

***Musicalbody: A Study of Malaysian 24 Festive  
Drums with Specific Reference to Pan-Asian  
Performance Theory***

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

The Malaysian 24 Festive Drums (24 FD) is a new emerging performance form, which was initiated in 1988 in Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia. The performance concept is derived from the 24 solar terms (minor festivals) in the Chinese lunar calendar system. Yet the performance practice features a combination of ensemble drumming and a wide range of choreographed bodily movements. An actor-drummer's body is performatively used in the 24 FD performance and training. The current scholarship of 24 FD is situated within the domain of ethnomusicology, which offers an ethnographical description of 24 FD to readers who are not familiar with the form. Ethnomusicology and performance studies, although, offer valuable tools to understand performativity in the context of social and cultural identity, an in-depth discussion of how various factors are related to the performativity of 24 FD has not yet been given. The actor-drummer's body is the source for creating the performance and performativity. The technical, physical, psychophysical and aesthetic aspects of this form, however, have not been explored seriously in the current academic discourse. A series of significant research gaps lead me to address the inaccuracy of the existing research methods and the necessity of establishing a new methodological framework to thoroughly examine how philosophical concepts are relevant to performance in aesthetic and technical ways, and how this new approach aids the understanding of the aesthetics and performance practice of 24 FD. As a result, in order to frame a pan-Asian foundational framework, I draw theories from selected Asian philosophies, religions, aesthetics, and bodily traditions. Indian, Japanese and Chinese philosophies and aesthetics theories are selected in this project, as these cultures are relevant and play an influential role in Malaysian culture due to their historical interaction and multi-

cultural exchanges. By using a specific pan-Asian methodological foundation, 24 FD training will be investigated on the basis of an epistemological debate demonstrated in training to perceive technique as knowledge, and the Chinese concept of *yin yang* and martial arts in Asian actor training, which are closely associated to 24 FD in philosophical and practical ways. To better understand the performative dynamics of 24 FD, I conceptualise a term *musicalbody* as a critical term to describe the fusion of musicality and corporality in the phenomenon of 24 FD. The repertoire/performance entitled *The Memories* will be analysed to illustrate and explain this phenomenon. The foci of the study, therefore, will be: 1) to examine the designated pan-Asian (Indian, Japanese and Chinese) aesthetic and performance theories with a specific focus on the role of the body in Asian concepts, 2) to explore the performance/training principles of 24 FD mainly focusing on the bodily movement, percussion, dynamics and choreography, 3) to contextualise the current research background of 24 FD, updating the contemporary development of the form, 4) to conceptualise critical terms, such as “actor-drummers” and *musicalbody* in order to facilitate a better aesthetic and artistic understanding of 24 FD.

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# Glossary

## General Notes

### Surnames

Chinese scholars	Many Chinese scholars share the same surnames. In order to distinguish them, I use the surname plus initial to distinguish some of the Chinese names.
Malay scholars	Malay scholars have no clear distinction between surname and first name. Hence, I use the full name to refer to the Malay authors.

**Translations** from Chinese to English were required in this thesis. In all occasions of ancient Chinese texts, literatures, interviews and text messages, the English interpretations were given by the author of this thesis, unless specified.

The writing style of the **ancient Chinese texts** has found some differences in relation to the contemporary linguistic structure. First, the sequences of reading and writing are from the top to the bottom and the right to the left. Second, no punctuations are available in the texts. Third, one single character conveys multiple meanings, and the words were written in the traditional Chinese characters.

This thesis follows the guidelines of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the University of Lincoln Harvard Referencing in general. However, a slight issue arises from **referencing** to the ancient Chinese texts. No page number is a common problem that exists in the most ancient Chinese texts. Hence, the page number cannot be referenced unless it is available.

## **Vocabulary**

**Repertoire:** Repertoire is conventionally used to refer to a set of different pieces, which are prepared to perform. However, in the context of 24 FD, a ‘repertoire’ is a common term that is widely used to refer to a classic piece of performance, which has been created in the first place and can be recreated repeatedly for the different occasions of performances. Newspaper reporters (Dinesh Kumar Maganathan, 2017; Embren Batrisyia Zainourudin, 2018; Leng, 2016), 24 FD researchers (Chan, 2015; Nithyanandan, 2015) and performers from both professional and traditional teams, all adopt the term ‘repertoire’ to acknowledge a performance piece in their usage. To avoid the confusion, the term ‘repertoire’, in this thesis, is only used to indicate an annual and/or classic piece of performance/composition in the particular context of 24 FD.

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization.

**Malaysian:** The word “Malaysian” is not equivalent to “Malay”, and vice versa. The term “Malaysian” embraces multi-culture, multi-religion, multi-ethnicity in the state of Malaysia. However, Malay can only refer to one particular culture and ethnicity in Malaysia.

### **Foreign Vocabulary**

The following vocabularies are the terms used in the thesis, emanating specifically from the Malay, Chinese, Indian and Japanese language and culture.



**Advaita:** It plays an influential role in the Indian philosophy. According to Bhajanananda and Mission, “Advaita as a philosophy’ is a conceptual framework that attempts to explain impersonal absolute occurs as the phenomenal world and individual selves” (2010, 2).

**Batik:** The use of *batik* in this thesis only refers to Malaysian *batik*. It is a textile design that is popularised in Malaysia. According to Rohaida Nordin and Siti Safina Abu Bakar, *batik* features in organicity and geometricity. As he continues, “Malaysian *batik* is heavily influenced by religious beliefs that discourage the use of animals in the design work; floral and geometric designs are used instead” (2012, 118). The *batik* design was used as one set of costumes in the performance of *The Memories*.

**Bunga Raya:** The national red flower of Malaysia.

**Close-door policy:** Close-door policy is a practice of limiting the foreign intervention into a home country. In regard to China, the close-door policy has been practised several times since the 8<sup>th</sup> century period, and between 14-19<sup>th</sup> century during the Ming and Qing Dynasty. China also appears to practise its close-door policy during Mao’s communist rule between the 50s to 70s (Chen, 1991, 3-13)

**Dharama:** In Indian philosophy and religion, *Dharama* represents the fundamental principles that make things, events and actions possible. It also refers to the right way for living.

**Dikir Barat:** a Malay form of singing and doing hand and head movements in a sitting position.

**Fuxi (伏羲) & Fuxi *ba gua*:** It is debated whether Fuxi is a person or a period of collective composition of the diagram of *ba gua* (Wang, 2000). In Chinese history, it is believed that Chinese civilisation in ancient times commenced from Fuxi. In order to articulate the dating of Fuxi, the methodologies that Wang adopted include analysing data from the aspects of oceanography, meteorology, and geology in Chinese ancient times to give a reasonable explanation of the living environment of time and space, and the establishment of emperors/sovereigns. In order to determine the accurate timeline, Wang also matches the totems that are found from the archaeological site with toponomasiology, astrology and astronomy to prove the existence of three emperors and five sovereigns (2000, 680). Wang, as a contemporary, claims that a possible dating of Fuxi Period is during 7724BC to 5008 BC (2000, 49). Scholars cautiously refer to Fuxi period for accuracy. However, it is not the main focus of this research. The term Fuxi refers to the origins of the first *ba gua* diagram.

***Gamelan*:** is an ensemble of Indonesian percussive music instrument.

***Gendang*:** drum in the Malay language. It is a two-headed Southeast Asian drum.

***Gendang silat*:** *gendang* means drum in Malay, whilst *silat* means martial arts. *Gendang silat* is a term used to define a particular Malaysian performance style of drum and martial arts performance.

***Kathak*:** an Indian classic dance.

***Laguku*:** was the annual repertoire in 2015 that was composed by Orang Orang Drum Theatre.

**Malay Archipelago:** an area between Indonesia and Malaysia. It covers Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and Peninsular Malaysia.

**Manglish:** A unique Malaysian way of speaking in English. Apart from the accent being different to ordinary English; the grammatical structure of *Manglish* mostly borrows from Cantonese and Mandarin.

**Nirvana:** has been translated into English as salvation, which according to Buddhism is the highest state of knowledge a human being can reach through meditation. In Indian, Japanese, and Chinese aesthetic theories, there are concepts similar to *Nirvana* referring to aesthetic experience as the liberation from the daily mode of thinking and experiencing.

**Orang Asli:** Indigenous tribe, aborigines.

**Orang Orang Drum Theatre:** is one of the commercial teams that is active in the 24 FD community. *Orang* in Malay means a person, and *Orang Orang* means a group of people. Thus, there is a wide range of theatrical and scenic movements that are integrated into the drumming. This has become the characteristic of this team.

**Rojak:** a traditional dish of mixed fruit but often used to express a way of mixing a variety of things in conversational Malay language.

**Tabla:** is a South Asian drum.

**Teochew:** A city situated in the South of China in Guangdong Province.

**The Illustration of I:** 易象圖說 is one of the volumes that interprets the *I Ching* in the *Imperial Collection of Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature* (欽定四庫全書 薈要)

***The Memories:*** A co-production performed by Orang Orang Drum Theatre and JB Drums.

**The *Natyasastra:*** An ancient Indian treatise that identifies principles of different performance forms.

***The Torching of Manuscript and Premature Burial of Confucian Scholars:*** 焚書坑儒 It is due to the threat posed by Confucianism towards the governing of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty. The emperor destroyed many valuable classics of different fields, such as medicine, music, poetry, and divination. Many Confucian believers were killed in this movement.

***Vimalakirti Sutra:*** Also known as *Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra*. It is an Indian Mahayana sutra and one of the most famous texts in Mahayana Buddhism. According to Burton Watson (2000), the translator of the text, the likelihood of the composition of *Vimalakirti Sutra* is roughly around 100CE.

***Xici:*** 繫辭 Confucius's commentary on the *I Ching*.

***Yam Cha:*** The word is derived from the Cantonese tradition of having tea. In the Malaysian context, it can be understood by Malaysians of different ethnicities to mean having tea as well. However, it is similar to a recreational activity of going to a café or coffee shop for chatting and relaxing.

## **Chapter 1:**

# **Introduction: A Cultural Melting Pot, the Conception of 24 FD**

Malaysian 24 Festive Drums, known as 24 FD, is a particular performance form that originated in Malaysia. It is also known as *Gendang Dua Puluh Empat Perayaan* in Malay. From the perspective of performance practice, 24 FD is characterized as a multi-cultural performance with intricate combinations of rhythmic patterns and bodily movements, flexible but choreographed formations, physical and auditory dynamics, and theatrical scenes. In the field of Asian performance, the current research interest largely dwells on the major cultures, such as Indian, Japanese, and Chinese. Although a wide range of cultural performance forms are performed in Southeast Asia (such as in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand), fewer performance theories and critical studies have been developed in the understanding of these forms. According to Chopyak, “Malaysian music seems to have had little impact on the world. There is very little literature available on the topic” (1986, 111). As Nithyanandan affirms, Malaysian performances are not well recognised on the international platform; HANDS, the leading professional team of 24 FD, was once mistakenly perceived as Japanese drumming (2015, 60). 24 FD is a new emerging form, which is relatively unknown to academia. The situation of its emergence is as Dunsby describes, that “practice has run ahead of theory” (1996, 19), demonstrating a lack of research and recognition. Thus, 24 FD is an under-researched form of performance. Aesthetic theories explaining the practice seem to be absent due to the strong emphasis on the practical aspects. Additionally, most cultural performances feature indigenous cultural characteristic. 24 FD was conceived in Malaysia, where the context is seen as a “plural society” (Fee, 1995, 393). The multi-cultural practice led the form to develop as a unique performance style in which various cultures are embedded in. There is, however, a lack of research investigating the multi-cultural influence of 24 FD, where the culture in Malaysia is formed of multi-ethnic groups. As Matusky and Tan explain, the multi-ethnic group includes “the Malay, Chinese, Indian, Dayak,

KadazanDusun, Portuguese, Eurasian and other groups” (2017, 5). In this respect, there is a need for a pluralistic approach to present and elaborate the phenomenon of 24 FD as a contemporary performance in a multi-cultural setting. Moreover, 24 FD is a fusion of music, dance, theatre, martial arts and many other performative elements as a whole in its performance practice. There is a Malaysian term *gendang silat* (martial arts drums) to describe the music ensembles of Malaysian performances, however, the performance of 24 FD includes more than martial arts and drumming. Diverse performative elements, hence, can be traced in 24 FD and these elements closely interlock with each other to auditorily and visually constitute an embodied performance of 24 FD for the audience. Therefore, in this chapter, I mainly aim to provide a brief introduction on 24 FD from an ethnographical perspective, delivering contextual, cultural, historical and social information on the subject.

## **1.1 Current Scholarship and Limitations**

### **1.1.1 Research on Traditional 24 FD Team**

The study of 24 FD has only been established by a group of Malaysian scholars in recent years. Traditional (also known as school teams) and professional (commercial) teams are the two main types of groups in 24 FD (see sections 1.2.8.1 and 1.2.8.2). From my investigation, the available research on traditional 24 FD is limited in many ways. Academically, there are only three published works on traditional 24 FD teams, including Chan’s MA dissertation (2001), Chan’s article on 24 FD training (2006), a conference paper on 24 FD training by Lee et al. (2015) and a section from a textbook, documented by Matusky and Tan (2017). Of the former three academic works, Chan (2001) shows the first interest in 24 FD in her MA dissertation written in Malay. The dissertation focuses

on showcasing the relationship between music and choreography of traditional 24 FD. Although Chan's MA dissertation can be considered as the first work on 24 FD, it is written in Malay not English, indicating that her work is only accessible to Malay speakers. This limits the possibility for further research on an international scale. Matusky and Tan (2017) list 24 FD as one kind of Malaysian percussion ensemble in their textbook about *The Music of Malaysia*. In the 24 FD section, they only briefly introduce its performance style in a few lines, ranging across the aspects of history, instrument, music and rhythm. This section on 24 FD leans more towards an encyclopaedic essay rather than an in-depth piece of research. Further to that, Chan (2006) continues her research on 24 FD with an article about *The 24 Jie Ling Gu (24 Season Drums): Towards Discipline, Musicality and Creativity in the Chinese Schools of Malaysia* to examine the pedagogical aspects of 24 FD within the Chinese vernacular education system of Malaysia. Sharing the same interest, Lee et al. follow Chan's pathway, by looking into the "team-building" training sessions in 24 FD. In their paper, they undertook fieldwork with the Foon Yew drum team (Johor Bahru, Malaysia). In their analysis, they identify basic music theory, marching, stamina training, practice as a group, and rote-learning as the main training methods within the group (2015, 2332). This paper, however, does not offer in-depth detail about the 24 FD training sessions. In fact, there are a larger variety of methods involved in 24 FD training, due to the diverse performance styles of different teams. Fundamentally, the amount of research on 24 FD from the above researchers is relatively small and consists mainly of conference papers and a small section of a textbook. My PhD thesis, for the first time, offers an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the conceptual framework and practice of 24 FD, as my approach does not merely look into the practical aspect, but also examine the theoretical underpinning that shapes the unique characteristics of the form.



### **1.1.2 Research on Professional Team**

With the inspiration of the above scholars, the research angle of 24 FD has been shifted from the traditional team to the professional one. Gee (2013) narratively reviews one of the performances, *The Next*, which was given by a professional team, Hands Percussion (HANDS). Chan (2014) again attempts to explore the music, movement and choreography of HANDS. In 2015, the research on HANDS moves to an ethnomusicological perspective. Nithyanandan (2015) pursues her MA dissertation on how the performance of HANDS can project a Malaysian identity. According to Nithyanandan, the main focus of this work is the music element in HANDS, whilst dance and movement are not major concern in her dissertation (2015, 14). Chan discusses interculturalism in HANDS, by conducting a performance review of the music and choreography that have been used in the piece titled *Flesh and Bone* (2015, 31). HANDS can be seen as a transformed form of traditional 24 FD. Nevertheless, one is barely able to find a link between the traditional 24 FD and HANDS since the first study of HANDS in 2013. Commonly, the definition of HANDS “is a Malaysian Chinese percussion ensemble” (Chan, 2014, 106). In my informal conversation with Chan (2017), she claims that traditional 24 FD teams and HANDS have different focuses and styles. She perceives HANDS as different to the traditional 24 FD. Several differences distinguish HANDS from traditional 24 FD performances. This point will be expanded in a later section of this chapter. HANDS as a leading team represents a professional level of percussive performance, yet the intimate interrelationship between HANDS/professional teams and traditional/school teams has not yet been discussed. In Chapter 1, I also raise the issue of lacking ‘uniformity’ of 24 FD by comparing professional and traditional teams. To further investigate, I aim to find out how to respond to this particular phenomenon by looking at selected Asian philosophies and aesthetic theories in Chapter 2.

### 1.1.3 Critique of current scholarship

With reference to the available writing on 24 FD, the current existing research framework can be summarised as follow:

1. Historical accuracy and standardisation of terminologies.

As 24 FD is a modern performance form, which only emerged less than 3 decades ago, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the form can be frequently found, one aspect of which is the official name, authenticity and cultural elements of the form. One important point that I have identified from the previous studies is the inconsistency of the use of the name/translation. 24 FD has carried its official name as *24 Festive Drums* (二十四節令鼓) since 2009. Chan (2001, 2006, 2014) has not acknowledged the official name until her most recent articles on HANDS in 2015. Chan is not the only one, as many other Malaysian scholars who are interested in 24 FD also fall into the trap of the misinterpretation. For example, I found that Chan, A.<sup>1</sup> classes 24 FD as the Chinese lion dance in her article, as these two use the same membranophone (*shigu*). As a result, she inaccurately refers to 24 FD as “24-drum ensemble” and considers it a performance that is derived from the Chinese lion dance (2009, 90, 95), which is contextually incorrect. In recent publications by Leng (2013), Nithyanandan (2015), Lee et al. (2015) and Matusky and Tan (2017), none of them is aware of the formalisation of the name as “24 Festive Drums”. This is because 24 FD is still a lesser-known performance that has only been studied by Malaysian ethnomusicologists. There is lack of unification of concepts and definitions in its performance, social and cultural practice. The drawback of this leads to the limitation of understanding 24 FD. Therefore, it is necessary to re-explore the

<sup>1</sup> Chan is one of the most common surnames in Chinese name. I put Chan, A. (Amy Chan) to distinguish the key author of 24 FD scholar Clare Suet Ching Chan.

contextual information before the analysis of the aesthetic and practicality of the form. I will draw from different strands by re-examining the contextual background in the later section of this chapter.

## 2. Demand for a revised cultural context

The need for a revised cultural context is necessary to 24 FD research for two reasons: 1) The context Chan (2001) based her research upon was the early stage of the 24 FD school team, where the performance style tended to indicate Chinese characteristics rather than a multicultural and transcultural fusion. Yet after undergoing almost three decades of exercise and transformation, the Chinese character has largely diminished with the rise of Malay, Indian and other cultures. Considering the emergence of professional teams, the trend of multi-cultural interaction will predictably continue in the future. Significantly, the cultural context has influentially shifted from Chinese-only to Malaysian culture. 2) The cultural context of 24 FD was blurrily identified in the previous research. This is attributed to the fact that 24 FD was examined only by Malaysian scholars previously. Domestic scholars may be familiar with the multicultural traits of Malaysian culture. For them, the phenomenon that 24 FD was inspired by a variety of cultural traditions is a common issue to Malaysians, hence, they have not identified the dynamics of pan-Asian traditions towards the development of 24 FD. 24 FD, however, is not a self-conceived performance form. It was established by borrowing a set of small portions of different Asian traditions. Simply positioning the research in a Chinese or Malaysian context is not valid in the discussion of 24 FD, as there is more than one culture that exists in the form. In the subsequent section, I will explain what the problem is of utilising a single cultural approach to 24 FD.

### 3. Methodological reductionism.

Although Malaysian scholars, such as Chan (2001, 2006, 2014, 2015), Matusky and Tan (2017), Lee et al. (2015), Leng (2013), and Nithyanandan (2015), contribute informative materials to the discourse of traditional 24 FD and HANDS, their argumentations are partial and lack uniformity (see point 3-6 for details). Throughout my reading, it was hard to find a single piece of work that could accurately and comprehensively understand, elaborate and conceptualise 24 FD in an aesthetic, ethnographic and practical way. This is probably because Malaysian performing arts pay more attention to their practice rather than academic research. Matusky and Tan (2017) document more than 50 kinds of performance forms in Malaysia in the defined category of *Classical Music*, *Folk Music*, *Syncretic Music*, and *Popular and Contemporary Art Music*. Most genres are culturally independent yet dependent at the same time due to the multicultural characteristics of Malaysia and there is a lack of theoretical underpinning of their performance practice. 24 FD is one of these genres. It is, therefore, important to explore relevant theories from different fields and corresponding cultural traditions, in order to create a theoretical foundation for current and further studies of 24 FD.

The ethnomusicological approach is the main methodology that has been found in the current research framework. It mainly looks at music, movement and choreography of 24 FD, with the research methods of fieldworks, performance analysis and case studies. Notably, most of the academic writing only focuses on one individual 24 FD team at one time, due to the limitation of their research size. Every 24 FD team has its own performance style, training methods, inspirations and aims. Therefore, it is hard to map out what is the general feature of 24 FD, and to specify the phenomenon (aesthetic and practice) of the form as a whole in the current literature. For my PhD, I can benefit from

including a variety of teams from different geographies (Johor Bahru, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Liverpool) and traditions (school/professional teams) to collect more information historically, culturally, aesthetically and practically to offer more accurate insights into 24 FD.

There is a clear lack of critical categories in the analysis of 24 FD. The methodologies that Chan (2001, 2006), Matusky and Tan (2017), Lee et al. (2015), utilised in 24 FD studies are mainly observations and interviews in fieldworks and performance reviews. From the perspectives of considering 24 FD as a new emerging form, these materials and information provide the first image, for readers who are foreign, of 24 FD. Most findings and discussions, however, are narrative and descriptive. Theories in (music) performance are largely absent in their data analysis. In this PhD project, I aim to establish a new framework of the study of 24 FD from different dimensions. Particularly, I will use performativity as a key term to formulate concepts from relevant disciplines. Performativity is the common term that bridges the fields of ethnomusicology, music, dance and other performances in this study, and it furnishes this thesis with multiple applications depending on the context. Detailed discussion will be engaged in Chapter 2 to 4<sup>2</sup>. With the illumination of my intention and approach in the next section and how they are relevant to my research questions, the structure of this thesis will be more clearly understood.

<sup>2</sup> For example, one of my main finding in Chapter 2 is that an aesthetic concept in the pan-Asian context is being performative. In Chapter 3, I particularly use “performativity” to aid with the understanding of a sophisticated *yin yang* discussion. Performativity occupies a larger proportion in Chapter 4. I discuss how a performance can be performative by linking the body, music and culture. I also use this term to conduct an in-depth analysis of the piece *The Memories* and develop a dedicated concept for 24 FD following the theme of performativity.

#### 4. Need for a comprehensive research and professional practice.

The examination of music, movement and choreography is the first step to investigate 24 FD. They are explicit in the practice of 24 FD, and also are part of the competition requirements. It is apparent that music, movement and choreography are central to the entire performance and training. These components, however, cannot be separated in order to create the performance/performativity of the form. 24 FD contains more than sound and sight. There are far more elements than “the three” (music, movement and choreography) that can be located in 24 FD, such as the symbols of Chinese calligraphy on the drum body, the inspiration of movements that derived from the performance concept<sup>3</sup>, the involvement of theatrical setting, *mudra* (hand gesture), costumes, makeup, props in performance and so on. Existing research seems to address music, movement and/or choreography individually in its analysis, rather than blending them into one unit. Behind these elements, there are a series of factors that affect the performance, performativity, musicality and physicality of 24 FD.

The current research interest has led HANDS to become the major focus in the enquiry of professional teams, yet apart from HANDS, many other drum teams, such as *Orang Orang Drum Theatre*, *Souls Impact*, *Northern Drum*, and *frhythmS Academy* are professional teams that independently exist in Malaysia. The exposure and popularity of these teams may increase, due to the rapid development of 24 FD as a whole. HANDS aside, no other professional teams have so far gained academic attention. Scholars (Chan, 2014, 2015; Gee, 2013; Nithyanandan, 2015) favourably lean towards HANDS in their research on professional teams. The problem of only looking at the practice of HANDS gives rise to

<sup>3</sup> The inspiration of 24 Festivals from Chinese lunar calendar does not merely form the team, but also inspired one of the two founders, Tan Hooi Song, to create a series of conventional bodily movements by imitating agricultural activities.

two issues: Firstly, HANDS cannot represent all of the professional teams, and secondly, there are many other professional teams, which have a different focus. These teams remain largely undiscovered and indicate different performance styles and corporeal and musical presence. It is crucial to study them further in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of 24 FD. In Chapter 4, a performance titled *The Memories*<sup>4</sup> will be closely analyzed, in order to showcase the incorporation of the professional and traditional teams in creating a fusion of theatre and ensemble drumming in a performance. Additionally, the performance analysis of this piece will aim to explain how the professional and traditional teams make efforts to project a performative identity of being 'Malaysian' during the performance.

**To sum up**, in my study of the available literature, the relevant research on 24 FD is insubstantial. In the existing enquiry, music, bodily movement and choreography dominate the main research interests. An apparent lack of theorisation has been identified in the review of the existing research. In addition, the emphasis of current research tends to be one-sided in several ways.

1. the potential and relevant performance theories are largely unlinked and undeveloped during the analysis of the performance and training.
2. the research on traditional teams occupies a smaller portion than the professional teams. Besides this, research on professional teams only focuses on HANDS whereas many other professional teams are excluded.

<sup>4</sup> A co-production performed by Orang Orang Drum Theatre and JB Drums.

3. the cultural and social context is in need of relocating and re-establishing, as the current generation of 24 FD has undergone different changes since its establishment.
4. there is a lack of critical terms to explain the phenomenon of performance, as well as underpinning analysis of the training and development in 24 FD.

### **1.1.4 My Approach**

To bridge the research gaps as identified above, it is necessary to establish a new critical framework in order to accurately elaborate the case of 24 FD. In this project, my approach is intercultural and inter-disciplinary overlapping disciplines of ethnomusicology and Pan-Asian performance theory. Ethnomusicological methodology was the dominant research tool in the previous 24 FD research. This thesis only aims to undertake an ethnographical investigation into the social, historical and cultural aspects of 24 FD. These elements are essential to understand how 24 FD was uniquely developed within the Malaysian context. Due to the multi-cultural characteristic of 24 FD, a Pan-Asian aesthetic approach to performance serves as the main methodology in this research. It is situated in a wider context of (Pan) Asian Performance Theory<sup>5</sup>, which embraces the knowledge and methodologies of Performance Studies, Theatre Anthropology, epistemology of performance practice, and intercultural theatre. At the same time, it explores the underlying principles of Asian traditions and theories to understand how Asian performance techniques are closely connected to the relevant philosophical concepts. By benefiting from the intercultural and inter-disciplinary strands, the Pan-Asian theoretical approach in this thesis is established by reviewing relevant literature

<sup>5</sup> (Pan) Asian Performance Theory: see the discussion in Chapter 2.



on selected Asian practice, philosophies and aesthetics to construct a critical and accurate framework for the investigation of 24 FD.

A mixture of fieldwork, interviews, observations of training sessions and of a wide range of performances has been employed to gather information and data for this project. The purpose of using these methods is to illuminate how pan-Asian aesthetic/performance theory can explain the practical phenomena of 24 FD. My previous experience of playing 24 FD will be also included in this thesis as a first-hand source to offer an empirical analysis of the research subject. Details of my research methods will be addressed in the methodologies section. In short, the main approach to this project includes the following aspects:

1. An examination of the designated Pan-Asian (Indian, Chinese, Japanese) aesthetic and performance theories with specific focus on the performative use of the body.
2. An exploration of the performance and training principles of 24 FD mainly focusing on bodily movement, percussion, musical and/or corporeal dynamics and choreography.
3. A contextualisation of the cultural, social and historical background of 24 FD to avoid general misconception and misunderstanding between 24 FD and other performance in the region.
4. A conceptualisation of critical terms, such as *musicalbody*, in order to understand the phenomenon of actor-drummer, training and performance aspects of 24 FD.

### **1.1.5 Research Questions:**

Having outlined my approach and attempts in this project, the fundamental research questions for this PhD thesis are “what is 24 FD; what is its performance practice?” These

main research questions will be integrated and clarified using the following sub-questions:

1. In what particular context was 24 FD conceived, developed and transformed into a contemporary form? How did interculturalism, multiculturalism and transculturalism influence the evolution of 24 FD?
2. What are the selected Asian perspectives on the performative use of the body in performance practice, and how does a Pan-Asian approach with the selected traditions of Indian, Japanese and Chinese practices facilitate a greater understanding of the performative components of 24 FD?
3. What is the psychophysical mechanism of Asian performance that synthesises the complexity, multiplicity and technicality of the in-body training to create a fusion of performance based on ensemble percussion, choreography, theatrical movement and story for the audience?
4. How does the concept of *musicalbody* function as a means of embodied musicality to include music, dance, body, emotion, feeling and culture in the context of 24 FD?
5. What are the contemporary innovations of 24 FD, how do they address the multi-cultural diversity and what artistic cultural transformation has this experiment brought to a contemporary audience?

### **1.1.6 Methodologies**

In order to respond to the above research questions, this study was conducted with a variety of methodologies to satisfy multiple approaches of inquiries. This research is situated in an interdisciplinary context that overlaps the knowledge between ethnomusicology and Pan-Asian performance to explore an interweaving structure of

theory and practice in music, theatre, martial arts established with the training and performance of 24 FD. Research methods include:

1) Library-based research formed a literature study of relevant philosophies, theories, concepts and terms, such as Pan-Asian performance theories (Indian, Chinese and Japanese philosophies and performance theories) in chapter 2, *yinyang*, *bodymind*, technique as knowledge in chapter 3, *musicking* and performativity in chapter 4 and translation of original Chinese texts in chapters 2 and 3. Details of how these methodologies were integrated into the discussion will be expanded upon in the section “structure of the thesis”.

2) Fieldwork took place from 2014-2018<sup>6</sup> primarily in Malaysia with additional trips to Taiwan and Liverpool. In Malaysia, the states of Kuala Lumpur and Johor were my main research sites. I visited the Segamat, Labis, Kluang Chong Hwa JB Drum teams and the Foon Yew High School team in the Johor state, and Orang Orang Drum Theatre in Kuala Lumpur. Interviews were conducted with Tan Chai Puan, the founder of 24 FD, as well as instructors and/or performers Low Kee Hang, Jarrett Leong, Zhiyong Lye, Boyz Chew and Zye Leow. The languages used in these interviews were mainly Mandarin and Cantonese, which are also my native languages. The choice of the usage depended on the preference of the interviewees. I also translated the interview scripts into English and the translation of some Malay terms that I was not familiar with was contributed by my interviewees. Observation and surveys were undertaken in the aforementioned teams

<sup>6</sup> My first fieldtrip to Malaysia was in Feb 2014. After this, I visited once a year for a few days. The latest visit was in April 2018.

during the training and performance sections. Performance analysis was also an alternative method to review and understand the performance practice of 24 FD.

3) Social platforms, such as Facebook and Wechat were the main communication channels used to interact by text messages for instant response and also to set up video/audio interviews. The term “informal conversation” occurring in this thesis was used to refer to the information which I gathered from either Facebook Messenger or Wechat text/audio message. YouTube served as a sharing point that allowed me to obtain private video streaming, which was the first-hand source from the Malaysian teams.

4) My previous practical engagement with 24 FD allowed me to offer a more embodied experience of practice and performance of the form. I was taught by Engthurs Ang at Liverpool 24 FD in 2012. He was traditionally trained in the Malacca team, where the teaching and learning method used is rote-learning (see chapter 3). As I benefited from this rote-learning system, my experience provided this research with a more accurate insight in discussing the unique characteristics of the training in 24 FD.

### **1.1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

With the framework that I established from the relevant literature and the data that was gathered from the fieldwork and my experience of the performance and training of 24 FD, the thesis consists of three main chapters. In this chapter, I look at the ethnographical elements that serve as the influential components to the development of 24 FD. To achieve that, I trace the context of the founding of 24 FD by looking at the culture, society, ethnicity and identity of Malaysia. By drawing from a large contextual landscape, I attempt to offer a general overview of 24 FD by re-examining its history and development, ranging from the performance inspiration, aims, the 3 phases transition, competition,

styles, the actual instrument and the performer. This chapter will include a detailed description of 24 FD by way of responding to research question 1.

Chapter 2 is the literature review, which aims to provide a reply to the second research question. My intention in this chapter is to explore and examine the interrelationship between Asian theories on the discourses of the body, aesthetics and performance practice, in which I employ a pan-Asian approach for the investigation of this area. This chapter mainly examines Asian traditions to establish a new methodological framework to look at 24 FD. The pan-Asian approach is a methodology that Nair (2017) proposes to develop in his *(Pan) Asian Performance Theory: A Disciplinary Proposal* in order to distinguish the characteristic features of performance traditions in Asia. Yet it is important to note that the Pan-Asian approach in this thesis is much narrower than Nair's (Pan) Asian Performance theory. In this project, it only refers to the overviews of selected cultures, which aims to aid with the exploration of 24 FD; and it does not intend to embrace all Asian models. Designated cultures include Indian, Japanese and Chinese, as they are the associated cultures that can be identified in 24 FD. It is an approach to locate and isolate the characteristic features of selected Asian aesthetic theories by drawing on some of the Asian philosophical traditions and practices including the *I Ching*, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Asian performance forms an integral part of Asian philosophy. Similarly, aesthetic concepts and physical techniques are interconnected and well defined in Asian performance. After carefully filtering a wide range of Asian traditions, therefore, I selectively examine the aesthetic concepts of *rasa*, *hana* and *jiu mei* and their links with training and performance practice, especially in the context of 24 FD.

Chapter 3 examines the training sessions of 24 FD to respond to research question 3. The aim of this chapter is to explore different ranges of techniques that can be obtained during the training of 24 FD with the dedicated teaching and learning methods in 24 FD. Technique is an integral part of Asian performance. Technique refers to a wide range of psychophysical phenomena of the body such as mental, emotional, spiritual, vocal, somatic, interpersonal, expressive and more. As the chapter argues further, a technique, therefore, is the knowledge of the body, systematically trained and integrated as part of the expressive means of the actor. An actor uses technique not only to access her own body and the entire emotional world of the character in a performance situation, but also to design the motion trajectories and *scenic bios*<sup>7</sup> of the performance.

In this chapter, I look into the individual elements (different phases of training), which are included in an entire training session of 24 FD. Data and information are gathered in line with the observation and interviews in my fieldwork, and also according to my previous experience. Teaching/learning methods, such as rote-learning, syllabic vocalisation and titled rhythms will be discussed as they symbolise the unique characteristics of 24 FD training. With the support of the Pan-Asian approach, I look at the Chinese *yin yang* theory, the supplementary training of martial arts, and relevant Asian performance traditions, which share teaching and learning methods similar to 24 FD. At the end, I define the phenomenon that fuses the training, rehearsal and performance within a training section in the context of 24 FD. Further to this point, I attempt to suggest several points to explain this phenomenon, which constitutes the unique fusion of performance and training in 24 FD.

<sup>7</sup> The scenic presence of an actor.

Research question 4 are answered in chapter 4. This chapter consists of two main segments. In the first segment, I discuss the interrelationship between the body, mind and music, with a range of critical terms from different disciplines. Terms such as *musicking*, rhythmic sensibility and performativity are blended into the discussion. A music performance is a product of the performative use of the body. In other words, performance has its performativity. To better understand the performativity of 24 FD, I analyse the repertoire titled *The Memories*. I present a performance of *The Memories* to exhibit the unique characteristics of 24 FD. In this section, I aim to offer contextual information through an ethnographical description of *The Memories* to readers who are new to 24 FD. In this descriptive example, the context, compositional arrangement, storyline and actor-drummers' intentions are included in the account. The intention of using this example is to familiarise with the performance style, cultural characteristics, national identity and several unique terms used to describe 24 FD, such as "actor-drummer". To analyse the performance, I unpack each individual element of the entire process of performance, ranging from the compositional arrangement, use of instruments, storylines, and theatrical characters. Further to the analysis, I closely investigate the performativity that exists in 24 FD. Performativity is a shared concept that is widely used in the fields of music, theatre, and ethnomusicology. I apply this term to the model of 24 FD by using Blacking's categories of musical, non-musical, and extra-musical to explain how the performative components serve as a powerful theatrical means of expression in a pan-Asian model. In order to understand the audience's perception, I employ the Indian concept of *rasa* presented in the *Natyasastra* as an experiential tool to discuss the embodiment of the audience's experience that 24 FD imparts through their trained technique.

The second segment of this chapter mainly focuses on developing the concept of *musicalbody* linking with all discussions and analysis of the previous chapters. *Musicalbody* can be seen as my main finding in this research and it will be only discussed in Chapter 4. It is an inter-disciplinary term that can be used to explain the corporeal musicality of 24 FD. It intends to offer principles of embodied performance. Therefore, six core principles are codified in this chapter.

1. *Musicalbody* is performative.
2. *Musicalbody* is technique-driven.
3. *Musicalbody* is aesthetic/experiential (where *rasa* occurs).
4. *Musicalbody* is “oneness”.
5. *Musicalbody* is audience-dictated.
6. *Musicalbody* is multi-featured.

The concept of *musicalbody* is an initiative that aims to fill the research gap of limited scholarship of 24 FD at present. Meanwhile, it is an accurate term to explain the complex practices of 24 FD that covers various aspects. Potentially, it advocates the necessity to explore and develop further theoretical, aesthetical and practical framework in 24 FD research.

In Chapter 5, I will propose that the current generation of 24 FD has transformed from the Chinese-only into a cosmopolitan Malaysian identity. This process is projected in the repertoire of *The Memories*. It is a rare joint performance that is performed by a collaboration of a professional team (Orang Orang Drum Theatre) and a traditional team (JB Drums). In this performance, the performative use of the actor-drummer’s body can be understood in various ways. The aesthetics, practice, collective culture, national



identity and social beliefs can be significantly identified as the performative components in 24 FD performance. In relation to the traditional teams, the professional teams are free and ambitious in their compositions in terms of instrumental arrangement, theatrical setting and the integration of different forms. 24 FD, currently, is still in an exploratory stage. At this stage, it accepts a variety of experiments in terms of composition, performance, and training in order to multiply different styles of performances.

## **1.2 What is 24 FD?**

In this section, some factual information that naturally exists in the social, cultural and historical context will be traced. Factors such as some specific terms (eg. the name and the usage of 'repertoire') that are commonly used in 24 FD, the multi-cultural characteristics, ethnicity and social phenomenon, which are the fundamental elements form the practice of 24 FD, are inevitably taken into account in this research. At this point, I only aim to provide an ethnographical landscape of how 24 FD was conceived, practised, developed and transformed.

### **1.2.1 The Name**

As previously discussed, one of the misconceptions in the case of 24 FD is the issue of its name. 24 FD was given the official name "the 24 Festive Drums" by the Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Ministry of Malaysia in 2009 in its original city, Johor Bahru, and became part of the Malaysian National Cultural Heritage (Goh, 2012; Loh, 2016). 24 FD was formerly known as "24 Festival Drums" or "24 Seasons Drums" in many countries, (such as in the UK and the US). Many non-Malaysian 24 FD troupes nowadays still use different translated names, such as "Liverpool 24 Festival Drums" team and OSU

Malaysian “24 Seasons Drum Troupe”. However, after the formalization of the official name as “24 Festive Drums”, many independent teams in Malaysia have already adopted the formalized one. According to Low Kee Hang, the head coach of Chong Hwa 24 FD and Segamat Drum Team, there were arguments on the naming of 24 FD in the 1990s. After careful consideration, the name was finalised to “24 Festive Drums” instead of “24 Festival Drums”. This is because the words “festival” and “season” are merely linked to specific dates that cannot be changed. Moreover, there are not four seasons in Malaysia, due to its geographical location (Low, 2017). Located close to the Equator, Malaysia only has one season throughout the year, summer, the only difference between individual months is subtle temperature changes. On the other hand, the word “festive” can be used to describe any celebration, formal and informal. As the performers believe, 24 FD should not be only performed on the fixed festival dates but should also have the possibility to be performed at any event to create a “festive” atmosphere in a form of street carnival (Low, 2017). In a recent interview, founder Tan Chai Puan states that it is inaccurate and misleading to translate the name of the formation into 24 seasons drum (a direct translation from the Chinese term), as 24 FD embraces more layers of meanings than only four seasons throughout the year (Tan, 2018). Tan reveals the meaning of 24 FD in *Biography of 24 FD* as: *jie ling* (festivals) is a natural life circle that derived from agricultural activities by Chinese ancestors. It also represents the customs and traditions that exist in the Chinese community. Compared to the division of four seasons, to divide the entire year into 24 festivals is more accurate in terms of climate and seasonal changes (2000, 6).

As 24 FD has only existed for less than three decades, the relative ‘newness’ offers a possibility for most actor-drummers, including me, to learn how the genre has been

founded in the past. Any actor-drummers can inform the story of how two founders initiated 24 FD with their cultural enthusiasm. In 1988, cultural activist Tan Chai Puan and musician Tan Hooi Song (1947-2008) were invited to write an inception for the Ninth National Dance Festival in Johor Bahru (Johor, Malaysia). Initially, only nine drums performed at the event, reflecting the ninth of the dance event. The repertoire was called *jiu wu* (九舞 nine dance) (see Figure 1). The manuscript of *jiu wu* suggested that the requirements of this performance had been taken into consideration in details, including stage lighting, the number of drums and performers, the details of the costume and drums, and also some relevant notes for the sequence of the inception.

Figure 1: The repertoire of the 9<sup>th</sup> Dance inception



Source: VR Drumming Academy (11/11/2017)

The reason for choosing the traditional Chinese drum (*shigu*) as a performance was to align itself to the Chinese origin of the event, illuminating the Chinese cultural identity. According to Tan Chai Puan in the online video *24 Festive Drum Documentary* (YouTube),

[t]he impacts of the beats impressed every spectator there. It was the first time experiencing this impact (of the nine drums ensemble). [Since] the performance was being so welcomed, [if] more drums are involved [in the performance], a greater response or

impact [can be created] ... we found a tradition about our ancestors' farming [calendric system], which was practiced for the date and time marking calendar. The tradition is romantic and so called '24 Solar Terms', [which can be translated into 24 festivals as well] (*er shi si jie qi* 二十四節氣)<sup>9</sup>.

(Tan, 2009)

Loh attributes the idea of the use of 24 drums to a Taiwanese poem, by saying that the formation of the multiple drum ensemble was agreed by the founders, yet they could not decide on the numbers of the drums at the outset. Tan Chai Puan was impressed and inspired by a set of 24 poems that describes the magnificence of the four seasons by a Taiwanese poet. As a result, the number of the drums was set to be 24 in its performance practice (Loh, 2015).

The concurrent inspiration of the traditional calendric system and the impression made by this poem led to the formation of a 24 drums ensemble at Foon Yew High School (Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia) in 1989. The inspiration of solar terms and a poem for a drumming tradition could be attributed to the collective memory of Chinese culture that exists in the Chinese community in Malaysia, where the founders reside. Indeed, when a music performance/experience becomes a shared memory and is able to resonate for a particular group of people within the community, it can be considered as cultural heritage (Brandellero & Janssen, 2014). The time that Tan Chai Puan was educated can be dated back to the 1970s and 1980s, which was a period in which Chinese cultural identity was strongly emphasized and preserved in Malaysia. It is a rooted Chinese recollection that collectively exists between the founders (Tan Chai Puan and Tan Hooi Song) that created

<sup>8</sup> The Chinese meaning of 24 solar terms and 24 festivals is the same; the distinction is due to the different way of translating

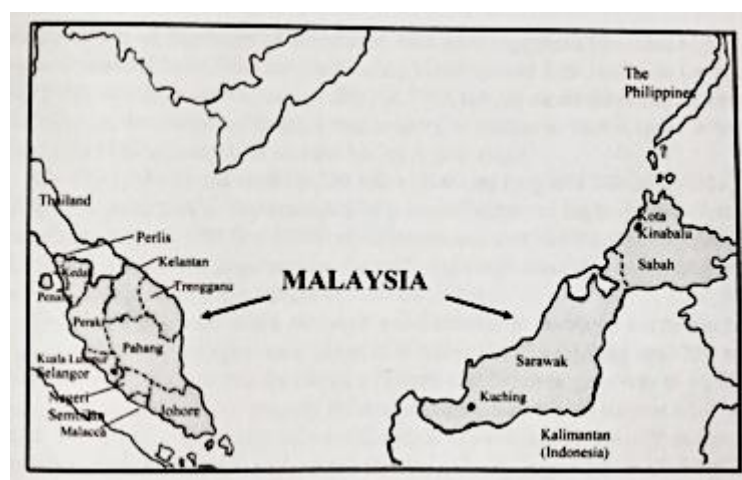
<sup>9</sup> The lines were directly quoted from the translated subtitles of the video documentary that is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnTDVUEhExQ>. [Accessed: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018]

a new performative phenomenon. One of the catalysts can be attributed to Tan Chai Puan's Chinese literacy that was inspired from the aesthetic aspect of the poem and prompted the emergence of 24 FD. Benefiting from the Chinese cultural activist background, the intention of linking the traditional Chinese drum ensemble with a Chinese poem is literally derived from the memory of the inner self of Tan Chai Puan. The emergence of 24 FD comes from the transformation from the prototype of a nine-drum ensemble into a 24 FD theatrical performance. Since this transformation, 24 FD has continuously performed at Chinese cultural events, festivals and community occasions.

### 1.2.2 Malaysia

As EntriKin claims, a place is not only a site, but a context to construct identity (Zheng, 2011, 20). 24 FD originated in the context of Malaysia, which is a country formed in 1963 through the alliance of Malaya and Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak). Matusky and Tan demonstrate that Sabah and Sarawak are situated on North Borneo, which is also known as East Malaysia (2017, 1). Both Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia share the same equatorial climate (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 1) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Map of Malaysia



Source: *The Music of Malaysia* (Matusky & Tan, 2017)

Malaya, as it was formerly known, gained its independence from the British in 1957 (Chan, 2012, 18) (see Figure 3). According to the demographic data from the Department of Statistic Malaysia, in 2017, Malaysia is made up of 68.8% of Bumiputera that consist of Malays and many aboriginal or native people from Peninsular Malaysia and Borneo. The country also has a significantly high Chinese presence at 23.2% with Indians at 7% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). The first Chinese that made their way to this area are documented with the arrival of Zheng He or Cheng Ho in the Sultanate of Malacca in 1405. According to Matusky and Tan, a large influx of Chinese migrants came to Peninsular Malaysia for the tin mining business (2017, 4). The arrival of Indians is most significant during British colonial times (1874-1957) (Chan, 2012, 18) under the scheme of plantation (rubber and oil palm in particular) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Matusky & Tan, 2017, 4). The migration phenomenon is historically known as “the credit-ticket system of immigration”, which fundamentally is the “coolie trade”, which is an “inhuman treatment of the coolies during recruitment and transportation” (Yen, 2000, 2). The foreign countries involved in this scheme included Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, America, Spain, and Portugal (Wang, 1978, 355-360). With the recruitment of Indian and Chinese labourers, Malaysia played a leading role in the rubber and tin industries (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 4). Apart from the labour trade, the exchange of goods is one of the active economic activities in Malaya. As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Strait of Malacca served as one of the key entrepôts for goods trading among China, India, and other Southeast Asian countries (Yen, 2000, 2), benefiting from the location and geographic connections with many neighbouring Asian countries. Trading was the pathway at that time to prompt the multi-cultural interaction in Malaya or the Malay Peninsula.

Figure 3: The Malacca Sultanate-Malaya-Malaysia

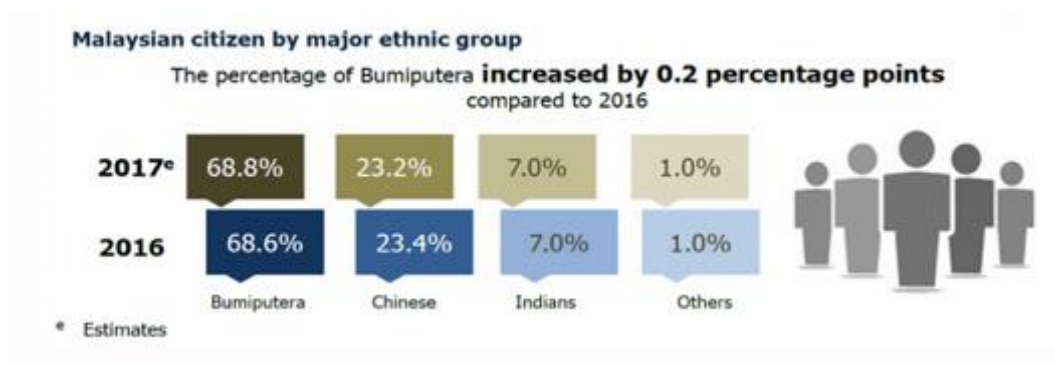
Timeline	Events
<b>1405</b>	Zheng He (Cheng Ho), as the first Chinese, stepped to the Strait of Malacca.
<b>15th Century</b>	The Strait of Malacca was the key entrepôt to trade among Asian countries.
<b>16th Century</b>	Portuguese arrived in the Strait of Malacca, initiating the first European cultural interaction.
<b>19th Century</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Indian arrival for the scheme of plantation (rubber and oil palm).</li> <li>2. A large wave of Indian and Chinese migration due to the “coolie trade” and goods trading.</li> </ol>
<b>1874-1957</b>	The British Colonial Time
<b>1957</b>	Independence from the British
<b>1963</b>	The alliance of Malaya and Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak) formed the country of Malaysia.

Source: Table by Giano Siu to chronologically illustrate the historic timelines and events that happened from the period of the Malacca sultanate to Malaysia.

In this sense, multi-culturalism in Malaysia is due to the historical impacts of colonialism, post-colonial migration, politics and economics. Chopyak views present Malaysia as “a rapidly developing, complex, multi-racial society” (1986, 111). Historically, the multi-cultural interaction began with the moment that the Chinese (Zheng He in Ming Dynasty) first stepped into the Strait of Malacca, and with the opportunities of exchanging and trading labour and goods in the historical phase. The development continued through to British colonial times with the arrival of Indians into this part of South East Asia. Despite the segregation of races by the British, who were not concerned about maintaining Malaya’s indigenous culture, the culture of Malaysia continued to develop in its own unique directions and practices during the colonial settings. Chopyak points out that,

although the first interaction with European culture can be dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the Portuguese arrived, the most substantial changes in Malaya were attributed to the governing of the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1986, 111). Shamsul (1997) describes Malaysia as a plural nation in its historical colonial background. In fact, the phase of colonisation brought different ethnic groups to Malaysia that contributed to its economic growth. Many scholars agree with Shamsul’s account, believing that colonisation helped the construction of the Malaysian nation (Fee, 2009, 22) from the economic, political, social class and cultural agendas (Shamsul, 1997, 242, 251, 256). Consequently, many cultural traditions were practised until the British left office and transcultural exchange began in the society. This ultimately led to the exchange of cultures among the different ethnicities of the Malaysians, through the acceptance of these different practices. Currently, Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country in South East Asia.

Figure 4: The ethnic distribution of Malaysia in 2016 - 2017



Source: The Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017)

Echoing Entrikin’s notion that “place” offers a “context” (Zheng, 2011, 20), the multi-feature of Malaysia serves as a catalyst to conceive 24 FD as a multi-cultural product in this particular context. Although the majority of 24 FD teams are Chinese-culture dominated (the reason why Chinese culture influenced 24 FD to a large degree will be



explained in subsequent sections), the multi-cultural characteristics can also be identified in the performance practice, symbolising a fusion of Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Malay Archipelago<sup>10</sup> culture. Taking religion as an example, Islam that was introduced by Arabs and Indians, Hinduism and Buddhism, brought from India, became the mainstream religious beliefs in the region (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 1). Similarly for 24 FD, the costumes, training, and percussion technique showcase a variety of different cultures that are mainly Chinese dominated. The barefoot practice in performance and training, however, tends to be of Indian tradition. In addition, bodily movements are inspired to integrate Indian dance forms (eg. *Kathak*<sup>11</sup>), and instruments such as the *tabla* are found in some performance repertoires<sup>12</sup>. Apart from that, different types of drumming techniques of 24 FD are inspired by Japanese *taiko* drumming, such as playing with the drum's head tilted and upright. Occasionally, there will be some Malay Archipelago elements added into the performance, such as *Dikir Barat*<sup>13</sup>. All these cultural elements present in 24 FD will be expanded in the relevant later chapters in this thesis. In particular, the interrelationship between Chinese, Japanese and Indian traditions will be discussed in chapter 2. The involvement of Malay culture will be examined in chapter 4 with the example of *The Memories*. It is also because of the diversity of the nation that Tan (2008) advocates that multiculturalism and pluralism should be included and expanded in the discussion of Malaysians' music performance in order to ensure the integrity of both major and minor cultures in the community. From her perspective, the catalyst or the medium for change lies in the practitioners as it shapes perspective/opinions by challenging the major norms of ethnicity through

<sup>10</sup> Malay Archipelago: an area between Indonesia and Malaysia. It covers Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and Peninsular Malaysia.

<sup>11</sup> *Kathak*: an Indian classic dance.

<sup>12</sup> Repertoire: see section 1.2.9 for explanation.

<sup>13</sup> *Dikir Barat* is a Malay form of singing and doing hand and head movements in a sitting position.

understanding and having appreciation toward cultural boundaries/barriers and differences (2008, 71). Ethnicity has its own social values and uniqueness. A country like Malaysia that embraces different ethnic groups gives the society an identity of its own and encourages the creation of formations such as 24 FD, showcasing the development of music and performance through embracing ethnic importance.

### **1.2.3 Ethnicity and Cultural Identity**

The Chinese ethnic group occupies almost one quarter of the overall population in Malaysia. Lee and Wong believe that, the identity of “Chineseness” is signified by descent and language (2017, 990). According to Lee and Tan, the earliest Chinese migration to Malaysia can be dated back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, landing in the Straits of Malacca of the Malacca Sultanate (2000, 2). However, the largest wave of Chinese migration in Malaysia came from Southeast China (nowadays Fuzhou, Guangdong and Hainan provinces) in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 2). Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka and Hainanese are the main Chinese dialects used in the Chinese families, whilst the Hokkien and Cantonese are the two biggest communities in the Malaysian Chinese context (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 2). This ethnic group is called “overseas Chinese” or *huaqiao* (Mackerras, 2005, 18). Wang Gungwu identified them as “Chinese sojourners” (Mackerras, 2005, 18). However, Tan rejects the term “sojourner” (*qiao*), indicating a person who currently lives in “a foreign country, and one day may return to the country of origin” (2000, 37). As Tan observes, the Chinese diaspora in Malaysia would rather be referred to as *hua ren* (華人) (overseas Chinese in translation) than *zhongguoren* (中國人) (2000, 37) (Chinese from China in translation). These two terms have different meanings. *Hua ren* is used to describe the “*hua* people”, including *huayi*, who are of

Chinese descent. *Zhongguoren*, however, refers to Chinese people who are from the nation of China (Tan, 2000, 37).

The expression “Malaysian Chinese” is widely used as a favorable term to describe the group of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. However, the usage of “Malaysian Chinese” as an ethnic specific term might be problematic and may trigger confusion regarding nationalism and identity. In the post-independence period, many Chinese in Malaysia obtained Malay citizenship and were committed to being Malaysians (Yen, 2000, 31). Despite the popularity of “Malaysian Chinese”, Tan prefers the term “Chinese Malaysian” to emphasize “local identity and Malaysian identity” (2000, 38). The perception of “Malaysian” and “Malaysian Chinese” varied, depending on the generation of the ethnics.

In my fieldtrip in February 2014, I discovered the different perception towards the Chinese identity. My informants were from different generations. In the first informal conversation (in November 2017) with founder Tan Chai Puan, who was born in the 1950s, and is the second generation of Chinese descent, I found that his use of Mandarin and Chinese dialect was proficient, and his understanding of Chinese texts is compatible to a Chinese from China. The ability of Chinese literacy indicates his effort and enthusiasm for Chinese culture. The generation of ethnic Chinese, who were born in the 1960s and 1970s would consider themselves as “Malaysian Chinese” or “Chinese Malaysian”, as they have more rooted cultural memories compared to the later generation. As Tan explains, the Chinese ethnic group already perceives Malaysia as their home country, rather than their original Chinese ancestral places (2017, 133). Gill agrees to this point by saying that “Malaysians of all ethnic origins, particularly groups whose ancestors were immigrants

and who have been in the country for three to five generations, regard Malaysia as their home” (2004, 135).

From the third or fourth generations of Chinese descent onwards, the attitude and understanding of Chinese identity changed significantly. These two batches of Chinese descendants interact with the particular multi-cultural and multi-racial environment in daily life and start using the label of “Malaysian” rather than “Malaysian Chinese” or “Chinese Malaysian”. Generational location may determine a generation’s response to the society (Pendergast, 2010, 2). In the third or fourth generations of Chinese descent, rural people in particular, still identify as “Malaysian Chinese” or “Chinese Malaysian”. The fifth generation of Chinese descent is the largest cohort that identify as “Malaysian”, without emphasizing the Chinese element. The Chinese element has been largely blended into the “Malaysian” identity. Pendergast also indicates that the “shared experience and conditions influence the generation collective”, and the generational location “shapes their thinking, values and beliefs, forming the generational persona” (2010, 2). The shared generational location for any generation of ethnic Chinese can be referred to as the nation of Malaysia, where the multi-cultural and multi-racial characteristics are significant. This also implies that Chinese culture is not the only shared element, but the diversity of culture in the modern nation of Malaysia. In this respect, different generations of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia may have different perceptions on their cultural and national identities. In this sense, I believe that using the term *huaren*, which is the native term that is widely accepted by many ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, to describe Malaysians of Chinese descent would be more appropriate.

The issue of national culture triggers debates in Malaysia, as there is a lack of policies and guidelines on national culture (Tan, 1988, 145). In contemporary Malaysia, Malay culture is not equivalent to Malaysian culture. The term Malaysian culture refers to the integration of all available cultural traditions and practices in Malaysia. The trait of Malaysian culture is difficult to identify due to the multi-influence of different cultures and is still in the process of evolution (Nithyanandan, 2015, 23). To attempt to define national culture, Nithyanandan compares Malaysia with Indonesia by saying that,

Indonesia and Malaysia have very different systems of defining what the National culture is. In Indonesia, knowledge and narratives of local culture are developed in association with ethnic-based regional boundaries ... In Malaysia however, the distinctions are more 'crude' or simplistic and the framing of national culture is done by lumping cultural artifacts into racial groups such as Malay, Chinese, India and indigenous tribe (*orang asli*).

(Nithyanandan, 2015, 25-26)

One of the interviewees in this project, Low Kee Hang, an ethnic Chinese, expresses his feeling, as “the Malaysian culture is unlikely to be defined, as there is no symbolic evidence to pinpoint what Malaysian culture is, as the word ‘Malaysian’ is affected by a diversity of cultures and ethnics” (Low, 2017).<sup>14</sup> However, Zamira Noh, from the Melanau ethnic group, contradicted this viewpoint, by explaining that: “I do not see the difficulty in defining the Malaysian culture. The individual cultural practice varies due to the diversity of ethnic groups in Malaysia. However, we do share the same norm and practice in our society, such as Malaysian hospitality and food” (Zamira Noh, 2017).

In fact, Malaysians of Chinese descent and Malaysians of other ethnicities share the same identity, social values and practice within a unique social-cultural context (Tan, 2017;

<sup>14</sup> Interview notes were translated from Mandarin to English by Giano Dan Xiao.

Thorpe, 2005). Additionally, it is perhaps the government and their suppression of Chinese that gave rise to the feeling of nativeness. Rather than distinguishing the ethnicities in Malaysia, nativeness could be the better term to explain the status of the Malaysian-born ethnics. For example, many *huaren* are of Teochew<sup>15</sup> descent, although they have ties with the ancestral family member in Teochew, not many of them will consider Teochew as the homeplace, but Malaysia. Likewise, most Malaysians of Indian ethnicity have ancestry in Tamil Nadu, in the South of India. Therefore, any ethnics in Malaysia, whether Malay, Indian or Chinese, perceive Malaysia as the native country. They grow to have a similar taste for food, they have the same *yam cha*<sup>16</sup> tradition with friends, and similar conversational style where they *rojak*<sup>17</sup> different dialects and languages in their daily conversations, a practice which is known as speaking Manglish<sup>18</sup>. The meaning and structure of the spoken language Manglish are only understood by Malaysians themselves. In this sense, the Malaysian culture is a fusion of various cultures, and varies when it is examined as individual traditions and practices. Although 24 FD is a Chinese-inspired performance, it is not very accurate to class 24 FD as a pure Chinese, Indian Japanese or Malay cultural product, as it has elements of all cultures, as I will detail below. In the end, 24 FD maintains its Malaysian cultural character by combining the cultural traditions that exist in the nation.

<sup>15</sup> Teochew: A city situated in the South of China in Guangdong Province.

<sup>16</sup> *Yam Cha*: The word is derived from Cantonese as having tea. In the Malaysian context, it is understandable by Malaysian of different ethnic groups as having tea as well. However, it is similar to a recreational activity of going to a café or coffee shop for chatting and relaxing.

<sup>17</sup> *Rojak* is a traditional dish of mixed fruit but often used to express a way of mixing a variety of things in conversational Malay language.

<sup>18</sup> Manglish: A unique Malaysian way of speaking in English. Aside from the accent that is different to ordinary English, the grammatical structure of Manglish mostly borrows from Cantonese and Mandarin.

Understanding the issue of ethnicity and the cultural characteristics in Malaysia are essential to examine the case of 24 FD, as it offers a wider context of where this particular performance style is created and who inspire, compose, and complete the performance. It is a fact that domestic 24FD performers are mainly of Chinese descent, as the early drum troupes of 24 FD were set up within the Chinese schools in Malaysia, with Foon Yew High School in Johor Bahru as the pioneering school. The fact of the active engagement of Chinese descendants in 24 FD performance determines the popularity of the form in the Chinese community of Malaysia. The reason for 24 FD being initiated in a Chinese school is attributed to the schooling system in the country. As previously mentioned on the racial segregation of British colonial times, another impact of this was the British implemented vernacular schools, which led to most Chinese going to Chinese vernacular schools. The school systems in Malaysia will be discussed in the subsequent section.

#### **1.2.4 School Systems in Malaysia**

In the post-independence era, language and education became a severe problem among ethnic Chinese in Malaysia (Tan, 1988, 142). Higher education was divided into public and private institutions (Gill, 2004, 139). In Malaysia, apart from tertiary institutions, primary and secondary schools are divided into two different types, which are public and private/independent schools. Within the public or government funded schools, the schools are further divided into the national system and the vernacular system. The national system is taught in Malay, and the vernacular system has elements of Chinese or Indian language for its students. Besides Chinese vernacular schools, there are also private or independent Chinese schools in Malaysia. They are Chinese schools that are independently owned. The reason for the founding of Chinese schools (private/independent) in Malaysia is due to the “special cultural and educational needs

of a migrant society” (Tan, 2000, 245). According to Yen, many ethnic Chinese in Malaysia perceive that the tool of education would help in constructing the knowledge of individuals and the society. Likewise, education is a means of ensuring the preservation of cultural identity (Yen, 2000, 25). Many 24 FD groups are formed in Chinese vernacular schools and independent Chinese schools, particularly in the independent or private Chinese schools as a factor of Chinese cultural influence. This can be attributed to the fact that Chinese culture is well established in Chinese independent schools as a strong cultural ground. Therefore, the Malaysian Chinese who study in Chinese private schools usually have more knowledge of Chinese culture and a recognition of Chinese identity as the pedagogical environment in those institutions strongly emphasizes Chinese culture. Most private Chinese schools include 24 FD in their optional curriculum. This explains why the early era of 24 FD only takes place in schools and universities, as it is a Chinese-inspired performance form, where the Chinese private schools can offer more room for its development. In my fieldwork in February 2014 in Johor Malaysia, I was advised that there has been an increasing number of national and Chinese vernacular type schools taking up 24 FD into their educational curriculum by my informants in an informal conversation. Substantially, 24 FD is becoming a widely accepted practice among different ethnicities in Malaysia and there are currently hundreds of 24 FD teams that exist within peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia, centrally formed as student societies and optional school modules within primary and secondary schools and also in tertiary institutions (college and university).

### **1.2.5 The Performance Concept of 24 FD**

Being conceived within the Chinese schools allows 24 FD to obtain a strong cultural base to be inspired by and creative in its performance practice. The performance concept was



derived from the ancient Chinese lunar calendar, consisting of 24 festivals. As detailed above, 24 Festivals, also has been translated into 24 *jie qi*, 24 Seasons, 24 solar terms, and 24 seasonal segments, etc. In the Chinese lunar calendar, the entire year is divided into 24 minor festivals/seasons, which means that each month has 2 festivals/seasons respectively. Each of the festivals reflects minor climate and weather changes throughout the year. In ancient China, farmers took great advantage of following each minor festival strictly in doing their agricultural activities, such as ploughing, fertilizing, sowing, planting and harvesting (Matusky & Tan, 2017, 197). The timing of the festivals is very accurate, linked to the weather and climate changes. For example, when the date of the *Beginning of Spring* approached, it indicates that winter ends and the spring starts on that date. The existence of the 24 solar system represents the creativity and sensitivity of the Chinese ancestors. It influences Chinese society in various ways, such as ritual, festivities and cultural identity. For this reason, UNESCO<sup>19</sup> added the system of Chinese 24 solar terms to the list of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in November 2016 (UNESCO, 2016).

Figure 5: The table of 24 Minor Festivals

<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Autumn</b>	<b>Winter</b>
Beginning of Spring	Beginning of Summer	Beginning of Autumn	Beginning of Winter
Rain Water	Grain Full	End of Heat	Minor Snow
Insects Awakening	Grain in Ear	White Dew	Major Snow
Vernal Equinox	Summer Solstice	Autumn Equinox	Winter Solstice
Clear Brightness	Minor Heat	Cold Dew	Minor Cold
Grain Rain	Major Heat	Frost Descent	Major Cold

Source: Table by Giano Siu.

<sup>19</sup> UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization.

The fact that 24 FD was inspired by the system of 24 Festivals in the Chinese lunar calendar does not indicate that the form merely borrowed the concept to create a new form of performance. Instead, most of the bodily movements and rhythmic patterns in the initial stage of 24 FD imitated the description of each festival in this farming system. As Leng interprets, the movements and music are associated with and designed on the basis of the different features of each season, for example, “transplanting rice seedlings, wishing for rain, harvests and celebrations” (Leng, 2016). Consequently, the early tradition of 24 FD performance contains a wide range of gestural movements, which are akin to ploughing, harvesting, sowing and so on. In the later section, I will illustrate representative movements, which are commonly used in the early stage of 24 FD.

### **1.2.6 The Development of 24 FD: Three Phases**

Although there is no official documentation that indicates the developments of 24 FD since it began in 1988, based on the information that I gathered from the interviews, observations and background research, the growth of 24FD can be divided into three phases:

1) The exploration phase: during the first decade after 1988, 24 FD was mainly exploring and focusing on the creation of rhythmic patterns for the drumming, followed by the involvement of physical movement. For a newborn performance genre, drumming and bodily movements of 24 FD were simple and performance repertoires were created by the inspiration of the other sources. In terms of drumming, 24 FD largely drew upon the drumming styles and techniques from the most relevant performance forms. My informants Low Kee Hang, Jarrett Leong and Zhiiyong Zye all mentioned that the Chinese lion dance drumming, Jazz drumming and Taiko drumming were the main sources to

imitate in terms of styles and technical presence in the early stage of 24 FD. Significantly, the *miyake* pattern from Taiko drumming, tilting the drum to a 40 degree angle (Chan, 2014, 110), was integrated into the performance as an alternative drumming position. In terms of physical movements, the gestural movements were also mainly borrowed from the Chinese lion dance and basic martial arts movements, such as the horse stance, the somersault and the butterfly twist (see chapter 3 for a more detailed analysis). Meanwhile, 24 FD was inspired by the original performance concept of “24 festivals”. Imitating the farming activities therefore became an alternative way for early 24 FD troupes to create the bodily movements. Additionally, the costume was iconic as they were likened to Chinese martial arts (see chapter 4 performance analysis). For these reasons, 24 FD has been commonly misunderstood as a pure Chinese performance in this period, as there are no traits of the engagement with other cultural elements in its performance practice.

2) The creative phase: in the second decade, the use of props in the performance and the emergence of the professional drum team indicate that 24 FD stepped into a creative stage of its development. *Rhythm of the Drunken Souls*, composed in 1998 by Foon Yew 24 FD troupes from Johor Bahru and performed in 1999, was the milestone repertoire representing the creativity of the new generation of 24 FD, in terms of perceiving the drums as props (Low, 2017). There are two interesting points to distinguish previous 24 FD performances from this piece. Firstly, in *Rhythm of the Drunken Souls*, the drum was not only an instrument, but also a prop. The drum used in the performance was decorated as a Chinese wine jar, as they have a similar exterior appearance (see Figure 6). Secondly, this was the first attempt to include the scenic acting of drunken people and to intentionally add theatrical elements within the traditional 24 FD performance.

Figure 6: The performance of *Rhythm of the Drunken Souls* and a Chinese wine jar



Source: the performance of *Rhythm of the Drunken Souls* on YouTube<sup>20</sup>, Easy Tour China<sup>21</sup>.

During this era, there is an emergence of the first commercial drum team, Hands percussion (HANDS) in 1997. Founder Bernard Goh was a former 24 FD student, who learnt directly from Tan Hooi Song, the founder of 24 FD (see the section 1.2.8.2 on professional teams). The existence of HANDS points towards another transformation of 24 FD, moving away from the traditional cultural performance and towards a fusion of theatrical, technical, scenic, musical and multi-cultural performance.

3) The international phase: Since the first 24 FD in the world was set up in 1988, the dissemination of 24 FD spread across Malaysia rapidly, through the forming of societies in various schools and universities, from the South to the North. It travelled from the South from Johor and Malacca, with its practices spread out further to the middle peninsular of Malaysia to Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Finally, the form reached the Northern parts of the country, to the likes of the State of Penang (North). Now, it is played by actor-drummers of all ages, from children in elementary schools to university students

<sup>20</sup> Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z7L6Mcnb6A> [Accessed 28/10/2017].

<sup>21</sup> The photo was taken from *Easy Tour China*. Available at <https://www.easytourchina.com/photo-p3877-jar-of-the-wine> [Accessed 16/09/2018].

in Malaysia, Taiwan and China. Nearer to Malaysia, the growth and expansion of the Singaporean Drums- Zingo has been attributed to 24 FD. The Zingo Drum can be seen as another transformation that is similar to HANDS, which emphasizes the theatrical and musical presence. In less than three decades, 24 FD has spread internationally to countries including Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, China, Indonesia, Brunei, Australia, the US, the UK Switzerland, and Africa (Goh, 2012; Loh, 2016). An increasing number of professional drum troupes (such as Orang Orang Drum Theatre) have been set up in Malaysia. Professional teams are frequently invited to perform abroad, such as the recent French Tour by JB Drums and the Orang Orang Drum Theatre. Additionally, some students from traditional 24 FD backgrounds, have set up drumming groups abroad with some setting them up whilst studying abroad. Their enthusiasm towards 24 FD has seen drumming groups being created in Liverpool (Liverpool 24 FD) and in Oklahoma (M24D). These international interactions create more opportunities by way of cultural exchange with other countries.

**In summary**, the characteristics of 24 FD in the exploration stage can be concluded as seemingly Chinese culture dominated with simple rhythmic patterns and bodily movements in the performance. Yet the integration of the bodily movement and drumming in 24 FD practice could be identified at its initiation. Chinese and Japanese were the two cultures involved in the training and performance practice of 24 FD, for example, drumming from the Chinese lion dance and the Japanese Taiko, and the bodily movement from Chinese martial arts. For this reason, the intercultural interaction commenced since this point. In the creative phase, new elements integrated into its performance practice led the form to become more compelling. 24 FD is not merely a drumming performance, but a fusion of performance that combines theatre, music and

dance as a whole. In this sense, the inter-disciplinary presence has been established since this stage. When 24 FD entered the international platform, the multi-cultural and cross-disciplinary features became increasingly significant and better shaped. Tradition in 24 FD is not fully applicable. At some point, 24 FD creates one tradition but another one, which is contrary to it, can be created. For example, the traditional school team and professional team are two performance styles in 24 FD, they barely relate as performances, due to the different performance styles, aims and intentions, yet *The Memories* (see chapter 4) is a co-production between Orang Orang Drum Theatre and JB Drums. After undergoing these three phases, 24 FD, an appropriate methodology is needed to explain its aesthetic and performance practice. Therefore, I use a dedicated methodological framework, adopting a Pan-Asian approach to merge specific cultural elements with inter-disciplinary discourses to facilitate a more theoretically accurate explanation of 24 FD.

### **1.2.7 Competition**

Since 2010, the 24 Festive Drums Association has hosted the national biennial competition of 24 FD in Malaysia. The organisation invites coaches from various teams to form a judging and evaluation committee in the competition. In *Biography of 24 FD*, the elements of marking include composition, presence, percussion, props, choreography, music/theatrical arrangement and spirit (2000, 39). Hall (1997) indicates that cultural meanings can be accessed and shaped in accordance with the movements, choreography, music and visual imagery (Tan, 2017, 134). In parallel, one previous member of the committee, Jarratt Leong (2017), states that there are four aspects, which he particularly evaluates in every performance: these are technique, creation, music and choreography. As he further explains, technique refers to the completion of the entire performance,

including the level of proficiency of the percussion, difficulty of the bodily movement, and the expressivity and performativity of the story and theme. Creation is about the concepts of the composition. Music refers to the rhythm, whilst choreography is the bodily movement and formation of the performance. 24 FD places technique as the principal component and the overall consideration in the assessment with the rest of the three elements forming an umbrella system of assessment in the competition, indicating that the creation, music and choreography are all technique-based elements in the performance of 24 FD. Subsequently, these four aspects become the guidelines for the existing 24 FD troupes for training and composing their performance. Since then, 24 FD has moved the main focus from drumming and bodily movement, into a more comprehensive set of performance practices, as a way of taking on board the consideration of the assessed and suggested components by the committee.

### **1.2.8 Styles and types**

Styles differ between different drum troupes in the 24 FD community. There is a common agreement that different drum troupes have different styles and their own routine to practise the 24 FD. Matusky and Tan support my observation by saying that “the movements of the musicians and rhythmic patterns generally vary from troupe to troupe” (2017, 204). Each team has their dedicated training routine and performance style. According to Stefani, style is “a blend of technical features, a way of forming objects or events; but it is at the same time a trace in music of agents and processes and contexts of production” (2000, 54). A style is a way of being recognisable. In the genre of 24 FD, there are two explicit types, which are the school teams and the professional drum companies.

### 1.2.8.1 The School Teams

The school teams are non-profitmaking; they train and perform mainly on campus. Repertoires will be created and practised by the coach/coaches in the team, meaning that the repertoires vary among different teams. In the school teams, a storyline is not necessary to a creation. Instead, the technique of drumming is the most important component, followed by the bodily movements. Most of the teams present their performance as a showcase in school anniversary parties, which are usually public events. Showcasing 24 FD on public occasions increases the exposure of the form to the general public and provides an opportunity for 24FD teams from different schools or groups to take part. Each of the repertoires takes approximately half a year to prepare; this timeline is mapped onto the academic semester in the Malaysian schools. As primary and secondary school academic years begin in September, actor-drummers will mainly spend the first half of the term practising for the anniversary party, alongside the Chinese New Year celebration, and on minor occasions, performances within the schools and outside the school venue. According to Tan Chai Puan, the celebration of festivals is a profound Chinese culture tradition. People from different hierarchies, including education background, wealth or poverty and age, are all entitled to celebrate festivals (2000, 3). The 24 FD frequently perform for the celebration of Chinese festivals. Apart from this, when it comes to the date of one of the 24 festivals, the team will play the drums in public as a form of marking the occasion or to signify the approach of a specific festival. It is a traditional ritual and also corresponds to the concept of 24 FD. For instance, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2017 was the festival of *the beginning of the spring* in the Chinese lunar calendar; some teams presented a performance to the schools, celebrating the start of the Spring Festival.



### 1.2.8.2 The Professional Teams

The professional teams are trained and performed for a higher level of performance. Most of the actor-drummers were former 24 FD students who practised during their educational times such as secondary and tertiary education. For example, Bernard Goh (founder of HANDS) was a 24 FD student of Tan Hooi Song, one of the founders of 24 FD. This rationale for the emergence of HANDS is due to the enthusiasm of Goh to 24 FD. As Boyz Chew recalls, once Goh completed his studies, he found an increasing interest in 24FD. He, hence, set up HANDS, as the first professional drumming team in the world (Chew, 2018). Boyz Chew and Zye Leow were the former actor-drummers in HANDS before setting up Orang Orang Drum Theatre in 2013 (Leng, 2016). As Tan Hooi Song emphasises, “the most difficult part in composition/creation is to disregard the influential factors” (2000, 9). Potentially, these professional teams normally have less restriction on their music and theatrical presence. Compared to traditional teams, they have more freedom that allows them to explore any possibilities that can be added into the drumming ensemble. Leng also identifies that “(the professional drum teams) streamline the presentation of the drumming technique to the general public and experiment with integrating drum performance with other forms of performing arts for theatrical staging” (Leng, 2016). For this reason, several representative applications of different musical elements can be found in the performance repertoires that were created by the professional teams. In particular, the elements of *gamelan*<sup>22</sup>, *tabla*<sup>23</sup>, *gendang*<sup>24</sup>, and jazz drum kits are added by HANDS in their performance time to time. Furthermore, they made trips to Indonesia to study *gamelan*. Another professional team, Orang Orang Drum

<sup>22</sup> *Gamelan* is an ensemble of Indonesian percussive music instrument.

<sup>23</sup> *Tabla* is a South Asian drum.

<sup>24</sup> *Gendang* means drum in Malay language. It is a two-headed Southeast Asian drum.

Theatre brings the *dikir barat* element into their theatrical drumming performance titled *Laguku*<sup>25</sup>. Kartomi coined the performance of the sitting song-dance as “playing the body” (Orang Orang Drum Theatre, 2017, 80). Orang Orang Drum Theatre only adds a small segment of *dikir barat* in its performance. As a result, it generates a different feeling for 24 FD. Besides *dikir barat*, in *The Memories*, which is the performance piece that will be analysed in chapter 4, cultural instruments are integrated into the arrangement and the point of culture and performativity in 24 FD will be expanded in the discussion.

The Professional team of HANDS is a transformation of the traditional 24 FD. In order to meet the demands of the Malaysian market, a professional team as such needs to adapt themselves to the local taste, which is made up of the different ethnicities in the country. As discussed earlier, 24 FD is a largely Chinese dominated form, and HANDS had to transform from its 24FD tradition into a new form by adding different elements into their performance. These include local cultures from the Malays and Indians. On the other hand, 24 FD remains in its own culture preserving its own unique Chinese culture in the Malaysian wider context, HANDS seek new possibilities in their performance, yet differing themselves from its Chinese-inspired drumming performance, 24 FD. Most HANDS members are made up of individuals with a 24FD background. The performers on one hand were conventionally trained, on the other hand they creatively seek potential possibilities to embrace novel elements in performance. HANDS as a professional team, becomes a hybridisation of the 24 FD with the localisation of the community. In this sense, the localisation might be the main reason for HANDS to

<sup>25</sup> *Laguku* was the annual repertoire in 2015 that was composed by Orang Orang Drum Theatre. Chew expresses that normally one repertoire would be created during a year (10/04/2018).

transform from the traditional 24 FD into a new identity. Additionally, the emergence of the transformed 24 FD (professional teams) also symbolises the modernity of 24 FD.

### **1.2.9 The Length of a Performance/‘Repertoire’<sup>26</sup>**

In recent years, 24 FD focused on formalising the performative elements, which are closely associated with their performances. The length of the performance is one of the examples in this point. In 24 FD critical literature, performance reviews and my interviews, I encounter the emergence of the term ‘repertoire’ to refer to the performance pieces that can be played and recreated continuously. For example, a 24 FD team can create a ‘repertoire’ as the ‘classic piece’ for the team. This ‘classic piece’ can be modified and recreated for future performance. In this respect, it is the intention of 24 FD practitioners to use the term ‘repertoire’ when referring to the particular performance they exhibit. The adoption of the term is for the sake of maintaining the authenticity and consistency of the resources. Academically, it occurs in Nithayananda’s (2015) MA dissertation titled *Hands Percussion: Moving Towards a Malaysian Identity*. For the general public, it is also a preferable term that newspaper reporters frequently use to indicate a particular performance piece.

Conventionally, the length of each 24 FD repertoire is fixed to 7 to 10 minutes for competitions. However, a duration of 5 to 8 minutes is mostly acceptable and practised

<sup>26</sup> Repertoire is conventionally used to refer to a set of different pieces, which are prepared to perform. However, in the context of 24 FD, a ‘repertoire’ is a common term that is widely used to refer to a classic piece of performance, which has been created in the first place and can be recreated repeatedly for the different occasions of performances. Newspaper reporters (Dinesh Kumar Maganathan, 2017; Embren Batrisyia Zainourudin, 2018; LengPG, 2016), 24 FD researchers (Chan, 2015; Nithyanandan, 2015) and performers from both professional and traditional teams, all adopt the term ‘repertoire’ to acknowledge a performance piece in their conversation. To avoid the confusion, this thesis only uses the term ‘repertoire’ to refer to an annual and/or classic piece of performance/composition in the particular context of 24 FD.

by many school teams in their performances. Some of the professional drum teams, such as HANDS, will hold their own concerts with a series of small repertoires. However, there will be some exceptions in the commercial troupes. According to Low, in his retrospect, the longest repertoire he has watched and listened to was *Chaos in Unison* about 1 hour and 30 minutes by HANDS in 2007 (Low, 2017). Thus, compared to traditional teams, more freedom is given to the professional teams in altering the performative elements to suit the needs of the performance presence.

### **1.2.10 The Instrument: *Shigu*-like**

As the name implies, 24 FD are an ensemble formed of 24 drums. The actual drum used in 24 FD performance is the single-head drum. The body of each drum is decorated with two Chinese characters written in Chinese calligraphy, representing one of the Chinese festivals of the year. The Figure 7 below shows a drum representing the *beginning of spring*. As Leng illustrates, the performance style of 24 FD largely drew upon the “lion-dance drumming, or *shigu*” (Leng, 2016). Similarly, the drums used in the performance of 24 FD are the same as the ones used in the Chinese Lion Dance in terms of the shape, manufacture and materials used. Even the pair of drumsticks used are the same. One distinguishing point, however, will be the element of the Chinese calligraphy. As Tan Chai Puan stresses, the fusion of festivals, drumming and calligraphy constitutes the emergence of 24 FD as a new cultural product (2000, 4). Tan points out that calligraphy is one kind of Chinese fine arts that imparts 24 FD the “colour” of a Chinese element in its practice. The “tattoo” of the Chinese characters on the drum body may alert actor-drummers that this culture is within the practice. The combination of drum and calligraphy ensures the continuity, viability and possibility in the promotion of Chinese culture (Tan, 2000, 3).

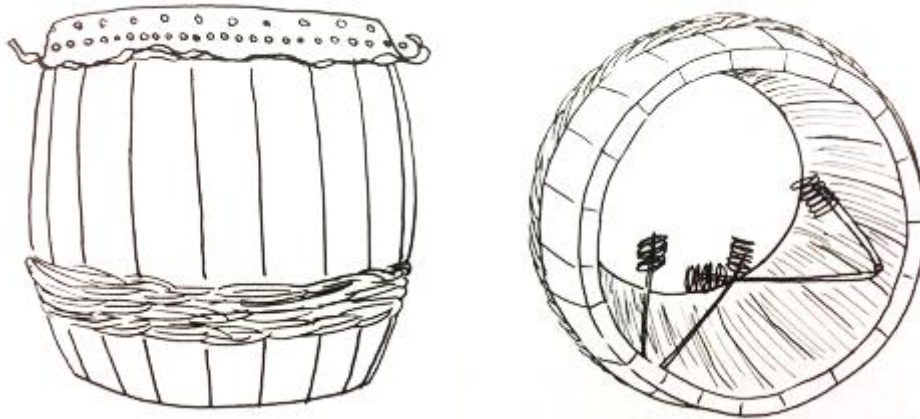
Figure 7: The instrument of 24 FD and the lion dance drum



Source: photos by Giano Siu, Liverpool 24 FD, in 2012.

According to Matusky and Tan, the drum body is made of wood and it is approximately 60cm in height. The surface is made of cowhide with a 58cm diameter. The wood and cowhide are nailed and it is shaped into a barrel-like drum, with metal springs attached underneath. The function of the metal springs is to create the particular echoing sound (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 150, 197). All the drums are imported from China, where the country has an abundant number of water buffalos to make the drumheads. The process of making the instrument is not complicated, and normally includes assembling the drum body and surface and then the painting a colored finish, mainly red, yellow and black. In line with Tan, red symbolizes prosperity and yellow represents royalty and luck in the Chinese context (2017, 135). As a native Chinese, I suggest that red signifies success, happiness and joy. Yellow is a prestigious color in Chinese culture, as all Chinese emperors wear yellow/gold color garments. Yellow goes well with red as a good combination. The color of black is the most neutral color that can be mixed with red and yellow.

Figure 8: The outside and inside views of the instrument



Source: Matusky and Tan (2017, 151)

### 1.2.11 The Maintenance of the Drums

The actual instruments are imported from China, as the weather conditions of Malaysia are not suitable for the manufacture of the drums. Although the instruments are not domestically made, the maintenance of the instruments is essential. The preferable temperature for the drum storage is at room temperature 25 to 30 degrees in a dry environment. The weather of Malaysia is tropical and humid throughout the year, thus, extra care of the drum is needed in order to maintain the best quality of the drum sound/timbre. Otherwise, the worst case might be the damage of the drum surface. Low Kee Hang highlights that once the cowhide surface is damaged, there is no way to repair the surface, and the only way is the replacement of the cowhide. It is expensive and complicated to replace the surface and to tune the bottom springs to fit with each other (Low, 2017). To prevent the damage of instruments, many teams are aware of the importance of daily maintenance. For example, Low informs me that, the drums would be taken out under the sun for drying and to remove humidity every one or two weeks due to the hot and humid Malaysian climate which has disadvantages for the upkeep of

the drums (Low, 2017). Similarly, the drums are kept warmed in the British climate periodically especially in winter to maintain them in their best condition. The position of the drum storage is important too, to prevent damaging the drumheads. My experience at Liverpool 24 FD suggests that the drums should be placed in the opposite directions (see Figure 9) where the surfaces of the drums are placed facing each other.

Figure 9: The correct position of storing drums



Source: Photo by Giano Siu, Liverpool 24 FD, 2012.

### 1.2.12 Conventional Movements

With the influence of the notion of 24 festivals, founder Tan Hooi Song created a set of basic movements with reference to the characteristics of the four seasons. He imparts names/titles to these (musical/bodily) movements, which can be seen as the initiative for the titled rhythms in chapter 2. These movements are titled in light of the rhythmic patterns and choreographed bodily movements. The creation of the conventional movements was largely inspired by the seasonal features and farming activities. Common features, such as “transplanting rice seedlings, wishing for rain, harvests and celebrations” (Leng, 2016) were used to create the conventional movements. Taking an example of the *seedling* movement (see Figure 10), the way to play this rhythm is by beating the centre

point of the drum with upright drumsticks, as this movement imitates the activity of *seedling*. Striking the drum surface with upright drumsticks is not a common drumming technique in 24 FD. In chapter 2, I will expand the discussion by looking at different techniques used in 24 FD.

Figure 10: the *seedling* movement

(二) 插秧

- 顾名思义，插秧这个花式表现出农耕作息表里的重要一环。
- 从而也表达了农民对新秧苗的一种期望。



- 图(1) - 第一个小节里的四拍，利用鼓棒的尾端双手一齐击向鼓心（鼓的中心）；头部有力地转向右边看。
- 图(2) - 第二个小节里的四拍，手部动作保持不变，但头部有力地转向左边看。
- 图(3) - 第三个小节里的四拍，手部动作保持不变，头部有力地往上方看。
- 图(4) - 第四个小节里的四拍，手部动作保持不变，头部有力地回来原本的方向。



Source: *Biography of 24 FD* (2000, 29)

These basic movements are known as the conventional movements, which are reorganised by Goh<sup>27</sup> et. al (2000, 29) in *The Biography of 24 FD*. In their recollection, twenty movements (see Figure 11) are formally documented. As *The Biography of 24 FD* suggests, movements are used to represent the agricultural activities, with the alternation of drumming gestures and volume. For example, the hand and arm movements are smaller, and the volume is softer when playing the *seedling* movement. In

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Goh, the founder of HANDS.



contrast, the *harvesting* movement involves more dynamic bodily movements and a louder sound (2000, 28).

Figure 11: The names of the conventional movements<sup>28</sup>

## 廿四节令鼓基本套路

资料整理：吴圣雄、云大雄、庄立康

1. 进场	11. 鼓边花式
2. 东南西北转	12. 收割
3. 跳步	13. 打谷
4. 惊蛰	14. 摘星
5. 变化	15. 欢庆
6. 播鼓	16. 滔米
7. 插秧	17. 压音
8. 对打	18. 播鼓
9. 音乐节奏	19. 结束打
10. 千手观音	20. 收场

Source: *The Biography of 24 FD* (Goh, et. al, 2000, 29)

### 1.2.13 Actor-drummer

Matusky and Tan (2017) define that the majority of music performances in Malaysia are percussion-dominated alongside theatrical or dance forms. For example, *Caklempong* and *Kulintangan* are both percussive ensembles with dance and martial arts in their performance practice, and they represent a Malaysian form of *gendang silat* (drum and martial arts) (2017, 159). However, from my investigation, these forms are more of a melodic and tonal performance. Furthermore, these said performance forms are mainly

<sup>28</sup> Translating into English as: 1. *Entering*. 2. *East-South-West-North turn*. 3. *Leaping*. 4. *Insects awakening*. 5. *Variation*. 6. *Drum-beating (lei gu)*. 7. *Seedling*. 8. *Counterpart drumming*. 9. *Musical rhythms*. 10. *Thousand-hands Avalokitesvara*. 11. *Edge patterns*. 12. *Harvesting*. 13. *Threshing*. 14. *Star-pick*. 15. *Celebration*. 16. *Rice overflow*. 17. *Soften volume*. 18. *Drum-beating*. 19. *Finale*. 20. *Retrieve*.

in a sitting position during the performance. This shows that the central component is the musical element, and the body movement becomes focused in the performance forms. In relation to 24 FD, it is mobile and has a higher requirement of bodily movements. The mobility allows the players to perform and create a theatrical and scenic presence. Although the drum is seemingly atonal, the performers largely make use of different positions and techniques to create musical playing (see chapter 3 for the different drumming techniques). Apart from this, each performer takes various roles in the performance. In a performance, drummers aside, there are roles such as dancers, conductors, producers, accompanists, different instrumentalists, and drum movers that 24 FD fill during the performance. For example, in some performances, Orang Orang Drum Theatre particularly designs an accompaniment area for the arrangement of the other instruments, which are also played by the drummers.

Notably, the new generation of 24 FD tends to integrate theatrical elements in its performance. I shall describe the multi-functional players of 24 FD as actor-drummers, as the elements of the body and music in the performance are inseparable, the actor-drummers are acting and drumming at the same time to fulfill the additional roles and produce meaning through the performance. The act of drumming and dancing in the Asian context is a form of acting, which I will discuss further in my chapter 4 in a detailed analysis of *The Memories*. In this sense, the phenomenon that drumming and acting are executed by the 24 FD performers not only creates a meaning, but a performative context to the performance. Reasonably, the term actor-drummer is appropriate to describe and define the 24 FD performers.

### **1.2.14 Evolutionary Outlook**

There is a trend that 24 FD is in the process of formalization step by step. It began with the prototype of a 9 drums ensemble of the first 24 FD team being set up in 1988. Next is the transformation of the 24 FD-born teams, which are professional troupes (first team of its kind in 1997). They add a variety of elements into the performance for the purpose of modernization and localization. Then, the emergence of the competitions since 2010 and formalization of its official name since 2009 indicate a proper structure of the performance form. At present, 24 FD are gradually acquiring an international presence as there are groups forming on an international basis performing in many countries. In the unique multi-cultural setting of Malaysia, 24 FD benefits from the transcultural support through the cultural fusion of ethnicities, race and religion. With this support, 24 FD borrows and brings multiple possibilities into its performance practice. Ethnicity is the major influential factor in its development. However, all the social-cultural components (ethnicity, cultural identity, localization, diaspora, and modernity) aside, transformation and performativity also are key factors in the performance practice of 24 FD. After the transformation of 24 FD from the first nine drums ensemble model into the conventional model of 24 FD, the performance form has further undergone an evolution into a series of 24 FD-born forms – the professional drum teams. The intention of transformation happens as the actor-drummers ceaselessly seek new opportunities in their performance ensemble. According to Tan Chai Puan, the tradition of 24 FD cannot be systematically formulated, as it is an ongoing process that evokes a wide range of possibilities in its development (Tan, 2018). During the process of transformation, what 24 FD creates is the multiple identities and realities through the combination of all the performative elements from a wide range of sources. Therefore, the key concepts of performativity and transformation of 24 FD are important for the examination of the

form. However, simply examining these two concepts is not adequate for the understanding of 24 FD as the performativity and transformation of 24 FD are largely influenced by a series of sociocultural elements. The culture of 24 FD depends on the context. On one hand, it is a collective memory of Chinese culture, whilst on the other hand, it projects a unity of Malaysian identity as a fusion of various cultures without deliberately emphasizing the Chinese identity. 24 FD frequently borrows from the mainstream of Asian performance traditions and its domestic denomination, such as Chinese, Indian and Japanese. It uses not only Chinese instruments, costumes and props but also develops its performance concept from Chinese religio-spiritual beliefs. Indian traditions of barefoot performance, dance forms, costumes and rhythms are equally integrated into the core of the performance practice. Malay *batik* clothing, instruments and *bunga raya*<sup>29</sup> illuminate the beauty and strength of the performance form. The gestural patterns of the hands and the drumming positions inspired by Japanese Taiko drumming inform the percussion and the rhythmic dynamics of 24 FD. All the above individual points will be expansively examined in chapter 4. Essentially, the involvement of diverse components indicates that 24 FD is not a single cultural performance. Instead, it is a multi-cultural, precisely dedicated cultural product. Therefore, there is an urgent need to look at these three cultural traditions from the perspectives of aesthetic and performance practice, in order to frame a comprehensive theoretical base for the examination of 24 FD. To better study, compare and contrast the relevant cultures, a Pan-Asian paradigm can be seen as an appropriate tool to offer aesthetic and practical theories to 24 FD. This will be discussed in chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> The national red flower.

## 1.3 Conclusion

This introduction of the PhD thesis consisted of two main parts. In the first part, I pointed out the limitation of the current scholarship on 24 FD and indicated my approach of being intercultural and inter-disciplinary, overlapping ethnomusicology and (pan) Asian Performance theory, research questions that ranging from social-cultural inquiry to theoretical and practical application, and methodologies including literature review, fieldwork, use of digital tools, and analysing my personal experience. I also outlined the structure of this thesis by briefly illustrating each chapter. Chapter 1 offers an ethnographical understanding of 24 FD. Chapter 2 develops the theoretical framework with the reference to (Pan) Asian Performance Theory. Chapter 3 examines the practical component of 24 FD by looking at its training process. Chapter 4 interrogates the corporeal musicality of 24 FD by conceptualising *musicalbody* to explain the performative phenomenon of the form. Chapter 5 states the limitation and future implication of this research. In the second part of the current chapter, I investigated the aspects that are relevant to 24 FD from the historical, social and cultural perspectives, which inevitably and naturally shape the practice of the research subject. Another important point of this chapter was the term 'actor-drummer', which defines the various roles, the unique performance styles and characteristics of "oneness" in the 24 FD performers. This term is used throughout the thesis to refer to the 24 FD performers, and it will be further expanded to facilitate the context of the discussions in the relevant chapters.

## **Chapter 2:**

# **The Entangled Body: An Introduction to Pan-Asian Performance Theory**

The intention of this chapter is to locate and isolate the affinities of Asian aesthetic theories by drawing on the Asian philosophies of the *I Ching*, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism to trace the interrelationship among these theories, aesthetics, practice and religio-philosophical traditions of thoughts. Asian performance forms an integral part of Asian philosophy. Similarly, aesthetic concepts and physical techniques are interconnected and well defined in Asian performance. I, hence, particularly focus on the concepts central to Indian, Japanese and Chinese performance aesthetics, respectively *rasa*, *hana* and *jiu mei*, by borrowing the philosophical framework and exploring the extent to which they can help us to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of 24FD. Bodily movement in performance and training embodies Asian performance aesthetically. “The body of the actor is the source and medium of performance” (Brandon, 1989, 38). Therefore, the discourse of how the body has been conceptualized and practised in selected texts of Asian philosophies will be examined within the specific context of Asian performance. Consequently, I will conclude the chapter through a concise summary of the limit of an isolated consideration of these contexts, leading to my argument for the necessity of developing a new concept in order to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of 24 FD.

## **2.1 (Pan) Asian Performance Theory**

In chapter 1, I point out that there is a need to develop a methodological framework by drawing upon various cultural traditions, aesthetic, philosophical and performance theories due to the multi-cultural characteristics of the research subject, 24 FD. Additionally, multiple artistic and performative elements (for example, music, dance, theatre, martial arts, calligraphy, storyline, theme and so on) are involved in 24 FD. To analyse how these elements are fused to constitute a 24 FD performance requires a

methodology that is established on the basis of different disciplines. I, therefore, use a Pan-Asian approach, which fulfils the above two criteria of this study by examining (Pan) Asian performance theory developed by Sreenath Nair (2017) in order to explore and identify the knowledge (aesthetic, philosophical and practical) that different cultural traditions offer to a Pan-Asian performance model. I will further clarify in the following section.

It is important to note that the development of a complete (Pan) Asian performance theory is not the main focus in this thesis. Rather, (Pan) Asian performance theory is used to inform the methodological framework of my research project, pinpointing relevant philosophies, aesthetics, and cultural traditions. Theories of Indian, Japanese, and Chinese performance, tradition and practice will be selected as a new Pan-Asian framework. To distinguish and clarify my approach to the (Pan) Asian performance theory, I use the term 'Pan-Asian' to claim that the selected cultural traditions might not represent the entire (Pan) Asian performance. However, it is suitable to achieve a more in-depth understanding of my research project - 24 FD as a multi-cultural performance. The term 'Pan-Asian' that I use in this thesis, in this sense, only denotes the shared Asiatic characteristics of Indian, Japanese, and Chinese cultures, by way of a diverse cultural aesthetics and performative landscape. The reason for choosing aforementioned cultures will be explained in the section "Rationale".

What is (Pan) Asian performance theory and where does it sit within the wider context of performance theories developed in conjunction with Asian aesthetics and practices? According to Nair,



(Pan) Asian performance theory is an attempt to re-locate, develop and redefine a range of critical paradigms in contemporary performance theory and practice originated closely in relation to performance traditions in Asia ... It is an attempt to explore the relationship underpinning philosophy and performance in Asia, in order to understand the complex structural principles and methodologies of practice that define and explain the psychophysical dynamics entangled in Asian performance.

(Nair, 2017, 103-104)

In Nair's terms, (Pan) Asian performance theory responds to my first inquiry for a methodology that can aid with a multi-featural performance form. Asian performance embraces a wide range of forms and genres from different cultural traditions. They exist independently and can be influenced by the other cultures in different cultural contexts. For example, the lion dance is a form that originated in China, yet it becomes one of the catalysts of the emergence of 24 FD. In this respect, some of the Asian forms featuring in sophisticated structures and performance principles require a Pan-Asian approach to explain. Nair also points out the "psychophysical dynamics" that exist in Asian genres. That is a unique technique that Asian actors obtained through their rigorous training and cultural practice. The "psychophysical dynamics" indicates that one of the purposes of (Pan) Asian performance theory is to explore the physical and psychophysical interaction of the body. In order to investigate this, the pan-Asian approach in this thesis will study the selected religio-philosophies and their cultural performance genres. A performer's body is a site comprising both mental and physical engagements of the body.

(Pan) Asian performance theory is a methodology that also embraces intercultural theatre to examine the overlapping areas of religions, philosophies, aesthetics, bodily techniques and performance knowledge in the Asian context. Schechner highlights that

intercultural discourse refers to the norm “between or among two or more cultures (rather than nations)”. He further sheds light on the characteristics of intercultural performance as connections or sharing points or separation or uniqueness among multiple cultures, and it could be “harmonic or dissonant; or both” (2013, 263). Fischer-Lichte situates her perspective on intercultural theatre by saying that the cultural interaction between East and West has occurred over a long period. For example, the European avant-garde theatre learnt movements and techniques from Japanese, Chinese and Indian performance since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, European spoken theatre was inspired in Japanese and Chinese genres (2017, 110). Pavis clarifies Schechner’s ideas of connections and sharing points in intercultural performance by emphasising the effect of hybridisation<sup>30</sup>. While agreeing with the characteristics of integrating multiple cultures in performance, Fischer-Lichte also exposes some limitations of intercultural theatre in performance research and responds to Pavis’s discussion on hybridisation by explicating that “intercultural theatre” separates cultures to cultures, which is a “false assumption” and even hybridisation in the current scholarship does not respond to this phenomenon<sup>31</sup> (Fischer-Lichte, 2014, 129-130).

<sup>30</sup> “**Intercultural theatre** ... creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas. The hybridisation is very often such that the original forms can no longer be distinguished ... **Multicultural theatre** ... The cross-influences between various ethnic or linguistic groups in multicultural societies ... have been the source of performances utilising several languages and performing for a bi- or multicultural public” (in Schechner, 2013, 309).

<sup>31</sup> The concept of “intercultural theatre” assumes that it is possible to separate one’s “own” theatre from “other” theatre ... (It) makes the false assumption that cultures are sealed entities – once Japanese, always Japanese; once European, always European ... The existing research on so-called intercultural theatre is inadequate to assess this situation. Even more recent studies that focus on hybridisation ignore this central point ... In research on “intercultural theatre”, the appropriation of elements from non-Western theatre cultures into Western theatre is generally valued differently than the appropriation of Western theatrical forms by non-Western cultures (Fischer-Lichte, 2014, 129-130).

In both Fischer-Lichte and Pavis's account, the attempt of intercultural debate, as in Fischer-Lichte's own term, is to "interweave" the Asian and Western performance cultures in the process of modernisation and globalisation (Fischer-Lichte, 2014, 115). The term "interweaving" refers to a fabric metaphor in which Western and Eastern are interconnected. A blossom of cultural exchange occurs in modernisation and globalisation and it leads to the development of each individual performance culture in the interwoven theoretical fabric. Fischer-Lichte's critique also stresses the problem of intercultural theatre in enquiring into performances with different cultural contexts. To avoid the "dichotomy between 'our' culture and 'other' culture" (Fischer-Lichte, 2014, 131), the research context of intercultural theatre, thus, is a blend of East and West by emphasising the exchange of different and unfamiliar cultural identities in performance. Intercultural theatre and (Pan) Asian performance theory have a different focus in their research context. In comparison, (Pan) Asian performance theory is situated within the Asian context, which only explores Asian traditions from the aesthetic, philosophical and performative positions, in order to develop an alternative discourse to re-evaluate and reassess the intercultural paradigm. The intercultural discourse in (Pan) Asian performance theory is within the Asian context.

To respond to the intercultural debate on Asian performance, Nair<sup>32</sup> further explains the fact that the intercultural debate in Asian performance is very limited in academia, and the reason for this is due to the isolation of performance practice and methodology. The

<sup>32</sup> In the current scholarship on Asian performance research, performance forms have been studied in isolation or in methodological exclusion, denying many other areas of their overlap. Asian performance forms are complex and multi-layered in terms of their structure, techniques, spatiotemporal contours and the nature and purpose of the aesthetic experience ... The *Natyastra* ... shares a (Pan) Asian methodological connectivity to other performance traditions in Asia, such as the writings of Zeami (1363-1443), and Chinese aesthetic theories (Nair, 2017, 104).

intercultural debate in Asian performance, particularly in the minor cultural genres, is insufficient. There is a variety of performing arts that uniquely exist in the Asian context, however, the practice has not gained scholarly attention, and also performance concepts, theories and critical studies are largely absent in many Asian forms. For example, several unnamed dance performances can be found in Sarawak Cultural Village, Malaysia. Some of them are performed to cure disease, whilst some of them are believed to pray for fishermen (Zamirah Noh, 2017). However, they are unavailable in performance research. In order to close this research gap, a new framework that suits the current research context should be established. (Pan) Asian performance theory is applied as an appropriate critical paradigm in this project. The methodology that (Pan) Asian performance theory offers is intercultural and interdisciplinary. On one hand, it uses the methodology of intercultural theatre for mapping out different Asian cultural traditions to draw an Asiatic characteristic in performance. On the other hand, the theory is established from a wide range of disciplines, such as Performance Studies, Theatre Anthropology and performance Epistemology. Essentially, the focus of (Pan) Asian performance theory is of central importance in analysing the performativity of the Asian performance form by synthesising Asian philosophies, religions and aesthetics into the development of concepts.

### **2.1.1 Rationales**

In chapter 1, I discuss the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious features of Malaysia. Malay, Chinese, and Indian are the three major ethnic groups in the society of Malaysia. Of these three ethnicities, Malay culture is largely influenced by Hinduism. Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism are central to Chinese culture. Hinduism and Buddhism originated in Indian culture. According to Smith, Islam is the religion of Malays,

who are also influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism in the Malaysian society. Chinese in Malaysia believe in Buddhism, Taoism, or Christianity. Indians in Malaysia generally follow Hindu, Christian or Sikh religious belief systems (2003, 120). Tan adds that ethnic Chinese also believe in Confucianism (2000, 283). Therefore, the influence of different cultural traditions forms the unique trait of *cham* (translated in English as mixed) culture in the community, which is known as Malaysian culture. Although the formation of Malaysian culture is largely influenced by Indian and Chinese elements due to transcultural exchanges in its historical past (see chapter 1), Malaysians do not fully integrate Indian and Chinese into the construction of Malaysian culture. Instead, the Indian and Chinese elements have only been taken into Malaysian culture where the conventions suit the local context. For example, the Kun Seng Keng (KSK) Dragon and Lion Dance group (Johor, Malaysia) is a Chinese dragon/lion dance group, but it integrates the Indian wind instrument *nadaswaram* and the percussion instrument *thavil*, and Malay *kompang* in their performances (Loo & Loo, 2016). With the introduction of Indian musical instruments in the practice of the lion dance, it is neither exclusively Chinese nor Indian, but it becomes an interesting blend of both. Therefore, Indian and Chinese cultures, traditions and practice in Malaysian music/performing art genres will not be directly borrowed but modified and contextualised to suit the demands. As a result, the process of amending and fusing Indian and Chinese elements constructs a 'Pan-Asian identity' in the Malaysian context.

Japanese influence is also important in the examination of 24 FD for two reasons. First, Malaya (Malaysia's former name) was colonised by Japan from 1941 to 1945. According to Kratoska, the Japanese invasion of Malaysia was profound. As he interprets, "the Japanese occupation divides the twentieth-century history of Malaysia into two parts,

1900-40 and 1945 onward and has often been described as a major watershed, and an event that put an end to the old order and created a new one” (1988, 1). The Japanese invasion had a strong impact on Malayan intellectual and social values. In particular, during World War II, for the sake of Japanese Pan-Asian propaganda, Malayan people were forced to learn the Japanese language, sing the Japanese national anthem and learn traditional Nippon music and dance (Kratoska, 1988). Second, in the explorative stage of 24 FD, drumming techniques were largely inspired and drawn upon by the Japanese *taiko* drumming in terms of the application of tilted and upright drumming positions (*miyake* patterns) and the arm’s movement of these two drumming positions. Despite this, the form itself contains a theatrical presence in its performance practice and Japanese aesthetic concepts are embedded in its theatrical performance. It made sense, therefore, to look into the Japanese theatre to understand how Japanese theory perceives the use of the body in its genre.

The above rationales aside, another reason to formulate a Pan-Asian framework is that the aesthetic and philosophical concepts of India, China, and Japan in Asian performance are notably well-established and influential in the entire Asian region. Indian, Chinese and Japanese cultures, therefore, are central to the methodological approach in this study in terms of aesthetic theories, philosophies and performance practice to explain the training and performance of 24 FD.

### **2.1.2 Indian Theory**

This thesis does not intend to explore the full theoretical and practical values of the *Nataysastra* on (Asian) performance. I study the *Nataysastra* for the following reasons:

1. To inquire what are the dialogues with the psychological transformation of the performer's body, training session and aesthetic concepts in Indian performance.
2. To identify the epistemological and cosmological perspective of the *Natyaśāstra*.
3. To specifically examine *rasa* theory with its counterpart term *bhava* in order to facilitate the aesthetic contacts and their functions in a performance.
4. To link the *Natyaśāstra* to the case of 24 FD with detailed application and explain what the *Natyaśāstra* can contribute to my study.

### **2.1.2.1 The *Natyaśāstra*<sup>33</sup> as a theoretical approach**

Indian theatre is a dramatic form that dwells on the layers of sound, texts, gestural behaviour, space and time. The *Natyaśāstra* was written in Sanskrit, the classical Indian language, between the second century BC 200 and 200 AD (Nair, 2015, 5) by Bharata (Madhavan, 2010; Vatsyayan, 2015; Jha, 2015; Cuneo, 2015; Mason, 2015; Schechner, 2015; Mee, 2015)/Bharatamuni (Byrski, 2015)/Sage Bharata (Nair, 2015).<sup>34</sup> It is an ancient treatise that is considered as the oldest in the world demonstrating and explaining in detail various aspects of performance, such as theatre architecture, actor training, acting, bodily movements, hand gestures (*mudra*), music and musical instruments and playwriting (Vatsyayan, 2008). It binds tightly with most genres of the performing arts (see Appendix for chapter illustration).

<sup>33</sup> The *Natyaśāstra* is an ancient Indian treatise on theatre.

<sup>34</sup> The debate of the authorship of the *Natyaśāstra* is various. In the *Natyaśāstra*, Ghosh addresses that “the sages (*muni*) approach Bharata, the master of *nāṭya* (drama)” to indicate the relationship between Bharata and *muni* as two parties (2006, xi). Bharata seems to be the most common way of referring the author of the *Natyaśāstra*. Therefore, this thesis follows this fashion. The issue of the authorship will not be included in the main body of this thesis, as the rationale of using the *Natyaśāstra* is to explore the knowledge and methodology that the *Natyaśāstra* can offer to my study. Relevant discussion can be found in Appendix.

From the aspects that the *Natyasastra* embraces, it is a creative and critical work of art (Ghosh, 2006, xv), which aims to provide conceptual insights and practical methodologies employed in performance (Nair, 2014, 1). It, particularly, presents a comprehensive discourse on the body in Indian performing arts across 36 chapters, covering not only theatre and performance but also, poetry, music, dance, medicine, mathematics, linguistics, prosody and architecture (Ghosh, 2006, xiv). The text, besides serving as a very detailed “how to” manual for a performer, offers a methodology for understanding and appreciating performance practice, discussing in detail what constitutes a performance, what fundamental psychophysical elements shape a performance and how textual, physical, spatial and temporal categories come together to form a visible form of performance. According to Vatsyayan “[...] the written text in its very nature is a residual record of a deeper richer experience and wider oral discourse” (2008, 77). Essentially, Vatsyayan significantly stresses implicit and explicit layers that exist in the *Natyasastra* (2015, 19). On the explicit level, the *Natyasastra* address “structure, methodology and techniques” (Nair, 2015, 6). Particularly, not only looking at “bodily animations”, but also examines “the actor’s entire psychophysical potential<sup>35</sup>”.

In addition to these characteristics of the explicit layer, there are “unsaid and unspoken implicit layers” (Vatsyayan, 2015, 19) in the *Natyasastra* dealing with *rasa*, the aesthetic experience, which will be discussed in the next section. Apart from *rasa*, Vatsyayan believes that, the *Natyasastra* has its cosmological view of perceiving “the world is an

<sup>35</sup> As Nair further explains, “It includes systems of knowledge, the science and arts, all dimensions and orders of space, time and bodily instruments ... particularly in relation to physical scores, and the actor’s skills, not only limited to bodily animations, but also extended to the actor’s entire psychophysical potential, ranging from textual and verbal articulations to music, costumes, stage conventions and other tools employed to create illusion in performance, such as imagination and improvisations. In this sense, the bodily discourse presented in the *Natyasastra* is inclusive in nature, but complex and multidisciplinary in structure” (Nair, 2015, 6).



organism” as well as the theatre (2015, 20-21). She exemplifies the central metaphor of *bija* (seed) to emphasize the process of growth. The process of growth can be seen as similar to Jha’s notion of the process of creation of an art form. Jha, from the epistemological perspective, points out that the process of creation of an art form and the process of appreciation of an art form are two fundamental processes that should be examined in the analysis of the *Natyasastra* (2015, 45). As he continues,

It’s everybody’s experience that the universe of our experience is partly given and partly created by man. A tree is given, a chair is created; flowers are given, garland is created; voice is given, music is created ... Therefore, our world of experience consists of both the given and the created. It is an accepted fact that what is experienced is a plural world: garden is not flower, flower is not thread; I am also not flower, nor the thread nor the garland; all of them are experienced as having independent existence ... They exist independent of their knowledge and that is why they become the cause of their knowledge.

(Jha, 2015, 46-47)

Consequently, the explicit and implicit levels are corresponding with the views of cosmology and epistemology, in the sense that the methodology of practice is intending to generate *rasa*, the aesthetic experience, which can be perceived as the outcome of the performance.

In Jha’s point of view, performance is created and given (2015, 46-47). In this respect, a performance is constituted by a series of pre-conditioned and pre-patterned actions. The *Natyasastra* confirms the fact that performance is tied to actions by asserting that the art of theatre is the art of acting. The *Natyasastra* is concerned with acting from almost every aspect of the body and mind of the actor such as movements, gestures, emotions and choreographies. A performer’s body creates a wide range of possibilities. As Vatsyayan

has it, “the ‘body’ (*sarira, tanu* and several other words are used) is a primary tool. It is also a term of reference. Physically, it is made up of bones, joints and muscles. The sense organs and sense perceptions are potent vehicles of feeling and sensibility” (2015, 23).

Bharata believes that the actor’s power, knowledge and skill will create another world, a world that an actor can create for the spectators through the performance (Ghosh, 2006, xii). Bharata defined two modes of representation (*dharmi*) in acting: *Lokadharmi*, which is daily (*loka*) behavior and as such best understood in terms of being realistic or naturalistic and the *Natyadharmi* (extra-daily and theatrical), which is stylized (*natya*) behavior. The gestures we use, for instance, and the ways we communicate with others in our daily lives, are likely to be different from the gestures we employ in a theatrical space. According to Bharata, dramatic compositions as well as their subsequent performances largely come under these two broader classifications. As Jha defines, the *given* and the *created* worlds are the two contexts that we live with (2015, 46-47). Nair further elaborates the Jha’s terms in greater detail, “the *given* world is the world we live in, and we have not created even one particle of it. The *created* world, however, is the world of art, our creation, in which we have arranged and rearranged the already *given* world”, and an Indian actor is a “creator” of his/her world of performance by using his/her “extra-ordinary abilities” (Nair 2015, 7).

Ranging from Vatsyayan’s cosmological view of explicit and implicit layers of the *Natyasastra* to Jha’s insights into the epistemology of the Indian aesthetic experience, the *Natyasastra* offers a systematically developed methodology to enable the actor to create the imaginary world of performance. The physical acting and training are not the only

focus in the *Natyasastra*, but the psychophysical dynamics. To assess the psychophysical state of a performer, *rasa* as an experiential tool will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.1.2.2 *Rasa* as the performative experience**

*Rasa* is central to the *Natyasastra* as a way of aiding experiencing aesthetic pleasure in performance. As Bharata has it, no *Natyasastra* can independently exist without *rasa* (Ghosh, 2006; Godara, 2013; Schechner, 2001; Vatsyayan, 2008; Bäumer & Brandon, 1993). *Rasa* in Sanskrit means, “taste” and is commonly referred to address the sensory states of “feeling”, “emotion” and “experience”. Coincidentally, the word *rasa* exists in Malay and is used to denote “feeling”. In the *Natyasastra*, the relishing of *rasa* is “taste” (Ghosh, 2006, 238). In many cases the metaphoric description has been appropriately utilized in understanding aesthetic theories such as the flower metaphor in Japanese *hana*. According to Pollock, the metaphor of “taste” functions as a means of bridging a direct relationship to the aesthetic object. As he explicates the concept, “unlike smell, taste admits of degree” (2016, 42). In this respect, the metaphoric use of “taste” renders tactile experience into different degrees rather than any bodily sense. Because of the analogy between “taste” or “relish” in Bharata’s descriptions of *rasa* and food (Ghosh, 2006, 239, 241-242), many scholars (Schechner, 2001, 168, 172 and 177; Ley, 2000, 203; Vatsyayan, 2008, 37-38; Baumer and Brandon, 1981, 214) deploy the metaphor of food in addressing the concept of *rasa*.

*Bhava* and *rasa* are coupled to explain the relationship between psychological states and emotions in the *Natyasastra*. Mason suggests that, there are sets of different terms to distinguish emotions and feelings with *bhava* and *rasa* (2008, 100-101). In the translated text of the *Natyasastra*,

*bhavas* (psychological states/feeling) are so called, because through words, gestures and representation of the Sattva they *bhavayanti* (infuse) the meaning of the play [into the spectators]. .... The psychological states are so called by experts in drama, for they make one feel (*bhavayanti*) the sentiments in connexion with various modes of dramatic representation. .... Sentiments arise from the psychological states and not the psychological states from the sentiments.

(Ghosh, 2006, 240-241,277)

In this respect, the relationship between *bhava* and *rasa*, psychological states and sentiments are as Pollock has it – “mutually constitutive” (2016, 51). To better understand the mutual contact of this pair, Bharata uses a tree metaphor to address the interrelationship of *bhava* and *rasa*, saying that “just as a tree grows from a seed, including the flowers, fruits and the seed, the sentiments (*rasas*) are the source (root) of all the emotional states (*bhava*) as the emotional states exist as the source of all the sentiments” (Ghosh, 2006, 242). Bharata uses the analogy of the ‘tree’ alongside its branches, leaves flowers and fruits to explain the concept of the *rasa* (Vatsyayan, 2008, 25). The seed of the tree is the *bhava*, the latent emotions, the fruit is the *rasa*, the aesthetic experience and the entire organic structure of the tree is the body of the performance.

There are eight *rasas* that are originally presented in the *Natyasastra*. According to Bharata, all human emotions are in one way or other based on these basic mental states. The following table will show eight pairs of *rasa/bhava* relationships more specifically:

Figure 12: *Rasa/bhava* relationships

<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Sthayi Bhava</i>	English
<i>Sringara</i>	<i>Rati</i>	Desire, love
<i>Hasya</i>	<i>Hasa</i>	Humor, laughter
<i>Karuna</i>	<i>Soka</i>	Pity, grief
<i>Raudra</i>	<i>Krodha</i>	Anger
<i>Vira</i>	<i>Utsaha</i>	Energy, vigor
<i>Bhayanaka</i>	<i>Bhaya</i>	Fear, shame
<i>Bibhasta</i>	<i>Juguptsa</i>	Disgust
<i>Adbhuta</i>	<i>Vismaya</i>	Surprise, wonder

Source: *Performance Theory* (Schechner, 2003, 340)

A ninth *rasa* – *śānta* (bliss) was added by Abhinavagupta (Schechner, 2003, 340). As Schechner explicates,

Every emotion is a *sthayi bhava*. Acting is the art of presenting the *sthayi bhavas* so that *both* the performer and the partaker can “taste” the emotion, the *rasa* ... From Abhinavagupta’s time onward, many Indians speak of the “nine rasas”. But *shanta* does not correspond to any particular *sthayi bhava* ... *shant* is the perfect balance/mix of them all; or *śānta* may be regarded as the transcendent *rasa* ... A perfect performance, should one occur, would not transmit or express *śānta* (as it could transmit or express any of the other *rasas*), but allow *śānta* to be experienced simultaneously and absolutely by performers and partakers.

(Schechner, 2003, 340-341)

The *rasa/bhava* discussion presented in the *Natyasastra* is elaborate and systematically explained in relation to physical movements, body postures, music, language and other means of acting. Bharata defined *rasa* as a combination (*samyogad*) of determinants (*vibhava*), consequents (*anubhava*) and complementary psychological states (*vyabhicharibhava*) through which the *rasa* experience emerges (Ghosh, 2006, 237). Determinants are two in type: 1) the characters which are the base and 2) the situations and surrounding, which are the stimuli. The Consequents are the character’s actions and

reactions based on the Determinants (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005, 95). In the *rasa* of love (*sringara*) for instance, the lovers are the base determinant (*alambana*) and the appropriate situations and surroundings that enable the characters to express the love are the stimuli (*uddipana*). Bharata explained the transitory states (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005; Madhavan, 2010) as the emotions that are impermanent but that go together with a major emotion, for example, tears when you are in extreme excitement. Here, the tears in no way mean sorrow, but they intensify the dominant emotion. The discussion of the *rasa/bhava* in the *Natyasastra* is very detailed and the classifications are systematic and well explained, which is a useful tool to access the experiential contact that is evoked within a performance.

Performance is a mediation to access *rasa* through *bhava*. Bharata explains that *rasa* comes from the *bhavas* (Ghosh, 2006, xxxiii), whilst Schechner states in a similar way that, “*rasa* is experiencing *bhavas*” (2001, 177). The sweetness in a ripe plum is its *bhava*, the experience of tasting the sweet is *rasa*” (Schechner, 2001, 177). In acting, therefore, the emotions are *bhavas*, which are expressed by the actor. They become *rasa* when both the performer and the partaker can ‘taste’ the emotions. Actors, therefore, become a tool to help the audience to experience *rasa*. The *bhava/rasa* relationship, therefore, is central to the *Natyasastra* methodology. The love between the lovers is *bhava* and it becomes *rasa* when the lovers experience it or when the audience watching the love in a performance also experiences it. In this project, the audience’s perception and experience in 24 FD performance is one of the key points to examine the aesthetics and appreciation of the form. *Rasa/bhava* is parallel to the actor/audience relationship as discussed in the *Natyasastra*: an emotional state in a performance is only relevant when it is experienced by the audience and according to Bharata, this process of experiencing a given emotional

situation is called *rasa*. *Rasa* is created in theatrical performance to enact the presence on stage by the units of determinants (*vibhavas*), consequents (*anubhavas*), and fleeting emotions (*vyabhicharins*) (Ghosh, 2003, 293). The account of “art-emotion” and “life-emotion” suggests that the *rasa* and *bhava* should be distinguished from real life (Ghosh, 2003, 294). The actors are the substitution in theatre, which might be not real, but only the presence of the theme (Schechner, 2003, 234). Such an approach strives to explain that the audience only experiences *rasa* if the acting is different from our familiar life.

### **2.1.2.3 The *Natyasastra* and 24 FD**

In my close reading of the *Natyasastra*, I discovered that it offers a philosophical understanding of the body on the one hand and suggests a practical approach for training the body in performance, and for the body in performance itself on the other hand. These methodologies will be used to understand the unexplored areas of 24 FD. *Rasa* is the core theory in the literature of the *Natyasastra*, and it is a valuable term to elaborate the complex psychophysical interaction and the nature of aesthetic experience in a performance. To constitute a performance, Bharata identify a number of elements in the *Natyasastra*, including “*Rasa* (sentiment), *Bhava*, *Abhinaya* (acting), *Dharmi* (modes of representation), *Vriti* (style of expression), *Pravrti* (local usage), *Siddhi* (success of production), *Svara* (note), *Atodya* (musical instrument), *Gana or Gita* (song), and *Ranga* (theatre)” (Godara, 2013, 1). These elements are closely related to the case of 24 FD. Precisely,

1) the acting (*Abhinaya*) consists of four elements that are physical, vocal, mental/emotions and scenography. In this category, *Abhinaya* explains how “actor-drummer” is the most suitable term to describe the performer, who is acting and

drumming at the same time. The physical and vocal aspects are about the bodily movement, ensemble drumming, singing and exclamation that take place in a 24 FD performance. The mental/emotions can be referred to as the feeling, experience, imagination and perception of an audience towards the 24 FD performance. Subsequently, the scenography is related to the scene settings, theme, storylines of the performance. These four elements will be further discussed and contextualized in the performance of *The Memories* in chapter 4.

2) The modes of representation (*Dharmi*) are stylized (*Natyadharmi*) and naturalistic (*Lokadharmi*). As Schechner interprets, “the *Natyasastra* is more danced than read” (2001, 169 -171). This statement expounds the nature of the *Natyasastra* as a practical tool for performance research. With the reference of this tool, Barba takes up the concepts of daily and extra-daily techniques in parallel to the concepts of *Lokadharmi* and *Natyadharmi*. He points out that daily technique appears to be more natural and realistic in relation to extra-daily technique (Barba & Savarese, 2006, 7). This so-called daily technique is basically the proficiency of using the body in an appropriate way of practice. Daily technique is used to communicate, to convey the performance in a natural way, whilst the extra-daily technique is used to inform, to bring spectators into the world of the stylised performance. Extra-daily technique demands an embodied acting, meaning that the actor’s entire body should be utilised appropriately in the performance. This discourse of daily and extra daily techniques becomes one of the important arguments in Barba’s works. In the meantime, daily and extra daily techniques help in understanding the technique-related phenomenon of a performance. In Chapter 3, the technique-based training event of 24 FD will be examined by closely looking at the concept of *technique as*



*knowledge*<sup>36</sup> in epistemological implication and argue how technique can be learnt, practised, revised and eventually became a form of knowledge in a continuous circle of training sessions. The *Natyasastra* specifies acting principles in great depth and this fundamentally proposes that technique is the base of knowledge. What the *Natyasastra* offers is a repository of a series of physical vocabularies, techniques and concepts that are systematically explained extensively throughout its 36 chapters (Vatsyayan, 2007, 60), which explores what a performer's body can do. Different principles are for the sake of different performances and training demands. Through these codified principles, a knowledge of technique can be learnt and trained. In this sense, the *Natyasastra* is epistemic, as it embraces a wide range of principles to render performance knowledge for training and performance.

3) Qualities of movement and expression (*Vriti*) include strength (*Arabhati*); beauty (*Kishiki*); resonance (*Bharati*) and subtlety (*Satwiki*)<sup>37</sup>. The criteria of movement and expression require not only physical but also aesthetical aspects of a performance. To achieve the qualities of movement and expression, the *Natyasastra* sheds lights on four aspects of the principles in details. It is also a shared requirement in other cultural domains, such as the quality of acting in *jiu mei* in Chinese aesthetics. In an experiential context, this category is related to the aspects of the bodily presence, performativity and embodiment of 24 FD.

<sup>36</sup> Technique is a form of knowledge. See Chapter 3 for detail discussion.

<sup>37</sup> To clarify further, resonance is always related to the vocal expression and subtlety is associated with actor's emotional expressions. The other two categories are associated with movements.

4) Adaptation/local usage (*Pravrti*) referring to actors performing differently due to different spectators, venues, time, culture and other social factors. The *Natyaśāstra* is not only an acting manual, instead, it takes in all influential factors that happen in a performance. This social and cultural perspectives allow this thesis to provide the missing linkage between ethnographical discourse and performance/performative research, which is the issue that has been addressed in the introduction of this thesis.

5) The success of a production (*Siddhi*) is attributed to divine grace (*Daivi*) and human effort (*Manusi*). This layer of requirement corresponds to the necessity of studying relevant theories from the selected cultures. Divine grace responds to how Asian religions and philosophies can largely influence Asian aesthetics. In other words, it sheds light on the rationale of this thesis to examine selected Asian religions and philosophies to summarize the Pan-Asian concepts of performance. The human effort can be referred to as the training and performance. This is a core discussion in chapter 3.

6) Vocal notes (*Svara*) consisting of seven notes that are mutually related to each other, and is categorized into Sonant (*Vadin*), Consonant (*Samvadin*), Assonant (*Anuvadin*), and Dissonant (*Vivadin*). Vocal notes are one of the crucial characteristics that exist in the training and performance of 24 FD. The section of “syllabic vocalization” in chapter 3 will detail the specific Asiatic training method in (music) performance.

7) Musical instruments (*Atodya*) have been classed into four types: string instruments (*Tata*), covered drums (*Avanaddha*), cymbals (*Ghana*) and wind instruments (*Susira* meaning “hollow”, flute, for instance), also songs and recitals (*Gana* and *Gita*). Instruments have their cultural performativity to present different cultural identities and characteristics for performance purposes, and this will be discussed in Chapter 4.

8) Stage space (*Ranga*) where the *rasa* is embodied and enacted for the audience in the form of a performance. In this sense, Bharata's methodology is specific and Asiatic at the same time. On the one hand, it is specific because Bharata's techniques and terminology are culturally located in South Asia. On the other hand, his classifications and concept and principles of *rasa* aesthetics are broader categories that are applicable to suit the majority of Asian performances.

The knowledge that the *Natyasastra* offers is not merely of physical aspects, but also psychophysical and aesthetic. Physical technique can refer to acting technique. Besides acting, Bharata further offers the concept (*rasa*) of the aesthetic experience and psychophysical connection of the body, an in-depth knowledge of the relationship between the sense, body and mind. Bharata's methodology is physical, corporeal and tactile, dealing with three broader categories concerning the art of theatre: 1) artistic experiences; 2) sentiments and emotions; and 3) dramatic structures (Nair, 2015, 3). Physicality or corporeal mechanisms can be understood empirically; however, it is much more difficult to understand the processes involved in an actor's/performer's feeling and emotion. The body, feeling and emotion are interlocking systems of mechanisms and Bharata's methodology insists upon the interrelations between these domains of activity located in the body (Nair, 2015, 4). In other words, the *Natyasastra* covers both scopes of subjective and objective recognition. Inspired by the *Natyasastra*, Barba's study attempts to discuss the pre-expressivity and presence of an actor as a method of using the *bodymind*<sup>38</sup> technique. Although the intention of synthesis is only one of many strands of

<sup>38</sup> The discussion of the *bodymind* technique can be located in chapter 3.

knowledge in the *Natyasastra*, it corresponds to the Asian belief of the body and mind being integrated as one entity. Essentially, the *bodymind* synthesis informs the linkage between the selected genres (Indian, Japanese and Chinese) by way of locating the intellectual and performative traditions and practice. Precisely, in the Indian theory, *rasa* is the synthesis of *bodymind*. This characteristic helps in developing and shaping the Pan-Asian aesthetic/performative identity in this project. Similar concepts can be found in the Japanese and Chinese cultures in the subsequent sections.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the audience's perception and experience in the study of the performance practice of 24 FD. *Rasa*, which facilitates the emotion and feeling of the performance, performer and spectator, will be particularly deployed to access the emotional states of the audience. *Rasa* arises from an embodied performance due to the sensory capacity of the body. Furthermore, ensuring that a performance is performative is also contingent upon the performer's techniques (see chapter 3 for details). The understanding of the human body as well as its gestural possibilities in creating the aesthetic experience together forms the central methodology in the *Natyasastra*. In respect of the above discussions, the *Natyasastra* lends support to this thesis by rendering multi-dimensional modalities. Particularly, the principles of physical, psychophysical and aesthetics of performance practice will enrich the research in explaining and understanding the performativity and embodiment of 24 FD. Trained techniques (physical and psychophysical) serve as a means of embodiment to artistically enhance a performance and an audience's experience.

### **2.1.3 Japanese Philosophies and Aesthetics**

Japanese performance is closely tied to the prevalent Asian philosophies and religions. According to Kubota, Japanese culture has analogues with Chinese, which is collectivist (1999, 12). Philosophies, religions and social and cultural values play supportive roles in Japanese performance. Their theories form aesthetic concepts in Japanese genres. In this section, I will discuss the relevant theories of aesthetics, religions and philosophies of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen Buddhism, to explore the influence and implication of the theoretical ground towards the physical and psychophysical use of the body in Japanese performance.

To specify, two approaches are aimed to achieve in the section discussing Japanese performance. One is to identify the similarity among Indian, Japanese and Chinese performance principles and theories, in order to establish and facilitate the rationale and appropriation of pan-Asian framework in this study. The aspects that I examine in following are mainly and only served for the construction of the proposed methodology. This section is not a place to specifically interrogate and analyse the sophisticated linkage of religions/philosophies and Japanese performance that goes beyond the foci of this research. Extending from this approach, another point is to explore the paradigm of Buddhist epistemology and performance, in order to offer a deeper understanding of philosophical dimension of epistemological performance in a larger landscape.

#### **2.1.3.1 Religions and Aesthetics**

The reception of Japanese aesthetics has been associated with religious factors. For example, *taiko* drumming is rooted in Buddhist religion (Gould, 1998, 12; Wong, 2000,

67), using for chanting in religious service (Gould, 1998, 12), due to its historical influence by Indian, Chinese and Korean Buddhism in the sixth century (Powell, 2015, 112). Another example is *Noh* performance, which implies that how Japanese theatre deal with religious dimensions since its formation by Kannami Kiyotsugu during the medieval era (Tsubaki, 1971, 56; Lafleur, 1985, 89). There is extensive research on the relationship between religion and *Noh* performance (LaFleur, 1985,89; Mathews, 2013,30). George studies and analyses how specifically Zen and Buddhism infiltrate into Japanese martial art and *Noh* (2011). As he observes, in a technical way, swordmanship and archery are two techniques can be found in Japanese martial arts from Zen's influence (2011, 184). In an aesthetic and performative context, the essence of *Noh* is not about the movement, but the "frozen moment" of "no action" (2011, 194), which finds its counterpart on Zen's and Buddhist emphasis on mindlessness/nothingness and emptiness<sup>39</sup>. From George's perspective, the moment of motionlessness in *Noh* is more important than any other factors. The moment when the movement is "frozen", *hana* (see 2.1.3.3), as an aesthetic state of experience is emerged. Although Zen is rooted in the Japanese religious belief since the medieval era, Zeami's treatises were also inspired and influenced by Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism (Lafleur, 1985, 90). Mathews highlights that there is a lack of study in the field of conceptualizing Zeami's treatises with Confucianism (2013, 31-32). In fact, even Zeami himself perceives the most significant element in *Noh* as Chinese characteristics (Mathews, 2013, 38), due to the linguistic similarity. As Nearman reveals, Zeami was in favour of using "Chinese-like catchphrases" to offer more meaningful expression and ease linguistic difficulty in terminology (1980, 158). The discussion of the

<sup>39</sup> Nothingness and emptiness will be fully expanded in the section of 2.1.3.6.

linkage between the Japanese aesthetics and Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism will be taken place in the subsequent section.

At this stage, Japanese and Chinese theories are not in isolation, but have a mutual influence towards each other, and this connection between religion and performance is apparent. Because of this interconnectivity, a Pan-Asian methodology can be created by investigating essential theories and practices in these representative domains. Additionally, religious and aesthetic theories are not abstract and philosophical, they practically present a series of solid evidence on technical skills and performance quality. This is not only limited to Japanese performance, but also can be found in the Indian and Chinese context in this thesis. George might not be aware of the intimate interrelationship that was involved in the Pan-Asian context, yet his works provides substantial evidence for the ways in which Japanese performance, martial arts and training have largely integrated and infused with philosophical theories. A shared characteristic of religions and aesthetics being performative, therefore, becomes a key to unlock the Pan-Asian attempt.

### **2.1.3.2 *Yugen***

In a Pan-Asian context, aesthetic concepts generally account for the beauty of the performance. In Japanese genre, *yugen* is an aesthetic term that is also the core around which *Noh* revolves. Zeami defines *yugen* as “the beauty of gentle gracefulness”, or “beauty and gentleness” (McKinnon, 1953, 211). In relation to the *Natyasastra*, Indian performance considers the element of beauty (*kishiki*) in the quality of movement and expression (*Vriti*). In relation to the Pan-Asian context, *yugen* and *hana*, *bhava* and *rasa*

are different interpretations of terminology, but indicating similar messages in the sense of aesthetics.

From Zeami's viewpoint, *yugen* determines the success of *Noh* performance. *Yugen* as a form of feeling indicates that the Japanese theatre regards the beauty of the performance as about perceiving a specific feeling. At the same time, it is an influential element in *Noh* performance to identify the quality of the performance. In other words, *yugen* generates a sense of aesthetic taste in Japanese performance, and also determines what a successful performance must be. The spectator's response and reaction are the main focus in performance research – where the core of the accomplishment in a performance is based upon the accreditation of three aspects, which are the effort and devotion to the art form, the capability to emulate the art form and the ability to attain *hana* from the performance.

George further adds that, Zen's practice integrates in *Noh* training in an "open" way, which allows actors to "individualise, personalise, and particularise, not standardise what they do" (2011, 196). The way he advocates not to standardise a performance is fundamentally a technique of making each performance different, as performance only happens with only one act. A successful *Noh* performance, as George clarifies, is not only about the "plots and imagery, but the structure and technique" (2011, 186). Plots, storylines, theme and actors could be absent or in the same setting, but each individual performance is different, as this is how the actor makes effort to their presence and brings an embodied performance to audiences. In this sense, Japanese performance largely focuses on a trained technique to produce non-repeatable performance and create aesthetic pleasure in the audience.



The role of the audience in a performance is predominant in terms of accessing the aesthetics and quality of the performance. Zeami sheds light on the importance of the recognition of the audience in the plays in achieving effectiveness in a performance. In line with Zeami, the actor and audience can be considered as the giver and receiver. An actor guides the audience to perceive the play by his acting (Mathews, 2013, 47). In this way, an actor creates the novelty of the performance for the audience. The novelty, as Zeami suggests, is the way of developing the taste and mood of the audience (McKinnon, 1953, 211). Likewise, it is also an important quality of an actor/performer in Asian performance. In the Chinese context, there is a similar requirement of creating novelty in a performance, as one of the principles of *jiu mei*, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Regardless, an actor should be conscious of the feelings of the audience. The account of Zeami comes distinctively close to *yugen* at this point. It expounds that, the target of the “feeling” is the audience, and he/she will be moved with our theatrical tool, which is the actor. Japanese aesthetics strives to attain the beauty of the feeling by the ceaseless pursuit of acting training.

### **2.1.3.3 *Hana*: Flower as the Performing Body**

*Hana* means flower. Similar to Indian’s *rasa*, the metaphoric concept of *hana* is found in the writings of Zeami. Zeami wrote twenty-one treatises on *Noh* performance during his life time of which five have the Chinese character that signifies “flower” (*hana*) in their titles: *Fūshi kaden*, *Shikadō* (A Course to Attain the Flower), *Kakyō* (A Mirror to the Flower), *Shūgyokutokka* (Pick up a Jewel and Take the Flower in Hand), and *Kyakuraika* (The Flower in . . . Yet Doubling Back) (Nishio, 1974, 312). The first and foremost concern of the performance according to Zeami is to know the flower. Yuka Amano offers a clear explanation of Zeami’s use of the metaphor in the following manner:

Along with the flower, another key concept in Zeami's aesthetics is *yūgen*, a term that generally describes a profound and mysterious sense of beauty...According to Zeami's explanation, *yūgen* and the flower are fundamentally different concepts. While the former refers to the elegant beauty inherent in the object per se, the beauty of the flower is determined solely by the audience's perceptions. In other words, *yūgen* refers to the intrinsic beauty, primarily the elegance and physical appeal, of the performer as opposed to the flower, which can refer to immanent physical body and/or to the beauty achieved through the actor's technique (*kufū*) and the state of mind.

(Amano, 2011, 532)

As Zeami says, the "flower of *yugen*" will diminish as the actor's physical beauty fades with age, while "both the coming into bloom and scattering" of "the authentic flower" is "in the control of the mind" (Amano, 2011, 532). Zeami's account for "flower" is not about perceiving the "flower" as an object but refers to a particular moment that the "flower" is emerged. In order to realise this moment, Zeami also points out, "*hana* is in the mind, the seed is technique" (George, 2011, 184). This is to say, the "flower" exists in the audience's mind, the audience navigates his own way through the actor's acting. "Flower" cannot last longer than a performance (George, 2011, 154), it is momentary. The 'flower moment' occurs when the audience immerses in his actual experience. This process is experiential and subjective, but from the Pan-Asian philosophical perspective, given that Buddhism, Zen, Taoism all implicitly acknowledge that things including performance is an event happening at once, another essential point is to realise that *hana* is 'momentary'.

The best *Noh* actor is able to elicit surprise and excitement in the audience's mind by performing in such a way that goes beyond the reach of appreciation and emotional response and beyond verbal expression, Says Zeami (Amano, 2011, 533). The movement refers to the actor's gestural behaviour, whilst expression is about the aesthetic

expression via the actor's acting. Whilst giving an example of how an old man should be played, Zeami explains *hana* in acting in concrete terms. The actor who presents an old man will generally pick up the physical appearance of an old man such as "bent over at the waist and lame in the knees" (Hare, 2008, 33). However, it will be of little interest to the audience because the audience is least concerned about how an old man looks. So, the problem comes in looking old and yet retaining the flower, meaning that the acting should break the mere resemblance of the old man, bringing beauty to it. It is very clear in his description that the external similarity alone is not enough to move the audience. What is equally important is the aesthetic experience (the flower) that is emerging from the acting, which is only capable of moving the audience. He also suggests that a performance that only depicts the external appearance of the character will lose the flower, meaning that it is of little interest to the eyes and will not surprise the audience in pleasant ways (Hare, 2008, 34). In this regard, the actor should maintain grace even when playing the role of an old man. In other words, the flower is not about the actor's physical beauty, but it is the aesthetic enjoyment that the actor shares with his audience while performing the old man. Japanese theatre pursuing the experience of *hana* is an innovative way of surprising the spectator. Consequently, the moment when *hana* is realised, the beauty of the performance is obtained.

#### **2.1.3.4 Training in Japanese Performance**

Training in Asian performance enables and equips actors to obtain the technical quality which will contribute to enhancing the aesthetic experience of the performance. Training from the perspective of Zeami, is of chant and dance. He believes that the consciousness of these two main elements would lead to perfection of acting on the stage (McKinnon, 1953, 215). For Zeami, dance, as one form of performance is about the corporeal use in

practice through the movement of the arm and body. Chant, on the other hand, refers to the verbal expression, producing music element in performance. As previously discussed, Zeami perceives the technique of an actor as the seed for creating *haha*. Not only because the technique of using the body will aid with the visual impact on stage (McKinnon, 1953, 217), on a deeper level, the aesthetic transmission – *hana*, is produced in performance by actor's body motion. The practical components involved in training, specifically, is kinetic, that includes all aspects of the bodily practice.

A major claim that will be closely examined in Chapter 3 is that the body and mind have never been separated in Asian context, yet the prime aim at the moment is to point out this inseparability. From the philosophical perspective, Buddhism does not distinguish mental and physical states, but as Johansson defines, it is a “psychophysical” phenomenon that sees everything – “realities” as the same, which are fictions<sup>40</sup> (1979, 49). In Taoism, Hare addresses that the body refers to the substance (*tai*), while the mind can be seen as the instance (*yu*). They are used to describe the essential and incidental matter (2008, 98). Asian philosophies are interested in recognising and understanding the primary experience of the self. George, when he explores the intimate interrelationship between Buddhist practice and performance, emphasises that “Buddhist philosophy turns the raw materials to direct experience, turns philosophy into praxis, turns knowledge into wisdom via experience” (2011, 43). In this sense, Asian philosophy is not elusive, but embodied and tacit. The fundamental aim is not about knowing something, but about the practical engagement of the process of knowing.

<sup>40</sup> Johansson addresses that “things” including “concrete reality, mental reality, the world and even truth itself – are the same: all are fictions” (Johansson, 1979, 49). And more importantly, “things” are not the main focuses in Buddhism, but process (Johansson, 1979, 217).

Aesthetic theory plays an integral role in performance and training, meaning that terms like *hana* offers, not only an aesthetic meaning, but also actual and practical functions in performance and training. As Zeami has it, *hana* offers “acting theory, composition theory, directing theory”, and even deals with “spectator theory” (George, 2011, 150). It imparts practical principles of using the actor’s body to achieve the aesthetic state of performance, which is the *hana* moment. Therefore, Asian aesthetic theory is neither an “obscurity”<sup>41</sup> nor abstract, instead, it is performative.

Insofar as understanding the experiential and performative aspects of Asian philosophy, the linkage between philosophy, aesthetics and training/performance is clear. They are closely tied with performative experience, excluding narratives and descriptions, precisely, as George (2011) calls it, a “praxis”. With reference to Asian aesthetic theory being practical and performative, Zeami focally trains the body and mind of the actor in his rigorous training that is similar to many Asian forms. According to Zeami, “the real *hana* is the *hana* of the mind, and its blossoming and its fading depend upon the mind” (George, 2011, 151). If applying the Buddhist method in this case, the training to achieve *hana* is a psychophysical application acquiring from the empirical praxis. What the “real *hana*” is becomes less important. Instead, Buddhism prioritises the sensory contact, and the process of conceiving *hana*. In this sense, training involved in Asian performance is not merely physical, but psychophysical. Fundamentally, it is a performative process that is fused with aesthetics and philosophy.

<sup>41</sup> When Suzuki studies *yugen*, he calls it an “obscurity” in English, and says all the translation and definitions of *yugen* can be related to the feeling (1959, 56).

## 2.1.3.5 Confucianism and Zen Buddhism in Japanese Performance

### 2.1.3.5.1 Confucianism in Japanese Performance

The Confucian ideology focuses on education and art (fine and performing arts), particularly advocating the practice of the body and mind in any event (Lee, 2007, 406). Zeami's treatises were inspired by the Confucian source and put a great weight on the self-cultivation of an actor. In his view, an actor should be self-conscious of moving the audience in any circumstance of the performance. The ultimate purpose of the practice is to lead the spectator to feel the performance. Mathews (2013) considers Zeami's point of view (*transmitting the Flower*) is used to "mollify people's heart" (*yawa-rageru*) and "create excitement (*Kan*) in the high and low"<sup>42</sup>, meaning that Zeami's argument essentially emphasises on human's feelings (2013, 35). The experience of this excitement is the *hana* moment. Zeami's approaches of actor training to create *hana* largely represents the application of the Confucian's self-cultivation in education. In addition, "high and low" refers to all classes and groups of people, including different ranges of age and sex. As Guo and Gao (2001) argue, in the Confucian belief, people from different classes may experience music in the same way (2011, 51). Xun Zi, one of the greatest theorists of Confucianism perceives that the enjoyment of music is attributed to the nature of humanity in a well-ordered society (Fei, 2002, 14). Confucianism examines the perception and experience of music/performance on social grounds.

In a social context, Zeami ties the Confucian theory of *li* (*rei* in Japanese, rites in English) and *yue* (*gaku* in Japanese, music in English) together in looking at *Noh* theatre. In the

<sup>42</sup> *yawa-rageru* is similar to the Chinese idea of *he* (harmony) (see the discussion of harmony in Chinese theories reviewed), *Kan* has been translated as "excitement" by Hare (1986; 2008), while Mathews would rather translate it as "feeling" or "emotion" (2013, 35).

Chinese language, the term for *yue* is wide-ranging and extensive, and thus, also encompasses art in general where Gu argues that this formed a value judgment (2016, 96). The word *music* in Chinese is *yue*, and Confucius and many early scholars have the propensity to combine the word *yue* with *li*, which is the term for rites. Most rites and ceremonial occasions occur with musical accompaniment and rites come with moral education in the Chinese culture. In one particular account by Gu, the life that Confucius lived has hinted at the existence of psychological and artistic properties in music education (2016, 97). In comparison, Kubota perceives that music is part of rites in a social context. Zeami distinguishes *Noh* as music and music aids with harmonizing the social community (1990, 43). Harmony becomes the shared feature that can be identified between Chinese and Japanese philosophies and aesthetics, and music/performance in Japanese and Chinese context functions as a means of social contact and pleasure.

### **2.1.3.5.2 Zen Buddhism in Japanese Performance**

The Confucian thinker Ichijo Kaneyoshi (1402-1481) considers Buddhist, Shinto, and Confucian-Taoist thought as similar concepts at some points (Mathews, 2013, 33). With reference to the Heart Sutra, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form” (Hare, 2008, 184), and the notion of nothingness in Buddhism (Tsubaki, 1971, 57), Zeami draws upon the idea that “emptiness is form” to give theatrical resonance in terms of openly liberating the actor’s performance (Tsubaki, 1971, 55). He suggests and encourages the freedom of acting in practice. This point is akin to the idea of Taoism, “no rules being the ultimate rules”. There are endless examples of Japanese performance representing the aesthetic idea of “nothingness” and “emptiness”. Due to the historical interaction, Japanese aesthetic theory becomes neither pure Mahayana Buddhism nor Taoism. It develops into a fusion of the latter two within a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, the so-called Zen

Buddhism, playing a dominant role in the main philosophy in Japan (Tyler, 2013, 26). Consequently, Zeami's aesthetics combines Zen Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. All of the concepts coexist with each other, and it is a common case that emerged in many Asian performing forms (Tsubaki 1971, 55). This leads to the fact that pan-Asian aesthetics share a common philosophical ground among the selected cultures.

### **2.1.3.6 Nothingness and Emptiness**

The beauty of *Noh* theatre is to attain the concept of nothingness (Tsubaki 1971, 64). Precisely, Zeami advocates that the "supreme *hana* moments" are the "no action" and "frozen moments" (George, 2011, 194). However, the question posed here is in what way we can realise the states of "nothingness" and "emptiness". It can neither be seen, smelt or touched in an explicit way.

In the Buddhist faith, "form is emptiness", meaning that the form itself is empty in nature. In Japanese performance, actors are encouraged to perform with "no mind" and focus on the "technique of nonmovement" (George, 2011, 194, 195). Aesthetically, the highest state of *hana* is the "empty moments" when "nothing happens" (George, 2011, 200). These principles indicate how different philosophies have integrated into a performance/training in Asian context. However, why does Japanese performance particularly adopt "emptiness" as a specific technical requirement in performance and training? George (2011) conducts his long-term research on performance concepts influenced by Buddhism, and how Buddhism and performance are similarly epistemic in a performative context. He points out that performance and Buddhist meditation have something in common, "meditation turns ideas into truths, knowledge into experience



and experiences into forms of action” (2011, 57). The Buddhist meditation and performance epistemology both suggest that “emptiness” is the way to use a person’s own experience for establishing his knowledge, understanding, gestural behaviours and a created ‘reality’. Taoism on the other hand emphasises the term “nothingness” which shares a similarity with “emptiness”. The Taoist religion believes in “nothingness” as the highest plane after the existence of something. Taoism holds the opinion that Taoist knowledge will only be gained when a person can empty himself/herself to the point of nothingness. In this sense, Buddhism and Taoism share the same belief in abandoning the restriction of the performing style and creation in Asian performance.

Responding to the question in what way “emptiness” and “nothingness” can be realised; experience and feeling is the only way. “Emptiness” and “nothingness” are related to liminality, which is closely associated with ritual and originates from ritual. The experience of liminality is more often considered as “a rite of passage” in rituals (Turner, 1977, 36). As Schechner explains, there are two circumstances presented in the liminal stage in a ritual. In the first circumstance, everything is diminished into “nothing”, and “open to change”. In the second circumstance, the human is given “new identities and powers” (2013, 66). These two circumstances of liminality echo Turner’s perspective that the subject or person “detaches from its old place in society” and returns “inwardly transformed and outwardly changed” (1977, 36). If liminality can be seen as a stage to clear the space for the establishment of new identities in theatre, “emptiness” and “nothingness” play the same role.

The process that Liminality departs from “nothing” to a new thing also corresponds to *karma* in Buddhism. *Karma*, as George explains, it is “a theory of rebirth”, but also means

action, precisely, it is a phenomenon that “the self migrates from existence to existence” (2011, 75). In other words, a person is not the same person in the past and he will not be the same in the future. In a performance, if an actor performs an injured character, it does not mean that the characteristics of being an injured person will last forever, and also it does not mean he is injured in reality. Reality in Buddhism is created and constructed by the mind (George, 2011, 51). This is similar to *maya-lila*<sup>43</sup>. According to O’Flaherty, *maya* has the “artistic power” to make either “something was not there before” or “something was there into not there” (1984, 117). Schechner (2003) extends this into the transformational possibilities of *maya-lila*. *Lila* refers to play, sport, drama and illusion elusive. When something is transformational, it is associated with the multiplicity. Thus, there are multiple realities and experience in the play. *Maya* is performative, as it generates, creates and makes something in the play. *Lila* is creative, as it is the dramatic creation of the performative action. In this sense, *maya-lila* is the consequence of performative-creative, and the multiplicity indicates that *maya-lila* is unfinishable and continuous process. This is essentially what Buddhism stresses, everything is not a ‘thing’, but a process. *Maya-lila* is a continuous process, so is *karma*. In theatre, no performance can be the same, even it is performed by the same actors. Each performance is produced again and again as a continuum.

Reality, in Buddhism and performance, is created and therefore, fictional. Barba argues that “theatre is the art of ubiquity” (2002, 148), indicating that anything and everything can be theatrical. In turn, Schechner responds that any event can be a performance (2013,

<sup>43</sup> *Maya-lila*: An Indian philosophical concept. In Sanskrit words, *Maya* means “illusion”, *lila* means “play”. Schechner (2013) uses the *Maya-lila* concept to describe the abstract boundary between “real” and “illusion” (114), and the multiple realities that exist in the play (Schechner, 1995, 27).

1), and “an empty theatre space is liminal, open to all kinds of possibilities” (2013, 67). Barba is in favour of presenting reality in acting and acknowledges that the actor is encouraged to be completely engaged in the performance by drawing upon the source of our real life. In his view, performative elements are everywhere and can be fully made use of. Therefore, Barba advocates that “tradition does not exist. I am the tradition” (2002, 28) to encourage the liberty of creativity in theatre performance. In the case of 24 FD, tradition does not exist, identity and performance practice are formed by themselves through the process of training and acting. With a waiver of “tradition” boundaries, 24 FD has more room to innovate their performances. No ‘standard’ can be found to follow in their performance and training. Some teams are more interested in theatrical presence in their performance, while some tend to be more musically focused with the usage of a wide range of instruments. For them, performative elements exist everywhere and the process of creating a new performance makes them enjoyable. If applying “emptiness” and “nothingness” can help to understand Barba’s argument and 24 FD, the meaning of them becomes more well-defined. “Tradition” is not a “thing”, and it is of less concern in 24 FD. It was created by actor-drummers, and also because it was not there, in an empty place, performers can construct an “identity” to it, and a new version of “tradition” emerges. More importantly, Buddhism is not interested in a “thing” – “tradition”, the most compelling point for Buddhism is the event and process of creating a new “reality”.

### **2.1.3.7 *Hana and Rasa***

Between Indian and Japanese performance practice, considerable cultural differences can be found rather than similarities. However, in relation to aesthetic theories that shape performance principles, both cultures share common concepts and principles. I emphasize that Buddhism as an underlying cultural resource has inspired and shaped the

aesthetics and performance of Asia to a great extent. As originated and fully developed in the Indian subcontinent, Buddhism shares several common features with Hindu philosophy and performance. Besides, Buddhism stimulates the emergence of Zen Buddhism, along with Taoism, and Zen Buddhism becomes a leading philosophy in Japan for years. More to the point, the affinity of these esoteric references serves as a vehicle to understand the essence of Japanese aesthetics. I will continue my discussion in the following section investigating Chinese aesthetics in order to find links between Indian and Japanese aesthetic theories.

The evaluation of Japanese aesthetics is vitally close to Indian aesthetics. Bharata believes that *rasa* is evoked and relished in the minds of the audience (*sahridaya*) and therefore, the actor is “the agent responsible for creating ...*rasa* in the audience...by his acting skills” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2011, 97). Similarly, Zeami responds that it is the audience who are delighted and surprised by the actor. The metaphor of the flower, in this way, represents the enhanced feeling of the spectator mediated by and through the actor. Besides, Bharata and Zeami interestingly share similar botanical metaphors in explaining *rasa* and *hana*. For Bharata, the *bhava*, the latent emotion is a ‘seed’ that only grows as a tree through the performance of the actor that brings the fruit of it. The tasting of the fruit by the audience is the *rasa*, the aesthetic experience. For Zeami, the audience reaching the ‘flower’ is the ultimate aim of the performance, and the seed of technique is the actor’s presence. Fundamentally, *rasa* and *hana* are not only aesthetic theories, instead, they offer performative and practical principles to performance and training. The principles provided are not merely physical, but more importantly, psychophysical. This point will be one of the major discussions in Chapter 3.

## 2.1.4 Chinese Philosophies and Aesthetics

China is one of the ancient civilizations in Asia and the country is famous for medicine, martial arts, music and performance. However, there is a critique that no Chinese writing or set of writings by a single author comparable to Bharata's *Natyasastra* or Aristotle's *Poetics* or Zeami's *Fushikaden* (Schechner, 2002, i). This leads to diverse observations and opinions on Chinese aesthetics rather than well-defined discussions normally attached to mimesis or *rasa* or *hana*. At present there is a cultural crisis in modern China due to the traditional knowledge not being transferred to new social, political, cultural and ethical formulations. The dialogue on this has not taken place yet due to the movements of *The Torching of Manuscript and Premature Burial of Confucian Scholars* (焚書坑儒)<sup>44</sup> (212 BC – 213 BC) by the first emperor (秦始皇) of the united China in the *Qin* dynasty, and the closed-door<sup>45</sup> policy of the *Qing* dynasty, the resonance of which is still prevalent in Chinese culture, in many ways. As a native Chinese, I would acknowledge the fact that Chinese history, beliefs, philosophies, practice, and theories are heavily reliant on historical documentation. Due to the isolation as a result of the closed-door policy and the historical loss of literature (particularly *The Classic of Music* 樂經), modern contemporary theory faced obstructions in finding a place in academia. The academic and research fields also encounter a lack of concentration in the scholastic views of performance, as focus is given to the practical aspect rather than theory. I shall lay my focus on ancient texts and philosophies to find the link between culture, aesthetics,

<sup>44</sup> This is due to the threatening of Confucianism towards the governing of the first emperor of the *Qin* dynasty. The emperor destroyed many valuable classics of different fields, such as medicine, music, poetry, and divination. At the same time, many Confucian believers were killed in this movement.

<sup>45</sup> Close-door policy: Close-door policy is a practice of limiting the foreign intervention into a home country. In regards to China, the close-door policy has been practised several times since the 8<sup>th</sup> century period, and between 14-19<sup>th</sup> century during the *Ming* and *Qing* Dynasty. China also appears to practise its close-door policy during Mao's communist rule during between the 1950s and 1970s (Chen, 1991, 3-13).

religious beliefs and performing arts to close the research gap on Chinese performance theory.

#### **2.1.4.1 *The I Ching* as the primary source of all Chinese philosophies**

Rooted deep in Chinese culture, the concept of the *I Ching* is an ancient Chinese text that dominates the Chinese society in various ways. However, the text is established based on *ba gua* (see Figure 13). Yet the original authorship of *ba gua* is thought to belong to Fuxi (伏羲)<sup>46</sup> (Nelson, 2011; Cheng, 2011; Ding, 2003; Wang, 2000), known as *Fuxi ba gua*<sup>47</sup> (Xu, 2018, 173<sup>48</sup>). It is important to note that *Fuxi ba gua* is a diagram without any interpretation at that time (see Figure 13). Later, in the Zhou dynasty, the King Wen (周文王) (1152BC-1056BC) studied and developed the diagram of the Fuxi *ba gua* into 64 hexagrams (Cheng, 2011; Ding 2003). Subsequently, Confucius (551-479BC) interpreted the *I Ching* and produced the *Xici* (繫辭)<sup>49</sup> for commentaries.

<sup>46</sup> It is debated whether Fuxi is a person or a period of collective composition of the diagram of *ba gua* (Wang, 2000). In Chinese history, it is believed that the Chinese civilisation in ancient times commenced from Fuxi. In order to determine the dating of Fuxi, the methodologies that Wang adopted include analysing the data from the aspects of oceanography, meteorology, and geology in Chinese ancient times to give a reasonable explanation of the living environment of time and space, and the establishment of emperors/sovereigns. In order to determine the accurate timeline, Wang also matches the totems that are found from the archaeological site with toponomasiology, astrology and astronomy to prove the existence of three emperors and five sovereigns (2000, 680). Wang, as a contemporary, claims that a reasonable assertion of the Fuxi Period is from 7724BC to 5008 BC (2000, 49). Scholars cautiously refer to the Fuxi period for accuracy. However, it is not the main focus of this research. The term Fuxi refers to the origins of the first *ba gua* diagram.

<sup>47</sup> Fuxi is a person or period. *Fuxi ba gua* is the first *ba gua* diagram, thus, italic.

<sup>48</sup> Unpublished PhD thesis: *Art and Text Collisions in Contemporary Chinese Art*.

<sup>49</sup> Collections of Confucius's commentaries about the *I Ching*, translated as *the comprehensive commentaries* by Cheng (2011, 3).

Figure 13: Fuxi *ba gua*



Source: *Art and Text Collisions in Contemporary Chinese Art* (unpublished PhD, Xu, 2018)

In my close study, the *I Ching* and the *Natyasastra* have a common cosmological insight to explore the most natural phenomenon of the human being. Yet, compared to the *Natyasastra*, the *I Ching* is more interested in inquiring the relationship between humans and nature and does not explicitly indicate the direct link to performance. The *Natyasastra* offers direct and practical principles, because it is an acting manual, but the *I Ching* is more elusive to understand in terms of the linguistic issue<sup>50</sup>. Particularly, the *I Ching* is written in the ancient Chinese format, where one character represents a wide range of meanings, and no punctuation is given between sentences. In this respect, many scholars, Chinese or non-Chinese would misunderstand and misinterpret the actual meaning and knowledge of the *I Ching*. The reason why misconceptions take place is due to the lack of studying how the *ba gua* can be created before the emergence of the *I Ching* text. This aspect of knowledge will be examined in chapter 3 of this thesis. At the moment,

<sup>50</sup> Scholars have a varied perspective on the *I Ching* where Pondicherry described the *I Ching* as an “obscured enigma, a hundred times more difficult to explain than that of the sphinx”. Other scholars such as Karlgren on the other hand, denounced the *I Ching* as “barely intelligible rigmarole” (Minford, 2015, xxi). As Huang has it, a translation of a book must be initiated unswervingly in its original language and must not be preoccupied with perceptions and opinions of the writer. Indeed, as Derrida interprets, the Chinese language is abstract and official as well as practical and natural (1997, 102).

in this chapter, I focus on tracing back to the relevant ancient texts in order to explore the most authentic meanings and principles of the *I Ching*.

From my re-exploration of ancient texts and much like Cheng noted, I found that the *I Ching* is commonly mistaken and perceived as a book of divination (2009, 73). In fact, it is a series of branches that traces the essence between nature and humans (Ding, 2003, 321), offering methodologies of “symbolism, divination judgments, and explicit philosophical commentaries” (Cheng, 2009, 73). It questions how changes emerge and how humans cope with the changes. Hence, the interrelationship between theoretical perception and practical execution can be analysed in the application of the *I Ching* (Cheng, 2011, 3). Substantially, the essence of the concept has been widely extended to explain and provide enlightenment about enigmatic and puzzling questions in the field of philosophy. According to Cheng, rather than considering the function of divination, “the *yijing (I Ching)* embodies and presupposes a cosmic view that is consonant with human engagement with the natural environment and social practices encompassed by cultural and history” (2011, 3). Aside from playing an influential role in Chinese culture, the *I Ching* has also been found to inspire many theoretical developments. Schopenhauer believes that, the *I Ching* consists of music, mathematics, and mysticism (2007, 58). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who invented the binary system, informed us about his inspiration from the *I Ching* in his mathematical model (Nelson, 2011; Ryan, 1996). A Jesuit missionary Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730) initiated the religious interaction in China (Ryan, 1996; Nelson, 2011), and “brought knowledge of the classic (the *I Ching*) to the West” (Smith, 1998, 391). After Bouvet, Jesuits adopted the *I Ching* as a “hermeneutical strategy” in Christian traditions and interpretations (Smith, 2001, 2). This ancient Chinese classic has given rise to many theories and practices. Essentially Confucianism



and Taoism, as the predominant philosophical thoughts in Chinese society, derive their philosophical context and ideas from the *I Ching* (Legge, 1996, xi).

#### **2.1.4.1.1 *The I Ching, meaning and Performance***

In the Chinese linguistic structure, “single characters are pronounced with a single syllable” (Pohl, 2000, 135). *Ching* is the pronunciation of 經, which projects that Chinese characters simply feature as single syllables, yet contain multifaceted connotations in different contexts. The term of *I* (易) was given by Confucius. In a current research context, many *I Ching* scholars only recognise three layers of meaning in *I*, as changeability, simplicity, and invariability (Cheng, 2009; Cheng, 2011; Ng, 2008), possibly due to the explicit meaning of the term. However, when I restudied the *xici*, which is the ancient text from which Confucius and his disciples interpreted the *I Ching*, it clearly states that: “the word *I* has four layers of meaning, which are unchange (*bu yi* 不易), exchange (*jiao yi* 交易), change (*bian yi* 變易), and simplicity (*jian yi* 易簡)<sup>51</sup>” (*Xici Shang*, 9).

#### **Unchange/Invariability:**

The first layer of the meaning of *I* is revealed as invariability (不易). According to the *xici*, the law of nature and humanity is *unchangeable* (*Xici Shang*, 9). Cheng explains that, this layer of meaning can be coined as “nonchange of change in the sense that change is a constant activity” (2011, 10). Cheng’s perception indicates that continuous change is the law of the world, yet the fundamental principle of the world will not change. The *I Ching* fundamentally negotiates the interrelationship between nature (heaven), earth, and the human. As *the illustration of the I Ching* suggests, heaven, earth, and the human (see

<sup>51</sup> Original text in *Xici*: “諸儒言，易有四義，不易也，交易也，變易也，易簡也”.

Figure 14) are invariable/unchangeable components in the world, and more importantly, each of them can be a *tai chi* that contains *yin* and *yang* (5) (the full discussion of *tai chi*, *yin yang* is in chapter 3). *Tai chi* is boundless and sizeless<sup>52</sup>, and thus, an individual person can be seen as a *tai chi*, so does heaven and earth. To understand this characteristic, pan-Asian philosophy can be used to explain. The notions of “emptiness” and “nothingness” in Buddhism and Taoism suggest that objects, specific rules and categories are absent. Additionally, liminality addresses the departure of “nothingness”. These all correspond to *tai chi* is being a waiver of shape, size and bound. Regardless, what the *I Ching* emphasises on is that the positions of the human, nature and earth will not be affected in the movement of the continuous change. As the graph shows, heaven stays at the top, the earth is at the bottom, and the human is in the middle between heaven and earth. Heaven, earth and the human are the three elements that will not change in the *I Ching* text. It is seemingly paradoxical, but this is the invariability that the *I Ching* means. To apply this into the case of 24 FD, the three elements can be related to the ensemble drumming, martial movements, and theatrical presence, constituting the invariability of 24 FD. If examining these three strands closely, they practically are the performative use of the actor-drummer’s body. With reference to nature, earth, and the human are independently being one *tai chi* (Figure 14), the body (gestural behaviour), music (percussion and vocal), and performance style of 24 FD exist in their own *taichi*. A 24 FD performance, uniquely, is seen as a *tai chi* entity that fuses with a wide range of techniques. Creativity and modification occur within the scope of the *tai chi* of 24 FD. In this respect, the invariability is also performative. To bridge the relationship between *tai chi* and 24 FD as one entity

<sup>52</sup> To avoid repetition, the discussion of *tai chi* being borderless and sizeless can be found in chapter 3.

will help in understanding the concept of *musicalbody* in chapter 4 and the *bodymind* totality in training in chapter 3.

Figure 14: Nature, Earth and the Human



Source: Taken from *the illustration of the I Ching in the Imperial Collection of Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature*

**Change:**

The meaning of being the continual change (變易) is explicit and easy to understand, and it serves as the essence of life (Legge, 1996, ix). The idea of change has been largely emphasized in various Western scholarships, such as Smith et al., who inscribes that *I* means change, a belief in the change of the Shang state to Chou (2014, 10). Therefore, it leads to the translation of the *I Ching* to be *the book of changes*. This perception is similar to Buddhism, as George has it, Buddhists emphasizes on “continuity” and “change”, by saying that everything changes and is impermanent, therefore, anything can be “discrete, unique, singular, particular” (2011, 44, 47). Everything in the Cosmos lives in a circle of ceaseless change and variation, such as four seasons, life and death, day and night, and so on (Smith, 2014, 12, 17). It is a natural process that is involved in movements. “No things, only events” (George, 2011, 46) is central to the Buddhist practice, meaning that the weight of the perception is not given to the “things” as in objects and reasons, but

significantly, the processes and movements. Similarly, the *I Ching* does not take an interest in the reason for change. Instead, it explores the process, function, and consequence of the change. For example, the inter-movement of *yin* and *yang* happens in the ceaseless circle of movements. In this iconic coupling, changes take place in a metaphysical way “what exists before the physical form” (形而上學), and “what exists after the physical form” (形而下學) (Smith, 1998, 395). The change fundamentally is the alternation and variation between *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* are metaphors of two oppositional qualities, which can be changed, integrated, and transformed. According to Cheng,

we can speak of our experiences of *yin* (shady) and *yang* (bright), *gang* 剛 (firmness) and *rou* 柔 (softness), *dong* 動 (motion) and *jing* 靜 (rest), and related qualities such as empty and substantial, potential and actual, process and regress, and ups and downs ... we may reach a more generalised notion of *yin* and *yang* as preserving force and advancing force.

(Cheng, 2011, 6)

*Yin* and *yang* are oppositional, as they regulate the changing process. In the *xici*, it explains “when one change had run its course, they altered. Through their alternation they achieved penetration. Through penetration they achieve sustainability” (Chang, 2009, 225). Therefore, change is a continuous phase within the four dimensions of situations. George examines the interrelationship between Buddhism and performance from the perspective of epistemology. The characteristics he identifies, such as temporality, particularity, singularity, liminality and insubstantiality, suggest that performance (theatrical and music) and Buddhist practice (for example, meditation) are both performative processes. This is an important theoretical ground that 24 FD performance and training session based on. In pan-Asian context, performance and training are not intentionally defined, for example, no dress rehearsals in Japanese *Noh* and Indian

*Kutiyattam*. Both performance and training are temporal, unrepeated, and different time to time, and this becomes a collective phenomenon and cultural tradition that shapes pan-Asian performance. In chapter 3, I will particularly discuss this issue to explore the pan-Asian performance/training characteristics.

### **Simplicity:**

The meaning of simplicity (*jian yi* 易簡) suggests three points:

- The elements involved in the *I Ching* are simple - *tai chi*, *yin*, and *yang*.
- The methodology that Fuxi used to create his Fuxi *ba gua* is simple, it is through his observation.
- The documentation of the theory is simple, which has been produced through pictograph (pictures and symbols) without linguistic interpretation.

Movements, change and process are central to Asian philosophy. In the *I Ching*, *tai chi*, *yin* and *yang* are positioned as the primary elements, encompassing all sources in the world, to make change, transformation, and alternation in their own motions. According to Cheng, “(when) (*I*) 易 is a unity and a source of creativity, it is referred to as *taiji* 太極 (known as *tai chi* in all my chapters) or *dao* 道. (When it) is a multitude and process, it is the activity of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽” (2009, 81). His perspective of *I* literally originates from *The Illustration of I* (易象圖說)<sup>53</sup>, “*tai chi* constitutes *I*, and the movements and alternations of *yin* and *yang* constitutes *I*”<sup>54</sup> (*The illustration of I*, 4). The essence of the *I Ching* is about the process of ceaseless movement that how *yin* and *yang* move and change,

<sup>53</sup> 易象圖說 is one of the volumes that interprets the *I Ching* in the *Imperial Collection of Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature* (欽定四庫全書薈要).

<sup>54</sup> Original text: “易有太極，易有陰陽之變”.

within the scope of *tai chi*. In this respect, the simplicity with the existence of three primary elements can be linked to 24 FD. The co-existence of *yin* and *yang*, as two oppositional qualities, is analogous to the intimate interrelationship between the body/music and mind in 24 FD. In the pan-Asian context, performance is purely about the completion of the process, embracing simple elements but sophisticated movements and applications of techniques. Insofar, the fundamental elements that constitute the performance of 24 FD are as simple as the *I Ching*, namely physical and the psychophysical movements. According to Asian philosophy, the body and mind are never separated, following the rule that *yang* and *yin* should exist in the same unit (*tai chi*). Within these two basic components as the main source, 24 FD creates a wide range of variables to embody their performance.

### **Exchange:**

*I* as the meaning of exchange (*jiao yi* 交易), is informed by Confucius in the *xici*. However, in my research, not many scholars are aware of this alternative meaning of *I* in the *I Ching*. In the *xici*, it states that the motion of *gang* (strong 剛) and *rou* (soft 柔) is the exchange (*xici*, 9). In the Chinese context, when an object is referred to *gang* or *rou*, it can be related to the quality of *yang* and *yin* respectively. They are the performative qualities to ensure that each party in the community functions. The exchange of *gang* and *rou* is substantially the process of reaching *he* (harmony 和) in the *I Ching*, which will be discussed in detail later. In 24 FD performance and training, the exchange of oppositional qualities is commonly used, namely the technique of dynamic control. It refers to the volume control of loud and soft in percussion drumming, whist strong and soft force in bodily movements. For example, the key to play the softest volume in ensemble drumming is not to be able

to hear yourself playing. If an actor-drummer can hear his drumming beats in this circumstance, *yin* and *yang* cannot find the harmony in the ensemble drumming. More detailed discussion on this is in chapter 3.

**To sum up:**

Unpicking the implicit and explicit meanings of *I* in the *I Ching*, the translation of *the book of changes* might be challenging, as the perception of “change” can only reflect one aspect of the entire meaning of the concept. The phenomenon that *I* is embedded with several meanings suggests that, the interpretation of the *I Ching* is context-based, meaning that explanations and understanding vary in accordance with the context. Ding confirms that the *I Ching* offers “context-oriented remedies”, which aims to emphasize on the situation that the performance takes place in (2003, 328-329). This is similar to the Taoist principle of “no rule is being ultimate rule” and also the Buddhist realisation of “no self” (Garfield, et. al, 2018), as every existence changes and is temporary. The characteristics of context-based responds to the phenomenon of non-unification that exists in 24 FD between professional and traditional teams. 24 FD practice has no ‘standard’, and there are no rules and principles to follow in their performance and training, meaning that each team codifies and adjusts their performance and training accordingly. Because of this, professional and traditional teams are seemingly different, in terms of styles, aims, focuses, and techniques. From the socio-cultural perspective, the reason for Malaysia to be multi-cultural is due to its high acceptance of any other cultures in this community, and the key for this is harmony. Move to 24 FD, both professional and traditional teams have no issue for the existence of each other, and harmonically accept the different performance styles of 24 FD. If the community of 24 FD is seen as a *tai chi*, two different types of teams can exist within the same *tai chi*, that means a state of harmony has been

established. With the condition of harmony, professional and traditional teams undergo changes and transformations all the time, akin to the alternation of *yin* and *yang*.

#### 2.1.4.1.2 *He* (Harmony)

Nelson demonstrates the temporality and self-changeability<sup>55</sup> of the *I Ching*, whilst Ding's perspective of the *I Ching* is context-oriented, temporal and changeable as well. It is important to note that neither *yin* nor *yang* exists permanently in their original positions, as the continuous circle is a never-ending process that moves crossing time and space. For the sake of co-existence, *he* (harmony) becomes an agreement between two oppositional components. In the *Zuo Zhuan*, Yan Yin (晏嬰) explained *he* with the metaphor of cooking:

Harmony is like making soup: [one has to use] water/fire, sauce/vinegar, salt/plum in order to cook the fish and the meat; one has to burn them with firewoods. The cook will mix (harmonize, *he*) them, and reach for a balanced (*qi* 齊) taste, [He does this] by compensating what is deficient and releasing/dispersing what is excessive. When the master eats [food], his heart/mind will be purified<sup>56</sup>.

(Cheng, 2009, 13)

This story happened when Yan Yin discussed the differences between *he* (harmony) and *tong* (identity) with the Ruler of the Qi state. From his perspective, harmony is a technique to blend and balance different “ingredients” into an agreed “taste”. However,

<sup>55</sup> *Yijing* (*I Ching*) is a portrayal of spontaneity and self-transformation of things in their self-being and immanence, and change as purposiveness in transience, order in alteration, and harmony across singularities... not about abstract time but the dynamic temporality of the living moment (*shi* 時) ... is an open semiotics in relation to a changing world, indicating an interpretive material logic with reference to nature (Nelson, 2011, 387).

<sup>56</sup> Original text: “和如羹焉，水，火，醯，醢，鹽，梅，以烹魚肉，燂執以薪，宰夫和之，齊之以味，濟其不及，以泄其過。君子食之，以平其心” (*Zuo Zhuan*). The reference is translated by Cheng (2009, 13).



for Cheng, there is “disagreement” and “difference” involved in harmony, yet no such elements in identity (2009, 14). In the mainstream discussion of harmony, the former perception is widely used, but the latter idea, which Cheng points out, is rarely addressed. However, in the *I Ching*, harmony is not only about “agreement”, but also about “disagreement”. *He* in Chinese has another meaning of being the ‘same’ or ‘identical’. If everything is the same, and no oppositional others, (for example, different gender) new things will not be generated. In this case, it requires the co-existence of *yin yang* to “disagree” and “different” to each other, yet they exist hand in hand in the same *tai chi* in a continuously changing circle.

The “heart/mind” of “the master” is “purified, as the harmony is genius, and the feeling and experience are embodied. Whilst emphasising the role of the mind, Asian aesthetics in performance can be seen as the result of harmony, and it can also be either in “agreement” or “disagreement”. The joyful aesthetic experience refers to the performance being embodied, but an embodied experience is not necessary to be delightful. Zeami addresses that “the real *hana* is the *hana* of the mind, and its blossoming and its fading depend upon the mind” (George, 2011, 151). There are eight *rasas* in the *Natyasastra* and only two or three of them represent delightful. This means that aesthetic experience depends on how it has been perceived by partakers. *Sringara* (love/desire) as a delightful *rasa* and *bighasta* (disgust) as the opposite, *hana’s* blossoming and fading, they express both sides of harmony. “Agreement” and “disagreement” are the interplay of *yin* and *yang*.

The Asian philosophy considers the body and mind to be considered one union. But why do the body and mind exist in a context of oneness/wholeness? The answer can be found

in the *I Ching*. Confucius studied Fuxi *ba gua* and interpreted that *tai chi* conceives *yin* and *yang*<sup>57</sup>, meaning that *yin* and *yang* were there in *tai chi*. *Yin* and *yang* are not created, but they were the elements to create new things. Buddhists perceive that everything is created in the mind, and the existence of *yin* and *yang* is the same as ‘the Buddhist mind’. The statement that the body and mind (*yang* and *yin*) are integral to each other and that they constitute an entity is widely accepted among many Asian philosophies and performance training. It is true that two oppositional elements coming together will create a new element. However, if *yin* and *yang* are not in the same union, how can they create a new identity or reach/maintain the harmony? Therefore, the most important condition of generating ‘new identity’ and achieving ‘harmony’ is that *yin* and *yang* (mind and the body) act within the same world (*tai chi*) at the very beginning. The perception of *yin* and *yang* stay in the same *tai chi*, echoes to and explains the reason why *bodymind* is an integrated expression in the pan-Asian context. This also represents the rule of invariability in the *I Ching*, as *yin* and *yang*, the body and mind, they are the primary and fundamental sources for the human being, and also for performance and training.

Harmony is external and internal, and Cheng (2009) points out that harmony can be conceptual and practical in different circumstances. As Cheng continues, “the phenomenon of change and transformation is the process of ordering, integration, and growth ... This is both experiential and theoretical” (2009, 33). In a performative context, harmony can be related to physical (bodily movement) and psychophysical (*bodymind*) components. The external harmony normally can refer to the arrangement of musical elements, bodily movements, storylines, the appropriate use of props, makeup, and

<sup>57</sup> Original statement: 太極生兩儀. The relationship between *tai chi*, *yin yang*, and *ba gua* will be illustrated in chapter 2.

costumes, and so on. The internal harmony is the psychophysical movements, such as the integration of *bodymind*, the actor's intelligence, performance experience and knowledge, and many other inner factors.

#### **2.1.4.2 Chinese Aesthetics in Confucianism and Taoism**

With the inspiration of the *I Ching*, Chinese thinkers begin to explore philosophies between nature and the human. Most philosophers follow key features of the *I Ching*, such as the metaphorical use of nature, change and harmony in the development of their theories. Confucius, Laozi and Zhuangzi were the three great Chinese thinkers in history (Yao, 1989, 3), and in particular, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are the three most influential philosophies in China that lead the way in thinking and behaviour (Xiao, 2010, 408).

##### **Confucianism**

As one of the central philosophies dwells on Chinese aesthetics, the Confucian ideology imparts good advice for training and advocates the importance of practice in terms of the body and mind of the actor (Lee, 2007, 406), which is associated with self-cultivation. The *bodymind* method is a particular way involved in Asian actor's training. It is embodied, as the process of knowledge transmission is through experience. The body and mind are not two separated bodies but a combined performative unit. An actor being given a particular role in performance does not mean he cannot be someone else. With reference to the previous discussion, Buddhists believe that everything is from the mind. Our mind constructs new and temporal identity and context to the world. The Confucian self-cultivation encourages the actor to be 'creative' by using self-consciousness and imagination to deliver his character to the spectator, in a novel and unfamiliar way. By

doing so, Confucius also advocates the principle of “old and new” in the *Book of Songs* in his pedagogical methodology. Confucius believes that, new things will be created by revising old traditions and materials. The old form can be anything and it is not necessary to be well-known or well-recognised, as it is all about the actor’s ability of creation and novelty to excite the spectator. The phenomenon of revising old tradition and creating new performance also finds its commonplace in the Buddhist practice, but the point of view is slightly different. Buddhists considers this process from the old to the new as “emptiness”, as “form is empty”, and it is gained by the human’s own experience.

Another major point of the Confucian thought is that music has its socio-cultural meaning and function. In the Chinese language, the term *music* is wide-ranging and extensive, and thus, also encompasses art in general where Gu argues that this formed a value judgment (2016, 96). In short, all forms of performing arts, including singing, dancing, instrumental playing, theatre are all referred to *yue* (music). Tien explores the function of music in an ancient Chinese context, and he reveals that music is spiritually and religiously used as the form of musical chanting in Buddhist ritual. Chinese society is also known as Confucian society. Chinese music has its socio-cultural meanings and uses (2015, 5). Confucius and many early scholars have the propensity to combine the word *yue* with *li* (rites). Most rites and ceremonial occasion occur with the company of music and as the rites come with moral education in the Chinese culture. In one particular account by Gu, the life that Confucius lived has hinted the existence of psychological and artistic properties on music education (2016, 97). Therefore, the principles that the Confucian ideology offers are aesthetic, moral and practical in performance and training. 24 FD emerged due to the social and cultural needs in Malaysia. The booming sound of drumming is a widely used way of celebration in Chinese culture, and it is true that they

frequently perform on the occasions of Chinese festivals. This is a cultural norm that Confucius passed on to his descendants and 24 FD adopted.

### **Taoism:**

Taoism plays an influential role in Chinese society, alongside Confucianism. In Taoism, a balance of opposing qualities, is central to the theoretical foundation. Historically, Taoism was founded by Laozi and Zhuangzi (Liao, 2001, 88), who were interested in practising meditation to achieve the highest state of the self. The balance of opposing qualities refers to the interaction of *yin yang*. In Taoist thought, *yin yang* traces “strong and weak, hard and soft, male and female” (Pohl, 2000, 7), which is largely derived from the *I Ching*. It works with the concept of one object but raise the awareness of balancing opposites. For this reason, this balance also corresponds to the concept of harmony, which embraces “agreement” and “disagreement” at the same time. Taking the internationally renowned *jingju* actor Mei Lanfang as an example, he is a male, but acts as a female character in his acting career. The interesting point here is that his gender does not hinder his performance but makes it successful. This is because *yin* and *yang* reached the balance and harmony. For instance, in his well-known female role of *Bai Nianzi* and *Lin Daiyu*, Mei Lanfang skilfully improves the effect of the stage by drawing upon his male dynamic and figure. His gender might be contradicted to the female role, but on the other hand, it aids with the dynamic presence in the performance. This is the outcome of the negotiation between *yin* and *yang*, “agreement” and “disagreement”. The example of Mei Lanfang also implies the Taoist thought in theatrical practice. The Taoist concept of “no rule” as the “ultimate rule” (*wu fa er fa, nai wei zhi fa*) can be found in the work of the monk-painter *Shitao* (1641-1717) (Lin, 1967, 140). There is no rule of gender identity in performance. A male actor performs a female role, representing the disregard of “rule”. In Mei Lanfang’s

acting, he does not perform his actual gender. Instead, he acts a female character in his career, and this aesthetically improves the performance. The “ultimate rule” in Taoist belief is represented in this case.

### **2.1.4.3 *Jiu mei*: Nine Beauties in Chinese Performance**

With reference to Indian and Japanese theatre, Chinese scholars also offer a structural methodology in terms of practice. Another example from *Huang’s poetry collection of Yuan Dynasty* by Hu Zhiyu (1227-1292) shows that a proper understanding of the art of acting had been part of Chinese aesthetics. The concept of *jiu mei* (nine beauties) explains the nine essential qualities of a performer as follows:

- Master the body movements to such a high level of perfection and brilliance that the audience is dazzled.
- Cultivate a graceful and demure disposition, and stay away from the vulgar and the commonplace
- Use intelligence and sensitivity to observe the affairs of the world.
- Speak with eloquence that makes every sentence and every word ring true and clear.
- Sing with a voice as clear and round as dropping pearls.
- Employ expressive gestures and expressions to help the audience’s understanding.
- Maintain appropriate volume and tempo even when singing or speaking old familiar lines; keep it fresh and do not sound like old monks reciting scriptures.
- Revitalize classical plays and characters, making their emotions, words, and deeds so immediate and vivid that the audience hangs onto every word and has no time to feel tired.
- Gain new insights when working on old materials; create novel terms and expressions; in short, make it unpredictable.

(Fei 2002, 35)

In close observation, the principles of *jiu mei* offer aesthetic, philosophical and practical advice to Chinese performance. From the practical aspect, *jiu mei* codifies nine important principles of how a good actor should be trained in terms of verbal and physical techniques in great detail. For example, principles 4 and 5 are related to the requirements of verbal technique. They emphasise the quality of speech and voice with the metaphorical use of “dropping pearls”. In 24 FD performance, exclamation is one of the performative techniques that aims to embody the auditory experience to excite audiences. It originally refers to stressed shoutings that take place in 24 FD performance, but gradually, exclamation has been transformed into singing and speech in 24 FD practice. The requirement of the voice in *jiu mei* is about clarity, and this is also one of the requirements of exclamation in 24 FD.

The principles of “master the body movements” and “expressive gesture” correspond to “the qualities of movement and gesture” that are presented in the *Natyasastra*. *Jiu mei* details the requirement of the *Natyasastra* in the technical use of the actor’s body for performance and training. Essentially, this is also the *bodymind* training that will be discussed in Chapter 3. To “master the body”, it requires the mind to engage in the process. Also, gestures cannot be “expressive” without the participation of the mind.

From a philosophical point of view, *jiu mei* adopts similar methodology as the *I Ching*. the primary methodology that the *I Ching* used is observation, this can also be found in *jiu mei* as “observing the affairs of the world” to apply to the performance. To observe surrounding sources and use them into a 24 FD repertoire is a common case in 24 FD. For example, the storyline of *The Memories* originates from the question of identity issue in Malaysia, and some of the bodily movements imitate the wave of water, as water is the

element that they take from as what is close to them. The storyline and the element of water, therefore, are both the sources that 24 FD actor-drummers observed and adopted to their performance. Despite the methodology of observation, the last two principles give precise structures with respect to the old-new concept of Confucianism, whilst the methodology of the imagination is based on the *I Ching*. This is similar to the disused Indian term *maya-lila*, which claims to use the actor's body through imagination in order to take a shift to transform the 'creative materials' to "illusion" in performance context. In Chapter 1, I mentioned that the use of the term *repertoire* in 24 FD is slightly different to its original usage. The principle "create novel terms and expressions" in *jiu mei* finds its place to explain the phenomenon that 24 FD adopts a classic term and customises to suit their needs of usage.

In an aesthetic sense, the requirements of being "graceful", "dazzling", "uncommon", "vivid", "novel", and "unpredictable" are central and predominant to the good of being a perfect actor in *jiu mei's* definition. What *jiu mei* addresses is not merely acting technique, but also how to perfect the techniques. In order to achieve the perfection, the *Natyasastra* suggest that the "success of production" is related to "divine grace" and "human effort", which is clearly explained in the *jiu mei's* principles. In this comparison, the perfection of an actor in *jiu mei* refers to the success of a performance in the *Natyasastra*. "Human effort" in the *Natyasastra* can be related to the rigorous training of the pan-Asian performance forms. In this sense, Asian aesthetic concepts are similar in intention though different in terminology. Pan-Asian principles of performance are shaped through the performative use of the performer's body.



## 2.2 Pan-Asian Philosophies and Aesthetics

### 2.2.1 Entangled Bodies

The Buddhist teaching of the body is integrated in Japanese aesthetics in general and *Noh* performance in particular and understanding the concept of the entangled body will eventually serve as a vehicle to help us understand the function of the body in performance. Adopting Buddhist teaching to the core of his aesthetic theories, Zeami, in his writings, conceptualised the body as 'useful' (*yō taru*) and insists that what the *Noh* actor required is a body which is sensitive and reflexive that allows him to read the atmosphere that surrounds the body including weather and the time of day, as well as the sense of the type of an audience, in order to achieve the best performance (Amono, 2011, 536). Zen Buddhism duly liberates the body of the actor, or rather, it emancipates the mind of the actor. Continuing from Zen Buddhism, the central concept of Taoism is somewhat parallel to Zen Buddhism. Precisely, the idea of the 'return' is central to Taoist thought. It proclaims that everything will decay and return to its original form (Tyler 2013, 32). For example, in a human life cycle, a person is born, falls sick and eventually dies in the end following the cycle of life. All things will result in nothingness. It is the nature of all things in the world. This leads to the characteristics of impermanence/temporality, which is similar to performance. "Temporality, singularity, particularity, and experience" are out of the eight epistemological aspects of performance that George identifies (2011, 13). When he inquiries into the relationship between performance epistemology and Buddhism, he identifies that the eight features of performance can be located in Buddhist philosophy. For example, a performance is temporal, and this event only happens once, which is a singular activity but also particular. More importantly, George also suggests that Buddhist teaching is an empirical system,

offering not only a “method”, but more as a “praxis” (1999, 38), to “turn knowledge into wisdom via experience (1999, 43). That is to say, the human’s body is the only way to make this “experience” occur, and also to turn philosophical concepts to be embodied.

Buddhism forms the domain of aesthetics in China and the theory of *fa* in Buddhism in Chinese is analogous to the Sanskrit term *Dharma*<sup>58</sup>, which is central to Indian philosophy and aesthetic theories. They both refer to traditional teaching and practice. Buddhist teaching does not consider the mind and the body to be two separate entities of human life. In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*<sup>59</sup>, one of the most important texts in the non-dualist Mahayana Buddhist teaching, there is a discussion on the body. The discussion takes place between Buddha and his chief disciple Manjushri reported by a sick layman. In the discussion about the impermanence of the body, Buddha says:

Tell him about the impermanence of the body, but do not tell him to despise or turn away from the body. Tell him about the sufferings of the body, but do not tell him to strive for *nirvana*<sup>60</sup>. Tell him that the body is without ego, but urge him to teach and guide living beings. Tell him of the emptiness of the body, but do not tell him of its final extinction.

(Amono, 2011, 335)

In his answer, *Vimalakirti* emphasises the impossibility of gaining wisdom without using the body while also admitting the necessity of recognising the impermanence of the body. In fact, awareness of that very impermanence of objects, according to *Vimalakirti*, insists upon the constant changes taking place on objects at each moment in time. It also means

<sup>58</sup> In Indian philosophy and religion, *Dharama* represents the fundamental principles that make things, events and actions possible. It also refers to the right way for living.

<sup>59</sup> Also known as *Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra*. It is an Indian Mahayana sutra and one of the most famous texts in Mahayana Buddhism. According to Burton Watson (2000), the translator of the text, the likely date of the composition of *Vimalakirti Sutra* is roughly around 100CE.

<sup>60</sup> *Nirvana* has been translated into English as salvation, which according to Buddhism is the highest state of knowledge a human being can reach through meditation. In Indian, Japanese, and Chinese aesthetic theories, there are concepts similar to *Nirvana* referring to the aesthetic experience as the liberation from daily mode of thinking and experiencing.

that impermanence is 'overcoming' in the sense that the physical form undergoes changes that will eventually attribute new existence due to constant modifications in appearance. Things would not and cannot be the same once and for all. This fundamental Buddhist teaching has been summarised into the following observations on the body: 1) the body is impermanent, but it is the only source of gaining knowledge 2) the body is impermanent but, it is 'new' always due to constant changes taking place in its appearance 3) the body inherits dynamism and movement 4) the body is the site of sensitivity and transience (Amono, 2011, 335). With reference to Buddhist teaching, everything is changeable, and anything can be unique, the mind and the body will be ultimately empty in reality (George, 2002, 47). The changeability here corresponds to the *I Ching*. Likewise, this emptiness serves as a vehicle in order to bring out a new kind of performing style on the basis of the previous source.

### **2.2.2 Pan-Asian Philosophies**

Several important points can be summarised in my study of relevant Asian philosophies. The *I Ching* is believed to be the original source that inspires the developments of all Chinese philosophies. In particular, *yin yang*, as two fundamental elements derived from the *I Ching* have been widely used in Taoist meditation and Confucianism. Therefore, some of the similarities among concepts can be drawn upon, and there are enough examples to illuminate how Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism share similar concepts with each other. Buddhism and Taoism both consist of emptiness and nothingness in their theoretical approach (Guo & Gao, 2001, 509). The embodied experience of "emptiness" and "nothingness" allow actors to be unrestricted and creative in their performance styles in order to enhance their presence.

There are many subtle links within Asian aesthetic approaches. For example, the flower in Mahayana Buddhism symbolises the idea of non-dualism, the unity of two different elements (Amono, 2011, 536). Zeami borrows this idea of the flower from Mahayana Buddhism as a central concept of his aesthetic theory and for him, the presence of the audience is integral to a performance event because the success of a performance will be determined by the audience. The actor and the spectator, hence, should come together in a single unity of experience, which Zeami explains through the metaphor of the flower. In his treatises, Zeami repeatedly explains that *hana* is the beauty of a performance, the flower of unity between the audience and the actor. From Zeami's perspective, the psychological and physical elements in the art of acting are not two separate entities but they are interrelated or entangled to one another with mutual dependency (Amono, 2011, 532).

The perception of *bodymind* is central to Asian philosophies. Different branches of philosophies have their own interpretations to explain the phenomenon of the *bodymind* totality, yet indicate the same idea. For example, Taoism advocates the balance of the body and mind, while Confucianism builds its theory on harmony. Both balance and harmony fundamentally refer to the alternation and inter-movement of *yin* and *yang*, and the negotiation of "agreement" and "disagreement". In Mahayana Buddhism, the "unity of the body and mind" (*shin-shin ichinyo*) (Amono, 2011, 545) is a key concept that also shapes the major aesthetic principles of *Noh* theatre. In *Noh* theatre, the actor uses the body as a means of accessing *hana*, the flower that combines the audience and the actor in a single unity of experience. The body of an actor, therefore, is entangled and unique in that it combines the actual and potential in a synthesis in performance practice (Ichikawa, 1993, 107). This means that the body of an actor possesses diverse

possibilities of vocal, physical, kinetic and visual power in creating the world of performance. Each faculty of the body is entangled and interwoven as a single unity of the psychophysicality of the actor.

### **2.2.3 Pan-Asian Aesthetics**

Comparing the three aesthetic concepts (*rasa*, *hana*, and *jiu mei*) from different cultures, the concept of *jiu mei* is similar to *rasa* and *hana* due to their profound emphasis on the actor's physical technique, imagination, adaptation of old texts and finally the importance of audience participation in the performance. *Jiu mei* emphasises the "unpredictability" of the actor who brings innovation in acting and "novel surprise" to the audience (Fei, 2002, 36). Moreover, it sheds light on aspects of perfection, cultivation and sensitivity that conceptualize Confucian ideology, which also has been drawn upon in Zeami's treatises. In relation to the principle of Zeami, explored above, chanting and dance are two essential elements in training. Regarding the rule of *jiu mei*, there is a clear emphasis on the practical aspects of the voice and movement. Despite this, the actor's physical skill is responsible for bringing these aesthetic qualities into a performance, which sounds similar to the concepts of Indian *rasa* and Japanese *hana*. In the context of Chinese philosophy, the concept of harmony, which is derived from the *I Ching*, can be frequently found in aesthetics. It is a collective element in Japanese and Indian aesthetic theories: *rasa* is the harmony of various psychophysical elements, whereas *hana* refers to the flower of harmony created by both the actor and the audience.

In my inquiry, the Asian performance form appears to be more complex and varied in training and performance. The theories, philosophies and aesthetics above identify what constitutes the Asian performing arts in many fields. Importantly, the use of a pan-Asian

approach with selected cultural references aids the understanding of shared/different concepts, functions, requirements and specific roles of “the body” in Asian performance. In this sense, the Pan-Asian methodology lends support to this thesis by suggesting, 1) the conceptualisation of the body is what makes Asian aesthetics and performance practices unique. While the *I Ching* confirms the *bodymind* totality, Buddhist teaching merges the body and the mind as a whole. Besides, it suggests the necessity of recognising the impermanence of the body. The *Natyasastra* gives weight to the primary and straightforward way of experiencing *rasa*, which is bodily movement. Zeami adapts the idea of metaphorization of aesthetic concepts, perceiving the body as unique and the only source to obtain knowledge, feeling and the sensitivity of reading the audience. In the theory of *jiu mei*, the body is trained to achieve the perfection of acting by dazzling the spectator. 2) Apart from the emphatic adherence to the body that constitutes Asian theatre, the affinity between the actor and audience has been placed as the key discourse. Zeami underpins his account of the actor and audience, which need to be considered as a single unity, by grappling with the fusion of the body and mind in Buddhist philosophy, while the *Natyasastra* suggests that acting comes about from the body and mind. In Indian theatrical exercises, the actor leads his spectator to experience the existence of *rasa*. Chinese theatre also urges the engagement of the audience in watching the innovative and unpredictable performance of an actor revised by old materials. 3) With regards to aesthetic appreciation, the emotional approach has been tangled up in the shared tradition of Asian performance. The metaphor of cooking can be found in both Indian and Chinese discussions. *Rasa*, for example, is the taste of feeling. Successful acting produces *rasa* between the actor and spectator. In the same way, harmony in Chinese philosophies is linked to “soup cooking” by Yan Yin. It emphasises the importance of harmonising different elements in the same entity. Moreover, *rasa* is parallel to Huang’s (Fei, 2002, 92)

codification of four major emotional bases, which are happiness, anger, sorrow and shock. He further explains that movements of the eyes, hands, feet and head correspond with these basic emotions, information that clearly brings Chinese aesthetics closer to its Indian and Japanese counterparts. 4) The matter of harmony that derived from the philosophical approach exists ubiquitously throughout Asian performance forms. This trace of harmony might be attributed to the substantial influences of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism in various levels. *Rasa* is the product of harmony in aspects of psychophysics that the body and mind is entangled as one piece, while *hana* is the harmony between the actor and audience. China fundamentally follows the principle of *li* in Confucian thought, which advocates a well-ordered society and disciplined individuals. 5) It is common to find that no directors are required in typical Asian genres, apart from Indian Sanskrit drama, on the condition that the director is knowledgeable in all elements of the forms, in line with the *Natyasastra* (NS, II, 222). Brandon (1989) also points out endless examples of Asian theatre that are in accordance with the theory of *yin yang* endeavouring to find the balance of opposite ends. That is because the actor is the soul of the theatre; only he/she would know how to convey his/her lines to the audience with the most unique technique. The director would not be able to realise the emotional feeling and physical condition of the actor. He/She will be the third person between the actor and audience, and because of this participation, the mediation of the performance will not be purely straightforward from the actor to the audience.

#### **2.2.4 Pan-Asian Approach and 24 FD**

Within a specific context of intercultural and transcultural exchange, the discourse of (Pan) Asian performance theory that Nair establishes triggers a new research interest in the field of performance/performative research. In chapter 1, I addressed the influence

of multiculturalism that affects the development of 24 FD and discussed the necessity of establishing the Pan-Asian framework. Applying this to 24 FD, several connections can be identified based upon the following leads:

24 FD, as a group performance, requires a higher engagement of all actor-drummers in performance to create a union. This point will be expanded and relevant examples will be addressed in chapter 4, while discussing the concept of *musicalbody* alongside the term “oneness” in an interdisciplinary approach. The *bodymind* synthesis, which is derived from the idea of entity, is given attention in my inquiry. Asian philosophical theory, such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism should be found in training and performance principles. The fusion of Asian philosophies into performance creates the phenomenon of an entangled body. Significantly, the body will be the primary vehicle of the performance, and it is integrated with the mind as a whole. The previous discussions imply that the terms emptiness and nothingness, and harmony and balance are highly related to the *bodymind* process. Apart from this, *rasa*, *hana*, and *jiu mei* can be referred to the *bodymind* synthesis. All the terms and concepts suggest that the *bodymind* discourse is one of the salient features of Pan-Asian performance. In 24 FD, the *bodymind* unity is a psychophysical technique, which embodies the performance and performativity of the form. In this sense, Asian philosophical and aesthetic concepts are not abstract and metaphysical. Instead, they are practice informed by epistemological insights. Precisely, *jiu mei* is a concept suggesting aesthetics, but also offers detailed principles to enhance acting techniques. In reference to *Rasa* and *hana*, they are both experiential and performative. However, there is no such aesthetic and performative concept available in



24 FD scholarship. It is, hence, necessary to develop a vibrant concept of *musicalbody*<sup>61</sup> in order to comprehensively understand and elaborate the cultural and practical norms of 24 FD.

As such, 24 FD can be seen as a Pan-Asian performance form that consists of more than theatre and music performance. With its unique characteristics, 24 FD creates an embodied performance and experience for the actor-drummer and audience. Therefore, the Pan-Asian reviews of theories tend to make a powerful intervention and render us attentive to the Asian concepts of the body. Using the Pan-Asian methodology as a lens of accessing critical components, will aid with the understanding of the embodied practice of 24 FD. In the Pan-Asian context, the performativity of 24 FD is generated through its physical and psychophysical techniques. All these techniques are linked to the performer's knowledge of using the body in a required way. In my subsequent chapter, I will look at the training and performance of 24 FD with more aesthetic clarity and methodological accuracy to explore the performativity of the form. The main discussions of this thesis *technique as knowledge* and *musicalbody* will be examined in the following chapters.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

In this condensed account of what constitutes Asian performance, I have, so far, explained the similarities underpinning Pan-Asian aesthetic concepts with selected countries in China, Japan and India, and also located the deviation that is attributed to cultural differences. I have also showed the interrelations between religion, philosophy,

<sup>61</sup> See the discussion in chapter 4.

aesthetics and performance practice in selected Asian cultures. In my close study of Pan-Asian traditions (Indian, Japanese, and Chinese only in this thesis), I discovered that the understanding of these regional performances was relatively mature and well conceptualized in the Asian context, and the particular Asian philosophies were rooted in Asian forms influentially in various aspects. The use of the body has been conceptualised in terms of what makes Asian aesthetics and performance practice intricate and multi-layered. There was a remarkable consideration of the actor's body as a site of never-ending possibilities in each of the performance cultures discussed above, whether it was called *rasa* or *hana* or *jiu mei*. It was also important to note that the interweaving correspondence between religion, philosophy, aesthetics and performance practice, which I examined in the fused context of the *I Ching*, Mahayana Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, was exceptionally meaningful in Asian performance. In this sense, Asian performance constituted an entangled body, meaning that the performer's body did not merely refer to the physical body, but both mental and physical engagement of the body, and this became the essential quality of a performer. The entangled body was not only about the *bodymind* synthesis, in a deeper layer, it was the site that was fused with aesthetics, religion, philosophy and knowledge as a whole. Significantly, the psychophysical presence of the performer's body was one of the techniques that could be found in the Pan-Asian model. In chapter 3, I will focus on exploring the training session of 24 FD through a discussion of different kinds of techniques that are involved in performance practice.

## **Chapter 3: Technique as Knowledge**

*“Training does not teach how to act, how to be clever, does not prepare one for creation. Training is a process of self-definition, a process of self-discipline which manifests itself indissolubly through physical reactions.”*

----- Eugenio Barba (1972, 47)

Technique is an integral part of Asian performance. Technique refers to a wide range of psychophysical phenomena of the body such as mental, emotional, spiritual, vocal, somatic, interpersonal, expressive and more (Spatz, 2015, 11). A technique, therefore, is the knowledge of the body, systematically trained and integrated as part of the expressive means of a performer. The performer uses technique not only to access his/her own body and the entire emotional world of the character in a performance situation, but also to design the motion trajectories and scenic presence of the performance. This inextricable interrelationship between the body, technique and training is particularly relevant to Asian performance, especially in the classical traditions where the entire knowledge and experience of the performance is generated by and transmitted through the master techniques of the actor.

Within this wider context of the discourse of technique and performance knowledge, my aim in the present chapter, initially, is to examine the role of bodily techniques employed widely in the training and performance of 24 FD, exploring those salient features of psychophysical techniques that constitute the performance. Training in 24 FD is an event that prepares actor-drummers to embody a performance. It is similar to most Asian theatre training, which trains and practices the performance repertoire during the process. In this chapter, I will examine the relevant components (warm up exercises, dedicated pedagogical methods, such as rote-learning, syllabic vocalization and titled rhythms, and performance/technique training) that can be identified in the training process, and discuss how these techniques of 24 FD can be acquired through in-body training. At the end, I will discuss in what way the characteristic of training/performance can be located in 24 FD and how different ranges of techniques could embody the performance through the skilful use of the body.

## **3.1 Technique as Knowledge**

### **3.1.1 Embodied Knowledge**

There is a strong emphasis in the current academic debate on exploring and developing theories and concepts for performance practice, in order to highlight and foreground the role of embodiment in performance. While addressing the fundamental issues of embodiment, Spatz begins his discussion of embodiment of knowledge by defining it into two specific categories: 1) a traditional (analytic) approach that is based on reason and rationality and 2) social epistemology that studies the ways in which knowledge is produced and circulated within and between societies and communities. Traditional epistemology traces the reason and rationality of knowledge, whereas social epistemology assumes that knowledge is produced through beliefs and cultural practices that are mediated by human bodies (Spatz, 2015, 24-25). Knowledge, therefore, is embodied knowledge. According to social epistemology, the function of a performance is to convey social knowledge, and the embodied performance presents “a way of knowing” (Taylor, 2003, 2-3). This knowledge is situated inside the “dancing and drumming body” (Daniel, 2005, 4) in a performance situation. Spatz further points out that, addressing the embodied knowledge without the epistemological approach is problematic because performance is a form of knowledge and embodied knowledge in particular is the fundamental substrate of any performance form (2015, 23). This clarifies the facts that “embodied practice is epistemic” (Spatz, 2015, 26) and the “technique” is the mediation that structures the epistemic knowledge of a performance practice. In recent years, scholars of theatre and performance have drawn heavily on the methodologies of social epistemology to understand and explain performance practice as explained above.

### 3.1.2 Technique

The meaning and importance of the term “technique” has been largely addressed in many fields. In anthropology, Mauss considers technique as the most significant social category that differentiates humans from animals (2006, 47), and further defines it as a unit of movements or actions. Technique structures the way we think, move and understand ourselves. It also incorporates the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies (2006, 78); this knowledge is transmitted through durable ways of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking (Bourdieu, 1990, 70). Artistic practices also share these techniques, largely as ways of doing and creating a performance. A performance, therefore, is an inclusive term for this embodied knowledge that Mauss further classifies as follows: 1) Technique is knowledge. 2) Technique is transmissible crossing time and space. 3) Technique is a compromise between nature and humanity. 4) Technique is bodily (Mauss, 1973). Mauss’s insight on techniques predates many of the theoretical assumptions of social construction and material forces in relation to the practice of the body. Mauss’s argumentation is limited to the “manual” (Spatz, 2015, 30). He views technique as “an ensemble of movements or actions” (Mauss, 2006, 149). For Mauss, technique is a series of physical movements executed by a human. Spatz (2015) adds to this argument that technique is embodied rather than bodily.

Foucault, in a similar fashion, defines technique as a key discourse of the body and identifies the following scenarios of practice:

1. Technique is changeable over time through power.
2. Technique is knowledge.
3. Technique forms the knowledge of the self.

(Spatz 2015, 33-35).

Mauss and Foucault both agree on several elements relevant to technique. They believe that “technique is knowledge”, a way of knowing and using the body. Secondly, “technique is changeable/transmittable” in different times and spaces. This implies that technique can be taught, learnt and trained in different contexts, locations and methods without any boundaries or restrictions. For example, Engthurs Ang, founder of the Liverpool 24 FD team, teaches actor-drummers in Liverpool. His knowledge is transmitted through training and performance, although he was taught back in Malaysia. There are no boundaries of regions and origins in the process of transmission. 24 FD, which was founded in 1988, has been practised for over 3 decades and maintains to this day its original performance concept and style. During this period, technique has been transmitted over time. Slight modifications of specific movements may have happened due to its development, underlying the changeable nature of technique and its transmission through time and space. Meanwhile, the knowledge has also been modified. Technique imparts a new form of knowledge from its own transmission in the scale of time and space. Foucault’s accounts define technique as *knowledge-power* that the body practices to challenge and change the limit of the material reality (Spatz, 2015, 33). Technique, therefore, involves the *practice* of the body with a series of actions (Schatzki et. al, 2001); and these techniques are “not ahistorical but transhistorical: It travels across time and space, ‘spreading’ from society to society” (Spatz, 2015, 41).

### **3.1.2.1 Extra-daily and Daily Technique**

Technique in an Asian context is the specific way of using the body. Barba develops his term of “daily” and “extra-daily” techniques by distinguishing different techniques that can be used in different contexts. These two terms were derived from *lokadharmi* (daily) and *natyadharmi* (extra-daily), which are the two modes of representations presented in

*Natyasastra*. The actions and behaviours that we use in our daily life are daily techniques, which are unconscious, effortless, and offering communicative functions. On the other hand, the characteristic features of extra-daily techniques include a wasteful use of energy, a heightened transmission of information, and integration of different techniques, and artificiality in the deliberate construction of movement (Barba, 1995, 15-16). Taking the gesture of walking as an example, the daily technique lies in the walking person whose entire sole of the foot makes contact with the ground. This is the daily technique, as it is unconscious and effortless. However, a ballet dancer is required to erect their foot for walking, dancing, leaping and spinning during a performance; this is the extra-daily technique, which is created through the performer's intentional consciousness. The complexity is from the simplification, meaning that the sophisticated performance is literally derived from the most simple and basic technique. The extra-daily is the seemingly complex gestural behaviour although it originates in our daily technique. In Barba's terms, it is the "alteration of balance". The extra-daily technique is the unstable balance that opposes the "natural" balance (Barba, 1995, 19).

The principles the actor uses in their daily technique will influence their extra-daily technique. Barba believes that culture is an influential element that differentiates body techniques (1995, 7). As a supplement to this, culture determines the nature of our gestures. The way people dine, for example, - from an ethnic Chinese who dines using chopsticks to eat his/her traditional cuisine and an Indian scooping using their hands with utmost proficiency, to an English or European dining with forks and knives - is due to the cultural factor. These actions are culturally determined in their daily techniques. When he/she transmits to a performer or a role of his/her acting, this daily technique has been naturally added to his/her performance. To take another example, one of the



characteristics of the Indian *kathak* dance is its rapid spinning during a performance. It heavily relies on the footwork technique of the dancer. Footwork is vital in this form and a *kathak* dancer is trained with the emphasis on his/her footwork. With the rigorous training of the foot movement, a *kathak* dancer is able to create an “incredible body” (Barba, 1995, 16) to embody the performance by using his/her extra-daily technique.

### **3.1.3 Technique as Knowledge**

Asian performance exists as a veritable ocean of codified techniques and bodily principles that not only forms the physical structure of the performance practice but also helps the actor to become imaginative and spontaneous. In Barba’s insights on *the dilated body*, he exemplifies that the Occidental spectator is seductively attracted by the Oriental actor-dancer via the mediation of the actor’s “presence, which is a body-in-life. The dilated body, in the end, is the consequent experience of feeling and emotion” (1985, 369). Techniques deploy the actors’ physical movement resources that “invoke” the agency of the body to convey their emotions with incredible details (Crossley, 2004, 43-47). In the pan-Asian context, acting manuals such as the Indian *Natyasastra*, the Japanese *Fushikaden* and numerous critical writings of Chinese aesthetics repeatedly clarify the enhanced role of actor’s technique and the purpose of training in performance practice. For example, Hu’s *jiu mei* (see chapter 2) details nine principles of acting and has been adopted in Chinese actor training since the Yuan Dynasty (Fei, 2002, 35). It covers the essential requirements of an actor’s physicality, including body movement, position, speaking, singing, expressive gesture, volume and tempo, emotion, and novelty. All these elements that *jiu mei* codified can equip a Chinese actor to conceive an “incredible body” through training.

Chinese performance consists of different ranges of training on different aspects of techniques. Pan Zhiheng (1556-1622), the renowned Chinese poet, for instance, elaborately discusses how the actress Yang has a truly captivating 'presence' developed through her acting techniques (Fei, 2002, 58-60). According to Zhiheng, a skilled actor should possess the qualities of talent, intelligence and presence/charisma and Yang surpasses all these qualities that she employs in her acting. While emphasizing the role of training, Pan clearly states that "through training, the performer's voices are smooth and supple like pearl strings, and their movements are elegant and graceful like divine beings" (Fei, 2002, 59). This is to say that training is a platform for actors to explore and establish their techniques for performance. From Pan's description of Yang's voice technique, he identifies "smooth" and "supple" features. In addition to this, Pan also compares Yang's voice technique to "pearl strings". In this sense, Yang's technique is performative in her performance. Likewise, this technique is not merely a daily technique. More appropriately, it is an embodied technique.

In a similar context, while reassessing Mei Lanfang's acting techniques, Huang Zuolin identifies two sets of salient features of traditional Chinese theatre (Fei, 2002, 154-156) as outer characteristics and inner characteristics<sup>62</sup>. They are as the salient features of the

<sup>62</sup> **Outer characteristics:** 1. Fluidity: there is no lowering and raising of curtain or change of scenery, so, the scenes follow straight on, one after another skilfully combined with appropriate, tempo, rhythm and montage. 2. Plasticity: the Chinese stage is highly flexible with no limitations either of time or space. 3. Sculptural: there is no picture frame enclosing the actors on stage; they stand out three-dimensionally with their body postures and dynamic movements. 4. Conventionality: there is an excess of stage conventions in traditional Chinese theatre that set the acting style of the actor without any embellishments. These conventions break the limitation of time and space and work along with the physical techniques employed by the actors. **Inner Characteristics:** 1. The essentialism of life, that is not a 'realistic' representation of life, but extracted, concentrated and typified from life. 2. The essentialism of movement, that is, human movement, but eurythmicized at a higher plane. 3. The essentialism of language, that is, not plain vernacularism, but a language elevated to lyrical height. 4. The essentialism of décor, that is, not the real environment but the one designed [by the body of the actor] to achieve a high artistic level (Fei, 2002, 155-156).

traditional Chinese theatre reemphasizes the inevitability of the actor's technique as a key ingredient of performance practice. All the elements identified such as stage conventions, time and space, décor, language, fluidity and sculpturality, are defined and controlled by the careful application of the actor's physical technique that according to Zuolin, is the great contribution of Mei Lanfang as the great master of traditional Chinese theatre (Fei, 2002, 158). In short, techniques eliminate the linguistic barrier in Asian performance, which is grounded in the embodied physicality of the actor. This (embodied) technique is able to surpass the language barriers. Barba's observation of an occidental spectator's experience of watching an oriental performance is one of the examples to explain how (embodied) technique eases obstacles to embody a performance within a foreign context. Training is the only way to achieve the state of embodiment, as what constitute training are all technique-related elements. The subsequent sections in this chapter will be dedicated to a detailed analysis of the training of 24 FD. It aims to examine the underlying embodied techniques and principles that shape the inner and outer forms of the performance form.

### **3.1.4 Technique in 24 FD**

#### **3.1.4.1 Drumming Technique**

The music in 24 FD is created by percussion instruments through the use of a variety of rhythmic patterns, alongside dynamics, tempi, timbres, and pitches. It is conveyed to the audience via the actor-drummer's drumming technique. The drums used in 24 FD performances and training are handcrafted. There are various factors that can affect the presence and quality of the sound of the instruments. This leads to slight differences of timbre and pitch between the drums. Many factors determine the quality of the sound

such as the choice of material and the process of making the drum such as the cow skin of the drum surface, the quality of the timber used in the making of the drum body, the springs at the bottom that align the drum body, and lastly, caretaking and maintenance such as storage, usage, removal, and maintenance of the drum.

Another crucial factor is the use of percussion and bodily techniques in the performance. In the way of making the desirable quality of the sound, the actor-drummer deploys a variety of techniques to hit the different surfaces (centre, edge, side and body) of the drum in order to create the demanded timbre for the performance. Indeed, timbre is one of the main focuses of the 24FD percussion instruments.

The centre point of the drum surface is the most concentrated and solid timbre of the drum. Recalling my experience with the 24 FD in Liverpool, I was taught the correct way of playing the instrument, from the position of holding the drumsticks to striking different parts of the drums. Essentially, the drumsticks should not be held too tightly since the drum should be struck with a remarkable sense of flexibility of the wrist at the centre point with equal and even pressure up and down. It is also important to adjust the shoulder, forearms and elbows into the most natural position in order to enhance the sound quality. The sound, therefore, is the product of a performative use of the body as well as the skilful application of the percussion technique embedded in the waving wrists of the performer. The volume, types and the overall quality of the sound are controlled by the movements of the body and hands: forms and patterns of movements as well as the motion of the wrists create a wide variety of sounds - the subtle motions soften the sounds, and vice versa.

The way the actor-drummer produces different tones and timbre is fundamentally affected by different playing techniques (Matusky & Tan, 2017, 197). The different playing techniques that Tan refers to are the different playing positions of the drum. These playing techniques assume that the actor-drummer plays one drum. However, there is no restriction to the number of the drums played by one actor-drummer during the performance. In most 24 FD performances, actor-drummers are always moving around and in full mobility in the performance venue (see chapter 4), meaning that they move around and play different drums. For example, the *360 turn* movement (in principle 3 of *musicalbody*,) requires actor-drummers to play on different drums within a triangle formation (one drum in the first row, two drums in the second row).

The center point, edge, side, and body of the drum are the parts of the instrument that can be hit to create different tones, timbres, and pitches (see Figure 15). Hitting the drumsticks against each other, and floor-striking are two other common playing techniques. The centre point of the drum surface is the preferred hitting point that sounds like “boom”, a sound I will explain shortly. When striking at the edge point, the forearms, wrists and palms of the two hands, should be apart yet remain parallel, the performer then lifts the elbows slightly to the edge of the drum, and strikes the point. It will produce a similar “boom” sound, yet the timbre of the sound is less solid, and the volume is softer than the sound produced from the centre of the drumskin. There is a specific technique used to play or produce sounds through the side beats. One of the useful ways to complete this movement is to imagine the drum’s surface as a clock, and then moving the forearms and wrists to the three o’clock position to hit the side creates a “tar” sound while the elbows remain the same.

Figure 15: Different hitting positions of drumming



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu at Liverpool 24 FD.

The “tar” and “boom” syllables imitate the sound of the drum when hit in different areas. It is a common system, a method of using vocal mnemonics to train drumming and dance (Spiller, 2017, 18) found in various Asian performance training, known as *kendang mulut* (Sundanese language, mouth of the drum in English). However, Spiller also adds that “it is rare to find two drummers or dancers who recite exactly the same syllables in practice” (2017, 19). This observation can also be applied to 24FD: there are no fixed vocal syllables used to teach and learn in the community. Different teams may adapt different syllables for mnemonic purposes. For example, “boom” can be voiced as “dong” or “tong”, “tak” can be understood as “tar”. This system will be further discussed in the subsequent “syllabic vocalization” section.

### 3.1.4.2 Bodily Technique

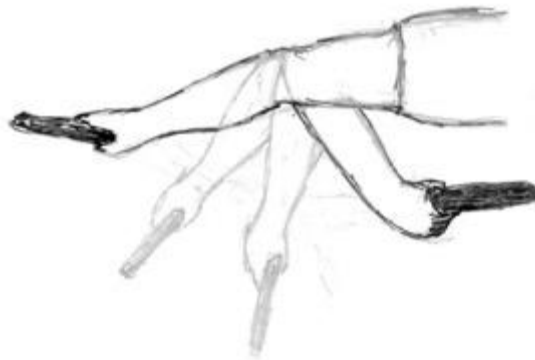
Similar to any movement-based performance, 24 FD has a very strict regime of training for the gestural practice in terms of the direction, angle, strength and timing to achieve perfection in the performance. This regime is derived from some martial arts principles. In the context of Southeast Asian performing arts, Spiller expresses that, “martial arts routines (*penca silat* in Sundanese) are typically accompanied by drumming” (2017, 13).

In the same way, there arises the phenomenon of *gendang silat* (Malay. Meaning drumming with martial arts), which is particularly featured in Malaysian percussion ensembles (Matusky & Tan, 2017, 163). The element of martial arts inspired 24 FD, in terms of movement creation, principles of movements, and the appreciation/aesthetics of certain movements and will be discussed in the section on “martial arts and 24 FD” in this chapter.

There is an example of a single movement in which the drumstick moves from one direction to the other in order to create a typical gestural movement (*pointing movement*) that is widely utilized in 24 FD performance. This action is not simply pointing the drumstick from left to right but requires a careful application of the technique step by step. First, one must weave the drumstick towards the actor-drummer’s chest as the first gestural movement. Second, one should mimic the drawing of a half circle downward with the underarm, and then point the drumstick to 90 degrees to the right hand side by twisting the wrist rapidly and powerfully. This action is completed with the right arm ending straight at 90 degree angle, perpendicular to the ground (see Figure 16). Although the action is seemingly simple and straightforward, a significant performative element accounts for its aesthetic and dynamism. Precisely speaking, the pattern of the arm movement is aesthetically required by several techniques. The technical requirements of this simple movement include three elements. The first is that the movement starts from its oppositional end. This is a common feature that can be found in Asian performance. According to Barba and Savarese, there is a common principle that Chinese actors generally begin their bodily movements from opposite sides, rather than straightly and directly going to a given direction of the

movements in a performance. This phenomenon of opposition principle is not only applicable to Chinese actors, but also most Asian performers (Barba & Savarese, 2011, 196), and is a technique that can be frequently found in most Asian performances. Secondly, the pointing angle of 90 degrees is essential to this movement. The technical requirement is parallel to the body, neither too far forward nor too far backward. Thirdly, the completed movement is akin to “throwing” the arm, rather than “drawing”, meaning that the performing technique should be precise and articulated. Extra strength is given to the end of pointing. The extra daily technique allows the actor-drummer to deliver the performance stylishly to the audience accompanied by the rhythmic beat that helps the performer accomplish a higher level of the embodied experience.

Figure 16: Arm’s movement of *pointing* movement



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu.

Japanese *taiko* drumming is an Asian form that has a large influence and inspired 24 FD in terms of drumming in its early stage of development, as explained in the introduction of this thesis. The bodily movement of *taiko* is known as *kata* (Powell, 2012). According to Powell, *kata* of *taiko* has been influenced by martial arts in its designation of bodily movements for an integral effect of movements and music (2012, 104). Bender perceives



this integral effect as “the visuality of a musical performance” or as what jazz drummer Elvin Jones coins “visual drumming” (2005, 197). In accordance with his experience of learning *taiko* drumming, Bender describes that the Japanese physique – short legs and small bodies - is the most suitable body type for *taiko* drumming as the emphasis of *taiko* drumming is mainly focused on the lower body rather than the upper body. However, the emphasis of 24 FD seems to be different (2005, 198). There is no permanent principle of whether weight should be given to the upper body or lower body. It varies according to the circumstances. For example, when a section of performance requires the horse/bow stance position of drumming, the emphasis should be given to the lower body. On the other hand, when the movements contain swirling, spinning and leaping, the emphasis should be given to the upper body. All actor-drummers should clearly know ways to control, balance and adjust their bodies to accommodate the requirements of different movements. This knowledge of knowing and the ability to convey this knowledge into physical execution are the actor-drummers’ techniques.

### 3.1.4.3 Hand Gesture

“Sound is movement, movement is sound” (McCombe, 1994, 29). The technique of the hand gesture in 24 FD is choreomusically essential in many ways. It is as important as the fingering in, for example, piano playing. Bharata emphasizes that the hand gestures are an important component of rhythmic presence of the performance as well as the creation of meaning in a performance, verbal or physical (Nair, 2013). The *Natyasastra* underpins the *mudra*<sup>63</sup> practice as a fundamental structural device of a performance. Similarly, hand

<sup>63</sup> *Mudra*: A *mudra* in Sanskrit refers to the representative hand gestures to the performance, which consists of “tempo, duration, rhythm, geometrical patterns of the hands and eye movements” (Nair, 2013).

gesture plays a crucial role in the 24 FD in relation to the ways of creating sound as well as the ways of weaving the drumsticks both of which are followed by systematically codified hand gestures. The 24 FD hand gesture can be identified in light of rhythm types, levels, and demands. The level of the hand gesture results in the different volumes of sound. If the hand gesture is subtle, the sound will be quiet, and vice versa. In other words, the hand gesture follows the dynamic changes in the embodied music. In this sense, the technique of hand gesture in 24 FD is central to the creation of different dynamics, timbres, even pitches, melodies and tones for the demands of performance.

Apart from producing sound, hand gestures are also designed to create the visual dimension of the performance, in the sense that the hand gesture contributes to the spectator's visual engagement with the performance. One of the representative examples is the *twisted hands* (Figure 17), which consists of nine individual beats made up of nine individual hand movements as follows:

Figure 17: The “flower pattern” that *Twisted Hands* creates



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu.

Preparatory posture: Starts with holding the drumsticks in place with both left and right hands parallel to the centre point of the drum.

1. Beating with the right-hand, swiping to the left position underneath the left hand, and staying parallel with the left hand. (Right-hand down, left-hand up)
2. Hitting the centre point of the drum perpendicularly by the left-hand. (Right hand down, left-hand up)
3. Beating with the right-hand, swiping to the right-hand side underneath the left-hand, and return to the preparatory posture, which is holding the drumsticks parallel.
4. Hitting the centre point of the drum perpendicularly by the left hand.
5. Beating with the right-hand, crossing to the left position over the left-hand, and staying parallel with the left-hand. (Right-hand up, left-hand down)
6. Hitting the centre point of the drum perpendicularly by the left-hand. (Right-hand up, left-hand down)
7. Repeating step 1.
8. Repeating step 2.
9. Repeating step 3.

In all these examples, a careful application of the performative body and drumming techniques that create an embodied soundscape can be identified within 24 FD. The discourse of music and movement, sound and sight are not a new subject in music/performance-related disciplines. The drumming and body techniques use the body in a performative way. In the music-dance field, it can also be understood as a choreomusical phenomenon. The term “choreomusicology” was conceived and developed by Paul Hodgins (1992) (Veroli & Vinay, 2017, 44), which is the study of sound

and movement (Mason, 2012, 5). Precisely, Nor and Stepputat perceive it as a new scope of study that integrates music and dance as the main research focus in academia, and it draws upon the methodologies of ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology (2016, xvi). According to McGuire, a choreomusical relationship refers to an audio-visual capture (2015, 17). The completion of *Twisted Hands* exemplified how the choreomusical presence can be conveyed in 24 FD. It is a unique technique that includes hand choreography in music/percussion playing. Aesthetically, this gestural rhythmical synchronization offers both an audio and visual experience during the performance. The performative use of the hands (the body) has a form and a subsequent movement pattern that creates the sound.

The essence of this movement pattern is to make the variety of these gestures by holding two hands close together, rather than separately. The movement of the wrists should be as subtle as possible and as a result, the audience will see the actor-drummer drawing a flower pattern with his hand movements while playing the appropriate beats. The switch movements with two drumsticks waving in a fast tempo with the pattern of spinning hands visually create the petals of the flower within the drumming hands. The small movements of the folding wrists create the illusion of buds, which further enhance the visuality of the flower image in the drummer's hands. The audience of 24 FD will experience and imagine this aesthetically created flower (*hana*) through the techniques of drumming during the performance. In this sense, techniques involve practice that bring aesthetic experience as a form of "knowledge" in performance, which is in line with pan-Asian performance traditions in general.

## 3.2 Yin Yang

The existence of *yin yang* in Chinese society is profound and ubiquitous, particularly in the ways of philosophical thinking, religious belief, culture, education, and so on. It is a shared core principle of various industries (language, divination, mathematics, medicine, science, music, climate, and many others) (see the discussion of the *I Ching* in chapter 2). The influence and application of *yin yang* in 24 FD is substantially important. Precisely speaking, the employment of 24 minor festivals as a performance concept symbolizes and distinguishes the uniqueness of 24 FD among many Asian performance forms. In chapter 1, I explained how the 24 minor festivals were calculated and formulated in accordance with the principles of *ba gua*<sup>64</sup> (see Figure 13, section 2.1.4.1), which is formed of *yin yang* variables, and originated in the *tai chi* entity. Apart from this matter, *yin yang* is a useful methodological tool to explain how body and mind can be integrated as a completed object in Asian training. I use a pan-Asian approach in this section, comparing Chinese *yin yang* to Indian *Yoni Linga* in order to access the *bodymind* (Shaner, 1985) synthesis in Asian actors' training.

### 3.2.1 Tai Chi, Yin Yang and Ba Gua

*Yin* and *yang* can be understood as two variables representing static and dynamic phenomena respectively. In line with the ancient Chinese text entitled *Imperial Collection of Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature*<sup>65</sup>, Zhou Zi<sup>66</sup> (1017-1073) wrote that

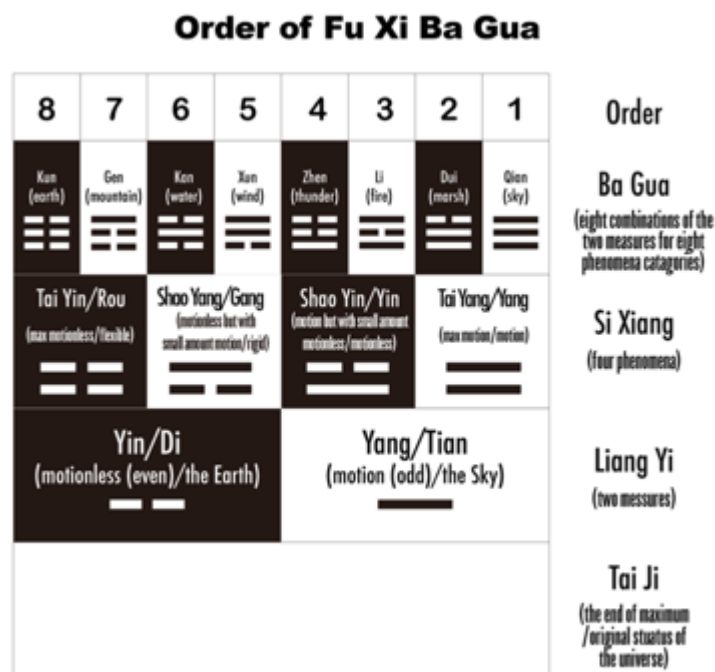
<sup>64</sup> 8 trigrams, which lines in groups of three.

<sup>65</sup> 欽定四庫全書薈要: It was completed in the year of Qianlong 41 years (1776). It is a collection that documents ancient literatures from Qin Dynasty to Qing Dynasty. The text that I utilize in this thesis is an edition that was written for the emperor, which is more authentic and less modified by editors.

<sup>66</sup> Zhou Zi was a notable Chinese philosopher, who lived in Song Dynasty.

*tai chi* conceives *yang* as a dynamic variable. With the continuous development of the dynamic force, a static force will take place, and *yang* will emerge as a result. The dynamic and static forces are two principal elements to differentiate *yang* and *yin*. This is a circle of conceiving *yin* and *yang*.<sup>67</sup> In this principle, there is an important rule that “an object will go to an opposite side when it reaches its extreme measurement”<sup>68</sup>. To be precise, Xu’s (2018) diagram<sup>69</sup> (see Figure 18) demonstrates how *yin* and *yang* are conceived, and how the process of creation is continuous. It is also the basic principle where *Ba Gua* is produced in ancient Chinese philosophy.

Figure18: Order of Fuxi *Ba Gua*



Source: *Art and Text Collisions in Contemporary Chinese Art* (Unpublished PhD, Xu, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> The original text of Zhou Zi’s reference is: “太極動而生陽, 動極而靜, 靜極而生陰, 靜極復動, 一動一靜, 互為其根”.

<sup>68</sup> Original text: 物極必反. It is also a common daily saying in Chinese society nowadays.

<sup>69</sup> This diagram is created by Xu (2018), which is translated and redesigned from the original text for better understanding. Original diagram can be located in appendices.

### 3.2.1.1 The Entity of *Tai Chi*

According to the above diagram (see Figure 18), it is explicit that *tai chi* (太極) exists as a transparent form (no colors and no lines) in the table. Likewise, *tai* in Sinology can be understood as huge (大), whilst *chi* means an object reaches an extreme. According to the principles that *an object goes to its opposite side when it reaches its extreme end* (see above paragraph), huge contains small, and a dead-end returns to its beginning. This principle implies two layers of meanings. 1) The condition of *tai chi* is borderless and sizeless. With no limitation and restriction of the original source of *tai chi* (eg. smaller than the minimum, bigger than the maximum), *yin* and *yang* as two fundamental variables is labelled as *liang yi* (兩儀). With the combination of *liang yi*, *Si Xiang* (four phenomena) is produced. Subsequently, *ba gua* (8 combinations of broken and solid lines) has been formed up. 2) It is widely known that *yin yang* focuses on the holistic approach to achieve harmony and to strike a balance in the world between two simple variables (Fang, 2012; Leung, et al., 2009). Harmony and balance are the results of the ceaseless circle of *yin yang*.

It is very common for scholars who are not experts in ancient Chinese philosophy and not familiar with the *I Ching* to misinterpret the entire concept. For example, when Scott brings *yin yang* theory in his examination of *tai chi chuan*<sup>70</sup> he refers to the “double fish diagram with a white eye in the black area and a black in the white” as the “*yin/yang* symbol” (see Figure 19) (1993, 49). His application does not reflect the fact of *yin* and *yang* and has two misleading and inappropriate statements. 1) It is a *tai chi* diagram, not

<sup>70</sup> It is a genre of Chinese martial arts that focuses on using fist/hand in its exercises.

a *yin/yang* symbol. The round shape of the diagram indicates the oneness of *tai chi*. Applying what has been discussed before, *yin yang* variables are conceived within the entity of *tai chi*. 2) The positions of *tai yin tai yang*, and the proportions and positions of *shao yin* and *shao yang* are not accurate (see Figure 20 for comparison). The large white and black areas are respectively *tai yang* and *tai yin*. The black and white dots within the white and black area are *shao yin* and *shao yang*. This diagram of *tai chi* explains the principles that *yin* can have *yang's* element, and vice versa (see 3.2.2 Performativity and *yin yang* for further discussion).

Figure 19: Scott's *yin/yang* symbol



Figure 4.1 Yin/Yang Symbol

Source: *Underneath the Stew Pot, there's the flame...*(Scott, 1993, 49).

Figure 20: The correct diagram of *Fuxi ba gua* and *tai chi*



Source: *Art and Text Collisions in Contemporary Chinese Art* (Unpublished PhD, Xu, 2018).



### 3.2.1.2 The Variable of *yin* and *yang*

*Yin* and *yang* are independent of one another. At the same time, they are unified and inseparable to create a series of diversification. Pictorially, *yin* and *yang* are differentiated by solid and broken lines. The broken lines denote *yin* whereas solid line signifies *yang* (see Figure 20). The existence of *yin* and *yang* supplements and stabilizes the order of the Chinese society for centuries. If there are good times in the Chinese society, there are bad times too, and if there are bad times, there exist protagonists and antagonists within the Chinese society. For instance, a farmer may have a poor harvesting year and he would consider himself having a bad year (*yin*), but the farmer is blessed with a supportive family (*yang*) that helps him get through the bad omen. This is the balance in life that helps Chinese society for centuries. In laymen's terms, what goes up must come down or what has been brought down will eventually rise again.

Ding attempts to categorize the possible meanings of *yin* and *yang* (2009, 20). According to him, *yin* and *yang* have oppositional meanings in a pair. In his examples, he lists 10 conditions of *yin* and 11 conditions of *yang* for illustration. The last example of *I or myself* is positioned in the *yang* category due to *yang* representing *tai chi* before *liang yi* (*yin yang*) is formed. With these examples, the variable of *yin* represents the negative and passive forces. On the contrary, the *yang* force is a representation of a positive and strong element (Legge, 1996, xi). Likewise, *yin* tends to refer to the internal and implicit element, whilst *yang* is used for the external and explicit.

Figure 21: The examples of *yin* and *yang*

<i>Yin</i>	<i>Yang</i>
The moon or cloudy	The sun or sunshine
Dark or shadow	Light or bright
Female or pistillate	Male or “masculine”
Vagina or menses	Phallus or semen
Cold or wet	Warm or dry
Death or hell	Living or recovery
Secret or invisible	Eyes or visible
Silence or gloomy	Clear or melodious
North of mountains or south of rivers	South of mountains or North of rivers
Shady or inside	Exposed to the sun or outside
	I or myself

Source: Table by Giano Siu to compare Ding’s idea of *Yin* and *Yang*; some of the sequences have been changed, due to the intention of comparison in pairs.

### 3.2.2 Performativity and *yin yang*

*Yin yang* generates performativity<sup>71</sup> when they are defined with identities. Identities can be varied in accordance with the circumstance. As an extension of the previous discussion, the principle of the birth circle (*tai chi*, *yin yang*, and *ba gua*) is as what Laozi in *Dao De Jing* advocates: “*Dao*<sup>72</sup> gave birth to the One; the One gave birth successively to two things,

<sup>71</sup> The discussion of performativity can be located in chapter 4.

<sup>72</sup> In the introduction, I have revealed three layers of meaning of *I* in *I Ching* (simple, changeable and unchangeable). According to Li Zhang (張理, 1776), who was the editor of *Imperial Collection of Complete*

three things, up to ten thousand things. These ten thousand things contain *yin* and *yang*, and through this blending of *qi* (vital energies or powers) it reaches harmony” (Ding, 2009, 20). The One refers to *tai chi*, as an entity. From Laozi’s explanation, it is also believed that everything/an object may contain both sides of *yin* and *yang*. There is no absolute *yin* or *yang* feature in one object. For example, a woman might have a potential manlike character, and vice versa. In this case, *yang* is within *yin*, and *yin* can be within *yang*. Although *yin yang* is a philosophical concept, it is culturally and historically coupled with gender in Chinese society. Culturally speaking, *yin* and *yang* in Chinese context are normally explained as female and male due to their individual characteristics, and this is also similar to Indian *yoni-linga* and Japanese *in-no*. For this reason, *yin yang* is not merely an abstract concept, but has performative and cultural implications. The interchangeability of *yin* and *yang* corresponds to Butler’s gender performativity. According to Butler, sexual identity is performative. The identity is produced in the social and symbolic event (1990, 25). Butler further articulates that:

The cultural identity ‘man’ might therefore be applied to a female body, and that of ‘woman’ to be a male body ... Our bodies cannot be understood as standing outside culture, as the ground or origin of our social identities. But that doesn’t mean that bodies should therefore be understood as inert or passive surfaces on which culture inscribes its meanings like an author writing on paper.

(Butler, 2007, 116-117)

In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agent from which various speech acts proceed.

(Butler, 1990, 270)

*Library in the Four Branches of Literature*, “*Dao* refers to the methodology of *I Ching*”. Original text: 易者道也.

Performativity generates identities in accordance with different contexts. The example of a woman (*yin*) featuring in the masculine (*yang*) or the opposite are hypothesized in a natural context. The above quote from Butler (2007) indicates that cultural and social elements are essential and cannot be separated in terms of accessing performativity. Referring back to Ding's (2009) 10 and 11 meanings of *yin* and *yang*, his examples all impart a performative identity in different circumstances. Cultural preference shapes the examination of *yin* and *yang* and imparts preferable identities toward these two variables. This is possibly the reason *yin* tends to be a female principle, whilst *yang* features a male character in natural, Chinese cultural, social, and historical contexts. Another important point that Butler (2007) suggests is that our bodies would actively create and recreate identities. Identities could interchange in different contexts, corresponding to the impermanence of Buddhist teaching that was addressed in chapter 2. *Yin* and *yang* are not indefinite forms of the self. The phenomenon that *yin* contains *yang* and vice versa is closely linked to Butler's perspectives of active changing identity. The interrelationship between culture, performativity and identity is intimate and interweaving, and it will be expanded in Chapter 4.

### **3.2.3 *Yin Yang* in a Pan-Asian Context**

In the Pan-Asian tradition, it is common that some concepts may find their counterpoints in other cultural traditions. Chinese *yin yang* theory is analogous to Japanese *in-yo* and Indian *yoni-linga*. Japanese *in-yo* is inspired by *yin yang*. *In* and *yo* is a pair of oppositional elements that indicate the similar meanings akin to *yin* and *yang*. They share the fundamental principle with *yin yang*, which is co-existing and conflicting to each other at the same time (CSL martial arts, 2018). Another pair of Indian concepts, which is known

as *yonilinga* share a similar context to *yin yang* and *in-yo*. In Ding's reexamination of Indian *yonilinga*, he describes that,

According to *The Brahman Sutra*, *Linga* or *Lingam*, a term from the Sanskrit, is the indicatory or inferential mark. *Linga* means phallus and represents the half-unity of consciousness while *yonis* is the female sexual organ. *Linga* is always combined with its counterpart, *yonis*, which forms the base from which the *linga* rises. *Yonilinga* is a sexual symbolizing unity for positive and negative polarity.

(Ding, 2009, 20)

Jayaram (2018) states that *linga* refers to the male principle, whilst *yonis* is the female principle. They are similar to Chinese *yang* and *yin* respectively. Apart from the basic principle, *linga* and *yonis* can be linked to "the soul and the body, consciousness and matter, male and female, positive and negative, and light and darkness". Unni Krishnan explains the inner meaning of *linga-yonis* as matter and energy. In his interpretation, *yonis* is "unmanifested energy", and *yonis*, as the matter, is "a temporary visible form of energy". These two elements can create a united concept of *advaita*<sup>73</sup>, which is the non-dual form (2014, 340).

The concepts of *yin yang*, *yonilinga* and *in-yo* are parallel to each other at some points. In the pan-Asian context, these three pairs of abstract philosophical concepts all have sexual principles in common as a metaphoric approach. To better understand these abstract concepts, Ding's example serves as an access point to address the translated names and interpretation of the meanings (see Figure 21). Additionally, the shared features of

<sup>73</sup> Advaita plays an influential role in the Indian philosophy. According to Bhajanananda and Mission, "Advaita as a philosophy' is a conceptual framework that attempts to explain how the impersonal absolute appears as the phenomenal world and individual selves" (2010, 2).

inseparability and opposition are evidently found within each pair of the concepts. The two variables in each pair are inseparable and opposite of each other. On one hand, they agreeably, and independently exist within the same entity with each other. Yet on the other hand, they integrate with their counterparts to conceive a new entity. Further to the point, each individual pair of concepts has both internal/implicit and external/explicit meanings. According to Nair, (Pan) Asian performance theory explores Asian philosophies and performance to explain the psychophysical complexity within the performance (2017, 103-104). In a Pan-Asian performance tradition in this project, the internal/implicit and external/explicit meanings are commonly coupled with each other. The internal aspect generally refers to the mind, whilst the external is related to the physical body. The internal and external comes together to construct a psychophysical state. The concept of the *yin yang* couple, which embraces both internal and external characteristics, can be deployed to access the psychophysical condition of Asian performers. This psychophysical presence can be pinpointed into the totality of *bodymind*, which will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.4 *Bodymind and Yin Yang***

While the complexity of *yin yang* has been unpacked, *yin yang* presumptively can serve as a methodological tool to access the *bodymind* incorporation. In Asian philosophies, the body and mind exist in the same world, rather than pursuing the occidental mind-body dichotomy (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). Spatz advocates that the terms of “embodiment” and “embodied practice” in his epistemological discussion refer to “everything that bodies can do”, including “thought, mind, brain, intellect, rationality speech, and language” that cover “mental, emotional, spiritual, vocal, somatic, interpersonal expressive, and more aspects” (2015, 11). In Spatz’s point of view, there exists a shift from the body technique into an

embodied technique. The body technique refers to a human's physical movement. However, an embodied technique is related to where the body and mind synthesise as a whole.

In the Pan-Asian performance traditions, *yin*, *yon*, and *in* refer to inner force, which can be linked to our mind. Likewise, *yang*, *linga* and *yo* signify outer force, which act as our bodies. "Force is the way power acts; it is integral to the action. Force is tangible, material and active in its operation" (Fox, 2000, 859). Roach attributes the power to "passion". As he continues, an actor "possessed the power to act on his own body, on the physical space around him, and the bodies of the spectators who shared that space with him" (1993, 27). An actor's bodily presence does not merely refer to the physicality and corporeality of the actor. Lavater asserts that science or knowledge exists within the inner and outer body of the human (1804, 19). This is to say, the internal and external aspects of our bodies are closely involved in building, learning, and grasping knowledge. They are inseparable in any circumstance, particularly in the Asian performance training. In the collapse of dichotomies of body and mind, Fischer-Lichte emphasises that, "The mind does not exist in opposition to the body. Rather, the mind finds its existential ground in the body, which brings it forth and can thus appear as embodied mind" (2008, 173). When Zarrilli describes his years of practice in learning *kathakali* and *kalaripayattu* in India, he mentions:

My body and mind were being positively 'disciplined', i.e., for engagement in the present moment, not *toward* an end or goal. My initial physical tensions and mental inattentions gradually gave way to sensing myself simultaneously as 'flowing' yet 'power-full', 'centered' yet 'free', 'released' yet 'controlled'.

(Zarilli, 1993, 64)

Zarrilli's "disciplined" experience is a phenomenon of the psychophysical synthesis that *yin yang* theory can clarify. The conditions of "flowing yet 'power-full', 'centered' yet 'free', 'released' yet 'controlled'" are contradicting and complementary, internal and external to each other. They are in pairs of *yin* (internal force) *yang* (external force) respectively. The two forces can be integrated for harmony, and contradictory and opposite to each other for balance. Hence, the synthesis of *bodymind* that Zarilli (1993) has is a state of harmony and balance which equates to *bodymind* unification. It is evidently corresponding to the rules of *yin* and *yang* in the martial arts and Asian performance training.

Sellers-Yong references Zeami's idea of fusing the body and mind into an "intensity of mind" in her discussion of "embodied cognition". In her discovery, *tai chi* (I assume it refers to *tai chi chuan*) and yoga are meditative training to generate "conscious embodiment" with the engagement of the body and mind (2013, 83). To achieve "embodied cognition", mind and body should be appropriately trained. Thinking is an inner body activity. The use of the mind in training/performance is fundamentally related to concentration and imagination/thinking that are executed by our bodies. The technique of an appropriate use of *bodymind* allows an actor-drummer to perform sophisticated gestural movements. For example, the movement of *swinging* can be considered as a sophisticated movement that requires a higher level of psychophysical technique to complete (see Figure 22).



Figure 22: The movement of *Swinging*



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu.

In this movement, an actor-drummer is required to leap and stand on the left and right edges of the drum surface. With the rhythmic playing, he/she gradually and smoothly swings his/her body on the top of the drum from right and left. At the same time, the drum is lifted by his/her swinging. Several constructive techniques are required to complete the entire process of the movement. 1) The actor-drummer must have clear knowledge of the interplay between *yin* and *yang*. He/she should recognize the limits of his/her bodily capability. If he/she goes beyond the limit of his/her bodily technique, he/she would not be able to complete the entire movement. The limits are not only about how far left/right or high he/she can achieve, but also the duration of his control of the balance. Therefore, the most difficult part of this movement is the control of balance, defined as “the human ability to keep the body erect and to move through space in that position” by Barba (1995, 19). Balance, according to Yarrow, is attributed to stillness, whereby the stillness creates the balance, which has the potential and preparedness to move (2001, 122). The control of balance relies on the actor-drummer’s extra-daily

technique. Barba calls this balance “luxury” balance, which is “complex, seemingly superfluous and costing excessive energy”. Likewise, the aim of the extra-daily technique is “a permanently unstable balance” (1995, 19). By knowing the limit of their bodily possibility, they are able to control their body in a perfect balance. This corresponds to what Mauss and Foucault understood as “technique is knowledge”: the performer knows how to use his/her body in a correct and feasible way during a performance.

Additionally, 2) *Yin* refers to the inner action (less motion) that acts within the actor-drummer’s body, and *yang* is the actual gestural movement (motion) that the actor-drummer executes. Compared to *yin*, *yang* (bodily movements) is a direct visual interaction and can be straightforwardly identified. *Yin*, in another way, plays a supportive role of offering “mental motion” to help in completing the entire movement. In the movement of *swinging*, *yin* is the inner dynamic of concentration and control of the balance and extreme. On the other hand, *yang* is the completion of a full set of “swinging”, which can be visually identified. In this sense, it is responding to the original form of *yin yang* in the *I Ching*, *yin* and *yang* represent static and dynamic, or using Xu’s term, motionless and motion.

### **3.2.5 *Tai Chi, Yin Yang* and 24 FD**

The relationship between *tai chi* and *yin yang* and the principles of these concepts are applicable to the practice of 24 FD in the following ways:

1. *Tai chi* is perceived as the original form of everything in the world in Chinese philosophy. It features the absence of borders and size, and it is an ultimate entity.

Having said that, 24 FD as a group formation and ensemble drumming emerged as an entity at the same time. There is no solo performance in the history of 24 FD. The feature of the entity requires 24 FD performance to be choreographed and pre-conditioned, meaning that improvisation is not possible in their live performance. To be choreographed and pre-conditioned does not merely refer to the music, body, and formation. Rather than that, the psychophysical engagement is substantial. The synthesis of *bodymind* technique enables the actor-drummers to skilfully control their bodies and achieve the beauty of harmony in an aesthetic way. In this sense, 24 FD is an entity that is entangled with pan-Asian philosophies, aesthetics, cultural tradition and technical knowledge in its performance/training.

2. *Yin* and *yang* are the two primary but fundamental variables that are conceived by the entity of *tai chi*. Their existence is oppositional yet harmonic at the same time. Due to this trait, the emergence of *yin* and *yang* are responsible for circulating new elements/characteristics/phenomena in the changing circle of *tai chi*. In relation to 24 FD, the body and music are two elementary components, which are central to the performance and training of the form. They are motion-based in the visual and aural ways. By modifying the movements of the body and music, a variety of possibilities can be created in performance. *Yin* and *yang* independently refer to motionless and motion. When they interact with each other, a series of new phenomena, visible and invisible, can be created. Transferring this interaction to 24 FD, the fusion of the body and music will result in the creation that consists of the essence of sound, soundlessness, motion and motionlessness.
3. Different drumming techniques of the actor-drummers can create a variety of different qualities of the sound in terms of timbre, volume, dynamic, and pitch (see

the section on “drumming technique” in this chapter). This series of phenomena can be seen as a miniature form of *yin yang* interaction. For example, the smooth and harsh timbres, loud and quiet dynamics, and low and high pitches, can be classed as *yin yang* characters. Additionally, according to the principle that *yin* has *yang*, and *yang* has *yin*, it also explains the phenomenon that the loudest sound has its quietest point, and the quietest sound has its loudest peak.

4. A circle of *yin yang* is a continuous movement that temporarily undergoes three stages of past, present and future. It is a ceaselessly changing process. Akin to *yin yang*, a performance of 24 FD undergoes three different stages as well, which are pre-performance (warm-up, and learning/teaching), performance (training/rehearsal), and post-performance. In this thesis, post-performance of 24 FD will be excluded, as it is not the main focus of this study. Instead, this chapter investigates the technique-based events, which are the stages of pre-performance, and performance/training in the subsequent section (see The Characteristics of 24 FD Training).

### **3.3 Martial Arts**

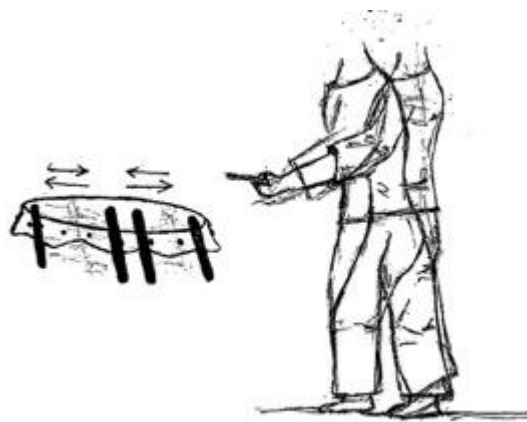
The idea that Asian performing arts integrate martial movements is nothing new. Instead, it has become a tradition that can be widely identified among cultures, such as the Malaysian performance genre of *kendang silat* (percussive martial arts), or *jingju* (Peking opera) adopting *wushu* (Chinese martial arts) into its performance. Similarly, Indian *kathakali* employs the martial stance and training of *kalaripayattu*, and the *tachimawari* (fighting scene) of Kabuki is inspired by *bushido* (Zainal Abdul Latiff, 2012, 383). In the pan-Asian context, theatres and martial arts are interrelated. Pan-Asian theatrical forms largely draw upon the practice, principle, technique and training system of martial arts.

There are a variety of genres of Asian martial arts, which were developed from the fighting and combating models. 24FD fits into this model as martial arts inspired the creation and choreography of body movements since the early stage of its development in the 1990s. Due to the initial 24 FD phase (approximately 1988-1998), when Chinese culture played a strong role in its development, it is believed that Chinese martial arts is the major genre to influence the bodily movements and techniques of 24 FD.

Chinese martial arts consist of internal and external styles (Henning, 1981; Mark, 1981; Theeboom & De Knop, 1999). The internal style refers to the soft and slow movements with a high engagement of mental practice. One of the examples is *tai chi chuan*. The external style refers to movement that consists of attacking and defensive techniques, those imitate or are influenced by animals (tiger, monkey, and other various animals) (Theeboom and De Knop, 1999, 148). The internal and external types of martial arts literally correspond to the internality and externality of *yin* and *yang*, which has been addressed in the early part of this chapter in the *yin yang* section. *Yin* requires less motion and more engagement of the mental element, whilst *yang* is related to the form with a more explicit physical presence that involves a large number of forces on the high dynamic bodily movements. In a performance of 24 FD, the characteristics of *yin* and *yang* can be clearly identified. The style of *yin* can also refer to a movement that uses an internal control of the body. For example, a movement entitled *awakeness* (see Figure 23) requires the use of the *yin* technique in particular. The actor-drummer gradually and smoothly plays the drum beats (4/4 bars filled with quaver notes) at the outset with a series of developing body movements accompanying the drumming of quaver notes. Later on, the next group of actor-drummers takes part in the performance and increases the volume of the beats to bring the performance to a heightened level of perception. By

then, a new intensive rhythmic pattern emerges after *awakeness*. In this case, the description of being “gradual” and “smooth” is the result of the controlling technique, mainly using the *yin* force. The power of the inner-body can control and support the physical performance. This is also the primary principle of Chinese martial arts, which is self-control.

Figure 23: The movement of *awakeness*



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

### 3.3.1 Martial Arts and Actor Training

Nichols states that “martial arts and acting have a common foundation: self-control, made possible only by focus of self” (1993, 20). In Chapter 2, I discussed that Asian philosophy played an influential role in performance and martial arts, particularly in Japanese genre. The “self-control” that Nichols has it, is similar to Confucian self-consciousness in training, whilst the “focus of self” can be referred to as the Buddhist mind, which creatively imparts meanings and instructions to the physical body. Asian acting and martial arts result in an entangled body, meaning that the body and mind is never in isolation in the process.

Nichols's account also suggests that martial arts and performances both aim to obtain a specific technique of controlling the self's body in a certain way. As he continues, martial arts training can benefit actor training by integrating an element of stillness into the performance (1993, 24). Zainal Abdul Latiff further adds that *silat* (Malay term, martial arts in English) can enhance "self-awareness, self-discipline, integrity, responsibility, loyalty, and cooperation among its practitioners" (2012, 384). A wave of scholars has integrated martial arts training into their acting classes since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, A. C. Scott employs *tai chi chuan* in his acting modules in the 1950s (Liu, 2011). Zarrilli (1993) adopts the Indian *kalaripayattu* in the actor training in the 1970s. Inspired by these two scholars, Zainal Abdul Latiff applies Malay *silat* into his Malay theatre and actor training in the 1960s. As he identifies, *silat* can be employed as one of the techniques in acting. Meanwhile, it is an apt training method for preparing Malay actors for performance (2012, 397).

### **3.3.2 Goals in Training**

In martial actor training, different practitioners have different focuses, yet include similar core principles in their training. Nichols (1993) codifies nine focuses in his training<sup>74</sup>, whilst Zainal Abdul Latiff shows his understanding of teaching *silat* in Malay performing arts as: "A philosophy of living through the cycle; Being in the moment. Oral and/or secret transmission" (Zainal Abdul Latiff, 2012, 386). Both approaches demonstrate the importance of "staying in the moment" (Nichols, 1993) or "being in the moment" (Zainal Abdul Latiff, 2012). For Nichols, it is an ability of self-awareness to recognise the

<sup>74</sup> Development of focus (concentration) 2. Staying in the moment, the 'here and there'; 3. Placement of images; 4. Focus of energy and economy in action/gesture; 5. Playing one action at a time; 6. Expanding the horizons of self-image. 7. Development of a flexible controlled and balanced body. 8. Unification of mind and body; 9. Appreciation and development of discipline (Nichols, 1993, 20).

moments as present, rather than historical, or future. There is no right or wrong presence; it is fundamentally within a changing process (1993, 21). This echoes the Buddhist recognition of reality, which perceives that everything is temporal, and reality is created by the mind. Therefore, there is no right or wrong. Buddhists focus on the process of creating the reality, and this reality can be related to the actor's presence in performance. In a similar context, Zarrilli discusses that the state of awareness is an action of "giving oneself in the moment". He links the ability of awareness to Barba's extra-daily technique (1993, 67). The perspective of Zainal Abdul Latiff is similar to Nichols, yet he adds that it is also the moment for actors to prepare and meet difficulties and unexpected events (2012, 387).

In comparison, Nichols pinpoints more specific principles of goals, in terms of energy, action, and *bodymind*, whilst Zainal Abdul Latiff's perspective tends to be more philosophical. As he expresses, *silat* is a long-term process of exploring human's strengths and weaknesses (2012, 387). It is important to note that, life began with nothing; people started learning from a piece of blank paper (Zainal Abdul Latiff, 2007, 21). The "nothingness" enables humans to create something new, while life resides in a changing circle. As Zainal Abdul Latiff's (2012) continues, actors will inevitably encounter different stages/level of their performances and successful or non-successful performance. The "nothingness" corresponds to Zeami's aesthetics of becoming a "no mind" actor in *Noh* training, which was discussed in Chapter 2. Being "mindless" is a liminal stage that is derived from Zen Buddhism, by doing so, the "frozen *hana* moment", which is the highest state of aesthetics, will be achieved. The quality of the performance, successful and non-successful again can be related to the Buddhist recognition of reality, no right or wrong presence, only focusing on the interplay of changes in its process. Insofar as the pan-Asian



philosophy, the different stages of an actor's experience are attributed to this ceaseless moving circle.

### **3.3.3 The Application of Martial Arts in 24 FD**

Martial art plays an essential role in Asian theatre and actor training. From the above discussion, it is evident that the training of martial arts is not only physical, but also philosophical and psychophysical. Most genres of martial forms have a philosophical methodology to manipulate. For example, behind *tai chi chuan*, there is a theoretical foundation of the *I Ching* to uphold its practice and principles. Asian martial art is a huge discipline, containing a variety of different genres and 24 FD is a drumming ensemble dominated form. It is seemingly difficult to include a full set of rigorous principles of any genre of martial art training in a 24 FD training session. Therefore, martial art training is not a compulsory element in 24 FD training. Instead, martial movements are added when necessary. In this section, I will discuss the adoption of martial movements in 24 FD training, and the reasons for non-adoption.

To echo Barba's words quoted at the very beginning of this chapter, Scott (1993) views the process of practising *tai chi chuan* as an important approach to self-discipline and self-awareness. Scott is right that the practice of *tai chi chuan* originated from *tai chi*. Yet he was not aware that *tai chi* is from the *I Ching*, which involves a more complicated philosophical meaning and application than his definition (see the discussion of *yin yang*). Scott mentions that the majority of students may exaggerate their bodily presence unconsciously. More seriously, "pauses and silences make them nervous" (1993, 55). This is also a common phenomenon that can be spotted in a performance of "young" 24 FD teams. According to my experience in Liverpool 24 FD, which was a team that had only

been founded for two years when I played with them in 2011 to 2013, actor-drummers frequently had trouble controlling the timing of the pauses. As a result, pauses or silences became the most problematic section in their performances. In a recent interview with Low Kee Hang in 2017, I posed this concern to him, and he explained to me:

I think most beginner level of drummers encounter similar problems of controlling the pauses and silent moments in the performance. Apart from these soundless movements, sometimes, it is worse that rhythms would play faster and faster in the real time performance. Eventually, bodily movements cannot follow the percussion. Therefore, I suggest students to stop playing the performance repertoire. Instead, take a session of Yoga or *tai chi chuan* related exercises ... Personally, I prefer *tai chi chuan*. It does not necessarily need to be a long session. A 20 minutes exercise is enough for regaining your concentration and letting go of the anxiety .... *Tai chi chuan* is completely opposite to the bodily movements that we do in 24 FD. It is very slow and full of inner body control ... The practice of *tai chi chuan* is about how slow you can maintain, and how your mind moves alongside with your moving gestural behaviour in a non-stop circle.

(Low, 2017)

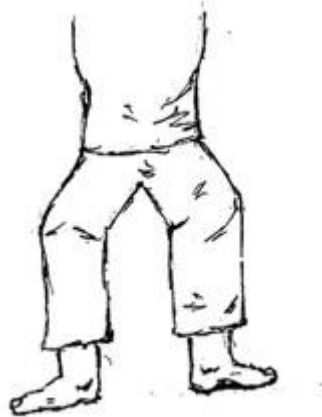
According to Scott, *tai chi chuan* has no rule to teach the way of acting (1993, 61). In fact, Low's *tai chi chuan* training always uses the basic forms (*taolu* 套路), which is known as *clouding*. It is a hand movement that requires waving hands continuously like drawing a cloud (Yan & Downing, 1998). It is a simple movement that largely depends on arm and hand techniques. As Low describes, "it is important to watch where your hands are going when you are doing *clouding*". This corresponds to Ghosh's understanding: "where the hand goes eyes also should go there" (1975, 42). The reason Low chose this movement of *clouding* as a *tai chi chuan* exercise is due to its simplicity and also its similarity of using arm and hand techniques, which is highly related to 24 FD. In Indian *kathakali* and *kutiyattam*, hand technique is also vital (Zarrilli, 1987, 209). It is the same case in 24 FD drumming also *tai chi chuan*. This evidence also echoes the previous discussion of the

pan-Asian model (see chapter 2). Returning to Low's training of *tai chi chuan*, his intention of employing *tai chi chuan* aims to eliminate performance anxiety, recover concentration, and in-body realisation. It is a psychophysical exercise. According to Zainal Abdul Latiff, *silat* helps with building the all-in-one techniques of physical, psychological and moral aspects (2012, 392). This might be the reason to explain why Low's bodily and percussive presence is calmer than many other actor-drummers.

### **3.3.3.1 Horse Stance**

Zainal Abdul Latiff identifies five concepts of *silat* training in his work, which are *sembah* (salutation), *kuda-kuda* (stance), *jurus* (forms), *tangan* (hands), and *gunga tari* (dance). According to him, the horse stance is the most common standing position that requires an open plié posture (Zainal Abdul Latiff, 2012, 395). In the same way, the standing position of 24 FD performance/training shares the same posture as *silat*, which is the horse stance (see Figure 24). In 24 FD practice routines, the horse stance has been integrated as part of the warm-up phase. This posture is commonly used in many genres of Asian martial arts. In this position, the knees are bent, actors are in a posture as if they are riding a horse by sitting upright. The weight of their upper body will be channelled to their quads, knees and two heels as they 'sit' with straight back and shoulder. An actor-drummer's lower body plays an essential role in most of 24 FD performances. The horse stance is a conventional drumming position that requires actor drummers to remain in this standing but plié position in the performance. In this posture, it is required to maintain a low and wide stance (Samudra, 2008). During the performance, actor-drummers are entitled to move around, not maintaining the horse stance at all times. Therefore, the duration of 3 to 5 minutes horse/bow stance is reasonable in training, as the common length of repertoire is in-between 5 to 8 minutes.

Figure 24: Horse stance posture



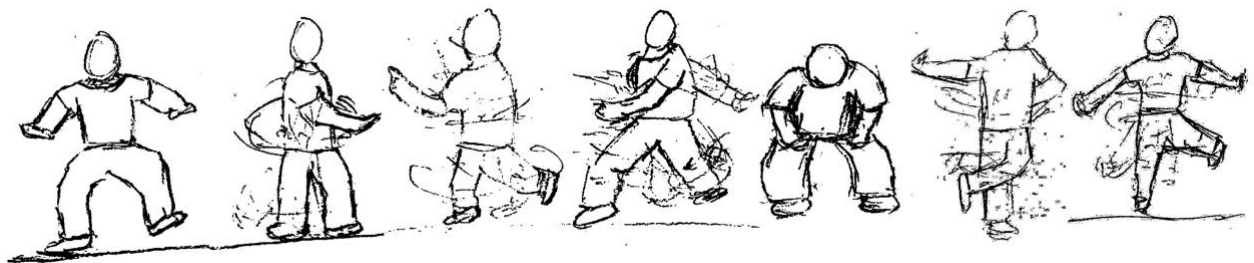
Source: Illustration by Giano Siu.

### 3.3.3.2 To Adopt or not

The relationship between Asian martial art and 24 FD can be pinpointed in two ways: movements and principles. The initial purpose of integrating bodily movement into percussion playing is to create a visual effect for the audience, when the rhythmic patterns of the drumming are simple, such as doing the movement of archery while playing the common four beats. In a recent interview with the founder Tan Chai Puan, he states that by adding the martial arts movements to the drumming, the audience finds the experience is different to simply watching the static percussion performance. This is the original intention of integrating martial movements within the ensemble drumming, as the audience can have an enhanced sensory experience (Tan, 2018). As previously mentioned, the horse stance is the common yet essential movement in 24 FD. Some basic martial movements such as single and double punches with fists have also been widely deployed and altered in order to fit the rhythms. Other advanced movements such as the *butterfly twist* (see Figure 25) and the *somersault* (see Figure 26) can also occasionally be performed by the actors during the performance. The body techniques structure the

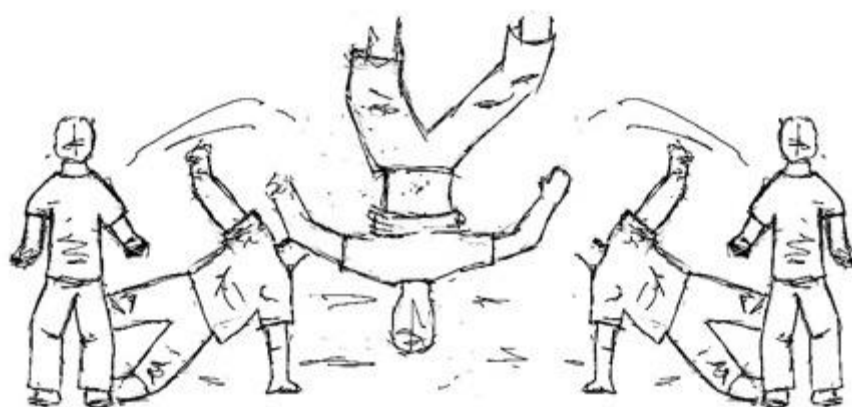
kinetic and physical form of the performance through a subtle or large alteration of the body (Spatz, 2015, 43). In this way, the entire body movements and posture in 24 FD remain powerful through the performer's skilful use of techniques, alteration of the body and appropriate application of martial arts movements in training and performance. The martial movement, which is conducted by the actor-drummer's body, becomes a performative element to embody a performance of 24 FD.

Figure 25: The movement of *Butterfly Twist*



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

Figure 26: The movement of *Somersault*



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

It is true that some bodily movements of 24 FD performance/training are learnt from and share similar principles with martial movements. However, there is also a fact that I

discovered in my fieldtrip displaying that not all martial movements are practised and integrated into 24 FD performances, as 24 FD fundamentally is not a full martial art practice, and also how large the proportion of martial arts adopted in the training and performance depends on the needs of the repertoire and the nature of the team. For example, some of the HANDS repertoires, focus on musically integrating various instruments and music and dance forms in their performance, such as *Rhythm Ride*, whilst *Classic* emphasises more on martial arts presence. 24 FD is a particular pan-Asian form that takes in martial elements as a technical accessory into its training and performance. Asian martial arts rigorously emphasize techniques. The adoption of martial arts in training serves as a useful tool to acquire required techniques, whilst enhancing the artistic experience in performance. However, different genres have different focuses. For example, some genres focus on the leg technique, such as kicks and sweeps, while some give heavier weight to the use of head-locks, throws and joint-lock or armed skills, such as using the traditional swords or sticks (Theeboom and De Knop, 1999, 147). *Tai chi*, as an “internal” or “soft” martial form, has 24 to 148 postures in its practice (Nichols, 1993, 19). There is also a wide range of techniques that can be found in Chinese martial arts, such as archery, wrestling, weapons techniques and boxing. Boxing and weapons techniques are commonly difficult to distinguish, as they are inseparable and correlated in the historical development. With regards to the weapons application, *wushu* employs double-edge straight sword, single-edge broad knife, staff, and spear in its competition (Henning, 1981, 173). With such a broad range of weapons, it is, however, impossible for 24 FD, as a new genre of ensemble drumming with theatrical features of performance, to include all of the variety of technical emphasis and the diversity of movements in its training and performance. Therefore, the martial movements involved in 24 FD performance and training are selective in accordance with the repertoire. It also

principally echoes the Taoist “no rules” as the “ultimate rules”, meaning that rules do not exist and that the ‘standard’ is created by the user, which is the performer.

### 3.4 Practice Strategy

#### 3.4.1 Practice Routines

24 FD training sessions are usually held on a weekly basis. The entire training session is constituted of three stages: pre-training (warm-up), in-session training (technique and performance), and post-training (disciplines and feedback). This study only focuses on the in-session training and less on pre-training. The post-training will be excluded from the discussion, as it is not the major focus. An ordinary practice routine lasts approximately two to three hours, depending on the duration of training sessions in different teams. Principally, a team with more training sessions in a week would generally have fewer hours allocated to one training session. For example, the average duration of each session in Kluang Chong Hwa High School 24 Festive Drums Team (Kluang, Johor Bahru, Malaysia) is two hours, as there are two training sessions taking place each week. On the other hand, as compared to this, the JB Drums spends three hours on one training session but only has one a week.

Figure 27: A comparison of trainings in Kluang Chong Hwa and JB Drums

	Kluang Chong Hwa	JB Drums
Time per session	2 hours	3 hours
Sessions in a week	2	1
Stamina training	30 – 45 mins	30 mins
Performance/technique training	1 – 1.5 hours	2.5 hours
Discipline training (Marching and revisions)	15 mins	Not necessary

Source: Table by Giano Siu

The warm-up phase occupies the first start of the pre-training in the entire practice. According to Mei et al., stamina, strength and agility are three qualitative elements in 24 FD training (2015, 2333). These three components are allocated to the warm-up part of the entire practice. For the Kulang Chong Hwa team, the warm-up phase consists of stretching, push-ups, sit-ups, jogging, and horse stance. These five components have different aims in the warm-up section. As the coach Low explains,

stretching aims to prepare the actor-drummer's body in terms of warming up and flexing their muscles for training use. Push-ups improve the muscular performance of the upper arms to aid with the holistic body and muscular movements. Sit-up exercises are coupled with push-ups to maximise the muscular activation of the upper body. It aims to increase the stamina of an actor-drummer's body, in order to complete a series of movements that require high consumption of stamina, such as spinning, turning, leaping, and bending. Jogging is a collectivist exercise and helps in creating the collective rhythmic sense in a group. It also aids with the activation of the entire bodily organism. The lower body remains in the static horse stance posture conventional to this drumming practice. Thus, the horse stance exercise is included in the warm-up phase to train the endurance and balance of the body.

(Low, 2017)

Consequently, a warm-up exercise is specifically designed to train bodily energy, muscular activation, endurance, resistance, and flexibility. It prepares the body of the actor-drummers 'ready' for the in-session training.

Periodically, music theory and history of 24 FD will be included in the training. It usually takes place in the phase of pre-training. According to Schechner, "learning the history and theory of a particular genre is important. Finding the right balance between the practical and the scholarly, and the right point in the training to learn, discuss, and debate history and theory is a skill that good teachers have" (2013, 233). The music theory they learn,



which is the Western music theory, is only related to elements in notation, such as rhythms, tempo, meter, and duration (see Figure 28), which are important for their drumming. They do not seek to learn the entire system of music theory as the main point for learning this is to understand some basic notated symbols for percussion so that repertoires can be documented as copies of reference. Although the Western music notation is included in training, they are taught in their own ways, using different interpretations. For example, in the fourth rhythmic pattern of Figure 28, there is a common instruction that is widely used among 24 FD teaching, as “three notes in one beat, the first two notes are played faster than the last one”. The same rule is applied to the fifth rhythmic pattern of the example. 24 FD actor-drummers are taught and learnt in their particular way. The instruction, terminology and language that they use might contradict and challenge the formal school of learning, but this is how they train and learn without unnecessary steps. Learning music theory is not the purpose for the training, but a tool for better conveying the percussion and documenting their performances. This usage is also similar to the way they use the term repertoire. Thus, many actor-drummers may not know the names of the music notes, and the reason why they should play in a certain way. Instead, they instinctively recognise the way in which they are required to play.

Figure 28: An example of the learning materials of music notation<sup>75</sup>



Source: The guideline of notation in the third competition of 24 FD in Negiri Sembilan State, provided by Low Kee Hang.

### 3.4.2 Learning by Rote

Training is an important stage for Asian performances. According to Schechner, training occupies the first place in the phase of proto-performance. It can be informal or formal (2013, 228). As he continues, informal training is close to our daily life, we learn and correct through experience, which is more “effective” and “holistic”, whilst formal training, such as “classroom school”, “apprenticeship” and “one-to-one teaching” tends to be more systematic (Schechner, 2013, 228). From Schechner’s point of view, informal training tends to be more practical and experiential, whilst formal training features a series of systematic settings in the teaching and learning. In a similar fashion, when Zarrilli observes the in-body training of *Kalarippayatu*, he defines the training method as

<sup>75</sup> Translation of the figure: 1. Single note/One note in one beat; 2. Two notes/Two notes in one beat; 3. Triplet/Three notes in one beat; 4. Former triplet/Three notes in one beat, the first two notes play quicker in group; 5. Latter triplet/Three notes in one beat, the last note notes play quicker in group; 6. Four notes/Four notes in one beat.

a “formal instruction” with an “informal learning process”. As he explains, neither explanations nor discussions of “the body, principles of movement or physiology” take place. It is a “physical behaviour embodied” session (1984, 197-198). Consequently, the features of informal training include: 1) Imitation as the way of learning. 2) Observation as the method to mimic the instructor’s gestural behaviours. 3) Verbal instruction as conducted in training (Zarrilli, 1984, 197-198).

Both Schechner and Zarrilli suggest that informal training is an embodied method of conveying performance knowledge practically, as it is taught and learnt straightforwardly in a physical and psychophysical way. These identified features can be traced in the training of 24 FD, it is known as learning/teaching by rote. According to Lee et. al. (2014) and Chan (2006) rote-learning is the most conventional teaching method that can be found in a traditional 24 FD school team. It is also evident that this system dominates the training of Asian performing forms (Howard, 2015, 107). As Hood has it, the methods of imitation and learning by rote are commonly used in most cultures of the non-Western world in the training of music and dance (1971, 39).

Hood also indicates the common ground of rote-learning and imitation in his argument. Learning by rote is similar to Schechner’s (2013) account of “imitation as a way of acquiring performance knowledge”. According to Schechner, imitation and repetition is the most direct way to transmit performance knowledge without any words, explanations and theories (2013, 232-233). This is to say, the percussion and bodily movements are taught without the involvements of music scores or acting manuals. Instead, students are required to imitate what rhythmic patterns and gestural behaviours their coach plays through their observations. The instructions and commands that

students received are all verbal and physical. With these leads, it is believed that the rote-learning method of 24 FD is similar to the pan-Asian tradition, which conveys performance knowledge in a holistic way.

### 3.4.2.1 Syllabic Vocalisation

Syllabic vocalisation is a particular phenomenon that can be identified in the training system of learning by rote. It is a way to use nonsense syllabic vocables in their teaching and learning in many cultural performances (Hughes, 2000; Li, 2001; Kippen, 1988; Patel & Iversen, 2003; Sundberg, 1994). *Vocable* is another linguistic expression that is the same as syllabic vocalisation to describe the phenomenon of combining vocals and syllables in the training. Syllabic vocalisation is an oral way of conveying rhythmic patterns by using syllables for memorising them. It is also a common Asian verbal teaching method, which is utilised widely in pan-Asian traditions. According to Nelson, most South Indian performers use their voice for music teaching to sing melody (*raga*), text (*sahityam*), and rhythm (*tala*) (2000, 138). Kippen adds that *tala* which is originated in the *Natyasastra*, means 1) “the North and South Indian systems of rhythm as a whole.” 2) “a specific metric cycle”. In the contemporary context, it is a way to syllabize the drumming sound through an oral method. In India, a series of syllables used in this oral notation is known as *bol* (Kippen, 2000, 110), *jati* or *vaythari*. In the culture-related context, *kendang mulut* (whose literal meaning is mouth of the drum) is the favoured vocal mnemonics that Indonesian dancers and drummers adapt to their training (Spiller, 2017, 18). Similarly, *taiko* drumming uses this method for the teaching of intricate rhythmic patterns. According to Bender, syllabic teaching in *taiko* is known as *Kuchi-Shōga*, which is the way in which rhythms and drumbeats are communicated through an oral teaching method. Bender further stresses that pitch and duration are what Western

music notation can suggest, yet *kuchi-shōga* can convey both also well as timbre (2005, 210). With the adoption of *kuchi-shōga*, the *vocable* element becomes rooted in the performer's memorial mechanism, *taiko* drummers are cued with the correlated linguistic *vocable* to play the required piece. To echo this, Nelson reveals that, the Karnatak<sup>76</sup> musicians, who learn and train with syllabic singing, are able to “feel the phrase and the beat moving together, which gives musicians confidence because they can sense immediately whether a phrase is properly synchronised with the beats” (2000, 138). In this sense, syllabic vocalisation is an acoustic-iconic mnemonic system in pedagogy (Hughes, 2000). Students learn directly from their sensory experiences. The teaching and learning of 24 FD at the outset are already an embodied practice.

The syllabic vocalisation is widely used for teaching and learning 24 FD. It is not merely used in school teams, but also in professional drum troupes. Bender (2005) only lists three aspects (pitch, duration and timbre) that *kuchi-shōga* can present. Similarly, syllabic vocalisation can be altered in terms of pitches, dynamic and timbre for improvisation in Indian music (Neuman, 1985, 107). It symbolises the musical sound by using phonetic syllables (Patel & Iversen, 2003, 925). In this way, the coach orally uses the sounds of “boom, tak, tik” to indicate positions of drumming points, and sings the rhythmic patterns to students for teaching in 24 FD training. An excerpt of *Heartbeats* is used as an example in this case (see Figure 29), which contains the striking of the centre and side points.

<sup>76</sup> Karnatak: A state in Southwest India.

Figure 29: An excerpt of *Heartbeats*



<b>Syllabic Vocalisation</b>	“Boom, Tak, Tak, Tak” ...
<b>Position of Drumming</b>	Centre (c) Side (s) Side (s) Side (s)
<b>Pitch of the Position</b>	Low High High High
<b>Dynamics of the Beats</b>	Strong Soft Soft Soft
<b>Duration of the Beats:</b>	Long Short Short Short

Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

In a syllabic way, the instructor will sing “boom, tak, tak, tak, tak” to indicate different positions of striking. “Boom” indicates the striking of the centre point, whilst “tak” is the side point. In this *vocable*, the instructor will sing “boom” at a louder and lower pitch to compare with “tak”. The purpose for this is to emphasise the different positions of the drum. The centre point is louder, stronger, and lower pitch, and vice versa. This is analogous to Spiller’s analysis of syllabic meanings in terms of vowels.

Although the syllables differ in many details, they are quite consistent with regard to the use of voiced versus unvoiced beginning consonants, high (‘i’), medium (‘e’, ‘a’), and low (‘o’, ‘u’), ringing (‘ng’) versus stopped (‘k’) endings, and the infixing of ‘l’ or ‘r’ sounds.

(Spiller, 2017, 20)

Hughes, on the other hand, offers more in-depth knowledge of different uses of consonants and vowels into acoustic-phonetic system as:

Stop’ consonants such as [p, t, k, b, d, g] generally mark the sharp attack of a plucked string or struck membranophone or idiophone. The deeper pitches are more commonly marked by the voiced consonants [b, d, g] ... Final consonants often help show decay. In many drum

mnemonics, a final [k] or other stopped sound represents a damped stroke, while a final nasal or vowel shows that the sound is left to resonate and decay naturally ... But a longer note on a plucked string or a struck instrument is often distinguished from a shorter one by adding a nasal consonant [n, m, ng].

(Hughes, 2000, 97)

Malaysia and Indonesia share similar linguistic structures. Spiller (2017) develops several general principles of the syllable vocalisation in his analysis of Sundanese dance<sup>77</sup>. He mainly focuses on vowels, occasionally consonants. On the other hand, Hughes (2000) explores in great detail the functions of consonants. Combining these two scholars' modalities and transferring them to the case of 24 FD will help understand the meanings, functions and intentions of using syllables in 24 FD. Precisely speaking, both "tak" and "tik" end with "k", accounting for the short sounds in terms of duration and decay. Meanwhile, in line with Spiller's principles that "a" is medium, and "i" is high, hence the pitch of "tik" is higher than "tak". Similarly, "boom" is the lowest pitch, as it contains the vowel "o" and the consonant "b". Also, due to "boom" containing the consonant "m", its duration is longer than "tak" and "tik". This is apparent in 24 FD drumming practice. "Boom" is the centre point stroke, which produces the stronger dynamic, lower pitch, and longer duration sound, in relation to "tak" and "tik". Therefore, these principles are applicable in the model of 24 FD to explain how to utilise different combinations of vowels and consonants in conveying their signification of sounds.

<sup>77</sup> Sundanese is one of the ethnic groups in the West Java in Indonesia.

The phenomenon of *kendang mulut* (syllabic vocalisation) is established by reciting syllables (Spiller, 2017, 28). In this process, actor-drummers are able to memorise the patterns/shapes of rhythms from pitch, duration, and timbre. Additionally, syllabic vocalisation also functions in ways to emphasise dynamics, stressed accents, duration and variations of different rhythmic patterns. Through the vocal memorisation of rhythmic patterns, actor-drummers can even sing the rhythmic patterns with all required musical elements (pitches, dynamics, timbre, positions of drumming, accent beats, and so on) in performance for self-signification or self-reminder. Therefore, syllabic vocalisation is a mnemonic method for training and performance. It is a common feature that can be found in the Pan-Asian tradition, and it is the technique of memorisation that exists in 24 FD.

### **3.4.2.2 Titled Rhythms**

Titled rhythm is another characteristic of learning by rote in 24 FD teaching and learning. It is, again, not only employed by school teams but also occasionally by professional teams. Traditionally, a rhythmic pattern will be created, and a name will be attributed to it as a reminder of the shape, drumming position, pitch, dynamic, duration, and/or the timbre of the rhythm. The idea of this method is similar to syllabic vocalization, yet different. Unlike syllabic vocalization, titled rhythms do not require singing the entire rhythmic patterns out. Instead, the name of the rhythm is the signifier of all musical elements of this rhythm. Another function of titled rhythms is that titled rhythms can be used as a metaphor for the rhythmic groups that already blends in with bodily movements, meaning that it is a term that fuses the gestural and music movements together at the same time. Students are able to recognize the drumming and bodily movement when they are syllabled by a titled rhythm. In this sense, titled rhythm is

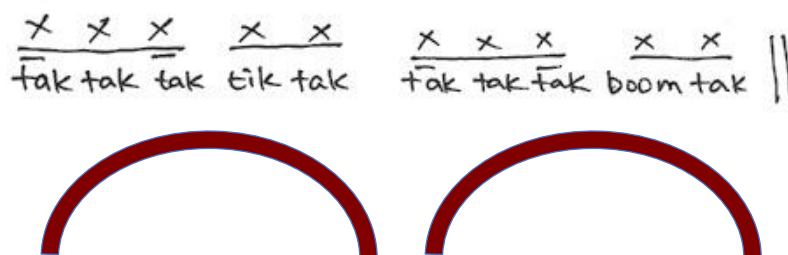


similar to a set of *vaythari* (verbal commands) that is used in *kalarippayattu* training. They are descriptive symbols to guide students to know the sequence of movements by titles. For example, “right straight kick” is known as *valatu nere* (Zarrilli, 1984, 197).

According to Zarrilli, verbal commands are the way to use descriptive signals in a repeated process. With continuous repetition, an automatic physical reaction will be activated to respond to the instructions (1984, 197). Verbal commands in *kalarippayattu* training are to signify the sequence of body exercises. The function of titled rhythm in 24 FD is similar. It is used to symbolise what is the rhythmic pattern and what bodily movements go with the drumming. The inspiration for naming a rhythm could come from daily life, collective knowledge or metaphoric objects. Rhythms are titled according to a collective understanding, meaning that actor-drummers have a common agreement for titled rhythms. For example, 24 FD features a titled rhythm known as *fan* (see Figure 30), a metaphor for the Chinese paper fan. Actor-drummers have the collective knowledge of the motion of opening and folding the Chinese paper fan. Likewise, the bodily movement of this rhythmic pattern is akin to “fold” and “open” the “fan”. Hence, this rhythmic pattern is titled as *fan*. In this rhythmic movement, the hand movement begins from the right hand of an actor-drummer after hitting the side of the drum (“tak”). Once completing this move, the actor-drummer would immediately draw his/her right hand up and begins a half-crescent movement across to the left as if the actor-drummer is drawing a half circle (in front of the upper body) to hit the left hand drumstick (“tik”). This is the first part of the rhythm. Yet in this series of movements, actor-drummers seem to “fold” an opened “fan” at the “tik” beat when two drumsticks strike at the left hand side. Immediately, when the left hand hits “tak” (the last “tak” at the end of the first part of the rhythm), the right hand “opens” the “fan”, and starts the second round of “folding” and “opening” the “fan”.

In this movement training, the instructor Ang emphasized the important technique of this movement by repeatedly saying: “keep the left hand as low as you can, the left hand should be nearly close to the side (side point of the drum). Mainly use your right hand to draw the fan. Use the right hand to hit the left hand, not two drumsticks hitting together.” Ang explains how the titled rhythm of *fan* can be completed with his detailed instruction. Fundamentally, the technique to the titled rhythm of *fan* can be summarized into two aspects. 1) The actor-drummer should have the knowledge to know the shape of the *fan*. This is as much about technique as knowledge, discussed in the early part of this chapter. This knowledge is similar to the phenomenon of a “notional audiation” in music performance, the “ability to ‘hear’ the music one is reading before physically hearing it performed on an instrument” (Brodsky et al., 2008, 427). Transferred to titled rhythms, it is the ability to project the shape of titled rhythms through mental images. 2) The way to convey their knowledge in performance depends on their technique of waving the right hand, wrist, and arm.

Figure 30: Titled rhythm example of *fan*



Note: “tak” is the side point stroke, “tik” is the beat that drumsticks striking, “boom” is the centre point stroke.

Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

### 3.4.2.3 Notation System

In one of the 24 FD documentaries, titled *24 Festive Drum Documentary*, the founder Tan Chai Puan (2009) expressed that: “people frequently ask me what the traditions of 24 FD are. However, for a form of 24 FD, which was established in the late 80s, it is difficult to define ‘tradition’, as there is still a lot of room for 24 FD to develop”. Indeed, there is still a wide range of arguments in its development, one of which is the musical notation system. Earlier, I have addressed the rote-teaching system, as the major and preferable method widely used by different 24 FD teams. In this system, the components of syllabic vocalisation and titled rhythms can be seen as the verbal “notation” in training. I played this form in 2011, when my coach Engthurs Ang taught me with the syllabic vocalisation and titled rhythms rather than Western music notation. The adoption of the Western music notation system is still an ongoing debate in the development of 24 FD. In my interviews, Low mentioned that “the adoption of the notational system depends on the tradition of the team. For example, in my team, I prefer to teach without reading the scores. However, I will notate the repertoires as well, as I would like my composed repertoires to be recorded for my students and for the future reference of the team” (Low, 2015).

The example of Low’s notation (see Figure 31) informs several important details of the repertoires. For example, rhythmic patterns, speeds, exclamation, positions of drumming, bodily movements and hand gestures can be identified through the written notation. Notably, title rhythms can be identified. Low divided each titled rhythm into a numeric sequence. This division helps actor-drummers to identify titled rhythms in his rote-teaching method. However, the exemplified notation reproduced below is not a sample of unified notation. In fact, there are slight differences of notations between different teams.

Each team modifies the notation system according to the needs of their specific training methods, and both written and verbal notation (syllabic vocalisation and titled rhythms) serve as mnemonic aids for the training of 24 FD.

Figure 31: The notation of *The Empathy of Actor-Drummers*

2018年“百人鼓阵汇演”鼓谱—《鼓手齐鸣》

Bpm: 120

开头 4/4 | 由2018年鼓手团开始打一拍二段 然后才接大队。

↓↓ 以下不是我们要学的。

① 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 sa 1 sa | 1 sa 1 sa |

② 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | x4 1: 双手 2: 打鼓棒

③ 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | x4

④ 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | x4 (动作: 下腰, 从左→右) 3: 重声

⑤ 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | x4 L: Left hand 打 R: Right hand 打

⑥ 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | x4

⑦ 4/4 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 | x4

Source: Transcription by Low Kee Hang, composer of the piece (2018).

### 3.4.3 Composition

The performance repertoires of 24 FD are created and recreated within teams for different performance purposes. There are no pre-written repertoires for actor-drummers to learn, practise and perform. The pieces of composition can vary: each team creates their own performances, and it is very rare that two different teams play the same repertoire, as composition is perceived as one of the important techniques of training.

Echoing the discussion in the introduction, for this reason, different teams have different styles of performing, as the style is highly related to compositions.

The composition process is frequently found during training. In most teams, it is a technique that can be learnt through their long-term practical experiences. In an interview with Lye Zhiiyong, he expressed that, “the (technique of) composition heavily relies on three aspects: the knowledge of the ‘composer’ (music, gesture, and choreography), the intelligence and sensitivity to explore inspiration, and the study of previous performance repertoires” (Lye, 2016). This leads me to associate Lye’s insight into composition techniques with the principles of *jiu mei* (see the discussion of *jiu mei* in chapter 2). Although *jiu mei* is an aesthetic concept that can also be understood to offer acting technique, in the case of 24 FD, it can be applied to composition technique. *Jiu mei* requires actors to “use intelligence and sensitivity to observe the affairs of the world”, and “gain new insights when working on old materials” (Fei, 2002, 35), corresponding to Lye’s perception of composition technique in 24 FD.

The performance repertoires can be composed by an individual, by a selection of actor-drummers, or collectively by all members of the group. The coaches I interviewed during fieldwork, including Low Kee Hang (2014, 2017, 2018), Lye Zhiiyong (2015, 2017, 2018), and Leung Shi Kit (2017, 2018), all suggest that whoever composes a piece and whether the composition is included in a training session varies according to the nature and level of the team. As Low told me: “for writing a repertoire, at least we need to know what, who, and where we play for. Once we have confirmed with the performance venue and the purpose of this performance, we start composing ... Normally we will have a theme first.

For example, a theme of Chinese New Year celebration. We, then, look for source and inspiration for composition” (Low, 2018).

According to Low (2017), when a team is comprised of advanced level or professional actor-drummers, the ideas and themes for the repertoire are usually proposed by one actor-drummer in the team. This person can be an individual who possibly has been classically trained in music, theatre, martial art, or related subjects. Once the theme has been set, the next action is a collective activity of completing the rest of the piece with the actor-drummers in the team. If the entire group is formed of an elementary level of students, this collective composition technique is not applicable. For this level of students, the composition is created by the coach only. Lye’s Taiwan team and Ang’s Liverpool team are the examples where the coach writes the piece for the team, without any involvement of students.

Despite the levels of the team, this phenomenon of composition created during training by performers is a tactile and embodied activity. Experience and feeling, and response and reaction are naturally inherent in a human’s body. By engaging with the composition, the actor-drummer creates performance repertoires including music, movement and choreography. These elements are the primary sources and first-hand experiences of the actor-drummers’ knowledge. As the actor-drummers of Orang Orang Drum Theatre (2018) confirm that they clearly understand the intention, requirements, difficulties and beauty of the work because these are the materials that they create for their performance. Substantially, the engagement of the actor-drummer in the composition directly skips the stage of identifying the composer’s intention, which may benefit the embodied performance. Secondly, actor-drummers are multi-role performers. According to Spiller,

dancer and drummer share the same choreography in aural and tactile sensory channels. Dance, in particular, is an activity that predominantly contains “tactile, embodied, and ‘felt’” sensation (2017, 13). Actor-drummers play multiple roles in 24 FD, which are sophisticated and entangled. Their intention and action in composition are active. Hence, the embodied characteristic is evoked in the composition stage by then.

### **3.5 The Characteristics of 24 FD Training**

By analysing all the elements that are involved in the training of 24 FD, the pan-Asian characteristics can be traced and identified. Significantly, performance materials and requirements are largely integrated into the training, which implies the main focus of the training is to consider each training session as ‘a performance’. This phenomenon can be unpacked and denoted in the following ways:

1. Training, rehearsal, and performance are not rigorously distinguished.

To identify the characteristics of 24 FD, it is important to understand several important concepts before entering the discussion, as the definition of terms at different stages of performance/training is not significant in the case of 24 FD. First of all, it is essential to define what is performance in general and in the specific context of pan-Asian practice. Defining and recognising a performance with significant “markers” is commonly perceived as the way to distinguish performance from any other events. To this perception, Schechner advises that any marked beginning, interval, end, and audience’s participation are not compulsory elements in identifying a performance. He also gives examples to explain how these elements might not be applicable or existing in different

cultures<sup>78</sup> (Schechner, 2013, 240), as those markers might not be the right tools to determine a performance with Asiatic characteristics. For example, pauses are frequently allocated in between the intervals of different rhythmic patterns in 24 FD performance. When *The Memories* was performed in eight festivals, including *La Menitre, Alencon, Pont-l'Abbe, Puy-en-Belay, Montignac, Port sur Saone, Confolens, and Plozevet* in France by Orang Orang Drum Theatre and JB Drums in July to August 2017 for a six-week tour (Sin Chew, 2017), audiences sometimes mistakenly applauded during pauses although the performance was still ongoing. This behaviour of audiences is attributed to their knowledge of identifying a “marked end” to a performance, as the form is foreign to them. If training is possible to correct errors and lapses, the performances of 24 FD experience interruptions in different circumstances as well. However, it does not interfere with its continuity (see point 4).

To better conceptualise performance, Sauter re-establishes the concept from the perspective of etymology, by saying that, “performance is related not only to a performance on stage”, but it is a form that takes place in a particular context (Sauter, 2000, 38). It is not necessary to be fused with any marking. For the details of contexts that might constitute performance, Schechner identifies eight types of situations to distinguish the types of performances as “in everyday life; in the arts, in sports and other popular entertainments; in business, in technology, in sex, in ritual, and in play” (Schechner, 2013, 31). These situations occur in different fields; yet share the same

<sup>78</sup> “the marking, or framing, varies from culture to culture, epoch to epoch, and genre to genre – even, sometimes, from instance to instance. In the performing arts in mainstream Western genres, lowering the houselights and bringing the stage lights up, raising or opening curtains, and other procedures mark the start of a performance or portion of a performance. The closing or dropping of a curtain, the dimming of stage lights, the applause of spectators, and the actors taking bows mark the end of mainstream performances” (Schechner, 2013, 240).



agency. Training and performance doubtless consist of a series of actions. While Schechner identifies different contexts of performance, he further adds that to determine whether the situation is performance, one should consider the “context, historical circumstance, use, and local conventions” (2013, 32). For this reason, a training session can be seen as a performance when it is materialised and contextualised (eg. Performance repertoire). Audiences are in place in both training and performance in 24 FD. The audience in training can be the coach, whilst audiences in the public performance of 24 FD consists of greater numbers of unfamiliar faces. The existence of audiences does not affect the way of describing training and performance. Additionally, it should not be used as a marker to define training as different to performance. Performance repertoires are the group trains/performs during the session, and audiences exist in both of these situations.

The boundaries of rehearsal, training, and performance are ambiguous in 24 FD and this is not the only case in Asian performance. As Awasthi and Schechner address, “for *kathakali* and *yakshagana* actors there is no such thing as a rehearsal; what they go through is long and rigorous training, and then a preparation before each performance” (1989, 53). And also, no rehearsal sections exist in *Noh* (George, 2011, 194). Similar to these forms, the use of the term rehearsal is absent in both training and performance events in the case of 24 FD. This is because training and performance are both embodied and experiential in 24 FD. In particular, sophisticated gestural movements interweaving with ensemble drumming is the phenomenon that is created by the mind of the performers. The *bodymind* training equips actor-drummers to be able to create contents and meanings for their performance. Therefore, the clear division among training, rehearsal and performance is unnecessary. Also, due to the continuous development of

the form, the term 'tradition' becomes absent in the discussion of 24 FD. Practice exists prior to the theoretical discourse. As the founder Tan Chai Puan states,

As a new and young performing form, in the search of new creation for performance purpose, 24 FD performers largely draw upon their familiar sources, in terms of performance style and training methods. For them, nothing is certain and fixed. For example, HANDS tends to develop into a percussive ensemble team, whilst Orang Orang Drum Theatre focuses on theatrical presence and story-telling into their performance ... The influence of outer cultures is profound.

(Tan, 2018)

Tan's account may also respond to the fact that there is no significant marking among rehearsal, training and performance, as the tradition is not fixed into merely one style. Consistent with the influence of the Pan-Asian cultural tradition, knowledge, technique, perception is hybrid in 24 FD. According to Schechner, "rehearsing is the process of building up specific blocks of proto-performance materials into larger and larger sequences of actions that are assembled into a whole, finished performance. Rehearsals are always tailored to the specific needs of the performance-at-hand" (2013, 237). The term 'rehearsal' is frequently absent in the training of 24 FD. It does not mean that 24 FD skips the phase of rehearsal. However, the phase of rehearsal is emphasised, as it is part of the blend-in components in training. Training becomes the final phase before attending to a public performance. In the training session, techniques are trained and built through the practising of a performance repertoire (see point 3).

Training and performance are interrelated to each other in many ways. Schechner simplifies the entire complex phenomenon of performance into three phases<sup>79</sup>, which are

<sup>79</sup> **Proto-performance:** 1) training 2) workshop 3) rehearsal; **Performance:** 1) warm-up 2) public performance 3) events/contexts sustaining the public performance 4) cooldown; **Aftermath:** 1) critical responses 2) archives 3) memories (Schechner, 2013, 22).

proto-performance, performance and aftermath (2013, 225). Comparing his model to the case of 24 FD, the performance sequence of 24 FD is slightly different. The sequence could be understood as: proto-performance (warm-up, composing, learning/teaching, and training), performance (public performance), and the aftermath. Schechner believes that the warm up is in a stage of performance. However, the warm up in 24 FD is a preparatory stage of training. For this reason, Schechner's perspective of the stage of performance is similar to the characteristics of 24FD training.

## 2. Actor-drummers are performing in training.

Performance repertoires are the only material used in training. Music and bodily movements are synthesised as a choreographed entity in training/performance. During training, the actor-drummers play the drums with the required dynamics, timbre, positions, rhythms, and many other essential moves that are required in an actual performance. Relevant moves can be exemplified as the choreography of drum positions. The positions of the drums in 24 FD performance/training are always mobile. Rarely would there be any occasions when the drum positions are at a fixed position in a 24 FD repertoire. The formation of the drum's position is principally taken into consideration as one part of choreography in accordance with the requirement of the repertoire. For example, the position of the drums can be changed from a typical audience-facing formation into an unusual one, such as facing towards each other among the actor-drummers. Essentially, it is important to note that the bodily movements that actor-drummers impart are carefully choreographed with the drumbeats. Bodily movements and drumming are integrated with each other. Separately training/performing the bodily movements without the engagement of the rhythmic patterns which are associated to specific movements, is not viable. The rhythmic patterns, in this case, serve as signifiers

and accompaniment at the same time. They suggest the intention of a particular bodily movement. Meanwhile, they support the bodily movements as a background supplement. In this sense, the body and music cannot be unconnected nor trained/performed without each other in the case of 24 FD. The actor-drummers cannot perform theatrical/bodily movements alone without blending in the counterpart of rhythms, as rhythms and movements, these two elements are systematically choreographed. Therefore, drumming and bodily movements require the same performance quality in both practice and performance.

Stillness, silence, rest, and pause are terms from different fields, but convey similar meanings. They all suggest a short-term moment of motionlessness and soundlessness. These static and mute moments are frequently found in-between the changes of rhythmic patterns. In the pan-Asian context, the silent moment can be seen as the highest state of aesthetics. For example, the “frozen moment” is the moment when *hana* is experienced. By adding this element, the audience might have a clearer understanding of the performance. One of the important functions of utilising the element of stillness/silence/rest/pause is to act as a divider in a performance repertoire. It divides a piece into different segments. Musically, each individual segment can be understood as different musical movements. Theatrically, these segments can be seen as different scenes to constitute a full performance.

For both performers and audiences, these motionless and soundless moments are a guide point and signifiers, which guide the stakeholders (actor-drummers and spectators) of a performance to clarify the changing of scenes and musical movements. For this reason, they should be specifically choreographed in the training and performance. Taking this

point into consideration, the element of time duration is one of the important aspects when devising the choreography of a performance. Motionless and soundless moments, which are performative elements, are practised and performed to the same standard in training/performance. During both training and performance, the durations of stillness/silence/rest/pause should be the same in each period. It is a non-skippable stage, as it is a performative element in a performance. Stillness/silence/rest/pause does not mean inactivity, but it is a moment. As Nichols stresses, “stillness makes possible some of the most moving moments for a character” (1993, 23). To further understand the term of “stillness” in the process of practice, Benedetti asserts that Asian actors have the competence to make use of the internal “dynamic essence” to know how to “stand still while not standing still” (1933, 465-466). Zarrilli attributes “concentratedness, balance, focus, the raising and circulation of one’s internal energy, centering, etc” (1993, 10) to this ability. These are the technical achievements that actor-drummers can attain during training. On the condition that actor-drummers are equipped with these techniques, a stillness/silencece/rest/pause moment is performative and leading to a 24 FD performance embodied (see “a performance can be performative” in Chapter 4). Stillness/silence/rest/pause has its own moment and tempo, imparting meaning and contents to the performance. Therefore, whether in training or performance, the component of stillness/silence/rest/pause serves a choreographic presentation in 24 FD and should be executed with accurate timing.

### 3. Physical and psychophysical techniques are blended into performances.

The trained and built techniques are integrated into performance. Training methods (rote-learning and syllabic vocalisation) and memorisation technique (titled rhythms) indicate an Asiatic feature, and predominantly suit the training and performance of 24

FD. They are an important way to transmit the performance knowledge in training sessions of 24 FD. This offers possibilities for performance repertoires to be created, taught, learnt and carried out in these most direct and tactile ways as these imitative methods sharpen aural and visual perception in training (Hood, 1960, 55). Benjamin Brinner, in his study of Javanese gamelan music suggests that the musical (performance) competence is an integral technique that can be gained through a particular context. Performers are able to learn and train in this technique through their performance (Pecore, 2003, 33). Hood also points out that the training of drumming is not merely about fingers and hands, it requires a “keen ear” as well (1960, 57). In many Asian performances, rote-learning requires a pair of sensitive ears to listen, and observant eyes to watch, so that imitation can be accurately executed.

In the observational stage, actor-drummers would initially play out the role of audiences. The first set of audiences of 24 FD performance would be the actor-drummers themselves, followed by the second set of audiences which would be the coach(es) of the team. The role of the coach is manifold. Instructor and composer aside, the coach is the leading actor-drummer in the team as well.

The coach/coaches in an advanced team/professional team does the following:

- Monitor: Monitoring training activities in the team.
- Advisor: Advising potential improvements and adjustments of some specific rhythmic patterns or gestural movements.
- Drummer: Being one of the actor-drummers in the team in performance venue.
- Associated composer: Helping in composition with the team members.
- Audience: Being the audience when actor-drummers are training for a new repertoire.

The coach/coaches in an elementary team:

- Instructor:
  - Physical instructor: training the physical development such as the stamina of actor-drummers.
  - Music/Percussive instructor: teaching percussion skills and rhythmic patterns of drumming.
  - Theatrical instructor: teaching theatrical movements and correcting bodily gestures of actor-drummers.
- Conductor: conducting a training session and a performance.
- Composer: Being the main composer in most elementary teams.
- Drummer: Being the leading actor-drummer in the team in the training and practice session.

Coaching in a 24 FD team can be done by one single individual or a group of professionals. For example, in JB Drums (Johor Bahru, Malaysia), there are three coaches in the team. On most occasions where multiple coaches are present, there will be one head coach or a leading coach, who acts as an instructor of teaching drums and movements in the team. He is a teacher of instruments, theatre, vocals and dance. The second coach practises together with the actor-drummer in the team what has been taught to them. He can be considered as the leading actor-drummer for this team. The third coach will be the observer, observing the lessons from a third person's perspective. He neither plays with the actor-drummer, nor involves himself in teaching. In this case, he can be considered as 'the audience' of the performance.

The imitation stage can be considered as a collective reproduction of a repertoire in 24 FD. The composition is not fixed or unchangeable. Instead, it is frequently altered according to the circumstance of the performance (for example, the accessibility and limitation of a performance venue), the quantity and the level of performers. For example, there was a rhythm known as “bounce” in the performance of *Heartbeats* at St David’s Hall, Cardiff, by Liverpool 24 FD. Before “bounce”, there was an exclamation of “sa” immediately followed by 4-seconds of silence. The original composition idea of this moment of silence by Ang in 2012 was aimed at clearing away the emotion of previous rhythms. Subsequently, the exclamation was used to symbolise a start or to rebuild the new emotion of “bounce” distinguished by a change of rhythmic pattern from the previous rhythms. During the training of this repertoire, the actor-drummers felt that the shout of “bounce” instead of “sa” was much more suitable for the piece. There were two reasons for this modification. First, the vowel of “bounce” has a similar sound to “sa”. For the quality of performance, replacing “bounce” with “sa” would not affect the function and intention of adding exclamation to this rhythm. Second, the substitution of “sa” served as an indicator of what rhythms should be played to actor-drummers. Subsequently, Leigh, the leading actor-drummer of the Liverpool 24 FD would shout out the word “bounce” to provide a signal for the rest of the actor-drummers in the performance to play to the required rhythmic pattern at a specific timing. A training session, at this point, is an event for altering a performance collectively in accordance with the changing context. It is also because actor-drummers engage in mutual communication and composition. They familiarise themselves with ways they wish to constitute and present the performance to the audiences. Their perspectives of a piece of repertoire were taken from composers, performers and even audiences. In this sense, an embodied technique is attained, and the embodiment takes place in a training session.



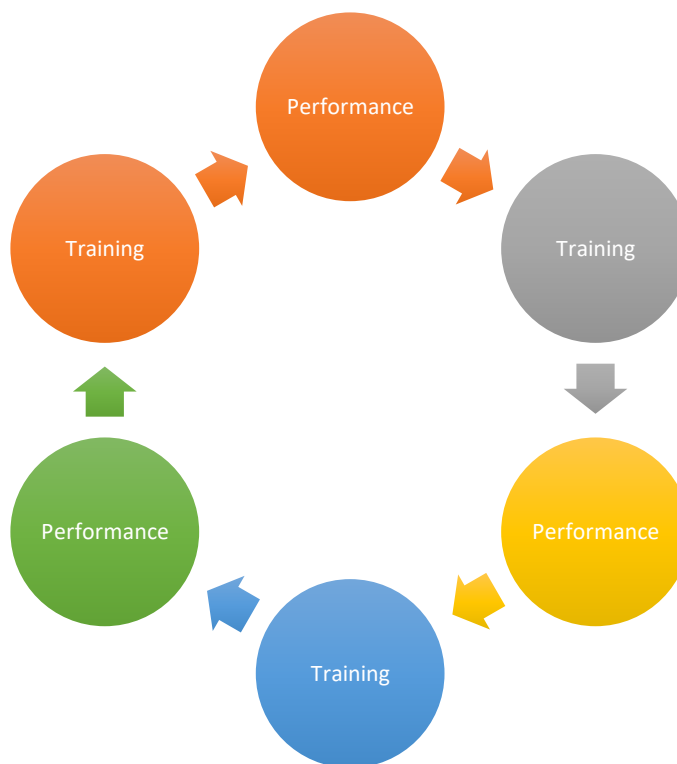
4. It is a continuous process during which training, rehearsing and performing circulate.

Training and performance form a continuous process that synthesizes a variety of techniques in its tactile teaching and learning. Within the movements of this process, techniques are learnt, trained, and built by practising performance repertoires. On the other hand, performance pieces are polished over and over again to achieve perfection. A piece of repertoire will not be played only once. Instead, it could be performed on many different occasions and venues (see Figure 32). According to Schechner, what behind a performance is the knowledge that the performer has gained (2013, 226). This is a process that indicates the shared characteristics between performance and Buddhism, which is being temporal, singular, particular and ambiguous (George, 2011, 196).

My previous experience at Liverpool suggests that knowledge and technique can be learnt through the repetition of performance and training. We created four repertoires within a two-year period. We performed approximately thirty times with these four repertoires, meaning that each repertoire was played at least seven times. If there was a different occasion, the repertoires would be reused and revised in order to bring a 'new' performance to audiences. The 'new' performance came from the old version of a repertoire, but it would be largely altered by the actor-drummers. In this case, a performed repertoire (successful or unsuccessful) will return to training for the preparation of the next performance. The circle of receiving feedback, returning to training, and performing again can be compared to the training sessions where the coach plays the role of the audience, observes the performance, gives feedback, and actor-drummers revise the piece accordingly. This circle also obeys the laws of *tai chi*. Within

the entity of *tai chi*, *yin* and *yang* are two variables that are ceaselessly moving. The movement of *yin* and *yang* will create new elements. In the same way, performance and training are repeating and revising. In the repetition of training/performance, actor-drummers gradually improve their techniques and cultivate knowledge through the practice.

Figure 32: The circle of training and performance



### 3.6 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was to investigate what is involved in the 24 FD training process and to identify the characteristics of 24 FD training in a Pan-Asian context. In the first place, I carried on the idea that the performer's body is a primary tool to constitute a performance in the pan-Asian context and discussed how technique is central to performance/performative research by drawing upon the concept of "technique as

knowledge". The *bodymind* synthesis transformed the philosophical discussions from chapter 2 to the performative application. I looked at elements that were involved in the training in a performative way and discovered the teaching/learning methods, such as rote-learning, syllabic vocalisation and titled rhythms as a collective pedagogical tool in the Pan-Asian tradition. In the end, the common features of 24 FD training were generated via the examination of the interrelationship between performance, rehearsal and training.

## **Chapter 4: *Musicalbody***

This chapter aims to look at the performance practice of 24 FD. At the beginning, I discuss the relationship between body, mind and music to seek to establish the role of the performer's body in (music) performance. A performance is constructed by a human's gestural behaviour. Hence, music and movement have an inseparable relationship in the performative context. In music research, terms such as *musicking* and rhythmic sensibility both suggest that music (as performance) has its performativity. A music performance can be performative once the experiential states of performer and audience are embodied. Culture shapes individual behaviours and becomes an important component to influence and generate the performativity of a performance. The cultural element is carefully considered in the key discussion which draws on Performance Studies, Intercultural Theatre, (Pan) Asian performance and ethnomusicology. In the performative context, I move to examine the interrelationship between culture, music and performativity. In the performance analysis, where I review several repertoires of 24 FD performances, two main parts are involved in the discussion. In part 1, I particularly analyse a recent performance entitled *The Memories* to identify performative components that exist in the performance. With these leads, I expand the discussion of performativity and 24 FD in part 2. In the end, I conceptualise a concept of *musicalbody* to explain the corporeality, musicality and performativity of 24 FD with reference to a series of theory reviews and performance analysis. I attempt to codify six principles for the concept, consisting of components that link to the complexity, multiplicity, technicality, and experientiality of 24 FD.

## **4.1 Body, Mind and Music**

### **4.1.1 The Body and Mind**

As chapter 2 discussed, the body-mind totality is central to the Asian traditions of performance practice. In relation to the common acknowledgement of the mind-body dichotomy in traditional music research, there is a new approach of perceiving the body and mind existing in the same world (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, 173). In the fields of musicology, music psychology and music pedagogy, scholars appear to be aware of the importance of perceiving the body and mind as one entity (Clarke, 1999; Davidson, 1993; Gabrielsson, 2011; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Jensenius, 2007; Jaques-Dalcroze, 2014) to explore the interconnection between embodied action and the awareness of it in music performance (Jaques-Dalcroze, 2014; Elliot, 1995; Ryle, 1949). Velmans attempts to emphasise that the brain is not an isolated part of the body (2000, 230). The brain is an organ for humans to think. Fischer-Lichte supports Velmans by rejecting that the body and mind stand in opposition. In her concept of “the human being as embodied mind”, she discusses that, the moment when the mind finds its counterpart of the body, the mind acts as an embodied mind (2008, 173). Therefore, the interplay of the body and mind is in the wake of embodiment, where the body functions as the most important component.

### **4.1.2 Body, Mind and Music**

A further consideration is the element of music, which is gradually blended into the key debates in music and music-related fields. *Music* stems from the Greek word *Mousike* that represents a combination of melody and dance (Murray & Wilson, 2004, 1). Significantly, the body and music are affected mutually (Blacking, 1997, 27). Music educator Jaques-Dalcroze endeavours to establish a framework in which the body is a mediator between

the sound and mind, and then further expands the idea that “(the) body is an inseparable unit of the mind” (1985, 108). He draws an explicit linkage between the body, mind and music, whilst Clayton bases his argument on the complexity of musicology, believing that musicology cannot be accessed if there is no mediated experience (2003, 58). The mediated experience can be determined by thoughts, which are actions of our mind, and can be achieved by the agency of the practitioner’s body and the performer’s playing of music. The concept of ‘thinking in action’ by Elliot (1995) shows that the music is not a corollary of thinking, however, it is the reason why we think and perform the music. His concept of ‘thinking-in-action’ implies, epistemologically, the importance of the musician’s ‘know-how’ of the technique of music in performance. Elliot further explains that this ‘knowing’ is the act of doing music in the music performance. Juntunen and Westerlund, as the followers of Elliot, elaborate that, “musicianship happens in action, through action, and within action” (2001, 204). The involvement of gestural movements in music gives bodily knowledge, which is a source that is able to enhance knowing in and through the body (Juntunen & Westerlund, 2001, 209). Apart from being an instrument of thought, the body can also be sensitive to sounds subconsciously and as a corollary, the body is transformative and experiential alongside the musical mind and thinking (Juntunen & Westerlund, 2001, 204). In this sense, action takes place in a performance through a range of techniques and therefore, a performer’s body becomes the medium of musicianship, which is also the key component in music solo performances and ensembles.

### 4.1.3 The Body and Music

Current studies related to the body and music mainly take their origin in 19<sup>th</sup> century theories that consider bodily components as expressive tools in music performance (Doğantan-Dack, 2006, 449). In this mainstream of thought, the body is seen as a supplementary part to assist with a performer's musical presence. There are scholars who express an interest in binding the terms of musicality and theatricality together to explore the ontological essence of their forms (Roesner, 2014). Musicality in theatre can be perceived as the interpretation and perception of music, associated with the body of a performer. Meanwhile, this perception of music, in turn, will be modified by music embodiment, the way in which the body interacts with the music (Jordan, 2000, 15). For Roesner, musicality happened in the past, is happening at present, and is predictably happening in the future. It serves as the fundamental aspect of theatrical practice (2014, 257). It is common that a substantial weight is given to the discourse of bodily movement in theatre studies, whilst the musical element receives more emphasis in music studies. In other words, theories of the body and music are better developed in their own fields. However, bodily movement in musical performance is less explored, and vice versa. 24 FD cannot be simply classed as a pure theatrical or musical performance. It overlaps several disciplines, such as music, dance, singing, theatre, and martial arts. To maximise the understanding of the body and music in 24 FD, an interdisciplinary approach should be employed, as it will largely draw upon the knowledge from different fields.

Reybrouck criticises traditional music research as being too narrow. It has heavily leaned towards the Western canon of art music, and therefore, in order to bring together the body, mind and music, he proposes two methods of practice to eliminate the lack of an interdisciplinary approach. He argues that music should not neglect the involvement of



body movement (2005, 3), and his first method includes the engagement of the body in music, proposing that the audience's auditory experience may be affected by visual sources. Music is a form of knowledge. Music performance is a way of knowing this knowledge. Knowledge, according to Reybrouck serves as an organism to organize its experience (2005, 7), through auditory and visual sources. In this way, he emphasizes, corporeal involvement to construct a knowledge of music, is a process of knowing of the knower. Reybrouck's second method is called 'dealing with music', a concept emphasizing the lack of descriptive and explanatory vocabularies in traditional music research (2005, 3). This concept offers a potential range of perspectives to trace all the possible elements, which include listening, performing, improvising and composing, as well as exploring, selecting and focusing on acting, interacting and transacting that are the 'source-knowledge' of performing music (Bregman, 1990; McAdams, 1993). In this sense, the interdisciplinary approach that Reybrouck brings in, reconstructs and reconnects knowledge from different subjects into a new relationship

In fact, different performance forms might use parallel vocabularies to designate the same phenomenon in their disciplines. The phenomenon may be given different names, but they all find their counterparts in the corresponding fields. Jaques-Dalcroze in his early research attempts to map out equivalent terms in the fields of music and dance (Jordan, 2000, 15), displaying different terms used to describe similar things. For example, pitch in music refers to the position and direction of the gesture in the space in dance. Similarly, the intensity of the sound in music can be understood as muscular dynamics in dance, and bodily movement in dance is known as the performer's gesture in music. The difference in terminology, on the one hand, may alert us to the unconscious negligence of the connection in different disciplines. On the other hand, it makes us aware

of the importance of interconnection between music and the body in an interdisciplinary approach.

## **4.2 Music and Movement**

Music and movement are firmly connected in a performance. Jensenius strongly believes that music is movement. He looks at how music is created and perceived by producing it, rather than investigating the sound waves. In line with his definition, all body movements in musical performance can be regarded as music-related movement (2007, 1). The subjects of music and dance should be merged, in this way, tightly into a performance, not separated individually. In a performance, music and dance suggest different layers of meanings (Jordan, 2000, 71), and are therefore integral to each other to enrich our artistic experiences in understanding the embodiment in music. This implies that music is a performative utterance, in training and performance that connects mental, emotional, and physical aspects of the musician to create a landscape of an aural and visual effect in a music performance. In short, a music performance is performative and embodied by a series of psychophysical components.

The importance of and interrelationship between music and movement are given greater attention in the fields of music and music-related disciplines. The eurythmics methodology is an approach to training the body to serve for musical expression in music pedagogy, advocating the engagement of the entire body in music production (McCoy, 1994, 27). Jaques-Dalcroze proposes that music knowledge can be taught and learnt via physical practice. Corporeal movements are essential to the process of studying rhythms (Phillips-Silver & Trainor, 2007, 534). With the reference to Jaques-Dalcroze's

Eurythmics methodology, Phillips-Silver and Trainor indicate that the embodiment of rhythm is articulated in the form of motion in music pedagogy (2007, 534). Movement and rhythm can bring performative experience and therefore, Eurythmics is an experience and a process which is applicable in different social and cultural contexts to understand and experience music (Juntunen and Westerlund, 2010). In this sense, rather than describing it as a method, Eurythmics is a “rhythmic sensibility” in musicians, as Jaques-Dalcroze calls it. He has conducted an empirical test to bear out that the body and music can help to experience rhythm. Thus, rhythm is a predominant component in both music and dance training. In the same way, rhythm is a major musical expression in 24 FD.

Music can be embodied by emotion through the practice of cultivating a sensation of mental images (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1985, 108). These mental images are based in aural, visual and kinaesthetic images for reading, writing, performing or creating music (Mead, 1994, 5). Rhythmic sensibility is an exercise to develop the ability to memorize these images. As previously discussed, mental, emotional, physical elements create a performative and embodied music performance. In music pedagogy, Jaques-Dalcroze further examines how the emotion that is behind the music can possibly serve as the source of embodiment in a performance. In line with Gabrielsson, the emotional score in music can be as simple as happiness, sorrow, anger, and fear, and more specific or modulated as security, reverence, gratitude, feeling of magnificence, tension, and so on (2011, 120). Rickard discovers that the rise of the intensity of an emotion results in a higher level of physiological arousal (2004, 384), which means that the emotional response is directly related to the level of embodied experiences.

From the perspective of Jaques-Dalcroze, the emergence of the emotion helps these mental images to embody our experiences in music performance. However, what kind of emotional state can affect the function of music in the service of dance, and how the emotion of music can be interpreted in dance are questions that are unaddressed in his work. If emotion is the source of the musical motion, different demands of emotional states, such as positive or negative demands will lead to different behavioural actions. The emotional awareness is unavoidable in music events (Juntunen & Westerlund, 2010, 204). At the same time, a musician's body undergoes changes of emotions during a performance. These emotional responses mark the meaning and reception of music, so it is essential to understand a methodology of the practice to induce emotional responses to musicians that help them to embody the emotion that they are dealing with in a music performance.

In order to elaborate emotion in performance, a question inquiring about the relationship between sentiments and psychological states arises from the *Nayasastra*. "Do the psychological states come out from the sentiments or the sentiments come out of the psychological states [...] The sentiments arise from the psychological states and not the psychological states from the sentiment" (Ghosh, 2006, 240). Pollock in his recent publication contends that emotions exist as "they bring into being the meaning of the literary work when these are given verbal, physical, and affective form ... through the four registers of acting: verbal, physical, psychophysical, and makeup". As he further explains, there are forty-nine emotions taking place in a performance. In a detailed classification, they refer to eight stable emotions, thirty-three transitory emotions, and eight psychophysical responses (2016, 53-54). The discussion of music and emotion has been developed through a series of empirical studies (Juslin & Sloboda, 2011; Valla et al., 2017)

Valla et al. address that *rasa* can change the mood of the audience in a specific way (2017, 2120). Balkwill and Thompson are interested in investigating the audience's experience in different cultural and perceptual dimensions. They, hence, conduct scientific research to explore the audience's psychophysical state in unfamiliar musical performances. In this experiment, 4 *rasas*, including joy/*hasya*, sadness/*karuna*, anger/*raudra*, and peacefulness/*shanta* are piloted with the variables of tempo, melodic complexity, rhythmic complexity, pitch range and timbre (1999, 48). Whilst studying Balkwill and Thompson's model, Valla et al. reference other similar studies (Balkwill et al., 2004; Fritz et al., 2009; Laukka et al., 2013) and summarise that the perceptions of Western and native audiences show little difference in the basic emotions (happy, sad angry, disgusted, surprised and fearful) in music, yet emotions such as peacefulness show a slight deviation between the samplings (2017, 2020). In the experiential and performative context, I would like to bring the concept of *rasa* as a potential methodology to address the issue of the music and movement, emotion and motion. *Rasa*, which is a conceptual tool to understand emotions, and which has been brought into the discussion throughout this thesis, can be applied to study the sensibility of rhythms in embodying emotions in the context of music. This is similar to Jaques-Dalcroze's argumentation of the embodiment of motion. Taking the above discussions into account, musical motion is a performative element, and it can be exercised to aid the aural and visual enhancement of a performance.

### **4.3 Musicking**

The term *musicking* is widely used in the fields of musicology, ethnomusicology and music performance. "Music is not a thing, but an activity, something that people do" (Small, 1998, 2). In Small's account, the concept of *musicking* has two layers of meanings.

The first meaning is that all music performances are based in actions, which is 'to music'. The second meaning refers to music as descriptive rather than evaluative, because it is active (1998, 9). Small believes that music seeks to describe where it has an active take on the music performance. He does not see music as a passive engagement of the body and we do not simply experience music only through organs and the body. In this sense, *musicking* is 'to music', meaning that the music is an active event and not a passive observation/listening. The definition of 'to music', therefore, refers to the gestural behavior of the musician as *musicking*. Small is right about music/*musicking* saying that *musicking* cannot be evaluated, while advocating that music/*musicking* should be an activity. He, however, does not fully explain what constitutes the components of descriptive music performance as *musicking*. In this sense, he leaves a gap by not answering the question as to what makes music/*musicking* a critical category, meaning what are the performative elements that make the reception and transmission of music/*musicking* possible. In order to fill this gap, I will address this question in the following section the *musicalbody*.

The Western canon of music takes a linguistic approach to the discourse of music, commonly phrased as 'music is language'. Tomlinson suggests that music and language evolved simultaneously in the early stages of evolution of music studies as separate disciplines considered as a new branch of anthropology. He further adds his voice to the debate that writing, and language developed together, which signifies that music and notation had the same rate of evolution as language and writing (2003, 36). On condition that music is a language, the writing here is the notation system. Tomlinson favours a flawless music notation system in the service of flawless music performance that departs from the dimension of language and writing. However, Tomlinson fails to realise that

hearing must have coexisted at the same time. When a person speaks, whether to others or himself/herself, the receiver of the spoken language should acquire the technique of hearing in order to understand the language of any written or spoken words to be grasped, including listening to his/her own voice. As discussed in Chapter 3, the transmission of any form of knowledge involves certain techniques forming a shared knowledge. Following this argument, if music performance is seen as a linguistic tool, the performer and audience must have a common knowledge/language to communicate. However, there are numerous examples to prove that music playing can surpass the barriers of language and culture, such as Barba's example of how an occidental audience is impressed by oriental actor-dancers (1985, 369). In this sense, it should be the other elements of music performance which enable it to transcend and transform from communication (language) to information (embodiment), as I will discuss subsequently.

Developing the above point, *musicking* and hearing are both verbs, which are similar to physical actions and gestural behaviours in performance. However, *musicking* is a phenomenon/experience, whilst hearing is a technique/ability. For Small, the concept of music for him only represents the object of "the work" (1998, 2-3), which can be seen as what Tomlinson refers to as the "writing" or music notation. *Musicking*, which can be applied to any music activities/performances, is the core of Small's argumentation. However, *musicking* and language cannot be considered as equal to each other, as language functions as descriptive/narrative and aims to convey "meaning" in a verbal world, not seemingly equated to *musicking*. Small adapts the concept of *musicking* at the same time with an acknowledgement that the search for an inner meaning in music is pointless. From Small's perspective, the question of asking what is the meaning of music is inadequate, and will not get an answer. Despite that, Small believes that *musicking* itself

speaks a language that delves into relationships between apprehension and an individual's life (1998, 14). Therefore, Small does not disagree with the linguistic approach in the understanding of his *musicking*. His major concern is with the emphasis of equating musical performance with *musicking*.

The entire *musicking* process is all about actions that deconstruct the musical work. Small offers a range of examples to support the gestural component of music when he argues that the linguistic approach to music has limitations. The Western music tradition, according to Jensenius, mainly focuses on studying music as written text rather than analysing organised sound and bodily sensation (2007, 2). As he continues, there has been a slight shift towards researching the sonorous aspect of music as an embodied phenomenon, an idea that lacks extensive attention in contemporary music research. Music is a movement-based phenomenon; therefore, talking about meanings and emotions without referring to the human body seems to be contradictory. Actions are one of the most important factors when it comes to conveying feelings and emotions (Darwin, 1872). A performative approach to music, therefore, would help to enhance our understanding of the music experience. Schechner, while explaining the term, "performativity", revisits Paul Ekman's study on facial prototypes and says that the linguistic description may not be able to interpret the performance fully, as spoken or written language are not universal categories that convey the same meaning (2001, 42).

Small develops some useful critical interventions asserting the role of gestural behaviours in music performance, which can be seen as an initiative to explore the embodied element of music in music research. Although Small does not explicitly express his position on performativity, seeing music performance/playing as a movement is a



performative approach to understand the activities that a music performance could present. In *musicking*, the cultural element is of less concern, whereas it is one of the important components to understand performativity. In the next section, the interrelationship between culture, music and performativity will be examined to achieve a deeper layer of understanding in terms of performativity.

#### **4.4 Culture, Performativity and Music**

Music conveys contexts by its given meanings, and meanings might vary according to different/shared cultural settings between the performer and audience (Jordan, 2000, 70). Analogously, Clayton suggests that the discourse of music is related to the realms of culture and experience (2003, 61). Thus, the language used to describe or define music lies in the embedding of a particular cultural context, meaning that the different culture and experience will somehow approach music differently. If a language views the music differently based on its linguistic and cultural contexts, then the instruments used to play the music too have a historical, cultural and social context of their own. Some instruments indicate social contexts and countries, such as the *taiko* drum traditionally used in Japanese classical, folk and religious music (Powell, 2012, 104). The *Kulintang* is a percussion instrument that is performed mainly in Sarawak, Malaysia for most social/musical events, and the *luo* (gong) and the *bo* (cymbals) are known as kinds of Chinese instruments that are used in a traditional Chinese orchestra, and also accompanied with membranophones, such as the *shigu* (lion dance drum).

A performance is constituted by a series of corporeal movements by the performer and para-corporeal elements. A music performance, in a similar way, embraces musical and

para-musical elements. The dominant and subdominant components play the performative roles in music and performance studies. According to Davidson, the term performativity, which was used in linguistic studies, has been gradually brought into the discourse of music study (2014, 179) after its modified application to theatre studies (Kartomi, 2014, 189). Austin advocates that performativity is the doing of an action (2007, 8). According to Derrida, “performativity speaks in a manner that is at once spontaneous, intentional, free, and irreplaceable” (2002, 74). In both Austin and Derrida, a performative utterance is closely associated with the liveness of the body in the present time and space. Kartomi distinguishes music performativity from music performance. She defines that “a music performance is the live presentation of an event. Performativity refers to all describable and analysable aspects of performers” (2014, 189-190).

In this sense, all identifiable components (sound, pitch, rhythm, tempo, bodily and theatrical movements, choreography, theme, story, costumes, makeups, props, and so on) that are inherent in music performance can be seen as performative components. Additionally, music performativity contributes to the discussion of the interdependence and interaction between the music and the musician, and/or the music and the performing body that generates gestural and visual components along with the auditory level of music. Therefore, the search for performativity in 24 FD can be sketched along two routes. One is locating all distinguishable components in the performance. The other one is to thoroughly examine the correlations and interrelationships between performers and audiences. To better understand how the performative elements can achieve the desired performance quality, and how performativity can succeed in exciting the audience, the performance of *The Memories* will be analysed through deconstructions of performativity in 24 FD, in order to locate the performative elements in the performance

practice. Finally, the performance analysis of *The Memories* will explore how each individual element correlates to and supplements each other to affect an audience's experience and perception.

By modifying Austin's framework, Kartomi (2014) further develops a four-level <sup>80</sup> methodology in explaining music performativity from every aspect that is related to a performance. Kartomi's approach is not merely applicable to solo or single performer performance, it is valid for group performances as well. One of the representative performance styles of 24 FD is the group formation. With the group formation, 24 FD actor-drummers create a unique performance style as a virtuoso percussion ensemble demonstrating theatrical movements. According to Stefani, style is "the music signifier and the historical and cultural signified" (2000, 54). In Blacking's account, "music is sound, and a cultural tradition". The way to evaluate musicality is to pinpoint what Blacking coins as 'sonic order', which comprises musical, non-musical and extramusical elements (2000, 97-98). The power of music is to create a joyful experience (Sager, 2017, 143), through stylistic techniques. Style is a mediator to make our musical experience possible. We are able to conceive a sensibility of familiarity with certain music genres, as they are inherent in the original sources, such as Green's example of her unerring instinct for Indian classical music (Green, 2000, 157). Applicably, the sources/materials in the case of 24 FD can be referred to as the performative components, including musical (the ensemble drumming), non-musical (gesture, costumes, props, theme), and extramusical

<sup>80</sup> 1) The *actual music performed*: the choice of repertoire; 2) The *execution of the music* and the affected factors: performance style, persona, competence, interactiveness, cueing, entrainment, which links to tempo, timbre, intonation, etc. 3) The *effects of the performers on the audience* and *vice versa*. 4) The *contributions of all stakeholders to the success of the event*: event organisers, technicians, publicists, entrepreneurs, and the media (Kartomi, 2014, 192)

(social, cultural, political and religious aspects). In this sense, music is not the only element pertaining to the performativity of 24 FD. There is a variety of additional components closely linked to 24 FD. One of the important elements is the cultural dimension. As Sager points out, 'experience' is an alternative way to describe 'culture' in the field of anthropology (2017, 146).

Culture is a vital agent in understanding performativity as well. According to Butler, the performativity of gestural behaviours can be varied due to social and cultural differences (2007, 114). For her, nothing is natural or universally meaningful, and identities and meanings are culturally constructed. In a similar fashion, Jaques-Dalcroze argues that performative action can be seen as a production of its time and culture (1985, 239). Performativity, for Schechner, is the performance itself that offers multiple possibilities of the body in a performance context, and one cannot define what is the performance without referring to a specific cultural circumstance (2002, 38).

In the Indian performance form of *kutiyattam*, the use of the body can reproduce thoughts and feelings through codified techniques of corporeal practice (Madhavan & Nair, 2013, 154). In line with Madhavan and Nair, the use of the foot is an extra-daily technique in Indian performance and there is no such thing as 'natural' in foot or leg movement, because they perform various and diverse kinetic functions during training and performance (2013, 155). Akin to *kutiyattam*, foot and leg movements in 24 FD are significantly influenced by cultural factors, as 24 FD may share the same Indian element as *kutiyattam* due to its cultural traits<sup>81</sup>. For example, the actor-drummer performs

<sup>81</sup> see chapter 1 for the multicultural features of Malaysia.

barefoot, a commonly found practice in some Asian performances (such as Indian, Malay and Indonesian forms). The role of the foot is essential to 24 FD, as it controls the balance of an actor-drummer's body. The barefoot performance is also culturally characterized and believed to increase agility during performance. 24 FD, as a product of its cultural performance, consists of a variety of bodily movements that are supported by the actor-drummer's foot. Apart from the footwork of leaping, heel-to-toe walking, tapping, shuffling, and bent knee posture, other theatrical movements (body swirling, swinging, flipping, tilting, leaning forward and backward) and martial arts movements (Somersault, butterfly twist, backward twisting and spinning) in 24 FD also require the full engagement of the trained feet (see discussion in chapter 3). Although 24 FD and *kutiyattam* are both cultural performances that are influenced and inspired by their traditional practices, the relationship between foot and rhythms are slightly different. Foot leads rhythms in the performance of *kutiyattam* (Madhavan & Nair, 2013, 156), and the actor performs the form without any direct involvement in playing musical instruments. The intentions and emphasis that lie behind 24 FD and *kutiyattam* are different in their performance practice. Nevertheless, the interplay of the foot and rhythms in 24 FD have heavier weight than *kutiyattam*, as the actor-drummer takes the dual role of playing rhythms and producing corporeal expressions at the same time. Rhythms and gestures, feet and legs, generate performative moments in 24 FD in accordance with its own multicultural, intercultural and transcultural setting.

## **4.5 Performance Practice**

As discussed in Chapter 3, 24 FD incorporates the Pan-Asian characteristics of training in its real-time performance, which is a process of fusing training, rehearsal and performance in one session. However, some elements can distinguish the nature of the

venue, for example, in a formal performance setting like concerts and recitals. Firstly, the composition takes place in a training session, not in performances, meaning that there is no improvisation in a performance venue. Secondly, makeups, props and costumes can be found in both training and performance. Occasional exemptions of not having these three in training, however, is acceptable. For example, special face painting, expensive or customised props and costumes are excluded in ordinary training sessions. The participation of audiences occurs in both training and performance. In training, the audience is associated to the performer of 24 FD, yet it may refer to participants who are similar or foreign to the form.

#### **4.5.1 Composer, Performer, and Audience**

The composer, the performer and the audience are the major stakeholders in 24 FD performances. A piece of 24 FD performance is written/created and modified by one or a few composers of the group. The role of composers only emerges in pre-session and in-session trainings, but not in a live performance. Performers in 24 FD refer to the actor-drummers in a group. They deliver live performance based on the choreography, practising, and rehearsing that happened during training to an audience. A 24 FD actor-drummer is a multi-tasked performer. In a training session, I posit that a composer could be a performer, and vice versa. A member of the audience is an individual, who is present at a 24 FD performance, but also could refer to the actor-drummers themselves during the training. In chapter 3, I looked at the alternativity of an actor-drummer being an audience member during the training. In this chapter, I turn to focus on examining the role of the audience during a live 24 FD performance.

Small comments that the experience and reaction of the audience are the goal of music

performance in the Western music tradition (1998, 5). It regards a musical performance as a single transaction between a composer and an audience via a performer; they are led to be aware of the obligation of a performer to respond to a performance (1998, 6). For Small, the meaning of a music piece should be demonstrated in a two-way interaction between the performer and audience without the involvement of a composer. Continuing on this line, Small believes that performers can surpass the meaning and beauty of a music piece according to their own understandings and experiences of music (1998, 6). The essence of *musicking* is to assess the interaction between the mutual feedback from the performer and audience. To achieve this, Small proposes that the graph to articulate the interrelationship between composers, performers and listeners in a performance should show “arrows pointing from composer to performers and a multitude of arrows pointing from performers to as many listeners as are present” (1998, 6). Based on the graph, Small explains that composing, performing and listening will take place in a selected setting. In this way, the meaning and beauty of the music work is the result of the interrelationship between musicians and listeners, and deliverers and receivers (1998, 6).

Small’s perception of the role of a composer in a music performance is parallel to *rasa* in the *Natyasastra*. The role of a composer might not be as important as a performer and spectator, since *rasa* will only be created between the performer and spectator. The relationship between the performer and audience is mutual, by way of delivering, receiving, responding and affirming. In the process of a musical performance as well as other forms of performance, a performer serves as a mediator to deliver a music text to its target, which is the audience. If both audiences and performers relish the ‘taste’ of a performance, an audience will also reveal its feeling to a performer. In this manner,

performers and audiences feed off each other with the shared 'taste'. 'Taste' is a common metaphoric term that has been used to refer to feeling and experience. The reason why 'taste' is the most preferable term to explain a sensational state that, is as Pollock has it, "Unlike smell, taste admits of degrees; as a bodily sense it also has a more direct relationship with the object as well as with the object's pleasure than the 'distance' senses such as sight" (2016, 42). 'Taste' is one of the performative elements that is conceived in a performance. From these considerations, *musicking*, rhythmic sensibility, and shared 'taste' can be categorised as performativity from the body, music and social perspectives in performance or training. This responds to Sauter's (2014) "embodied action", which is the term that he uses to explain performativity. I will expand the discussion in the section on performance analysis.

#### **4.5.2 *Rasa*: Audience and Music**

The literal meaning of *rasa* is "taste" and "feeling" in both Sanskrit and Malay. In performance, *rasa* is normally used to explicate the joyful experience that arises among audiences. According to Sauter, the experience of audiences is a major component in the discourse of theatre (2014, 26). Similarly, Nair adds that the recognition of audiences becomes one of the important categories of performativity (2007, 20). In musicology, Clayton (2003), while citing Adler (1985), says that the act of singing, playing and dancing in the study of musicology is not mere music but a series of comparing and contrasting tones and experiences, through which an individual gains music knowledge (2003, 58-59). The act of comparing and contrasting requires a combined mediation that involves music, such as tone, rhythm, dynamic, pitch and melody. This is to say, traditional musicology compares and measures the experience and the interpretation of music



works. Nevertheless, Clayton further adds that an unmediated experience, which is capable of creating a composite musical experience with audiences, is absent from discussions of musicology (2003, 59). The unmediated experience is a firsthand and primary source that intrinsically emerges from the emotional state of musicians. However, as he goes on, musicology cannot contain unmediated experience, but only can achieve a sense of its own complex relationship with the material fact of people experiencing music. He calls this relationship complex because the interconnectivity of practice and experience in musicology is not only being analysed, but the two dimensions also affect each other. This is corroborated by the reception and experience of performers and audiences (2003, 59). For these reasons, Clayton emphasizes an inevitable relationship between the mediated and unmediated by saying that “verbal and graphical discourses can describe, interpret, or otherwise account for the musical experience, at the same time, the music we make or choose to listen to is inevitably influenced by this paramusical activity” (2003, 59). From the perspective of Clayton, the mediated and unmediated in music feed off each other, forming an intricate relationship incorporating verbal, auditory, sensory, and visual categories in understanding musical performance.

Although he does not speak much about it, Clayton emphasizes the unmediated in music, the emotional underpinning of the music, as occupying centre stage in his work. In a similar fashion, “*rasa* can be devoid of the touch of any other knowledge” in Indian aesthetics (Gnoli, 1956, XXIII), indicating the characteristics of *rasa* being unmediated, which is self-existent. According to Mason, *rasa* is not a created thing, and it is not a thing at all. It is not generated by the emotional expression of an actor or based on material components (2015, 101). In his view, the experience of *rasa* is not artificial, it is naturally evoked in the audience. In parallel to Mason, Gerow elaborates that the idea of the

'uncreatedness' of *rasa* (1981, 235) comes from the fact that the *rasa* is what is really there, and has always been there (Deutsch, 1981, 225). His account can be referred to as the emotion emerged in an actual performance. Emotion and emotion as an experience are slightly different. Emotion is "there", but the way to realise its existence can be diverse. As for the example of the sweetness of the plum, the sweetness is the emotion in a performance, unless we taste it in person, we cannot acknowledge that it is "sweet". This is to say, *rasa* is unmediated in the first place, once the "sweetness" of *rasa* is relished, *rasa* becomes mediated.

Although *rasa* is immaterial and non-physical, and it self-exists in audiences, the way to become mediated requires the mediation of performance to emerge. This corresponds to the gap of the unmediated experience in music research that Clayton attempts to fill in, *rasa*, therefore, is concomitant with the unmediated and immaterial among performers, audiences and performances. In line with Byrski, the 'material' in a theatrical performance is the action of an actor. The gesture, as one kind of action that helps an actor to deliver his/her performance, can also be classed as 'material' (2015, 70). According to Mason, *rasa* itself does not contain any material content, however, if *rasa* is given a certain material meaning, it should transmit a form of experience from subjectivity into material reality (2015, 108). Taking the example of a music performance of Barenboim, music is created by the sound. While the sound is at odds with the silence, the silence is as important as the role of the sound in musical performance. Most musical pieces begin with silence before the sound enters. When Barenboim performs Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata, Op. 13, he begins with the interruption of the silence by an accented chord to indicate the start of the piece. The dynamic and volume he uses are highly powerful, and in this sense, the energy of the music can be delivered to the

audience with his action of the definite breaking of silence. The audience may feel energetic, as *vira, rasa* (valour) has been evoked. By the end of the performance, the audience applauds before the last sound goes into the silence, similarly, *sringara rasa* (love) might be evoked, as the audience show their appreciation of Barenboim's performance. In this case, *rasa* has been embodied in accordance with the action of Barenboim in his musical performance, and the experiential dimension of the music can be understood as *rasa*.

From the perspective of the *Natyasastra*, the embodiment of a performance can be achieved with the involvement of *rasa* where the experiences of both performers and audiences are dependent on their respective interpretation of taste. In a theatre performance, spectators primarily fall into social categories, according to age, sex, social background and after-performance reactions (Sauter, 2014, 26). Furthermore, personal experience, preference and understanding can define (music) performance accordingly. Martinez offers three strands to locate *rasa*, as aesthetic sensitivity, experience and knowledge (1996, 109). Aesthetic sensitivity is the primary factor, while experience and knowledge are seen as secondary and tertiary factors. *Rasa*, as aesthetic sensitivity is the first taste of the performance and varies with individual taste. It is followed by musical and physical experiences derived from performers, and the existing knowledge of listeners that affect their preferences of *rasa* (such as savoury or sweet).

I use another example to understand how *rasa* theory can be used to approach music. John Cage, an American composer was notable because of his famous composition "4'33" in 1952 (Cage, 2011). It is a piece that consists of three movements. However, the instrumentalists do not play their instruments at all, and precisely, no physical, verbal,

and emotional movements are made by the performers in a live concert with a formal orchestra setting. The audience's experience consists of sounds emanating from the surroundings. Despite that, different individuals may experience the piece in different ways, as each individual spectator perceives sound differently. Audiences can hear the sound following their perception as they have certain knowledge of specific sounds, dependant on a hearing technique based on the listeners' own knowledge and experience of listening to sounds. Additionally, the *rasa* experience in music requires the listener to identify the flavour of the piece, therefore, a different *rasa* can be tasted in accordance with different emotions. For example, an audience might feel impatient, and leave the concert hall experiencing *raudra rasa* (anger) in this emotional state. Alternatively, the noise they make during their departure can be perceived as an auditory source in the performance. At this point, the audience can become the composer of their own music. This explains why the role of a composer is not solely important in an embodied performance. Instead, the interrelationship between the performer and the audience is the key focus in the discourse. Therefore, the engagement of *rasa* can be created in order to enhance the artistic experience of the performance, meaning that *rasa* is what the performer is conveying to their spectator.

Both examples of Barenboim's performance and Cage's orchestra have the common element of "silence", which is also one of the key elements in 24 FD performance. In the performance analysis, I will examine how "silence" serves as a performative element to signify the performativity of 24 FD, even if there is no sound and no real action involved in the performance.

## 4.6 Performance Analysis

Performance analysis describes, evaluates and discusses the interesting points of performances from an experiential perspective (Sauter, 2014, 159). A performance analysis is conducted to answer a specific question with phenomenological and semiotic approaches (Fischer-Lichte, 2014, 54-56). This analysis mainly attempts to interrogate the performativity of 24 FD, and how a series of performative elements embody the performance. As Fischer-Lichte elaborates further, a phenomenological approach focuses on “people, space, things and sounds” in a performance. At the same time, it discusses the interrelationship between the performer and spectator and enquires into their perception and experience. On the other hand, the semiotic approach tends to investigate “the creation of meaning and perceptual order of representation. Precisely, it is related to the actor’s bodily movements, costumes, lighting, sounding, facial expression, and so on (2017, 55-56).

In this section, I will mainly review a collaborative performance entitled *The Memories*, which was performed by Orang Orang Drum Theatre (Professional team) and JB Drums (traditional team) in July and August 2017 during their French tour. In the following section, I will address the context, rationales, sources, and the story behind the piece. I will also contextualise this repertoire to explain the term of “actor-drummer” that I use throughout the thesis. This piece is important and valuable for analysis, as 1) it is an incorporation of a rare performance between a professional team and traditional team in one performance; 2) It showcases a traditional and theatrical combination in terms of style in the same piece. There are two parts to the performance. The first part reveals a significant amount of Chinese elements of 24FD in the performance. On the other hand,

the second part of the performance resounds on a theatrical level. 3) It indicates conventional and innovative interactions by adopting a variety of percussive instruments to signify Chinese identity on one hand, and transcultural integration on the other hand. 4) It is a performance that illustrates the definition of “actor-drummer” and showcases multiple roles taken on by the performers. 5) It is an apt example to aid with the understanding of the critical term of performativity in (music) performance and explicate how the actor-drummer’s intention can be assessed and understood with performative elements in 24 FD with or without the story or theme in the performance.

In this section, I will use the performance of *The Memories* as a case study to familiarise the reader with what a performance of 24 FD would be, and what elements can aid with the performativity of the performance. In the second part of this section, I will examine the term performativity by using 24 FD performances as examples. Performativity is an essential term for understanding embodied performance, in particular, that is of 24 FD. Fischer-Lichte’s phenomenological and semiotic approaches, mentioning the ongoing event on stage and an actor’s gesture and posture, costumes, sounds, facial expression and so on, and the aforementioned elements prove the existence of performative components in 24 FD. Additionally, the “four kinds of histrionic representation” including gestures (*āṅgika*), words (*vācika*), dresses and makeup (*āhārya*) and “four styles” namely verbal (*bhāratī*), grand (*sāttvatī*), graceful (*kaiśikī*) and energetic (*ārabhatī*) (Ghosh, 2006, 225-226), that are presented in the *Natyasastra*, also suggest a way to identify components in 24 FD. The above methodological approaches – the phenomenological, semiotic and *Natyasastric* - can be aligned with Blacking’s (2000) model. Having discussed the term “performativity” in different contexts and disciplines, I intend to position Blacking’s model of the musical, non-musical and extra-musical category

(Blacking, 2000, 97-98) for the sake of embracing the historical, social, cultural, theatrical, musical and other music-related aspects in the analysis. In the end, *rasa*, as an experiential approach will be brought into the analysis, in order to extend the discussion of performativity in the above three strands and explain how *rasa* is experiential and performative in 24 FD performance.

#### **4.6.1 Repertoire: *The Memories***

##### **4.6.1.1 Context and Background**

In chapter 1, I pointed out that it was the collective cultural memory of the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia that provoked the emergence of 24 FD, as a unique performance form in the contemporary context. In this respect, the inspiration of *The Memories* comes from the memory of the historical past and cultural recognition of the ethnic Chinese. When Boyz Chew (the composer of *The Memories*) taught 24 FD at the Tsun Jin High School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he discovered that uncertainty about “identity” was a major issue during his teaching. Students were not sure about their cultural identity and perceived the training of 24 FD as a physical exercise akin to sport, rather than a form of performing arts. As Chew further points out, the Chinese ancestors had a stronger sense of belonging to the Chinese culture during World War II, compared to the current generation of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. The motivation for them to come to Malaya was the desire to seek a better life. However, the question arises as to whether the hope of immigration would fundamentally help to improve their life. Due to the uncertain “identity” emerged in the issue of immigration, *The Memories* was composed in this wider historical and cultural context (Chew, 2018).

During a reflective session of the Orang Orang Drum Theatre training, one actor-drummer explains that “memory has no voice but image. We use our memory to explore the characters that we can create for a performance. First thing we need to find a potential element that exists in our memory and apply this element to the creation of a performance” (Leow, 2018). The element she mentioned can be seen as a medium to activate the initiation of a repertoire. According to Chew, this principal element in the creation of *The Memories* was initially the element of water, which is a material familiar to our daily life. He came up with the idea of using the performer’s body to metaphorize water. Inspired by the element of water, Chew contextualized the performance to the historical event of migrating to the South of the Ocean (Chew, 2018). Therefore, there is a wide range of performative uses of the actor-drummer’s body to symbolize, for example, sailing to the new world, searching for the direction of the new life, suffering from being puppets, and celebrating the new settlement in a new country.

*The Memories* could not have been created if the cultural and historical memories were absent. In the introduction of this thesis, I discussed that modernity shapes the unique cultural characteristics of 24 FD. One example of an “icon of modernity” can be identified in *The Memories*. Precisely, modernity can be seen in the digital application of a projector (the background of a sea to indicate the scene of Chinese ancestors coming to Malaya by boat) during the performance of *The Memories*, for the sake of signalling the context of the performance and the storyline of the piece. Consequently, the performativity of this performance is created along with cultural and national identities being established and confirmed step by step in the exploration and creation of the piece.



#### 4.6.1.2 Length and Arrangement

As mentioned in chapter 1, the ordinary length of a performance in 24 FD is 7 to 10 minutes. However, the length of *The Memories* was approximately 17 minutes, which could be considered as a long piece for 24 FD performance. Even with the participation of the professional team, the main performance style remained as traditional 24 FD (the distinction between professional and traditional teams can be found in chapter 1). The entire performance could be divided into two major parts. Technically, the performance style of the first part could be labelled as the traditional genre (picture 1 in Figure 33), whilst the second part fused different ranges of instruments, theatrical movements, and scenic blockings (picture 2 in Figure 33). In the traditional genre, the formation of the drum's position is either triangular or a numerical combination of odd-even-odd or even-odd-even numbers in different rows, for example, the 3-4-3 formation in *The Memories* in scene 2 of part 1. Aside from this moment, the performance started off with a triangular drumming formation. Additionally, the actor-drummer in the middle of the second row is the principal actor-drummer of a traditional performance. This was reproduced in *The Memories*. Finally, Matusky and Tan (2017), and Chan inform us that it is common that there are two "tak" sounds as an indicator to start off a performance of 24 FD (2001, 198). It is worth mentioning here, the "tak" "tak" signified at the beginning of performances is not always applicable in the current generation of 24 FD. Instead, there are a variety of ways to commence a performance of 24 FD, one of which is the adoption of an exclamation, a device used by the contemporary generation, which is also evident in *The Memories*.

Figure 33: Excerpt from *The Memories*



Source: Extracted from the performance video

#### 4.6.1.3 Instruments

This performance was performed by ten 24 FD actor-drummers from the incorporation of the two teams. One of the interesting points in this performance was the choice of instruments. Apart from the ordinary drums (*shigu*-like), there were a series of additional instruments from different cultural genres involved in the performance. They were namely the *kulintangan* (Sabah) (Figure 34a), the *jidor* drum (Malay), the *luo* and the *bo* (Chinese) (Figure 34b and 34c) (see Figure 35 for the arrangement of the instruments that were used in the piece). According to Matusky and Tan, the *luo* and the *bo* are the common accompaniment instruments found in the Chinese lion dance. The *luo* is a gong with a slimly-built rim of copper colour, whilst “the *bo* is a bronze set of cymbals (2017, 149). In *The Memories*, the inception started with a stressed and sustained sound by the striking of the *luo* for 8 seconds. The *bo* then entered into the introduction of the piece.

The *shigu*-like drums were the main instruments in the first part of the performance. They started to play after an exclamation of “hoi”, a shouting stance made by the actor-drummers positioned in the middle of the second row.

Figure 34a: *kulintangan*

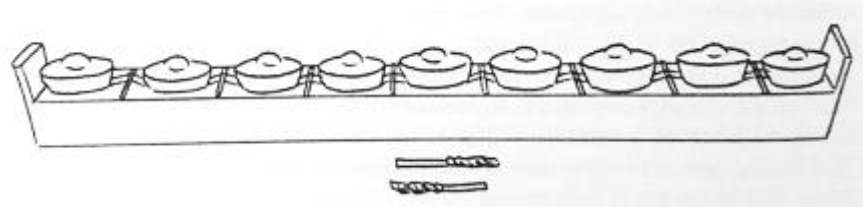


Figure 34b: *luo*

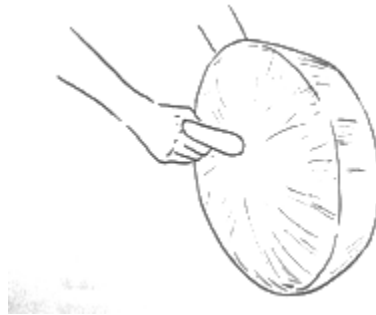
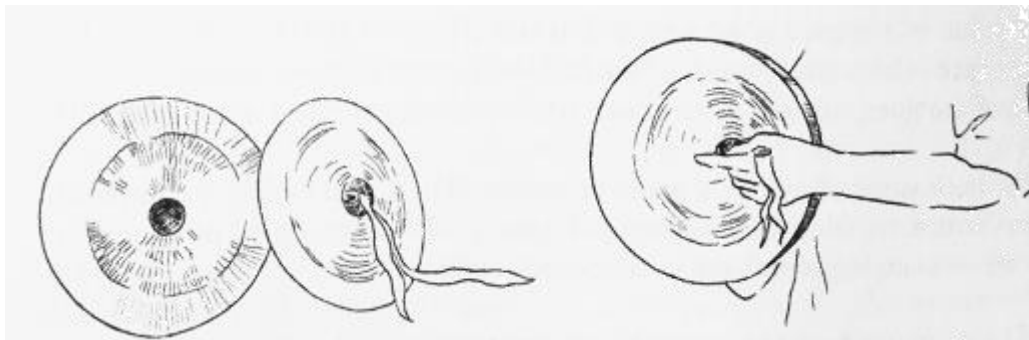


Figure 34c: *bo*

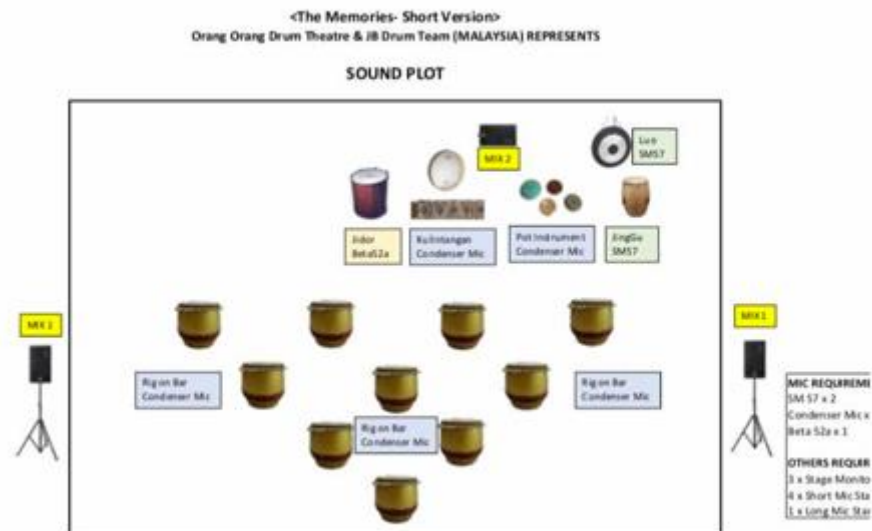


Source: *The Music of Malaysia* (Matusky & Tan, 2017, 150)

The *kulintangan* is a single row of 5 to 9 small gongs in its wooden stand. The sound is produced by hitting the knobs of the gongs with a pair of wooden sticks. The instrument is known as the *kulintangan* in Sabah, and the *engkerumong* in Sarawak (Matusky and Tan, 2017, 167). The *kulintangan* was largely used at the end of the first part of *The*

*Memories*, played as background music at the scene of the awakening of the actor-drummers who were impersonating the likes of “Chinese migrants” in this performance.

Figure 35: The full set of instruments in *The Memories*



Source: It is provided by Orang Orang Drum Theatre (2018)

#### 4.6.1.4 Story, Theme, Scene and Characters

According to Chan (2006), a performance of 24 FD has a story to it. Behind the performance of *The Memories*, there is a story describing the migration of the Chinese particularly from the Fujian and Guangdong area to a new land free from their horrific past to seek refuge and to seek a new life. The story brings these migrant Chinese to a place in South East Asia called Malaya, all for the betterment of their lives. They reach this place and integrate their life, culture and knowledge with the local cultures and their new way of life in Malaya.

The first part of the performance consisted of two theatrical scenes. The first scene emerged implicitly from the beginning until the prop of a shutter door (see Figure 36) was introduced. As Boyz Chew (the founder of Orang Orang Drum Theatre and the

composer of *The Memories*) recalls, the materials that they used to make the shutter doors are the same as those used in historical times for the *Chinese New Village* event<sup>82</sup> (Chew, 2018). The first scene included typical 24 FD characteristics, mainly intensive rhythmic patterns, taut movements and exclamations. It mainly described the miserable life of the Chinese migrants who desired and looked for opportunities to start a new life in a new place. Therefore, the costumes, drumming styles, rhythmic patterns, and choreography all suggested the significance and dominance of a Chinese cultural character in this scene.

Figure 36: The shutter door



Source: Photo by Giano Siu, Orang Orang Drum Theatre (Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) in 2018. Scene 2 in part 1 began with the actions of an actor-drummer thumping the door (the prop in Figure 36) on the floor to produce a beat alongside a series of semi-quaver notes played on the *jidor* at the same time. The semi-quaver notes were equally played at the approximate speed of 86 to 88bpm. These actions signified a change of scene.

<sup>82</sup> In the interview with Chew, he told me that the *Chinese New Village* was one of the historical events that occurred in the same context of the piece. In the British governing time, ethnic Chinese were found that were supporting mainland China in a financial way. They were imprisoned in a site called *Chinese New Village* to block the contact with mainland China. The door and the roof in this village at that time were the same materials that are used in the performance (10/04/2018).

Subsequently, the speed of *jidor* increased to approximately 144 bpm, alongside the movement of rattan (see Figure 37) beating by one of the actor-drummers.

Figure 37: The rattan



Source: Photo by Giano Siu, Orang Orang Drum Theatre (Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) in 2018. Theatrical elements were largely integrated into the performance from scene 2 of part 1. After installing the props of the shutter doors, an actor-drummer would then take on the role of a man standing 'outside the door', knocking on the shutter to be opened. A scene with the actor-drummer knocking on the door with a rattan then ensued. The next scene followed with the opening of the shutter doors. One actor-drummer could be seen standing in shock and wanting to escape from the door-knocking actor-drummer. The escaping actor-drummer then made a bid to escape from the rattan holding actor-drummer but was rapidly punished by a hit to the drum, representing a hit towards the escaping actor drummer (see Figure 38). In this section, the *jidor* was the only instrument that played the solo place in the background. I believe the purpose of using the Malay drum alone was the performer's/composer's intention to indicate the wider context of life in Malaya in the colonial time.

Figure 38: The scene of beating escaper



Source: Extracted from the performance video, which is provided by Orang Orang Drum Theatre. The beating and being beaten actions in scene 2 revealed the pain and difficulty of migrants trying to escape from the hardship of their previous life. The scene then moved on to the escaping actor-drummer being made a puppet to the rattan holding actor drummer, an impersonation of a superior character or the 'master', whilst the escapers could be imagined as coolies or members of the lower class, who worked for the 'master'. The 'master' would control the escaping actor-drummer with his beats on the drums (see Figure 39). A closure to scene 2 followed as other actor-drummers, who act as the shutter doors shut the doors and a period of the *jidor* played at 144bpm behind the scene symbolising that something was brewing behind the closed doors. This would follow with a 'blast' in the scene and actor-drummers who were holding the doors took on another role as the escapers or the would-be migrants. They would then be beaten and controlled as puppets. The rest of the actor-drummers continued playing the drums and the 'puppets' were assimilating the movements of the actor-drummers symbolising the fact that they were 'controlled'.

Figure 39: The 'puppet' role in scene 2



Source: Extracted from the performance video, which is provided by Orang Orang Drum Theatre. Scene 2 went into a new stage when the lights were turned on, and the 'puppets' and the rest of the actor-drummers lay down simulating the end of scene 2. The background music playing throughout this scene was an ensemble of the *kulintangan* and the *jidor*, where all the actor-drummers who were lying down were awakened by the sounds of the percussive ensemble. The combination of the *kullintangan* and the *jidor* was intentionally designed to symbolise the arrival of the migrants to Malaya and the historical conjunction of Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak to form a new country of Malaysia. Within the Malaysian percussive ensemble, actor-drummers gradually retrieved the props of the shutter doors and rattans. In the meantime, the position of the drums was set up in the formation of the typical three rows (three drums in both of the first and last row, and four drums in the middle row) for a new theatrical scene (see Figure 40). The timing in this retrieve and reset was the key element to demonstrate the process of searching and settling in their new lives in the unfamiliar country. The motions of the actor-drummers were relatively slow, symbolising that settling in the new land was a time-consuming procedure.



Figure 40: The formation of the new positions of the drums



Source: Extracted from the performance video, which is provided by Orang Orang Drum Theatre.

The following scene was part 2 of this repertoire. The ensemble of the *kulintangan* and the *jidor* continued to play, while the actor-drummers changed their costumes (see Figure 41), taking off the previous costumes, which symbolised that their Chinese characteristics had been taken off. The moment that signifies the fusion of the local Malay culture was when the actor-drummers raised the Malay *batik*<sup>83</sup> clothes before donning them (see Figure 42). According to Leong Shi kit (2018) and Chew (2018), *batik* is a pattern or drawing that is commonly found in traditional apparel in Malaysia. It implies the Malay culture. The moment when the *kulintangan* and the *jidor* ensemble joined the *batik* in the scene, indicated that Malay and Borneo cultures were fused into a new cultural characteristic.

<sup>83</sup> *Batik*: The use of *batik* in this thesis only refers to Malaysian *batik*. It is a textile design that is popular in Malaysia. According to Rohaida Nordin and Siti Safina Abu Bakar, *batik* features in organicity and geometricity. As he continues, “Malaysian *batik* is heavily influenced by religious beliefs that discourage the use of animals in the design work; floral and geometric designs are used instead” (2012, 118). The *batik* design was used as one set of costumes in the performance of *The Memories*.

Figure 41: *Batik* costumes



Source: Photo by Giano Siu, Orang Orang Drum Theatre (Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) in 2018.

Figure 42: The raise of costumes



Source: Extracted from the performance video, which is provided by Orang Orang Drum Theatre. Assimilation and integration into the society were further highlighted with the involvement of another Malay element, which is the *bunga raya*. *Bunga Raya* (hibiscus flower, celebratory flower in Malay) is the National flower of Malaysia (Leong 2018; Chew, 2018). According to Leong (2018) and Chew (2018), the *bunga raya* element was

purposely added into the piece, as it is an important element to signify Malaysian culture. Thus, it was adapted to *The Memories* through the whisk-like (tassel) props (Figure 43a). It is important to note that the modified *bunga raya* was an instrument and prop at the same time. As Chew (2018) further explain, actor-drummers literally used the “tassel” to strike the drums instead of the drumsticks. Meanwhile, the “tassel” was serving as a prop when it was waved to create a visual effect. It did not emerge in its original form as a “flower” until the finale of the performance by hurling the tassels up (see Figure 43b). In this scene, as Figure 43b shows, the tassels can be seen returning to their “flower” form. In this finale scene, the music was not played by the *shigu*-like drums, but by the ensemble of the Malay and Chinese instruments. With the integration of the *shigu*-like drums, the *kulintangan*, the *jidor*, the *luo*, the *bo*, the *batik* and the *bunga raya*, the performance embodied the unique identity of being Chinese in Malaysian society. By emphasising this identity, *The Memories* ended by showing the “flower” to their audience. At this point, the emergence of the “flower” in the end is analogous to the Japanese aesthetic of *hana*, which aims to create a metaphoric flower as an aesthetic experience to the audience.

Figure 43a: The element of *bunga raya*



Figure 43b: The movement of hurling tassels



Source: Extracted from the performance video.

With regards to the context of *The Memories*, the main theatrical character of this performance was the Chinese ancestor, who migrated to Malaya during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Performers are actor-drummers, as their performance comprises more than percussion playing. They act as the main character, which is the Chinese migrant in the

play. Besides, all additional roles are shared and allocated among them. Roles in *The Memories* include:

1. The main character of Chinese migrants
2. Percussionists of *kulintangan*, *jidor*, *luo* and *bo*.
3. Drummers play one or more drums
4. Vocalists
5. Role of setting the shutter door.
6. Role of retrieving props, and rearrange the drums' position
7. A 'master'
8. Coolies ('puppets')
9. The new character of Malaysian Chinese

#### **4.6.2 Performativity and 24 FD**

In line with my previous discussions, the performativity of 24 FD can be located with reference to Blacking's model of "sonic order" (2000, 97-98), namely, the musical (percussions, vocal expressions), non-musical (gesture, costumes, props, theme), and extramusical (social, cultural, political and religious aspects) components. According to Sauter, whether an audience can or cannot correctly understand the message or purpose a performer would like to convey, does not change the role of performativity in a performance (2014, 56). The performativity can be decoded in accordance with the performative movements that performers present. Further to this, a series of identifiable components embody the performativity in a performance. In this section, I will examine how performativity can be analysed through the components of musical, non-musical and extramusical elements. In addition to this, the emergence of *rasa* in the 24 FD

performance will be assessed in order to explain the audience's embodied experience, which is affected by the performativity of 24 FD. Relevant examples of 24 FD performances will be utilised for better illustration.

#### **4.6.2.1 Musical Components**

##### **4.6.2.1.1 Instruments**

The choice of instruments and the use of vocal expressions are the performative components in terms of music in the repertoire of *The Memories*. The inclusion of a variety of Malay, Chinese and *Orang Asli* (translated as aboriginal) instruments represents the diverse cultures in Malaysia. Particularly, the intention of adopting the ensemble of the *kulintangan* and the *jidor* explained the historical formation of how Malaysia was formed. In addition, the selected instruments have their social functions in the society. The integration of the *kulintangan* is an apt example in this case. This corresponds to one of the ideas that I gathered from the training session of Orang Orang Drum Theatre. A range of questions and issues of life were raised in the reflection session of the training. One of the actor-drummers (2018) who played in this piece expresses that he is interested in using different voices in his performance. In particular, he intends to use his real voice to indicate reality. Applicably, the *kulintangan* and the *jidor* are local instruments that are widely used in Malaysian society, symbolising the social circumstances of the piece. According to Kalanduyan, *kulintangan* music plays an accompanying role in the healing ritual with a trance dance (1996, 16). One of the social functions of *kulintangan* music is healing. In the case of *The Memories*, the *kulintangan* is used at an opportune time when the "Chinese migrants" arrived in Malaya after

undergoing times of torment in China. The intention of playing the *kulintangan* can be seen as a healing ceremony of bodies and spirits before donning the *Batik* garments.

The choice of instruments in *The Memories* denotes the intentional emphasis of the Malaysian identity in this repertoire. However, in contemporary 24 FD performances, far more instruments have been incorporated into the performance. For example, the utilization of the Malay *gamelan* in compositions is the performative element that HANDS commonly deployed in their performances (Figure 44). The instruments of Malay *gamelan* in *Rhythm Ride* were the *kendang*, the *bonang*, and the *gong*. It was not a full set of *gamelan*, as the *kendang*, the *bonang* and the *gong* were the only instruments that HANDS needed to enrich their membranophone ensemble in this particular piece.

Figure 44: The Malay Gamelan played by HANDS in *Rhythm Ride*<sup>84</sup>



Source: Extracted from the YouTube video of *Rhythm Ride*<sup>84</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> *Rhythm Ride*: Available from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwoe9N\\_A1b8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwoe9N_A1b8) [accessed 20/10/2017]

#### 4.6.2.1.2 Vocal:

Exclamations are executed by the voice technique of the performer. In this performance, exclamation did not merely refer to shouting, but also played an important role of vocal expression. The drums that 24 FD used for performance were the *shigu*-like drums. *Shigu* is the actual instrument that the Chinese lion/dragon dance uses. The shape is exactly the same as the instrument that 24 FD uses, whereas the difference lies in the ways that the 24 FD has additional painted Chinese calligraphy on the drum body. The fact that 24 FD uses the *shigu*-like drums in performance does not imply that 24 FD imitates the performance style of the Chinese lion dance. The integration of exclamation in performance determines that 24 FD is different to the traditional Chinese lion/dragon dance. According to Loo and Loo (2016), exclamation is not the traditional style of the Chinese lion/dragon dance performance. Nevertheless, it is an indispensable element, which can be found in every performance of 24 FD. The involvement of exclamation in 24 FD performance is probably learnt from the Japanese *Taiko* drumming, during the exploration stage of 24 FD (the detailed discussion is in chapter 3). This tradition gradually becomes one of the recognisable and representable elements of 24 FD.

Commonly, the exclamation, featuring loud and powerful volume, emerges as a form of shouting or roaring in chorus within one subject. It is rare to find countersubjects in a conventional application of exclamation in 24 FD. However, a new type of vocal arrangement has been found in the performance of *The Memories*. It has more than two subjects. As the volume was soft, rather than considering it as exclamation, it was a vocal expression that appeared to create a communicative and poetic dialogue between actor-drummers. Half of the actor-drummers spoke one line, whilst the rest spoke a



contrapuntal line. With this arrangement, two counterpoints brought another level of auditory experience to excite the audience.

Apart from the exclamations, *dikir barat* is another vocal element that 24FD would integrate into their creation of performance. According to Matusky and Tan, *dikir barat* originates from Kelantan, a state in Northern Malaysia bordering the southern part of Thailand. The form is performed to convey happiness (2017, 355). It is a sitting song-dance form that contains a wide range of upper body movement. With this thematic style, the involvement of *dikir barat* (see Figure 45) imparts another new form of vocal expression, which differs from the traditional style of mono exclamation, in 24 FD performance.

Figure 45: *Dikir Barat* in the performance of *LaguKu*



Source: Extracted from the YouTube video *LaguKu*<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *LaguKu*: Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qbQW2dGrII> [accessed 21/10/2017].

## 4.6.2.2 Non-Musical

### 4.6.2.2.1 Gesture and Bodily movement

Gestural behaviours and bodily movements fall into the category of non-musical components in terms of performativity. Sauter articulates that, *embodied actions* are performers' actions, which play the role of a signifier. At the same time, they can either be real or gimmicky actions (2014, 56). For example, when 24 FD actor-drummers play the drums, the actions are real. The *Rhythm Ride* by HANDS is an example that illustrates *embodied actions* as artificial actions. The first picture in example 13 shows the bodily movements and choreographies of actor-drummers in this small musical movement. It seems that, the music was produced by the striking of the drumheads by actor-drummers. However, what has been heard was the music ensemble of the Malay *gamelan* in Figure 44. The actor-drummers in Figure 46 pretended to hit the drums with extra-daily movements, whilst real actions (the real music playing) were completed by the actor-drummers pictured in Figure 44. As a result, the *embodied actions* are the identifiable and analysable performative components to comprehend the performativity of this specific movement in *Rhythm Ride*.

Figure 46: An excerpt from *Rhythm Ride* by HANDS



Source: YouTube video.

#### 4.6.2.2.2 Costume

The style of costumes has been changed with the transformation of the form. The costume in the first generation of 24 FD was likened to the costumes of Chinese martial arts or lion dance performance. It normally comprises the bandana, waistband, ankle band, wristband, and upper and lower garments (see Figure 47).

Figure 47: The costumes of traditional 24 FD in the first generation



Source: Chan's MA dissertation (2001, 73/101)

Over three decades of progress, a unique style of 24 FD costumes has been developed, and explicitly suggests its Pan-Asian tradition. It is not pure Chinese, Indian, Malay or Japanese. Instead, it is a set of customised outfits that highlights its Malaysian identity with a fusion of the Pan-Asian traits. The *Natyasastra* clearly codifies the principle of “the entry of a character” as the performer’s body “should be covered with trousers and decorations” (NS: III, 1451). It emphasises the trousers and decorations as the key elements in terms of costumes, but it does not mention the upper body’s outfits. The lower body’s costumes in contemporary 24 FD performances are sometimes similar to pants that used in Indian performance. In the Indian dance tradition, for example, the costume for the male dancers of *Bharatanatyam* is normally topless with loose-fitting pants in the performance. The costumes that HANDS wear in *Rhythm Ride* (Figure 48 left) follow this tradition. The design and the style of costumes could be seen as an imitation of the Indian cultural element, as I have been informed by many actor-drummers and Tan Chai Puan (2018) that Bernard Goh (the founder of HANDS) was largely influenced by the Indian culture in his performance and composition due to his early educational background. Low emphasises that, “Goh was the first one who brought the Indian element into the creation of 24 FD performance. Since then, the Indian element is largely adopted in the 24 FD community” (Low, 2015).

Apart from being a cultural fusion, costume also symbolically plays a performative role in 24 FD. Essentially, wearing this design is for the sake of the performance. Costumes in 24 FD are not merely tailored for decorative purpose, they are also designed for different functional effects. This particular design of pants has its function in the performance. For example, when the performance requires a great deal of spinning, the lower garment will spread and create the shape of a “flower” (Figure 48 right). The example of the spinning

movement is literally the common dance movement in Indian *Kathak* dance. Originally from Northern India, *Kathak* is a classic form of dance that consists of limb movements and fast-paced spinning (Walker, 2016). HANDS deployed this sophisticated spinning movement in *Rhythm Ride*, whereas they are modified to suit the theme of their repertoire. The footwork was imitated from the original form, as without the authentic steps of footwork, the multi-circles and fast-paced spinning cannot be completed. What HANDS modified was to reduce the speed of spinning, using more circling instead as *Rhythm Ride* tends to be more graceful and elegant.

Figure 48: Costumes with topless and loose-fitting pants.



Figure 49: Costumes fuses Malay and Indian elements



Source: YouTube Video.

There were two sets of costumes in the performance of *The Memories*. The first set tended to be Chinese-like martial arts costumes in dark brown colour. This costume represents the current style of 24 FD, which can be distinguished from pure Chinese costumes. The design of trousers is the key differential element and particularly that of the ankles. Traditional Chinese costumes are characterised by loose-fitting pants with cuffed ankles. However, the design of cuffed ankles has been modified with loose-fitting pants. Therefore, from the design and function of costumes, 24 FD does not simply imitate a single cultural tradition, on the other hand, they study and amend a variety of performance aspects from various cultural contexts to suit the theme and technical requirement of their performances. This is a unique performative element that distinguishes 24 FD from any other performance forms.

#### **4.6.2.3 Extramusical**

*The Memories* was created and performed in the context of the Chinese migration to Malaya during the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is the largest wave of Chinese relocation in history. The actor-drummers did not speak much about the inspiration and context of the story. However, Yen affirms the historical background of the Chinese immigration and settlement to Malaysia by identifying that, “(this phenomenon was due to) the agrarian problems of overpopulation, natural calamities, and landlord exploitation. Tens of thousands of Chinese immigrants, driven by poverty and despair, migrated out of the coastal provinces of China to Southeast Asia and America” (2000, 1). This is what has been illustrated in the performance. *The Memories* was not composed by coincidence. Instead, many ethnic Chinese in Malaysia can accurately describe what happened in the past. According to Chew (2018), “we have been told and taught by our ancestors, from

generation to generation about how the Chinese migrants left the country they love and came to Southeast Asia to commence a new life in this area, how the temporary stay in the *Chinese New Village* becomes their new home” (Chew, 2018). In this respect, history and knowledge are carried and preserved by the previous and collective memory in the past life. As can be seen from the name of the show, *The Memories* was inspired by the shared collective memory of immigration and settlement that occurred in the Chinese community in Malaysia.

As an extension of the topic, *The Memories* initiated a debate on migration, and posed the question of “where is home” (George Town Festival, 2017). It reflects what has been discussed in the introduction of the thesis that 24 FD materialises and integrates the social issues and problems in its experimental performance. The characteristic of the experimental theatre can be confirmed by my observation of the training session of Orang Orang Drum Theatre in April 2018. The team is in favour of inquiring about debates and phenomena that are close to our life. The creation of *The Memories* can be seen as a research project. Chew discovered an unexplained attitude among the young generation of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia towards their Chinese identity and the social status of Malaysia. He posed the research question of “where is home” by using the element of memory for exploring the characters to create a meaningful performance. In this regard, the performativity of *The Memories* is elaborated with a series of different components involved in the performance. The bodily movement is an explicit component to identify the performativity. The bodily movement in Figure 50 can be decoded as a symbol of searching for a new way-out in this scene. The bodily movement of turning right and left at 45 degrees in this example was seemingly a simple movement to an actor-drummer. However, it consisted of a series of principles and techniques to complete this movement:

1. The lower-body is lowered by bending one leg (bending right leg, when turn to the right, and vice versa. Gravity gradually moved from one leg to another.)
2. The upper-body leaned forward at 45 degrees but kept a straight back.
3. The turning movement started from the opposite side, then pulled to the turning direction.

Figure 50: An excerpt of bodily movements from *The Memories*



Source: Extracted from the performance video, which is provided by Orang Orang Drum Theatre. This movement responds to the composer Chew's intention to use the body and emotion through the performer's acting to tell the story. The element of facial expression is a rare performance aspect that can be found in 24 FD performance. However, it is one of the key points in this movement, alongside a metaphoric use of the body as "water". As Chew interprets, "the emotion here can be acted through the performer's facial expression. The angle of bending the body and the way of turning the direction of the body symbolise the shape of the water in the sea" (Chew, 2018). At this point, a series of technical requirements enables this movement pattern to be performative in this performance.



### 4.6.3 *Rasa* and Performativity

The musical, non-musical and extramusical components aside, the experience of watching and performing is an important component in the examination of performativity. As a reminder of my previous discussion, *rasa* is not physical and material, but experiential, and performance is a mediator to conceive *rasa*. Taking Figure 38 as an illustration, Orang Orang Drum Theatre and JB Drum Team imparted a material content of showcasing the historical migration of Chinese community to Malaysia in *The Memories*. Figure 38 shows a scene where a 'master' beats his coolie with a rattan. When this scene took place in a street of France, audiences were silent and motionless immediately. From their facial and physical reaction, it can be identified that even the foreign audiences who were unfamiliar with the background story were still able to feel a sense of fear based on the performativity that this scene conveyed. At this time, *Bhayannaka* (fear) *rasa* may emerge among the audiences. Aesthetic sensitivity, experience and knowledge are the three methods with which Martinez (1996) suggests approaching *rasa*, which has been discussed previously. The audiences felt the *Bhayananka rasa*, as they may or may not have experience or knowledge of fear. However, in this scene, the fear was created by a series of performative components:

1. An actor-drummer hitting the metal-made shutter door by using the rattan to make a beating sound.
2. Apropos to this, the beaten actor-drummer bent her body and leaned backward.
3. The position of leaning backward lasted for a few seconds.
4. The dynamic of fear has been augmented, during this short period of motionless.

With the evidence of this example, it can be concluded that, the mediation that allows *rasa* to materialise does not necessarily need to be a performance. *Rasa* has an intimate

relationship with performativity. If *rasa* is created during the performance, the performativity is created at the same time. Performativity does not simply refer to the action of an utterance or a motion by the performer's body. In 24 FD, it indeed embraces a series of elements that happen in the performance, including music (sound of beating the door), the actor-drummer's body (waving rattan or bending backward), timing (silence and motionless for a few seconds), and eyes (opened widely). Even the discourse as apparently simple as *rasa* is aesthetic, experiential and performative can be intricate, hence, there is a need for a critical concept *musicalbody* to decode every individual element in a performance in order to illuminate the interrelationship between them. Given that a performance is performative, the most important factor can be attributed to the process of "oneness", which is a synthesis of all aforementioned elements. In the next section, I attempt to propose a dedicated concept of *musicalbody* in order to explore the multifaceted dimensions of 24 FD.

## **4.7 Musicalbody**

### **4.7.1 Intention and Definition**

24 FD emerges as a multi-featural performance genre in the pan-Asian context. *Musicalbody* is a concept that can explain and interrogate the inter-dependency and inter-relativity of the musicality and corporeality of the performance of 24 FD. The development of *musicalbody* is able to facilitate a better understanding of the complexity, multiplicity and technicality that are constructed and transformed in both traditional and contemporary genres of the form. There are several unique characteristics that exist in 24 FD. In order to systematically determine the sophisticated phenomenon of 24FD, *musicalbody* is a new concept that I propose and explain in this thesis, by way of

incorporating a series of identifiable and locatable performative principles into the theoretical framework. The term combines two words “musical” and “body” together as one single expression of being *musicalbody* to emphasise the unification of these two elements as a whole. Similar academic terms that indicate the integration of multiple elements in one concept are available in current scholarship, such as *bodymind*, psychophysical, *rasaesthetic*, and so on. In Chapter 2, the term “entangled body” was specifically used to facilitate the pan-Asian performance. In relation to *musicalbody*, they are similar in terminology, but slightly differential in usage. “Entangled body” explains how pan-Asian philosophy plays an integral in practice, and additionally, how pan-Asian aesthetics is not abstract, but performative. The complex application of philosophy, aesthetics and performance can be underpinned by the *bodymind* training. “Entangled body” uses the pan-Asian methodology and provides an important theoretical foundation for the development of *musicalbody*. However, “entangled body” is situated in the pan-Asian context, analysing only selected cultures, whilst *musicalbody* is dedicatedly used to explain the intimate inter-relativity between the body and music in 24 FD with the unique multi-featural characteristics.

There are attempts in music scholarship to bind music and the body in its performative context as I described above. Meanwhile, the current research on 24 FD in my literature review is apparent only from the perspectives of ethnomusicology, due to a limited research interest in the Malaysian genre. Therefore, the current conceptual framework merely based on ethnomusicology, musicology and performance studies is insubstantial into explaining the practice of 24 FD. Firstly, the current scholars who are interested in 24 FD are mainly Malaysian ethnomusicologists. Admittedly, ethnomusicological research serves as a catalyst, a primary facilitator and a pioneer in the scholarship of 24

FD. It stimulates the attraction of 24 FD for potential research. However, current Malaysian ethnomusicologists only offer the general introductory information about 24 FD. Performance review is the only methodology utilised among this group of researchers. They examine one repertoire in one article with a descriptive method to draw a conclusion that, 24 FD or HANDS is a successful performance form founded in the late 80s. Nevertheless, the unique characteristics and practicality of 24 FD is more than can be described in one single repertoire. In this sense, it is necessary to investigate the phenomenon of 24 FD from a different approach, by exploring possible theories drawn from different disciplines to fill the research gap. Therefore, the concept of *musicalbody* is a term that uses an embodied methodology to explain the sophisticated phenomenon of 24 FD.

Secondly, using a single tool to understand 24 FD is insufficient. For example, referencing Western music theory to investigate Indian music is not the most feasible method to testify its validity bearing in mind the differences in terminology, as Indian music has its own system of scales, which are different to Western music knowledge. Clayton (2003) in his writing explains the difficulty in understanding the Indian concept from a Western perspective, affirming complexities involved in applying musical concepts cross-culturally and inter-culturally. As Schechner (2013) claims in *Performance Studies*, theories are not universal to explain all forms of performance. Schechner also believes that interculturalism is not equivalent to universalism. He deploys the idea of interculturalism to offer different levels of insight to comment on the performative in gestural behaviour (Sauter, 2000, 39). In this sense, there is no single theory in one discipline that can explain the aesthetic and performance practice of 24 FD. Consequently, *musicalbody* is a concept that I am proposing to explain a performance that integrates

various disciplines such as music, dance, theatre, martial art and percussion. In this way, performativity, corporeality, technicality, multiplicity, experientiality and complexity that exist in 24 FD will be brought into the discussion for development of the concept. I argue that *musicalbody* is the concept that can explain the intricate dynamic of the inter-connectivity between the aesthetics and practice of 24 FD.

### 4.7.2 Principles

The core principle of *musicalbody* is established by coupling the body and music as a unified entity in performance and this fundamental rule is fused throughout all principles. On the basis of relevant theory and a series of analyses of selected performances of 24 FD, I attempt to identify the following major principles for the concept of *musicalbody*:

1. *Musicalbody* is performative.
2. *Musicalbody* is technique-driven.
3. *Musicalbody* is aesthetic/experiential (where *rasa* occurs).
4. *Musicalbody* is “oneness”.
5. *Musicalbody* is audience-dictated.
6. *Musicalbody* is multi-featured.

Principle 1: as a performative body, *musicalbody* consists of a series of identifiable performative elements. In the early discussion of this chapter, I discussed that a performance is constituted with dominant and subdominant components, and all these components generate the performativity of the performance. It is a fact that not all performances of 24 FD have a story to express. In the historical development of 24 FD, particularly for teams at an exploratory stage or the immature overseas troupes, most of

the performances and repertoires were created without a story or theme as a contextual background. As a young performance form, the main focus of training and composition for elementary actor-drummers was on the technique of percussion and bodily movements. In the absence of a background story in a performance, in what ways can the audience accurately understand the actor-drummer's intention of composition, and successfully decode the synthesis of bodily movements and percussive ensembles in a performance? To access 24 FD performance, performativity is an important term to identify elements that aid with the reception of story-free and theme-free performances. In all events, 24 FD functions as an aesthetic performance, play, ritual, ceremony, or entertainment. The performativity of 24 FD is an essential approach to take in *musicalbody* from all possible aspects. Performativity helps in identifying a performance in an embodied way. Once the identity of a performance is evoked, the performance is performative. I use the term actor-drummer to define the performer of 24 FD, as they have this multi-role identity in the form. Drummers aside, they are actors as well. In chapter 2, the acting (*Abhinaya*) explains the performativity of the many identities of an Asian performer. The performativity of 24 FD can be traced from three categories, which are musical, non-musical and extramusical. Elements such as the choice of instruments, vocal expression, exclamation, costumes, props, social, cultural influence have been explored to indicate how these components can explain the performativity of 24 FD from the perspective of audiences. The way that the term *musicalbody* can be used to describe 24 FD is when the performativity of 24 FD is created.

*Musicalbody* is a process of using the performer's body performatively in a performance. At this layer of meaning, *musicalbody* acknowledges that music and other forms of performances have the shared nature of being a product of a performer's bodily

movements. In the performative context, music and any other forms of performances are fundamentally motion-based occurrences. Several terms from different areas of music studies support this argument. For example, *musicking* and rhythmic sensibility are both concepts that can be associated with performativity in music performance and pedagogy. They both perceive music activities as an active motion-based event, while performativity is the linkage between them. In this project, I found that it is not necessary to separate and distinguish music and the body as two different aspects of performance, as for 24 FD, to define whether it is a music/instrumental performance, or a theatrical presence could be pointless and irrelevant. Instead, they are two inseparable parts constituting the performance of 24 FD to become meaningful and performative. According to the founder Tan Chai Puan (2018), one of the initial intentions of 24 FD is “drum and dance”<sup>86</sup>(Tan, 2018). Dance refers to the bodily movement of a performer. His argument corresponds to the choreomusical phenomenon that has been discussed in chapter 2, as the quality of “drum and dance” requires the incorporation of drumming and bodily techniques together. As he continues, the choice of the *shigu*-like drum as the instrument is due to its acceptance and spread among practitioners and the general public. At the same time, the simplicity of the drum enables the possibility of adding bodily movements into a performance” (Tan, 2018). In this sense, *musicalbody* is an integral term to describe a corporeal ensemble drumming in a performative way. In order to achieve the performative body, a wide range of techniques are required. Therefore, *musicalbody* is a technical body as well.

Principle 2, as a technical body, *musicalbody* is conceived by performers’ trained

<sup>86</sup> His original phrase is “drum and dance” in Mandarin. However, according to our further conversation, I feel that it is more appropriate to refer the “dance” to the bodily movement.

techniques. Linking with principle 1, the technical body refers to the performative use of the body in training and performance. Essentially, *musicalbody* denotes that it is the performer's "source knowledge" that decides in what way her/his body would construct a particular part of a performance with a specific technique. This argument has been discussed in chapter 3 in detail. For example, it is common that different uses of *mudra* (hand gesture) in 24 FD performance can create different arrangements of volume, dynamics, and timbre in different layers. Apart from hand gesture, footwork is vital in 24 FD as well. For instance, the add-on element of *Kathak* footwork in the performance *Rhythm Ride* by HANDS is one of the examples demonstrating how footwork can be choreographed into a percussive ensemble performance to create a choreomusical effect. Consequently, in addition to the auditory layer, the specific application of hand gesture and footwork in 24 FD performance also imparts a visual pleasure for the audience. The *Natyasastra* further adds that qualities of movement and expression (Godara, 2013, 1) are an essential aspect in acting (see chapter 2). Movement and expression rely on the performer's technique, which requires the performative use of the body. In these two branches, the qualities of movement refer to strength and beauty, whilst the expression is about resonance (vocal) and subtlety (emotional) (Godara, 2013, 1). In this respect, the quality of the performance should be achieved not only in auditory and visual ways, but also in aesthetic and emotional ways. Similarly, *jiu mei* is the concept that addresses the technical control of the body to achieve the perfection of acting. The achievement of the perfection of an actor, in this sense, is to know how to control the body performatively. For this reason, the technical body corresponds to the performative body as well, as a way of enhancing the corporeal ensemble drumming by using a range of different techniques.



A performance can be completed by a performer by using specific techniques acquired by that player. For example, in comparison with the early and modern generation of 24 FD, one of the differences is the choice of instruments. The instrument used in the early generation of 24 FD is *Avanaddha* (covered drums) that are presented in the *Natyasastra*, as simple *shigu*-like drumming is the only percussive style that 24 FD can focus on in that era. When it comes to the modern generation, a wide range of percussive instruments, tonal and atonal, have been incorporated into composition and performance. In the Pan-Asian context, while accepting the transcultural interaction, contemporary 24 FD teams tend to have additional opportunities to engage with different combinations of performance style. For instance, different instruments, such as the *kulintangan*, are learnt and integrated into the training and performance. Upon receiving the training required and the skills and knowledges of the *kulintangan*, the instruments can be integrated into their composition and performance in professional teams, such as Orang Orang Drum Theatre. In terms of another professional team HANDS, the new element of *gamelan* was introduced and practised by the team. By contrast, as chapter 1 addressed, professional teams have different aims and eventually different performance styles are formed in each team. For these two teams, the performance style substantially projects the performative identity that actor-drummers establish step by step throughout their long-term training and performance. This may correspond to what the *Natyasastra* underlines that the success of production (*siddhi*) is related to divine grace (*daivi*) and human effort (*manusi*) (Godara, 2013, 1). Human effort in the context of 24 FD can refer to the technique of presence of an actor-drummer and knowledge gaining through rigorous training. Essentially, abundant techniques are required and involved in 24 FD performance. Figure 51 demonstrates how technique plays as a stunt in a performance. In this particular bodily movement, actor-drummers are required to leap on the drumhead, while

immediately sliding off from the drumhead, and pulling the drums into an upright position. These sets of movements are completed by three actor-drummers at the same time, meaning that synchronicity is the key to the technical requirements. Precisely, the timing of leaping on, sliding off, repositioning the drums, and bending over should happen at the same time among the three performers. In the meantime, the direction of the movements, the position of the drums, and the angle of bending over should be identical to their partner actor-drummers.

Figure 51: HANDS performance on *Classic*



Source: YouTube video of *Classic*<sup>87</sup>

The use of a technical body is seen in both training and performance. It refers to the physical body but also the psychophysical entity, where the body and mind come together to present a wholeness. In my observation and analysis of several repertoires created and performed by Orang Orang Drum Theatre, I discovered that silent moments, as one of the features of the team, are taken into serious consideration in the performance and training of the team. The way that performers give time during the silent moment leads them to reach emotional and physical states. As Chew expresses, “drumming is only one scope of

<sup>87</sup> The performance of *Classic*. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIUxDrvS0uM> [accessed 22/10/2017]

performance. Orang Orang Drum Theatre attempts to explore the possibility of what the performers' bodies can do alongside the drumming" (Chew, 2018). This is the reason for Orang Orang Drum Theatre being increasingly interested in incorporating theatrical performance with their ensemble drumming. As mentioned earlier, different teams have different focuses on their performative presence. Orang Orang Drum Theatre emphasises their theatrical characteristics in performance, whilst HANDS ceaselessly looks for more possibilities of incorporating different ranges and types of instruments. Deriving from the traditional 24 FD performance, the performative characteristic of Orang Orang Drum Theatre tends to be inter-disciplinary, yet HANDS might be more inter-cultural, exploring multiple cultural instruments that can contribute to their composition and performance. In this sense, the technical body is closely related to the performative body, the technical body in 24 FD does not limit itself to the ensemble drumming but extends to many other possible aspects of performance. More importantly, the actor-drummer's body is the only medium to access the technical body and the performative body.

*Musicalbody* enquires a full engagement of every individual part of our body. In any music/theatrical activity, the engagement of the performer's body is explicit. The body not only refers to the trunk and limbs of the physical body, but also to all organs and senses, and the mind as a whole. For example, in a musical performance, such as a piano performance, the fingering and other parts of the body including wrists, upper arms, lower arms, upper body, and as well as the lower limbs, are fully and actively participating in the constitution of the performance. Through the observation of the training session of Orang Orang Drum Theatre, Zye Leow in the reflective session expressed that "rhythmic playing takes place in every moment inside of the body, including toes, fingers, hips, foot, head, and so on. They all integrate together to feel the

drumming in a real way” (Leow, 2018). Senses importantly exist in the performance as well. An instrumentalist cannot play the instrument without receiving the auditory and visual senses from his/her side. The gestural behaviours in music making and other forms of performance are not merely creating a visual effect but also solidifying the auditory sense and embodying the musical practice. Musical experience is accessed with both visual and auditory experiences, not one on the other in isolation. One sense is embodied with the assistance of motion of its counterpart sense. In the case of 24 FD, the music making with corporeal gestures is analogous to the corporeal movement of piano playing. It requires the actor-drummers to fully make use of all parts of the body to engage in music playing. This full engagement requires a high coordination of every part of the body to serve the demand of the performance. For example, in the movement of *Awakeness* (see Figure 52) in the 24 FD performance, the drumming beats are played at the softest volume, drumsticks hit from the centre point of the drum surface to the edge gradually with the posture of standing at ease. In principle, the upper body of the actor-drummer should lean slightly backward so that he/she can control the volume in this particular way. The coordination of the body can also relate to the element of harmony in the pan-Asian context. Harmony here is about the control of the balance of each component of the body. In this sense, the ability to coordinate each part of the body to serve the performance is fundamental to the technique of the actor-drummer.

Figure 52: The movement of *Awakeness*



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

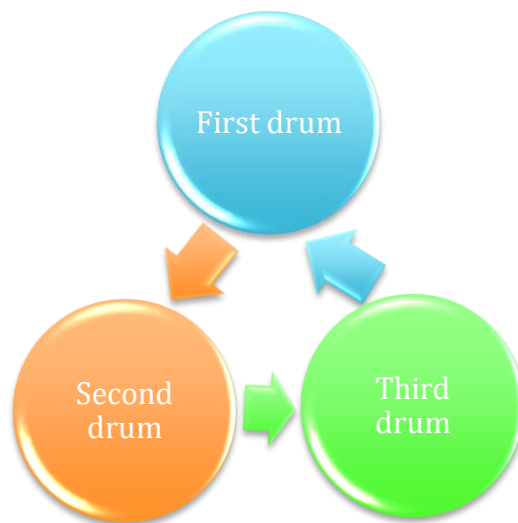
Principle 3, as an aesthetic/experiential body, *musical-body* is the performance in which the Pan-Asian aesthetic (*rasa*, *hana*, and *jiu mei*) exists. In chapter 2, I discussed that pan-Asian aesthetics are integrated in Pan-Asian performance practice. Pan-Asian aesthetic concepts share similar metaphors, which exist in different terminologies but here a similar meaning. For example, cooking is the collective metaphor that can be found in the interpretation of Chinese and Indian theories. Moreover, *rasa* presents “taste” and “feeling” in both Indian and Malaysian contexts. All the metaphors in the Pan-Asian practice are used to explain sophisticated theories and assess different aspects of performance. To position the case of 24 FD in the context of Pan-Asian modality, there are several applicable methodologies to understand the aesthetic experience of 24 FD performance. For instance, the Japanese *hana* (flower) is created in the finale of *The Memories* and the movement of *twisted hands*. Although using the nine principles of Chinese *jiu mei*, it was codified to improve actors’ acting technique; in an alternative way, it could be seen as an aesthetic paradigm to assess the performers’ gestural, vocal, and

musical technique in performance.

In this chapter, I addressed how *rasa* as an unmediated experience can be evoked via mediation. Mediation refers to the action every actor-drummer makes in the performance of 24 FD. The perception of *rasa* is the aesthetic experience of the audience in a performance. To access *rasa*, which is unmediated in the first place, the performative and technical body can help in experiencing the aesthetic of the performance through the action of the actor-drummer. In Indian aesthetics, the *rasa/bhava* relationship presented in the *Natyasastra* is used to discuss emotional and psychophysical states (see chapter 2). As Schechner discusses, emotion is *bhava*, acting (performance) is the presentation of *bhava*, and when the emotion is “tasted” by the “partaker” in the performance, that is *rasa* (2003, 340-341). What is involved in the action are the components that constitute the body and music in performance. These components are performative and technical. To distinguish *bhava* and *rasa*, Schechner also metaphorizes that “the sweetness in a ripe plum is its *bhava*, the experience of tasting the sweet is *rasa*” (2001, 177). In this respect, *bhava* is the state that can be described and defined, yet *rasa* can only be actively experienced. For example, in the movement of the *360 turn* (see Figure 53), the actor-drummer is required to play three drums (one in the front, two at the back to formulate a triangle) (see Figure 53) in the performance. The way to play multiple drums, as being one of the unique characteristics, is a common phenomenon that happens in 24 FD. To execute this movement, the use of the body is essential, as the hand and bodily gestures are rigorously choreographed in the performance in order to project the performativity and technicality of this movement. When an actor-drummer plays from the front drum to the left-back drum, the position is required to start from hitting the centre point of the front drum and progress into lifting the arm across the head and turning to hit the centre

point of the left back drum. The moment that the actor-drummer pulls his arm from the first drum to the second one, creates a power of heightening the emotion. In the psychophysical state, *utsaha* (energy, vigour) and *vismaya* (surprise, wonder) *bhavas* emerge through the actor-drummer's acting. The moment when the audience is embodied with energy and vigor, or surprise and wonder, *vira* (energy, vigour) and *adbhuta* (surprise, wonder) *rasas* are created among the audience. In this sense, the very moment the audience feels and experiences in the performance is the moment *rasa* has been channelled.

Figure 53: The movement of 360 turn



Source: Illustration by Giano Siu

However, it could be more than one *rasa* that can be conceived within one performance. This is because of the temporality of *rasa*. *Rasa* is evoked by the combination of *vibhava* (determinants), *anubhava* (consequents) and *vyabhicharibhava* (complementary psychological states). These three elements constitute a performance. The determinants (in terms of characters, situations and surrounding, Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005, 95) and consequents (actor's action and reaction, Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005, 95) (see chapter 2) may change due to different stages of performance, the transitory state (Meyer-Dinkgräfe,

2005; Madhavan, 2010) may also change accordingly. Taking *The Memories* as an example, the action of donning new costumes in the performance divides the context of the performance from the Chinese into the Malaysian culture. In these two major scenes, the identity of the characters, situations and surroundings of the context culturally change. As a result, the transitory state accordingly changes as well. Another example is in the repertoire of *Rhythm Ride*, which has been examined in the performance analysis section showing that *rasa* can be changed at different stages of a performance. In the performance of this piece, the transition of *rasa* is from *sringara* (desire, love) into *vira* (energy, vigour). In this sense, just as “taste”, *rasa* is a temporal sensation that may be changed throughout in a performance depending on an actor’s acting, performance contexts, an actor’s roles and the audience’s perception.

Principle 4, suggesting the “oneness” of the body, emphasises the unity of multiple elements in performance. “Oneness”, in this thesis, embraces two aspects of usage, pertaining to the aesthetic/philosophical point of view and cultural application. From an interdisciplinary approach, Ivanhoe (2015) proposes the term “oneness hypothesis” to illuminate “the relationship between the self and the rest of the world” that are intimately connected (Ivanhoe et. al, 2018, 1) in the philosophical, religious and psychological aspects (Ivanhoe et. al, 2018, 2). “The self”, in the performance perspective, can be extended to the physicality of a performer; and the interconnection between the body and the rest of the world implies the psychophysical interaction of an actor. In cultural studies, “oneness” is the term that Hall used to explain “cultural identity” in reference to the issue of diaspora, defining people who “reflect the common historical experience and shared cultural codes” (Hall, 2014, 22). One common theme discussed in chapter 1 was that the multicultural characteristics of Malaysia shape the practices of 24 FD. The shared



historical and cultural uniqueness located in the specific historical context gradually blended into the journey of its development. Talaifar and Swann perceive “oneness” as a phenomenon of “identity fusion” from a sociological perspective, highlighting the synthesis of personal and social identities. They further elaborate that personal identity distinguishes individuals one from another, whilst social identity differentiates groups (2018, 340). During the process of “identity fusion”, individual cultural identities that exist in 24 FD have been diminished and harmonised to constitute a “oneness” in its practice.

Ivanhoe also determines that “oneness” can be formed in more than one way and in multiple things by exploring different senses of “oneness” (2015, 4). In particular, the usage of “oneness” is extended to address the synthesis of the body and music in addition to, a wide range of identifiable factors in 24 FD performance. The linkage of “oneness” and *musicalbody* is that it explains the phenomenon of “oneness” through the shared cultural practice and the actor’s physical and psychophysical selves can be inextricably intertwined into the performance. Such a combination denotes that different instruments and choreographed bodily movements should be integrated as one unity in performance practice, meaning that the body and music are inseparable in 24 FD practice. In performance/performative research, terms like *musicking* and choremusicology fundamentally address the same issue of music performativity, which highlight the synchronicity of the body and music. In the Pan-Asian context, a series of skilful combinations of both music and body movements can be pinpointed in different genres. Particularly in the context of Malaysian performing arts, there is a form called *gendang silat*, which integrates martial arts and drumming into performance practice (Matusky & Tan, 2017, 163). As a Malaysian performance form, 24 FD is in favour of blending bodily

movement and musical elements together to create the corporeal musicality of its performance practice.

Apart from the emphasis on the “oneness” of the body and music, the idea of “oneness” in the body also advocates an interrelationship between the instrument and the performer. Ivanhoe points out one important understanding of “oneness” in Chinese philosophy by presenting the hypothesis that “nature is a blended whole” (2015, 5). An apt example is seen in the intention of the founder Tan Chai Puan in setting up 24 FD, as a combination of “drum and dance” in a single performance. This combination of the two elements implies the performer’s consciousness of the instrument. As Tan Chai Puan suggests, one of the essential requirements to play 24 FD is to achieve the drum-drummer entity (Tan, 2018). From the aesthetic aspect, the highest state of the 24 FD performance is that the performer and the instrument fuse into one entity, meaning that the performer can sensibly “feel” the drum. As a result, the instrument-performer entity is “oneness” in an aesthetic way. At a practical level, the drum-drummer entity refers to the performer’s familiarity with the drum and their ability to apply appropriate technique to their performance. It is the performer’s knowledge of the instrument and knowledge about which way the instrument should be played. Most 24 FD performers are taught the knowledge of the *shigu*-like drums, from aspects of their sound, their martial art use, their handcraft, and drum maintenance (see chapter 1), which offer them a more in-depth understanding of how potentially the instrument can be used in performance practice. The drum-drummer entity does not only refer to the knowledge of the drum and the drumming technique. In contrast, it also refers to the physical and choregraphical use of the actor-drummer’s body. The movement of *swinging* is a representative example to illustrate how the drum-drummer entity can be achieved by knowing all the information

about the drum and proficiently estimating the angle, strength and timing of the bodily movement to accomplish this particular movement.

It is also important to note that the body of “oneness” can either refer to one actor-drummer, or a group formation as a whole. It is rare to see a solo actor-drummer playing in a performance of 24 FD. In this case, each individual actor-drummer is a trained *musicalbody* equipped with different ranges of techniques. When it comes to its ordinary formation, as a group performance, *musicalbody* implies the team as a whole, indicating a strong sense of “oneness” in the ensemble. This is similar to a political concept of “1Malaysia” that is advocated by the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato’ Sri Najib Tun Razak, which unifies different racial groups and cultures in one nation (Loo & Loo, 2016, 136-137). When the choreography forms the team into a unit, each and everyone in the group forms its own *musicalbody* character through the same piece of music played. When I was trained for the repertoire *Heartbeats* at Liverpool in 2012, there was a very soft and quiet dynamic control in the inception of the piece. In order to achieve this dynamic, the coach Engthur Ang instructed that, “(to play) as quiet as you cannot hear yourself playing”. He required the performers to listen to the others playing so that the volume can be reduced, as if the performer can hear himself/herself playing, it represents that he/she causes the disharmony. In the 24 FD, a group would at most times play the same rhythmic patterns in their musical part. When playing as an ensemble, *musicalbody* emerges in the landscape of the performance, transcending from an individual *musicalbody* into a group *musicalbody* entity. In this sense, the body of “oneness”, in this respect, corresponds to the harmony that has been discussed in chapter 2. In order to construct an entity, each individual that exists in the same circle should be harmonic.

Principle 5, as an audience-dictated body, *musicalbody* is the audience themselves. An embodied performance is an active event, and audiences actively perceive the feeling and experience of the performance on their own. In the embodied context, the experience of *musicalbody* does not merely define the performer; the audience who experiences the enjoyment of the music in his/her own body can achieve *musicalbody*. The division between performers and the audiences emphasises that *musicalbody* is an experience felt and created within this relationship, and at the same time, this experience is active and subjective. According to Fischer-Lichte, performance has the transformative power of bodily sensation. As audience's perception is created via "spatial arrangements or certain types of embodiment" in a performance from what they have seen, heard, or sensed. It does not only occur between a specific performer and audience. Instead, it generally happens between a group of performers and the audience (2008, 59-60). Within the transformative stage, the audience is able to transform into the role of an actor in a process of role reversal. An example of a musician playing the piano whilst swaying her hair can be an illustration. The movement of her shoulder causes her hair to swing back and forth every time she hits the key, resulting in the expression the characteristics of the feeling and experience within herself. The onlookers' sensory level of perception has shifted alongside the gestural behaviour of the performer. Audiences, however, hear the music and watch the movement, creating their version of feelings and experience. At this moment, a performative turn is completed; the audience is transformed into the role of the performer and composer to interpret what has been suggested by their bodily perception.

In the experience of *musicalbody* in 24 FD, listening and watching the performers'

physical movement assists in delivering on experience of *rasa*. Audiences receive the sensory information from the performer and performance, and actively transform this information in their own understanding. This layer of meaning also recalls the previous discussion that all organs, limbs and senses of the body are engaged in *musicalbody*. The transitory states are impermanent emotions that can merge with the dominant emotion (see chapter 2). As a result, *vira* (energy) *rasa*, as the dominant emotion is commonly evoked during the performance, with regards to the nature of the form being ensemble drumming and consisting of a series of theatrical movements and rhythmic accompaniment. The drumming delivers strong and high-volume beats to the audience's ears, and this transmits energy and power to the audience. Additionally, the martial arts movement used to enhance the performance also can be found to convey visual effect to the audience's eyes in order to serve as an extension to experience the energy and power of the actor. *Vira rasa*, as the basic emotion that exists in 24 FD, can be seen as the performativity of 24 FD that requires *rasa*, as an experiential tool to explain. In the meantime, any kind of *rasa* is temporary and it may undergo changes in the different stages of performance.

Principle 6, as a multi-featural body, *musicalbody* exists in a performance that is composed of multi-roles, multi-cultures, and multi-characteristics. Essentially, each 24 FD actor-drummer has more than the role of drummer in training and performance. Role division (such as singer, actor, dancer, drummer, director, composer, drum remover, and so on) is detailed in the previous discussion. The phenomenon of multiple roles in the case of 24 FD can be attributed to the artistic exploration of possibilities, which can be blended into their creation of performance. For example, all the actor-drummers of HANDS were sent to a *gamelan* workshop in Bali, Indonesia to study the authentic and

traditional Balinese *gamelan* to aid with the integration of new elements in their composition and performance. Similarly, in the training of Orang Orang Drum Theatre, the multi-role characteristic extends to the pedagogical aspect. They are learners and teachers, composers and trainees at the same time. Consequently, role division in 24 FD is not significant, and *musicalbody* is a multi-role actor-drummer.

Notably, more than one single cultural tradition can be identified in the performance practice of 24 FD. In contemporary development, in particular, the multi-cultural feature is significantly synthesised in 24 FD practice. For this reason, the pan-Asian approach that is used in this thesis is essentially helpful as a way of understanding the form within an appropriate paradigm. Precisely speaking, even the Chinese, Malay, Indian, Japanese and Indonesian culture that exist in 24 FD are unconsciously modified and integrated into 24 FD, and gradually, it becomes a particular style of its own or the 'Malaysian style' of cultural tradition. The social, cultural and historical factors aside, the reason for the multi-feature body can be largely attributed to the lack of restrictions on innovation. The tradition of 24 FD can be varied according to different contexts. For example, the costumes are sometimes seemingly Chinese, but not traditional Chinese with cuffed ankles. Similarly, it appears to be an Indian-inspired sitting drumming tradition, but occasionally crossing one leg within the sitting drumming position, is not part of the Indian tradition. They imitate the exclamations of the Japanese *taiko* in performance, but these are modified into "poetry-reading" styles of vocal expression. The *gamelan* ensemble they use no longer follows the Indonesian tradition, but the Malay *gamelan*, with fewer instruments in the arrangement. Therefore, in the concept of *musicalbody* as a multi-cultural body, a variety and diversity of cultural practices can be identified in 24 FD.

Due to the multi-cultural influence and transcultural exchange in 24 FD, the multi-characteristics produce various forms of performativity. This is due to the performance practice of 24 FD being derived from different fields of performance, such as music (drumming and other instrumental playing), dance, singing, martial arts, theatre, and so on. Each genre has its own performance principles and artistic features. All these elements cannot emerge in isolation in the case of 24 FD. Instead, they exist in the same circle of harmony for the sake of creating new possibilities of performance. As a result, the performance of 24 FD integrates all these features together to conceive one entity as a *musicalbody* in performance. The pan-Asian paradigm also suggests that the role division of the performer is not significantly distinguished. In the *Natyasastra*, acting (*abhinaya*) is one of the elements that constitute a performance (Godara, 2013, 1). In Japanese theatre, the beauty of a performance can be achieved by an actor's acting (*kufū*) and the mind (Amano, 2011, 532). In Chinese performance, an actor's acting technique (physically, vocally, emotionally, mentally and aesthetically) can be trained by the principles of *jiu mei*. All these examples demonstrate that the definition of actor, dancer, drummer, instrumentalist, musician and performer are not significantly differentiated, due to the cultural traditions. In this sense, *musicalbody* creates a phenomenon that the audience watches a performance with a wide range of multi-features and experiences a different level of a combination of musicality and corporeality.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The main focus of this chapter was to develop a concept of *musicalbody* to explain 24 FD in an accurate and critical way. To achieve this, I discussed major features of the interrelationship of body, mind and music in music and performance-related research.

Secondly, I brought the concept of performativity into the discussion and argued how cultural elements can influence music and performativity. On this basis, I explored the relationship between performance and performativity, and explained how a (music) performance can be performative. Benefiting from the theoretical foundation, I investigated the performance practice of 24 FD by analyzing the performance entitled *The Memories*. This repertoire was chosen as it was a rare piece that was co-produced by professional and traditional teams, indicating the contemporary endeavour of 24 FD. In the performance analysis, I particularly focused on the performativity of this piece. Drawing on all these clues, the concept of *musicalbody* is the term I propose in order to understand the complexity, multiplicity and technicality that are central to the case of 24 FD. I positioned the form in the wider context of Pan-Asian performance within the cultural tradition of India, Japan and China. The reason for the choice of cultures was addressed in chapter 2. I attempted to summarise six principles, covering the philosophical, cultural, social, aesthetic and practical areas, in order to contribute a better definition of a new emerging form in the Pan-Asian context. These points were established on the basis of theory and literature study, my fieldtrip to Malaysia, performance analysis, and several interviews with different coaches, performers and the founder. The principles are tightly interlocking and mutually applicable with each other.



## **Chapter 5:**

### **Conclusion, limitation and implication**

The point of departure for this PhD research was to theoretically and critically explore the nature of 24 FD, responding to the fundamental research questions of “what is 24 FD” and “what is its performance practice”. In order to respond to this query, five additional questions were designed in different aspects throughout each chapter in order to answer the main research inquiries. When examining a lesser-known performance form, a useful and appropriate methodological framework is essential. Hence, in chapter 1, I revealed the limitation of the current 24 FD scholarship, which situated the practice only within the domain of ethnomusicology. As one single methodology limits the possibility of exploring 24 FD for a substantial and critical study, I advocated the necessity of establishing a comprehensive methodology in 24 FD research. By addressing my approach in this study, I unlocked its salient features of complexity, multiplicity and technicality within a Pan-Asian methodological framework, embracing intercultural and inter-disciplinary approaches, in order to rigorously analyze the technical training and embodied performance practices. I emphasized that the application of a Pan-Asian framework in this thesis did not fully represent the entire (Pan) Asian performance theory. It was an approach that was established by selective theories and practices from India, Japan and Chinese according to the needs of the research process, meaning that other Asian cultures were excluded in this project. The rationale for such a selection was attributed to the relevance of these cultural traditions for the study of 24 FD, mainly due to the historical, social and cultural impacts of these cultures in Malaysian society. Additionally, the Pan-Asian approach examined knowledge of a cross-disciplinary nature, integrating aspects of music, theatre, dance, martial art, calligraphy, and many other areas that overlap in 24 FD performance. The inter-disciplinary approach offered knowledge from different performance genres that benefited 24 FD practice. Moreover, aside from exploring performance knowledge in an inter-disciplinary context, critical

terms such as “performativity” and conceptual ideas (*musicalbody*) were brought into the discussion within the contexts of culture, music performance, performance studies, ethnomusicology and (Pan) Asian performance in different chapters. In the following sections, I will address how my research questions were clarified in which chapter, what the significant findings were and the potential aspects could be expanded further in this project.

Chapter 1 answered research question 1 by examining multiple issues under the research, historical, cultural and social context of 24 FD. Elements including colonization and post-colonization caused the cultural diversity of the Malaysian society. The collective memory and shared historical experience stimulated the emergence of 24 FD. Inter-culturalism, trans-culturalism and multiculturalism that exist in the nation prompts the development of the form. I also summarized three phases as the most significant development in 24 FD history.

Whilst addressing 24 FD as a Malaysian cultural product, it would be more accurate to perceive it as a Pan-Asian model. Indeed, the concept of Malaysian culture was not clearly defined, but generally known to feature in a fusion of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures as the major cultural traditions. To define what Malaysian culture was would not be the main investigation in this project. The pan-Asian paradigm, instead, revealed its relevance in examining 24 FD. I, therefore, examined Nair’s (Pan) Asian performance theory, employing an intercultural and inter-disciplinary approach. Indian, Chinese and Japanese cultural domains were selected to establish a dedicated methodological framework specifically for the case of 24 FD. Chapter 2 responded to the research question that was related to the Asian traditions and practices of the use of the body in

performance. I, in particular, identified several characteristics of selective cultural traditions, including Indian, Japanese and Chinese, which are culturally essential in 24 FD practice. I discovered that the Pan-Asian perspective of the actor's presence is highly relevant to the performative use of the performer's body. The Pan-Asian aesthetic derived from pan-Asian philosophies, and at the same time, pan-Asian performance practice was largely influenced by the Pan-Asian aesthetic. As a result, a pan-Asian performance created an entangled body in its performance practice.

The psychophysical application shed light on Asian performance through the rigorous in-body training. Chapter 3 explained the fact that this psychophysical mechanism was fundamentally the performative technique of an actor in an embodied performance. Technique was a knowledge gained through training. Hence, I was interested in how this technique was conveyed through 24 FD training, and I also identified the collective pedagogical methods that were widely used in the Pan-Asian genres. As such, titled rhythms, rote-learning, and syllabic vocalisation were the main teaching and learning methods in 24 FD training. These methods offered a more embodied experience of teaching and learning through imitation and observation in verbal and visual ways. The embodiment of 24 FD, in this sense, commenced from its training.

Some terms in the Pan-Asian context were not significantly defined. The role division, in particular, can be seen as an example of this phenomenon. The terms "actor" and "performer" were similarly used in the Pan-Asian context. Precisely, dancer, drummer and instrumentalist were actors and performers at the same time. The usage of "actor-drummer", hence, in this thesis followed this Pan-Asian tradition, describing the performer acting his/her roles and striking the drums at the same time. Similar to the use

of “actor-drummer”, the phases of training, rehearsal and performance were not clearly distinguished in my observation. As previously mentioned, the training method of 24 FD tended to be tangible in a physical and functional sense. Training was for the sake of the performance, and on the other hand, performance was on the basis of what has been trained. Training/performance was a repeated and continuous process. In this process, the term “rehearsal” was absent. The term training in 24 FD, instead, would be more appropriate to refer to the materials for performance.

Nair’s (Pan) Asian performance theory largely emphasised the psychophysical mechanism of an actor. On the basis of this debate, this thesis responded to research question 4 by developing the concept of *musicalbody*, fusing the body, music, emotion and feeling. This concept was established in a performative and embodied context. In order to understand how performativity presented in the performance practice of 24 FD, I conducted a performance analysis of the piece entitled *The Memories*, unpacking each performative element in categories of musical, paramusical and extra-musical. Reviewing *The Memories* linked to the conceptualisation of *musicalbody*. In my proposal of *musicalbody*, six principles, highlighting the fusion of multiple components in 24 FD, were codified in various aspects. *Musicalbody* was advanced as my original contribution to 24 FD scholarship, as it was a term that was aesthetically and critically developed on the basis of a wide range of academic theories and a dedicated methodological framework.

I also posed a query as to how contemporary innovation of 24 FD addressed multi-cultural diversity and artistic cultural transformation. Unlike the other research questions, this was not examined in a particular segment, instead, it was blended into the discussion throughout chapters. The contemporary innovation referred to the new

generation of 24 FD, who might have different performance styles and training/performance focus. In this thesis, I did not deliberately distinguish professional teams from traditional teams, as the main research aim was to discuss the nature of 24 FD. As I mentioned earlier, 24 FD has no fixed tradition, and it is highly likely that the professional teams would have more co-produced opportunities with the traditional teams with reference to *The Memories*, as the first example of its kind. To differentiate the two teams may trigger future research criticism. Therefore, discarding the clear division between the two teams, this thesis only selected relevant components of these two teams, where appropriate, as evidence and reference to the main arguments of this research.

My PhD, fundamentally, was to analytically explore the characteristics of multiplicity, technicality and complexity in 24 FD by examining the performativity of 24 FD in the pan-Asian context. The main findings in this project could be summarized as follow:

- The unique performance identity and practice of 24 FD are shaped by the multi-featural characteristic of Malaysia. A 24 FD performer takes multiple roles in performance and training, which could be summarized in the term actor-drummer.
- Technique in Asian performance does not merely refer to the physical motion of an actor, more importantly, it refers to the psychophysical application of an actor's body in performance and training. 24 FD training features the fusion of multiple activities, which do not separate training, rehearsal and performance.
- In Asian performance, philosophical theories give a theoretical formulation to aesthetic concepts and these concepts offer and guide the performance to illuminate an Asiatic characteristic. *Rasa*, as an aesthetic concept, for instance, is

understood as experiential and performative and the concept of *musicalbody*, which I develop in this study, helps a fuller exploration of the aesthetic, philosophical, experiential, performative, cultural and technical dimensions of 24 FD.

The cultural dynamic in the contemporary innovation of 24 FD gradually transformed over the generations. With reference to the three phases of development that I identified in 24 FD history, the cultural transformation occurred from Chinese-only to Malaysian culture dominated and now became an example of (Pan) Asian practice. Essentially, the definition of Malaysian culture referred to a cultural tradition and practice that fused a wide range of adapted cultural elements. In this respect, the Malaysian practice featured a cosmopolitan identity, which was excluded in this thesis. The discussion of Malaysian culture, although inevitable in the inquiry of 24 FD, was not the major focus of this project. 24 FD is still an ongoing project, implying a range of potentials which can happen in its future development. Cosmopolitanism can be a possible scope for further exploration of 24 FD.

Due to the time limit of this project and new observation that I discovered in my most recent fieldtrip to Malaysia in April 2018, I was unable to include several new elements in this thesis mainly because these points tended to be another major avenue of research. In my participation with the Orang Orang Drum Theatre training session, I observed how they liberally explored the inspiration of new repertoires. This drum team was well-known as a theatrical 24 FD team, highlighting the dramatic application in performance. Chew, one of the founders, is interested in exploring what an actor's body can do, hence, relevant literature of theatre was studied in his career. Orang Orang Drum Theatre

favourably encourages self-creativity and a free composition session is usually included in their training. On the site, I witnessed a strong sense of experimental theatre. The influence that the latter brought to Orang Orang Drum Theatre has not been investigated in this project. In point of fact, drum teams are influenced by different elements in their performance practice. This proposes a potential area for further research, examining factors that affect the development of different 24 FD teams. The intention of my PhD thesis is to attract the scholarly attention to 24 FD in academia and activate a long-term research journey of this form. The unsettled issues of 24 FD that I have mentioned in this project will continue to investigate.



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## **Appendix:**

### **1. The authorship and the written period of the *Natyasastra*:**

The authorship and the period in which the text was written are unclear and debatable. Many scholars believe that the text may have been written by several authors, sometimes working together, at other times on their own, across a long period of history and compiled the work in this accumulative manner, ascribing it to the one mentioned author, Bharata, for the sake of suggesting uniformity. Some even believe that the text in its present form is a product of academic researchers. M. M. Ghosh, however, the first English translator of the *Natyasastra*, after a careful reading of the text, believes that the *Natyasastra* probably was created by one single author, as the terminology and writing style show consistency and also because there is a single pattern of thoughts structuring various components of discussions throughout (2006, xiii). Ghosh also suggests that the text might have been written anywhere between 200 BCE and 200 CE due to various linguistic and cultural reasons. Scholars of the *Natyasastra* such as A.B. Keith, M. Ramakrishna Kavi, S.K. De, K.C. Pandey, F.B.J. Kuiper and many others follow this position (Ghosh, 2006, xiii).

### **2. The contents of chapters in the *Natyasastra*:**

Vatsyayan rearranges the chapters in the *Natyasastra* in her own way to make explicit the subjects and themes that Bharata discussed at various stages throughout the text (2008, 58). In chapters 1 to 5 we find detailed information about theatre space, the mythical origin of theatre, rituals associated with theatre practice and finally the details of preparations required equally for the actor and the audience. In the first chapter, Bharata also reveals the methodology he used in the *Natyasastra* to analyze performance.

Chapters 6 and 7 define and explain the concepts and experiences of *rasa*, *bhava*<sup>88</sup> and their varieties in relation to the actor's expressed emotions and the role of imagination in the performance. Chapters 8 to 13 are dedicated to the body. The discourse of the body language (gesture) presented in these chapters is very detailed, covering eyes, eyebrows, eyelids, the whole eye, the nose, the cheeks, the upper and lower chin, the mouth, the neck, the wrist joint, the palm, fingers, the shoulder, the elbows, the wrist, the trunk, the pelvis and the feet, the control of the body in sitting, standing and reclining and the entire functions of the body in a movement-based performance. In each of these, the text provides information to the performer on numerous ways of making use of that particular body part on its own and in conjunction with others; in the performer's work of creating the aesthetic experience of *rasa* in the audience, the text provides examples for each one of these areas. Bharata categorizes various movement patterns in these chapters. Chapters 14 to 19 lay down the verbal, sound and speech elements in a performance, and chapters 20 and 26 provide information about the structure of drama, types of plays and diverse degrees of movements in the plot. Chapters 22 to 26 comprise of details on characteristic expression in various amounts of forms, the colours and types of costuming and makeup for different roles, stage decor, hand props and masks. Chapters 28 to 33 are associated with categories of music, both instrumental and vocal. The *Natyasastra* here describes a complex system of music, covering aspects such as micro-intervals (*sruti*), notes (*svara*), scales (*grama*), modes (*murcchana*), melodic forms

<sup>88</sup> In the *Natyasastra*, Bharata introduced the term *bhava* and further explained it as the latent emotional state, which causes the emergence of expressed emotions that he calls *rasa*. *Bhava* transforms into *rasa* only by the means of performance. In another way, performance is a means for the actor as well as the audience to identify each *rasa* and its corresponding *bhava*. *Bhava* cannot be accessed because it is unmanifested, but it is the root of *rasa*. Bharata categorizes 8 *rasas* and corresponding 8 *bhavas* that cover all possible human emotions.

(*jatis*), and rhythms (*tala*). In chapter 13, Bharata also lays down a series of sitting postures and gaits to personify the sex, characterization and emotional states of a range of characters. He also emphasizes that the entire engagement of the corporal framework of the body evokes feelings and therefore, Bharata's approach to the body is holistic and comprehensive (Ghosh, 2006, 1-3,72-73). Significantly, the *Natyastra* dwells on almost every form of performing art and every element of the psycho-physicality of the actor in a variety of ways.

### **3. The *I Ching***

There are several definitions that are in need of further distinction, as they remain unclear in the current scholarship of Chinese philosophy. Firstly, Fuxi created the *ba gua* which is known as "before heaven diagram" (先天八卦) (Hershock, 2009, 48, 54) in accordance with his observation of nature and the human. Therefore, he is believed to be the creator of the concept; even he did not literally pass the knowledge of *ba gua* to his descendants. Secondly, King Wen rearranged the positions of *Fuxi ba gua* and expanded it into 64 hexagrams. However, neither *Fuxi ba gua*, nor *King Wen ba gua* existed with linguistic interpretations, meaning that they were symbols. Thirdly, Confucius, in his time, completed the interpretation of the *I Ching*, alongside the other five classics<sup>89</sup>. The *xici* is used to explain and comment on the *I Ching*. In this respect, scholars may believe that the *I Ching* only appeared more than three thousand years ago in Chinese history, a notion supported by Cheng (2011), who agrees that the *I Ching* started around the beginning of

<sup>89</sup> Confucius completed six classics originally. During the movement of *the Torching of Manuscript and Premature Burial of Confucian Scholars*, the Qin emperor destroyed the classic of music. Since then, there are only five classics available in Chinese literature.

the Zhou dynasty (1200BC). But different views of the Fuxi period and the emergence of *ba gua* occur in the ancient and contemporary archaeological studies (Xu, 2018, 149). In this thesis, I only use the term the *I Ching* to refer to the essence, meanings and principles of the entire philosophical system and to contextualise 24 FD into the *I Ching* to discuss the implicit application that the *I Ching* can offer in this project, alongside the Indian and Japanese theories.

Before Confucius, the *Fuxi ba gua* was interpreted and understood in various ways, as the origins of the *I Ching* emerged before structural linguistics was developed; it was created as a form of pictograph. As Smith et al. explain, pictography is an ancient style of documenting and recording in which pictures and symbols are carved into bones and oracles (2014, 10). With this nonverbal method, our ancestors are able to express and record their thoughts and messages to their descendants. In line with Huang, the image is the language that communicates the thoughts and concepts of the *I Ching* (2010, 1). Linguistically, the idea of the *I Ching* in its most basic and original form of pictography has been translated countless times, from pictography into the Chinese linguistic system, sinology, and finally adopted into the Western linguistic system, whose philosophy differs from the East, indicating that a translation was lost in the paradigm shift. Translations in English for the *I Ching* focused on the concept of change rather than the underlying essence of it, the core belief of the interconnection between heavenly and human life (Huang, 2010; Legge, 1996; Minford, 2015). This is due to the lack of research interest on the underlying values of the *I Ching*.