates communities-of-practice indigenous to urbanity. Soundscapes emergent from individuals and communities-of-practice in urbanity indicate more crucially, the qualitative nature of this indigeneity even as "*multiple, overlapping musical communities are intermingled, and musical networks criss-cross one another temporally, socially, physically and electronically*" (Stock 2008: 201). As soundscapes of musical and human intentional behavior, urban musical practices have less to do with imagined teleology and predilections for provenance and more to do with how musical practices are *en/acted*, lived *in* and *through* their communities as functions of time and space; summarily, how their soundscapes are *authentications of their indigeneity*.

Listening *to* and *for* soundscapes not only informs us of the indigeneity of person but also indigeneity of *persona/e* of communities-of-practice/s. Listening also provides opportunities for negotiating the very meanings that make for these

soundscapes not only in specific locations but also what connects them to other practices around the world. If soundscapes represent points of differentiation, difference/s in multiple practices need not necessarily connote fragmentation or differences between exegetical commentary and multiple practices of communities. Exegetical commentary in textual form, including recordings and online resources, are likely to be varied but it is this very diversity of perspectives that encourage different levels and layers of comprehensibility of *differing* musical practices across the world. Reflexive writing and ethnography are helpful in getting to a sense of their presence and practice in a specified location. They also make for prospective examination, differences of insider/outsider dispositions notwithstanding. But it will take criticism – of musical, historical and geographical perspectives – to come to terms with different practices to understand diverse ways of musical practices irrespective of time and space.

If soundscapes form the very basis of discovering and studying communities-of-practice as a central tenet, then ethnomusicology can re-assert its dispensation with the prefix *new* yet all the while being sensitive – if not sensitized – to a *critical view of the observer's relationship to the observed and identity...aware of social in equalities in the arts...beyond the "great" arts of all arts* (Nettl 2002: 202, 222 in Stock 2008: 188).

EUGENE DAIRIANATHAN's publications focus on interdisciplinary perspectives on Music. He is presently Head of the Visual and Performing Arts Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

References

- Blacking, J. 1973. *How Musical is Man?* Seattle, USA: University of Washington Press.
- Blacking, J. 1995. *Culture & Experience: Selected Papers*. Edited by Reginald Byron, Chicago University of Chicago Press.
- Chen, Y. (陈映葵), 2010. *Xinyao: At the Crossroads*, (联合早报) Lian He Zao Pao, 17 February.
- Chin, S. F. 1994. Xinyao is back in Style, Straits Times, 2 September.
- Connell, J., and Gibson, C. 2003. *Sound tracks: popular music, identity, and place*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Cowan, A., and Steward, J. 2007. "Introduction." Pp. 1–22 in A. Cowan and J. Steward (eds.). *The City and the Senses: urban cultures since 1500*. Aldershot, England, UK, Ashgate.
- Dairianathan, E. 2004. "Shuo Chang, the essence of the songs of Liang Wern Fook." In 写一首给你歌, [Write you a Song] L. Han (ed.). *World Scientific Arts Series III*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.

- Dairianathan, E. 2009. "Vedic metal and the South Indian community in Singapore: problems and prospects of identity", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 10/4: 585–608.
- Dairianathan E., and Chia, W. K. 2007. (戴有均、蔡慧琨) 新谣: 文化的定位 [Xinyao: questions of culture]. Nanyang Centre for Chinese Language and Culture, Nanyang Technological University. Singapore: Global Publishing, pp. 147–62.
- Dairianathan, E., & Chia, W. K. 2010. "Shuo Chang (说唱): giving voice to and through Xinyao (新谣) a musical practice in Singapore." *UNESCO Observatory E-journal*, 2/1. <http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/unesco/ejournal/pdf/editorial-vol-two-issue-one.pdf>.
- Foucault, Michel. (2002: [1972]: 1969). *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A. M Sheridan Smith). London and New York: Routledge.
- Goh, S., 1995. Pop bulletin. *The Straits Times*, 31 March, Singapore: L17.
- Hobsbawm, E. 1983. *The Invention of tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Koh, C. T. 1985a. Fame reaches out for new fans. *Straits Times*. 22 March.
- Koh, C. T. 1985b. Songs of life by the young. *Straits Times*. 4 July.
- Lee, B. B. 2002. "Xinyao – The catalyst that brought about Singapore Mandarin Pop." Program booklet for *XingPop*, 18 October. Singapore: The Esplanade Co. Ltd.
- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The production of space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers.
- Lee, T. S., 2001. 'Singapore'. Pp. 421–423 in S. Sadie and J. Tyrrell (eds.). *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, New York, USA: Macmillan, 23.
- Lek, A. (2006, March) Interview with Rudra, *Audioreload*, <http://www.audioreload.com/node/4095> (accessed 8 January 2007).
- Lin, W. Y. Mindy. 2004. An analysis of selected Singapore ballads (**Xinyao**), 1980–1990. Academic exercise (B.A.Hons.), National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.
- Low, M. M. 1986. PA to popularize local ballads with help of **Xinyao** performers. *Straits Times*. 10 June.
- Low, M. M. 1987. You could rock at this upbeat **Xinyao** Show. *Sunday Times*. 30 August.
- Maya Dance Theatre (2010). <http://www.mayadancetheatre.org/images/uploadedimages/WRITEUP%20FOR%20rudra.pdf> (accessed, 18 February 2012).
- Miles, M. 2007. *Cities and Culture*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Ministry for Information Technology and the Arts. 2000. *Renaissance City Report: Culture and the Arts in Renaissance Singapore*, Singapore: Ministry of the Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA) presently.
- Ng W. M. Benjamin. 2002. "Japanese popular music in Singapore and the hybridisation of Asian music." *Asian Music* 34/1: 1–18.
- Phan, M. Y. 2004. 'Music in empire: Western music in 19th century Singapore through a study of selected texts,' Masters thesis, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
- Soja, Edward W. 2000. *Postmetropolis: critical studies of cities and regions*. Oxford; UK Malden, Mass. USA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Stead, P., and Dairianathan, E. 2008. *Joy of Music Secondary One Textbook*. Singapore: Star Publishing, Singapore.

- Stock, J. 2008 “New directions in Ethnomusicology: Seven Themes towards Disciplinary Renewal.” Pp. 188–206 in H. Stobart (ed.). *The new (ethno)musicologies*. Lanham, Md., USA: Scarecrow Press.
- Tan, W. P. 2003. *Xinyao (Singapore ballads) and the construction of Singaporean identities*. Academic exercise (B.A. Hons.), National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.
- Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Resources on Xinyao

Oral Interviews:

- Zhang Fan, March 7, 2003.
Liang Wern Fook, June 17, 2003.
Liang Wern Fook, January 17, 2004.
Koh Nam Seng, December 11, 2003.

E-interviews:

- Tan Wei Ping, June 2003.
Lin Wan Ying, Mindy September 2003.

Websites:

- <http://mandarin.org.sg/campaign/milestones/default.htm>
<http://www.dbj.org.sg/PDF/S35e.pdf>
http://www.getforme.com/previous2005/151105_creativeindustriesinsingaporeovertheyears_more.htm accessed 28 February 2010
<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/> accessed 28 January 2012.

Resources on Vedic Metal

- Rudra website: <http://www.rudraonline.org/>.

Online resources:

- Aham Brahmasmi as recorded in studio by Black Isle Records
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arhWNhCjVWc&feature=related>.

Baybeats

- <http://www.baybeats.com.sg/2010/index.html> accessed 25 December 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7D8PY725ck&feature=related> accessed 25 December 2010.

Brahmavidya Immortal I – album release videos

- <http://vimeo.com/24167129> – accessed 28 May 2011.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJPx0tuB-oo&feature=related> - accessed 22 May 2011.

Brahmavidya Immortal I – International tour performance video

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WiaQq6buJk-> accessed 28 May 2011.

Kalaa Utsavam

- <http://www.kalaa utsavam.com/2010/microsite/17nov.htm> – accessed 22 October 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFuiXel1WxI> accessed February 23, 2011.