



UiTM@Media **2016**

Rencana Pilihan



UiTM@Media
2016

Making music in Malaysia

ROOM FOR FINE-TUNING:

Meeting the needs of aspiring musicians

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IT was only a mere three decades ago, in 1984, when Institut Teknologi MARA (now UiTM) made available the formal study of music at tertiary institutions in Malaysia.

Today, music education is available at many public as well as private institutions of higher learning, with qualifications from the Diploma to postgraduate levels being offered.

The range of courses that are available include those in performance, composition, music education, music business, music technology, ethnomusicology and music production.

UiTM Faculty of Music deputy dean of academic affairs, Associate Professor Dr Shahanum Mohamad Shah, feels that music education has been somewhat stifled due to misperceptions towards the subject by the general public.

"Nevertheless, for graduates, the career prospects are rather wide, depending on your training," she said.

"Many music graduates have found jobs locally as educators in schools, tertiary institutions and in private teaching.

"Within the industry, music and performing arts-related projects constantly require musicians and performers, composers, songwriters, arrangers, sound engineers, producers, music officers, arts managers, entrepreneurs and music technicians.

"Other potential employers include various government ministries, orchestras, city councils and

media stations."

However, she adds, the increase in the number of music graduates has meant that competition has become more intense, especially in areas with limited job openings.

"There is also the continuous advancement of new technologies and media and the changing demands of the music industry to consider," she said.

"Graduates will need to equip themselves with multiple knowledge and skills in the music discipline for competent performance in their tasks.

"The current and future musicians and music educators will need to generate creative and innovative ideas to fulfil society demands."

International College of Music (ICOM) course leader Niles Thomas said that music is a big part of our daily lives and there is always a big demand for new music, which people around the world are indeed producing daily.

For talented and enterprising music graduates who are passionate about music-making, prospects will always be bright.

Primeworks Studio chief executive officer Ahmad Izham Omar, a graduate of Berklee College of Music in Boston, the US, said that music graduates have a wide range of careers to choose from, in both the creative and administrative areas.

On the creative side, they can write songs, jingles, film scores and librettos and be musicians, songwriters,

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producers and arrangers.

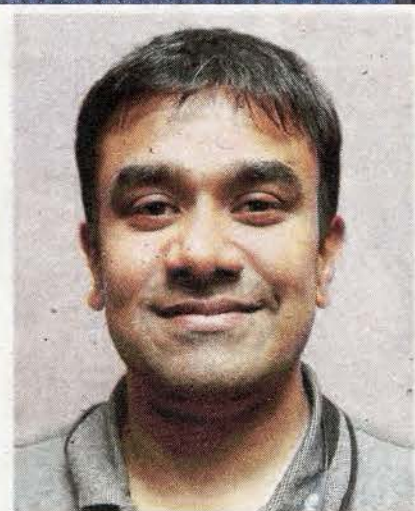
On the administrative side, they can manage venues, artists, orchestras and studios. They can also become promoters, company executives, business managers and lawyers. Or they can go into digital music management.

Said Ahmad Izham: "Studying music enables students to be more creative in their approach to work, which can also apply to other industries. In my case, I became a TV executive!"

Thomas said that ICOM's graduates work in an array of fields in the music industry, such as producing music for commercials (ads), performing music (live concerts and for studio recordings), film scoring, directing music for live concerts



Ahmad Izham Omar



Niles Thomas

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(music director), sound engineering (for live concerts, in the recording studio, for film and TV, etc.), writing, arranging and producing music for artistes and bands, and music teaching (from instrument teaching to university lecturing).

"Many of our graduates have also become successful entrepreneurs, owning recording studios, music production houses, and PA System rental and services," he said.

Twinning programmes are also being offered by certain institutions.

ICOM conducts regular music workshops for aspiring musicians that are taught by visiting lecturers from world-renowned institutions like Berklee.

During these workshops, students will be privy to valuable insights shared by industry professionals on different aspects of music.

Thomas said that ICOM, like Berklee, focuses on contemporary music education.

Students who complete ICOM's Foundation in Music are eligible to receive credit articulation to Berklee's undergraduate programmes, subject to meeting the minimum requirements in terms of grades.

Its programmes integrate music with technology, business and education in order to prepare students for an industry that is constantly evolving.

These include a three-semester Foundation in Music matriculation programme for students who intend to transfer to Berklee, and a joint three-year undergraduate programme offered with the University of Wolverhampton and conducted entirely at ICOM.

"The first year of study at ICOM is comparable to what one would learn at Berklee, and there is significant tuition fee savings if you compare first-year studies at ICOM and Berklee," said Thomas.

"A number of ICOM's faculty members are Berklee graduates, so this adds to the learning experience.

"ICOM students are much better prepared for the Berklee admission audition and interview through their first-year studies here and this, in turn, positions them at a higher chance of scholarship from Berklee."

Said Ahmad Izham: "When I was a student at Berklee, I thrived in the creative environment and will always remember the many

different people I met. Nevertheless, I have to say that many valuable lessons came as much from outside the classroom as from within."

ICOM also offers a diploma in business (music industry), a two-and-a-half-year industry-focused business programme that gives students insights into the music and entertainment industry. Students who successfully complete the diploma can continue their education further at the University of Hertfordshire.

ICOM has also introduced its online platform, reputed to be Asia's first online music school which allows

students to undertake courses without having to physically attend classes on campus.

Added Ahmad Izham: "If we want to see innovation as a key driver for our country's future, then we should make music education compulsory in schools.

"This is not to turn all students into music professionals but rather, to ensure that we adopt the important elements needed to be good in music, like regular practice, focused study, teamwork and most important of all, creativity. Just look at Tony Fernandes!"



Making music in Malaysia



"Graduates will need to equip themselves with **multiple knowledge and skills in the music discipline** for competent performance in their tasks."

Shahanum Mohamad Shah,
UiTM Faculty of Music
deputy dean
of academic affairs



Studying music enables students to be **more creative in their approach to work.**



Music students in Malaysia are known to be **enthusiastic and hardworking.**



INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC (ICOM) faculty staff members include those who have made a name for themselves in the local scene.

Sharon Paul, from the ICOM faculty, is an award-winning producer and arranger who has written and produced music for many top local performers.

To Paul, most teachers of music do it out of passion more than anything else.

"Unlike creating and performing music, teaching it can be challenging because the preparation work and administrative tasks are plenty while the remuneration may not be that great," she said.

"But I like to share my knowledge and experience, and it's rewarding when you do bump into an ex-student who's now working in the industry and they remember you and tell you how much they enjoyed your class. Some still call me teacher, or 'sifu' playfully.

"I really like hearing what my students come up with, their own original works.

"When you inspired them and they in turn create something based on your input, that is what feels good about guiding the next generation of musicians, and I learn from them too."

Paul said that educators themselves are constantly on a learning curve.

"One of the reasons I 'teach' is to learn from my students, to learn new ways to deliver the lesson material, to scope for new and upcoming talents.

"I involve my students in session work for my productions and also recommend them to other studios.

"We are always challenged to come up with new ways to deliver the material, the material is always the same, the theory behind the music doesn't change so it's up to the lecturer to make it interesting to capture the attention of the student who is very evolved these days, thanks

to the Internet and free music sites."

Paul finds it fulfilling when she sees her students doing well in the industry.

"One is a pianist who plays for the Jazz Festival and all the big concerts in KL, another is a music director-cum-violinist-cum-pianist and one more is a bassist who plays and sessions with many artistes and music directors and who is also lecturing in ICOM."

Kevin Stannard, the director of performance and outreach at the University of Wolverhampton's School of Performing Arts, said that the

aim of any music teacher is to instil in young people a love for music which will last all their life.

"The early stages of life are crucially important when the young mind is impressionable and malleable so it is vital to sow 'musical' seeds in the heads and minds of the learner from the outset (mother/father > kindergarten > primary school and so on)," he said.

"It is fair to say that the best teacher of music is a guide, a shepherd, a model of good practice and a facilitator and also that the best teacher provides a musical environment, conducive for learning, which enables the learner to develop.

"Nowadays, the teacher has to be adaptable and aware of/provide the resources required to help music grow (classroom, computer lab, studio etc) and the connections/interrelationships between music, per se, and the worlds of the commercial music industry, music education and the role of music in life-long learning.

"Essentially, there are many different ways to teach music but the desirable outcome is always the same: confident, capable, communicative and articulate performers/composers/teachers with a love for music!"

Stannard said he has found the music students in Malaysia to be very enthusiastic about their learning and always willing to work hard.



Sharon Paul

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"However, I often have to challenge Malaysian students in higher education to become more independent learners and to take responsibility for their own learning," he added.

Singer and vocal coach Vince Chong said that due to misperception, the music profession is

generally not viewed in Malaysia as glamorous or sophisticated as other professions like doctors, lawyers and chefs.

Another drawback faced by musicians is not having as stable a job as those in other professions, for those who need to be hired for gigs.

"However, once you're established, the rewards can be good," he said.

Nevertheless, Chong feels that the mainstream music scene in Malaysia is still too narrow and controlled.

He hopes that social media will force its opening up to more different genres.



Kevin Stannard (standing) with students at ICOM.

- **Penasihat**

Profesor Emeritus Dato' Dr Hassan Said
Naib Canselor

- **Ketua Projek**

Alfina Bakar

- **Pengurus Produksi**

Darus Kasim
Rosly Mahmud

- **Penyelaras Bahan Akhbar**

Firdaus Abd Hanan
Hanisah Yacob
Datin Umminalah Salleh

- **Pembantu**

Penyelaras Bahan Akhbar

Hazizi Jantan
Nor Azlina Nordin
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Raja Nazrul Raja Hisham

- **Pereka Grafik Utama**

Junaidy Talib

- **Pereka Grafik**

Rosdi Abdul Hamid
Mohd Nor Firdaus Mohd Isa

- **Sumber Keratan Akhbar**

Utusan Malaysia, Mingguan Malaysia, Berita Harian, Berita Minggu,
New Straits Times, The Star, Sunday Star, The Sun, Star Metro,
Kosmo, Harian Metro, Sinar Harian.

