

## Traces of the History of the Composer's Role: Development of Deli Malay Music

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**How to cite:** Lukitaningsih., Priyatna, A.J., Ayubi, M.A., Simbolon, K.S., Aritonang, M.N., & Wati, R. (2024). Traces of the History of the Composer's Role: Development of Deli Malay Music. *Gondang: Jurnal Seni dan Budaya*, Vol 8(2): Page. 470-482

**Article History :** Received: Jun 03, 2024. Revised: Sept 29, 2024. Accepted: Dec 25, 2024

### ABSTRACT

*This article describes the role of composers in the development of Deli Malay music in the city of Medan and examines the development of Deli Malay music from a scientific perspective history. The purpose of this study is to analyze the historical traces of the role of composers in Deli Malay music and elaborate on the development of Deli Malay music in the city of Medan. The method used here is a historical method with a literature study for data collection. The results of the research on Malay music show a combination with Arabic music based on Islamic Sharia, as found in the instruments and musical arrangements adapted to Malay-style characteristics, the song lyrics contains poems about daily life, full of moral messages, and have an influence on the Malay community as well as on other ethnic groups, especially in Medan city. Malay music reached its peak in the 1970s, signified by the many Malay orchestras that grew and developed during that time. By the year 2000, Malay music had experienced technological advances in terms of musical instruments, making Malay music treasures more colorful, less rigid, and more varied, providing a new atmosphere in Malay music. The role of musical composers is important in the development and maintenance of Malay Deli's musical heritage. They are responsible for creating new songs, arranging traditional music, and preserving the existing music repertoire. Thus, the role of Deli Malay music composers is crucial in ensuring the continuity and development of traditional music, keeping this cultural heritage alive and relevant amid changing times.*

### KEYWORDS

Historical Traces  
Composer Role  
Development of Art  
Deli Malay Music

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### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of music in the city of Medan offers a compelling area of study, as the city is a melting pot of diverse cultures and ethnicities. Medan is home to various ethnic groups, including Malays, Bataks, Javanese, Minangkabau, Acehese, and others. Each group brings its unique cultural traditions, including distinct musical expressions, contributing to the city's vibrant and varied musical landscape.

Music, as an art form, transcends being merely a collection of harmonized, rhythmic, and melodic sounds. It serves as a powerful medium to express emotions, evoke feelings, and inspire creativity. Across the globe, music plays a central role in daily life, finding its place in religious ceremonies, celebrations, entertainment, and artistic expressions. Music also serves as a channel for social, political, and cultural commentary, making it a dynamic force in human societies.

The diversity of musical genres—from classical, pop, and rock to jazz, blues, and traditional forms—reflects the rich creativity inherent in music. Each genre possesses unique

characteristics in terms of instrumentation, structure, vocal styles, and lyrical themes. Beyond its artistic dimensions, music becomes a tool for self-expression and healing, creating shared experiences that unite individuals and communities.

Medan's rich musical heritage is epitomized by the Malay ethnic group, particularly through the art form of Deli Malay music and songs. Deli Malay music, an integral part of Malay culture, reflects the traditions and identity of the Malay sub-ethnic group residing in Medan, North Sumatra. The Malay ethnicity is historically known for its adaptability and openness, traits that have facilitated interactions with diverse cultural influences, including Indian, Middle Eastern, and European traditions. These external influences have left a significant imprint on Malay music, enriching its structure, tone, and instrumentation while preserving its distinctive essence.

Deli Malay music is characterized by its unique blend of pentatonic, heptatonic, and diatonic scales, alongside vocal techniques such as "crank" and "swim." The integration of instruments like the tambourine, gambus, violin, and guitar further exemplifies its fusion of traditional and modern elements. These features create a deeply evocative musical experience, often capturing themes of love, daily life, nature, and cultural values. Iconic songs like *Selayang Pandang* and *Cumbuan Dewa* reflect this emotional depth and cultural richness.

Historically, the development of Deli Malay music has also been shaped by technological advancements and global musical trends. For instance, the emergence of the Malay orchestra in the late 1930s—featuring ensembles like the "Orkest Melajoe Sinar Medan"—marked a significant evolution in Malay music. This orchestra harmonized Malay melodies with European instrumentation while maintaining the genre's cultural integrity.

Despite its rich history, scholarly research on Deli Malay music remains limited. While Andrew Weintraub's study, *Music and Malayness: The Malay Orchestra in Indonesia 1950–1965*, and Harahap Sulaiman's *Genealogy of Malay Music* provide important insights into Malay music, their scope is restricted in time and geography. They do not comprehensively address the role of composers, the evolution of instrumentation, or the cultural values embedded in the lyrics of Deli Malay music in Medan.

This article aims to fill this gap by analyzing the historical role of composers in shaping Deli Malay music in Medan. It explores the development of instrumentation, the cultural values reflected in the lyrics, and the broader evolution of this unique musical tradition. Through this study, the article seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance of Deli Malay music within the broader context of Medan's diverse musical heritage.

## METHOD

This study employs the historical method to investigate the role of composers in the development of Deli Malay music. As defined by Gottschalk (1985), the historical method involves critically testing and analyzing records and evidence of past events. The approach emphasizes a systematic process to ensure the reliability and validity of findings, particularly in reconstructing the cultural and musical history of Deli Malay music in Medan.

The research process began with the collection of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of direct evidence from individuals with firsthand knowledge or direct involvement in the historical events under study. For this research, these included eyewitness testimonies from individuals closely associated with Deli Malay music, including musicians, journalists, and family members of composers. Secondary sources, on the other hand, were drawn from individuals who may not have been directly involved but

provided insights based on their research or interpretations of historical events. Examples of secondary sources include literature studies, archival documents, and published works on Malay music.

The study employed a combination of qualitative data collection techniques, including interviews and literature reviews. The interview process was crucial for obtaining in-depth, nuanced, and context-specific insights into the evolution of Deli Malay music. The selected informants represented a range of perspectives, ensuring that the data captured both personal experiences and broader historical trends. The key informants included:

1. **Mr. Idris Pasaribu** – A journalist and cultural analyst in Medan, who provided context on the socio-cultural environment in which Deli Malay music evolved.
2. **Mr. Yusrianto** – An employee of RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) Medan, who shared insights into the role of radio in promoting and preserving Deli Malay music.
3. **Mr. Parlin Tobing** – A former RRI Medan reporter, who offered historical accounts of performances and recordings during the golden era of Deli Malay music.
4. **Mr. Bachsufri** – A former musician with the Medan Studio Orchestra, who provided firsthand accounts of musical practices and the integration of Western and traditional elements in Deli Malay music.
5. **Mr. Darma Bakti** – The son of composer Lilys Suhairy and grandson of composer Lily Suheiry, who shared personal anecdotes and information about the creative processes and contributions of these composers to the Deli Malay music tradition.
6. **Mr. Raditya Yehuda and Employees of Lokananta Records (Mr. Andi and Mr. Anggit)** – These individuals provided information on historical recordings, the preservation of Deli Malay music, and the role of recording studios in the dissemination of this musical tradition.

The data collection process also included a literature study, examining books, journal articles, and archival materials related to Deli Malay music, composers, and its cultural context. These secondary sources complemented the interview data, offering a broader historical perspective.

After the data collection phase, the authenticity and accuracy of the data were verified through a rigorous validation process. This involved cross-referencing information obtained from different sources to ensure consistency and reliability. Following verification, the data were subjected to interpretation, which involved both analysis and synthesis. The analysis process focused on identifying patterns, themes, and relationships between the role of composers, the evolution of musical instruments, and the cultural values embedded in Deli Malay music. Synthesis involved integrating these findings into a cohesive narrative that reflects the historical development of the genre.

The final stage of the historical method was historiography—writing the history of Deli Malay music based on the verified and interpreted data. This narrative aims to illuminate the contributions of composers, the cultural significance of their works, and the broader historical context in which Deli Malay music flourished. By employing this systematic and critical approach, the study provides a comprehensive and reliable account of the development of Deli Malay music in Medan.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### First Scene: Historical Traces of the Role of Composers in Deli Malay Music

The history of musical art in Indonesia holds immense significance and must be preserved. This preservation ensures that Indonesia's national musical treasures, particularly those rooted in Medan, continue to thrive and be recognized as part of the nation's rich cultural heritage. Beyond their artistic value, music serves as a tool for education, recreation, and innovation, providing opportunities for regional music to evolve and become a platform for showcasing Indonesia's unique cultural diversity. Moreover, music reminds the public of the unparalleled richness of Indonesian art.

Research into the history of musical art allows us to trace the evolution of our perspectives on the past, how they shift over time, and how these shifts influence identity, culture, and contemporary policies. The process of exploring historical traces, or historiography, involves studying how history is documented and interpreted. This includes analyzing historical sources, employing methodologies used by historians, and interpreting past events. Several key aspects of historiography include historical sources (both primary and secondary), historical methodology (source criticism, contextual analysis, and historiographic theories), and periodization (dividing history into specific periods for focused analysis) (Gottschalk, p. 23). In this context, the role of composers in Deli Malay music emerges as a significant area of exploration.

A composer is an individual who creates music, whether in the form of songs, symphonies, sonatas, or other musical compositions. Composers combine melody, harmony, rhythm, and various musical elements to craft pieces that performers can bring to life. The creative process of a composer involves generating ideas, writing musical notation, revising compositions, and refining them into polished works. Creativity plays a crucial role in this process, as composers often draw inspiration from their surroundings, personal experiences, and cultural heritage.

Composers hold a pivotal role in the world of music, shaping works that inspire, entertain, and influence generations. They constantly experiment with new techniques, instruments, and styles to expand the boundaries of existing musical traditions. For Malay music composers, their craft reflects a deep understanding of the cultural roots and everyday life of the Malay community. The Malay ethnic group possesses unique concepts of musical scales and rhythms, which predate external influences from Indian, Persian, and Western musical traditions. Over time, traditional Malay music absorbed these external elements, evolving into Malay popular music through the integration of instruments and styles introduced by these cultures.

Malay music, as a traditional form, is deeply rooted in Islamic culture, religion, and the historical experiences of the Malay community (Arga:166). It developed primarily through oral traditions, emphasizing improvisation and communal creativity. According to Sinar (1990:1-6), Malay music seamlessly integrates with traditional Malay theater forms such as Makyong, Menora, Rodat, Silat, and Zapin, enriching entertainment and performance arts. Within the Malay community, music symbolizes togetherness, serving as a cultural and spiritual bridge among its people.

The role of Malay music composers is integral to the genre's development and preservation. One prominent figure is **Lily Suheiry**, a groundbreaking composer who profoundly influenced Deli Malay music. Her journey began with mastery over various musical instruments, including the violin, saxophone, piano, and clarinet. This strong foundation enabled her to contribute significantly to the evolution of Malay music.

In 1938, Lily Suheiry joined other Medan musicians in traveling to Singapore to record



vinyl records under the label His Master's Voice. Her experiences during this period greatly influenced her songwriting. The socio-political context of her time, particularly the Japanese occupation and Dutch colonial rule, inspired her to compose songs that reflected themes of resistance and struggle. Her compositions embodied the spirit of the Malay song genre, providing both emotional resonance and cultural expression (Idris Pasaribu, January 10, 2023).

Through these efforts, Lily Suheiry introduced unique and organic musical works to the public, leaving an indelible mark on her era. Her compositions not only entertained but also inspired and conveyed profound ideas and emotions. Her ability to translate the experiences of her community into music ensured that her work remained relevant and impactful.

In 1952, Lily Suheiry took her contributions to the next level by establishing "Lily's Band" and the "Mita Orchestra." The following year, she collaborated with colleagues Usman and Juso to form the **Medan Studio Orchestra (OSM)**, which later became the Radio Organ of the Republic of Indonesia (RRI) Medan. Lily Suheiry served as the leader of this orchestra. Under her leadership, RRI Medan broadcast programs featuring Deli Malay music and songs, enriching the lives of Medan's residents (Yusrianto, January 27, 2023).

Composers like Lily Suheiry utilized various platforms to ensure their music reached audiences far and wide. These platforms included live music performances, orchestras, and ensembles, as well as radio and television programs dedicated to Deli Malay music. Through these mediums, her work resonated with audiences across generations, solidifying her legacy as a cultural icon.

According to Mr. Parlin Tobing, some of Lily Suheiry's notable compositions, such as "Pemuda Indonesia" and "Marheni," were performed by Saimun and broadcast on NIROM radio as early as 1938. Even during the challenges posed by Japanese occupation, Lily Suheiry remained steadfast in her dedication to music, continuing to compose and perform. Her works were featured in opera performances, giving rise to popular Malay compositions such as "Rayuan Kencana," "Bunga Rampai," and "Araskabu." Remarkably, more than 10 songs were composed during the Japanese colonial period (interview results, February 15, 2023).

Composers like Lily Suheiry reflect and respond to cultural and social conditions through their music. Their works often serve as mirrors of historical events, social changes, and cultural trends. By creating music that resonates with the experiences and emotions of their communities, composers play a crucial role in preserving and strengthening cultural identity.

Furthermore, composers collaborate closely with musicians and orchestras to arrange and orchestrate their works. They provide musical notation (scores) for performers, ensuring that their creative vision is faithfully realized during live performances. In the context of Malay music, composers strike a balance between tradition and innovation, preserving cultural heritage while introducing new elements that resonate with contemporary audiences.

Through their creativity and dedication, composers enrich the musical landscape and foster greater appreciation and understanding of Malay culture, both locally and globally. Their contributions ensure that Malay music continues to thrive, inspiring new generations of musicians and audiences.

In conclusion, the historical traces of Deli Malay music reveal the vital role composers play in shaping and sustaining cultural identity. Figures like Lily Suheiry not only created timeless works but also helped build institutions and platforms that supported the growth of Malay music. Their legacy underscores the importance of preserving and celebrating Indonesia's rich musical heritage, ensuring that its beauty and uniqueness continue to inspire for generations to come.

## Second Scene: The Role of Composers in Deli Malay Music

The role of composers in the development and preservation of Deli Malay music is multidimensional, encompassing efforts to document, innovate, collaborate, and promote cultural heritage. Their contributions are essential in ensuring that Malay music evolves with the times while remaining deeply rooted in its traditions. Below is a comprehensive exploration of these roles, integrated into a unified narrative.

Composers play a critical role in documenting and preserving traditional Malay music, such as zapin, dondang sayang, and Malay gamelan. This process involves the meticulous task of creating notations for traditional melodies and rhythms, ensuring that these musical treasures are not lost to time. By transcribing oral traditions into written formats, composers provide future generations with access to the rich heritage of Malay music. This effort also facilitates the teaching and performance of traditional music in both formal and informal settings.

Additionally, composers are actively involved in reconstructing older musical works that may have faded into obscurity or are no longer performed. By reviving these compositions, they breathe new life into forgotten pieces, ensuring that the beauty and cultural significance of these works continue to resonate with contemporary audiences. This dual effort—documentation and reconstruction—cements the legacy of traditional Malay music, making it a living tradition that adapts while maintaining its historical essence.

Malay composers are at the forefront of innovation, blending traditional elements with modern musical genres to create something entirely new and appealing. They integrate the rich melodies and rhythms of Malay music with popular genres like pop, rock, and jazz, leading to the emergence of subgenres such as Malay pop and Malaysian rhythm. This fusion expands the appeal of Malay music, making it accessible to younger audiences and ensuring its relevance in the modern musical landscape.

In addition to genre fusion, composers experiment with new instruments and music technologies. They incorporate instruments like keyboards, electric guitars, and synthesizers into traditional Malay compositions, creating a fresh, dynamic sound while maintaining the core identity of Malay music. This willingness to innovate enriches the musical repertoire and allows Malay music to engage with global audiences, further cementing its place in the world of contemporary music.

Music created by composers often serves as a reflection of the social and cultural identity of the Malay community. Composers imbue their works with themes rooted in Malay traditions, values, and beliefs. Whether through lyrics that celebrate local customs or melodies that evoke the spirit of Malay culture, their compositions preserve and promote cultural heritage. This connection fosters a sense of pride and belonging among listeners, reinforcing the importance of cultural identity in a rapidly changing world.

Beyond reflecting cultural identity, composers play a vital role in promoting Malay culture on an international stage. Through live performances, recordings, and collaborations, they showcase the richness and diversity of Malay music to global audiences. These efforts foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, allowing Malay culture to contribute to the global dialogue on music and heritage. By acting as cultural ambassadors, composers elevate the profile of Malay music and ensure its enduring legacy.

The creative process of composing music often involves close collaboration with singers and musicians. Composers work hand in hand with performers to arrange and present their compositions in ways that maximize their emotional and artistic impact. This synergy between composers and performers results in songs that resonate deeply with audiences, becoming iconic representations of Malay music.

Many composers also take on the role of mentors, nurturing new talent and guiding the next generation of Malay musicians. Through mentorship and production, they provide aspiring singers and musicians with opportunities to develop their skills and showcase their potential. This role is crucial in sustaining the vibrancy of the Malay music industry, as it ensures a continuous influx of fresh talent and creative energy.

Malay composers have made significant contributions to visual media, crafting evocative music for films, television dramas, and theatrical productions. Their compositions enhance storytelling by amplifying emotions and creating immersive atmospheres that bring narratives to life. Whether it's a poignant film score underscoring dramatic moments or an energetic soundtrack for a television drama, composers play an indispensable role in shaping the emotional landscape of visual media.

In addition to film scores, composers create jingles and commercial music for advertising campaigns. By incorporating elements of Malay music into these compositions, they showcase the versatility of the genre while communicating messages effectively. This use of Malay music in media not only expands its reach but also reinforces its relevance in contemporary society, demonstrating its ability to adapt to diverse contexts.

The significant contributions of composers to Malay music are exemplified by figures such as **Said Effendi** and **Lily Suheiry**, whose works have left a lasting impact on the genre. Said Effendi, a Malay artist of Arab descent from North Sumatra, was a prolific composer who shaped the development of Malay music with his creativity and vision. His compositions reflected the cultural and social dynamics of his time, capturing the essence of the Malay experience through music.

Lily Suheiry, another iconic figure, made an indelible mark on the Malay music scene with her innovative and heartfelt compositions. Over her career, she created hundreds of songs, with her most popular work being the iconic *Selayang Pandang*. Her songs explored themes of love, nature, and the struggles of life, including resistance against colonial rule during the Japanese occupation. Her ability to weave personal experiences and historical events into her music made her compositions deeply resonant and impactful.

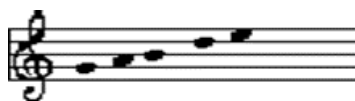
Lily Suheiry was not only a composer but also a visionary who elevated Malay music to new heights. She introduced orchestral arrangements into the Malay music genre, collaborating with the Medan Studio Orchestra (OSM) to create sophisticated compositions that blended traditional elements with contemporary styles. Her work with renowned Malay singers such as Rubiah, Nur Ainun, and Tuty Daulay further enriched the Malay music repertoire, making it a vital part of Medan's cultural identity.

Composers play a pivotal role in the development and preservation of Malay music, ensuring its continuity and relevance in a rapidly changing world. Through their efforts in documentation, innovation, collaboration, and cultural promotion, they act as custodians of a rich musical tradition while pushing the boundaries of creativity. Figures like Lily Suheiry and Said Effendi exemplify the transformative impact of composers, whose works continue to inspire and resonate with audiences across generations.

Their contributions highlight the importance of composers not only as creators but also as cultural ambassadors, educators, and innovators. By preserving the past, embracing the present, and shaping the future, they ensure that Malay music remains a vibrant and integral part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. In doing so, they enrich the global musical landscape, fostering a deeper appreciation for the beauty and complexity of Malay culture.

### Third Scene: The Development of Deli Malay Music in Medan City

The development of Deli Malay music in Medan City is a fascinating journey of cultural evolution, deeply rooted in a rich heritage that predates external influences. Traditional Malay music, with its intricate concepts of scales and rhythms, offers a unique system of "sounds," such as mersik, garau, garau alang, and pekak. These sounds, each possessing distinct characteristics, influence the tuning of musical instruments like the violin and rebab, as well as the overall mode system. This nuanced tonal landscape reflects the profound depth of Malay music, a testament to its cultural and artistic sophistication. The origins of instruments such as the violin and the fiddle, which reached the Malay world through European and Middle Eastern civilizations, further highlight the interplay between local traditions and global exchanges.



**Figure 1.** Examples of Pentatonic Scales in Malay Music Culture

Malay musicians and songwriters from the past were masters of improvisation, demonstrating creativity in both melody and rhythm. Terms such as "cengkok," "gerenek," and "song breaks" illustrate their innovative approaches to music-making. These techniques allowed for expressive interpretations, comparable to sliding pitch techniques, tremolos, and accentuated downbeats in Western music. The ability to improvise with such nuance speaks to the artistry and skill of Malay musicians, who enriched their performances with these intricate details. Improvisation in Malay music, therefore, serves not only as a creative outlet but also as a means of preserving and perpetuating traditional practices within an ever-evolving cultural context.



**Figure 2.** Maqam System (Scales) and Rhythms from Islamic Culture in the Middle East

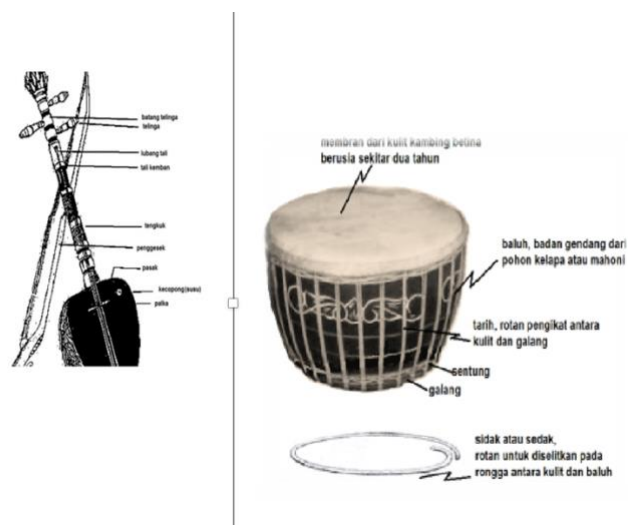
The concept of rhythm, or "irama," further underscores the complexity of Malay music. Rhythm patterns, durations, and onomatopoeic sounds that mimic various types of drums and ostinato predate even the influences of Hinduism and Islam. These rhythmic elements were integral to animistic rituals, such as rice harvesting ceremonies, where gratitude was expressed to supernatural powers for bountiful harvests. The invocation of spells by skilled individuals marked the beginning of these ceremonies, blending music with spiritual and communal practices. This animistic heritage laid the groundwork for the integration of



subsequent cultural and religious influences, illustrating the adaptability and resilience of Malay musical traditions.

The arrival of Hindu culture introduced new dimensions to Malay music, exemplified by genres like Chalti. This ensemble music, combining harmonium, violin, and tabla, gained popularity in the mid-20th century through the works of composers such as Said Effendi, Lyli Suheiri, and P. Ramlee. Chalti music later evolved into the rhythmic style of dangdut, pioneered by artists like Rhoma Irama and Elvi Sukaesih. These developments showcase the fluidity of Malay music, which continually absorbs and reinterprets external influences while maintaining its distinctive character. The integration of Hindu elements thus represents a significant chapter in the ongoing narrative of Malay musical evolution.

The introduction of Islam to the East Coast of Sumatra marked another transformative period in the history of Malay music. This influence is particularly evident in the adoption of instruments such as the gambus, which became emblematic of Malay musical identity. The fusion of Islamic culture with existing traditions enriched the musical landscape, fostering the creation of nasyid, kasidah, and other art forms that reflect Islamic values. Practices like hadrah, marhaban, and barzanji further illustrate the deep integration of Islamic spirituality into Malay music. These expressions not only reinforce religious devotion but also contribute to the cultural identity of the Malay community, demonstrating the harmonious coexistence of faith and artistry.



**Figure 3.** Rebab Melayu and Gendang Ronggeng

Islam's influence on Malay culture extends to the transformation of traditional animistic practices. Rituals that once involved reverence for natural elements have been recontextualized within an Islamic framework. The incorporation of phrases like "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim" signifies a cultural shift that aligns Malay traditions with Islamic teachings. This adaptation is evident in the prevalence of Islamic art forms within North Sumatran Malay culture, such as dhikr, rodan, and ratib. These practices serve as both spiritual expressions and cultural markers, illustrating the symbiotic relationship between religion and cultural heritage. The integration of Islamic music principles, such as the rhythmic styles of zapin and nasyid, further exemplifies this dynamic interplay.

The concept of maqam, or melodic modes, provides a foundation for the development of melody in Islamic music, which has significantly influenced Malay music. Maqams such as rast, bayati, and Hijaz offer a framework for compositions that range from devotional songs

to celebratory performances. These modes, coupled with intricate rhythmic patterns, highlight the sophistication of Malay music and its ability to convey a wide spectrum of emotions and narratives. The adoption of these elements underscores the adaptability of Malay music, which seamlessly blends local traditions with broader Islamic musical practices.

Western culture, introduced during the Portuguese rule of Malacca in 1511, brought yet another layer of influence to Malay music. Instruments like the accordion, saxophone, and acoustic guitar, along with electronic innovations such as keyboards and electric violins, have expanded the sonic possibilities of Malay music. This exposure to Western music and technology presents both opportunities and challenges for the Malay community. While it enables the creation of new musical forms, it also necessitates a careful balance to preserve the essence of traditional Malay music. The incorporation of Western elements, therefore, reflects a conscious effort to navigate cultural exchange while safeguarding identity.

In Medan City, the development of Deli Malay music exemplifies this intricate tapestry of influences. Composers and musicians have played a pivotal role in preserving traditional forms while embracing innovation. Their work ensures that Malay music remains vibrant and relevant, resonating with contemporary audiences while honoring its historical roots. The synthesis of animistic, Hindu, Islamic, and Western elements within Deli Malay music illustrates the richness of this cultural heritage. It is a testament to the enduring creativity and adaptability of the Malay community, whose musical legacy continues to inspire and connect generations.

#### **Fourth Scene**

Art, as a profound expression of ethnic pride, plays a pivotal role in shaping and preserving community identity. Among various forms of art, music stands out as a significant cultural medium, influencing society deeply through its capacity to educate, convey messages of da'wah (Islamic preaching), and serve as a tool for cultural preservation. As Widyatama (2012) notes, music transcends mere auditory pleasure, becoming a channel for reinforcing communal values and fostering a sense of belonging.

At its core, music embodies a complex interplay of ideas, ranging from spatial and tonal concepts to intricate melodic and rhythmic patterns. The spatial dimension of music refers to the organization of sound, encompassing the arrangement of pitches, tonal regions, and melodic contours within a composition. This spatial organization provides the framework for musical expression, shaping how sounds interact and harmonize. Complementing this is the temporal dimension, which focuses on rhythm, meter, and tempo. These two dimensions—space and time—are intrinsically linked, working in tandem to create a cohesive auditory experience. In Malay culture, this synthesis of spatial and temporal elements forms the foundation of traditional music, enriching its role as an integral part of daily life and cultural expression.

In the context of Malay culture, music serves not only as an art form but as a vital element that enhances communal identity and cohesion. It accompanies a wide array of rituals, ceremonies, and social activities, acting as a reflection of the community's values, beliefs, and traditions. This cultural significance elevates music beyond entertainment, embedding it deeply within the fabric of Malay life. Whether during wedding ceremonies, religious festivities, or harvest celebrations, music becomes a medium through which the collective spirit of the community is expressed and preserved.

Deli Malay music, a distinctive genre within the broader spectrum of Malay culture, exemplifies this dual role of preservation and innovation. Over time, the development of

Deli Malay music has seen numerous adjustments and collaborations with various instruments, elements, and genres, creating a dynamic and appealing package for listeners. Despite these innovations, Deli Malay music retains its unique identity, particularly through the use of traditional instruments such as the Pak Pung drum. This instrument, central to the genre, sets the tempo and imbues the music with a characteristic rhythm that distinguishes it from other styles. The drum's resonance carries with it the echoes of history, serving as a bridge between the past and the present.

As the music industry evolves, Deli Malay music continues to adapt to modern trends, ensuring its relevance within Indonesia's diverse musical landscape. The infusion of contemporary influences into traditional compositions breathes new life into the genre, allowing it to resonate with younger audiences while maintaining its cultural roots. This blend of tradition and modernity not only preserves the heritage of Deli Malay music but also highlights its versatility and enduring appeal. The result is a rich and dynamic musical experience that celebrates the genre's historical depth while embracing the possibilities of innovation.

One notable aspect of Deli Malay music is its openness to collaboration and experimentation. Throughout its history, the genre has integrated elements from Middle Eastern, Western, and other regional musical traditions, creating a unique fusion that enriches its repertoire. For instance, the influence of Middle Eastern music is evident in the incorporation of instruments such as the gambus and rebab, as well as in melodic structures that reflect Arab-Islamic aesthetics. These elements, combined with the traditional rhythms and melodies of Deli Malay music, create a sound that is both distinct and universally appealing.

In Medan, the vibrant cultural hub of North Sumatra, the development of Deli Malay music has been particularly dynamic. During the 1970s, Malay orchestras began to flourish in the city, offering a new platform for the genre to thrive. These orchestras, characterized by their blend of traditional and modern instruments, played a significant role in popularizing Deli Malay music and expanding its reach. The orchestral arrangements, often featuring violins, accordions, and other Western instruments alongside traditional drums and gambus, brought a new level of sophistication to the genre, appealing to a broader audience.

By the 2000s, technological advancements further transformed the landscape of Deli Malay music. The introduction of electronic instruments, such as keyboards and electric guitars, added new dimensions to the genre, enabling more complex compositions and diverse soundscapes. These innovations not only enhanced the musical experience but also ensured that Deli Malay music remained relevant in an era dominated by globalized pop culture. Despite these changes, the genre has managed to retain its core identity, rooted in the values and traditions of the Malay community.

The influence of Deli Malay music extends beyond its own boundaries, significantly shaping other genres within Indonesia's music industry. One prominent example is the dangdut genre, which owes much of its rhythmic and melodic foundation to Deli Malay music. The fusion of Malay musical elements with Indian, Middle Eastern, and Western influences has resulted in a vibrant and widely popular genre that continues to evolve. This cross-pollination of styles highlights the adaptability and creative potential of Deli Malay music, ensuring its lasting impact on Indonesia's cultural heritage.

Preservation efforts have played a crucial role in sustaining the richness of Deli Malay music. The documentation of traditional compositions through recording and notation has been instrumental in safeguarding the genre for future generations. Albums featuring Malay-language songs serve not only as a testament to the genre's vitality but also as a resource for

musicians and scholars interested in exploring its depths. These recordings, often produced in collaboration with local artists and cultural organizations, provide a snapshot of the genre's evolution while celebrating its enduring legacy.

The development of Deli Malay music also reflects broader cultural and social changes. As the genre adapts to contemporary influences, it continues to serve as a symbol of the community's resilience and creativity. This dual role of preserving tradition while embracing innovation underscores the dynamic nature of Deli Malay music. It is a genre that evolves with the times, yet remains deeply rooted in the cultural identity of the Deli Malay community.

In recent years, efforts to promote Deli Malay music have gained momentum, driven by a growing recognition of its cultural significance. Festivals, workshops, and performances dedicated to the genre provide opportunities for both appreciation and education, fostering a deeper understanding of its heritage. These initiatives not only celebrate the music but also encourage its continued development, ensuring that it remains a vibrant and integral part of Indonesia's cultural landscape.

Ultimately, the story of Deli Malay music is one of continuity and change. It is a genre that honors its past while looking toward the future, embodying the spirit of a community that values its traditions yet remains open to new possibilities. Through its melodies and rhythms, Deli Malay music tells the story of a people—their struggles, aspirations, and triumphs—preserving their identity while enriching the broader tapestry of Indonesian culture. As it continues to evolve, Deli Malay music stands as a testament to the enduring power of art to connect, inspire, and transform.

## CONCLUSIONS

Deli Malay music represents a profound embodiment of cultural identity, tracing its origins to the 6th century AD and evolving continuously in response to historical, social, and cultural shifts. Rooted in kasidah introduced by Arab traders, this musical tradition has flourished into a rich tapestry that reflects the ethos of Malay society. By the mid-20th century, Deli Malay music emerged not merely as public entertainment but as a vehicle for transmitting high literary values through lyrics steeped in pantun. These poetic verses, intertwined with daily life, offer moral guidance and cultural wisdom, accompanied by the distinct cengkok and intricate musical arrangements unique to the Malay tradition. The ability of Deli Malay music to assimilate and adapt foreign influences—whether Middle Eastern, Indian, or Western—demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of Malay culture. While these external elements have enriched its repertoire, Malay music remains firmly grounded in its identity, adhering to cultural norms and Islamic principles. This duality—a synthesis of innovation and tradition—is a hallmark of its enduring appeal and relevance.

In essence, Deli Malay music serves not only as a reflection of the Malay community's identity but also as a testament to its cultural vitality and creativity. Its unique rhythms, melodic patterns, and thematic richness continue to resonate with contemporary audiences, bridging generations and transcending geographical boundaries. As a dynamic art form, it encapsulates the essence of Malay life while contributing to the broader cultural mosaic of the Indonesian archipelago, ensuring its preservation and growth in the ever-changing cultural landscape.

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