



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
SINGAPORE

ANNEX A: EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

First presented in 2019 in Venice, Italy, *Music For Everyone: Variations on a Theme* was held at the Singapore Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale, one of the most prestigious international contemporary art platforms. The exhibition references a series of music concerts organised by Singapore's Ministry of Culture from 1971 to 1985, responding to state directives that deploy the arts as a means of nation building during this period.

The expanded presentation at the National Museum of Singapore comprises three sections: *A History; Amateurism and an Art of Rehabilitation; and Purposeful Play and an Art of Empathy*. Together with works that engage thoughtfully with structures and contexts of music-making, this homecoming show in Singapore reveals how music can be a ground for ideological contest, capable of accommodating state agendas while allowing for agency, ambiguity and dissonance to emerge.

Title:	Music For Everyone: Variations on a Theme
Dates:	8 October to 8 November 2020
Opening Times	10am – 7pm
Location:	National Museum of Singapore Basement Level
Commissioner:	Rosa Daniel, National Arts Council, Singapore
Artist:	Song-Ming Ang
Curator:	Michelle Ho
Producer:	Renée Ting
Studio Song-Ming Ang:	Cornelia Herfurtner Sang Eun Kim Amelie Marei Löllmann Tomoyuki Ueno Masatoshi Noguchi
Exhibition Design:	FACTORY
Exhibition Assistants:	Jocelyn Ang Lai Yu Tong
Digital Programmes Coordinator:	Daryl Qilin Yam



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Finance:	Teo Swee Leng
Marketing/Social Media:	Anmari Van Nieuwenhove
Photography:	Marvin Tang
Videography:	Third Street Studio
Exhibition Build:	Creative Bulb
Technical:	Larry Kwa
Lighting:	Hardy (Torene Project) JJ Faiz
Supported by:	Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore
With Support from:	National Museum of Singapore Torene Project



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EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

Venice Documentation

2019



Students from the Istituto Comprensivo Dante Alighieri (Venezia) performing a composition inspired by the film Recorder Rewrite at the inauguration of the Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2019. Photo courtesy of National Arts Council, Singapore.

Song-Ming Ang's solo exhibition, *Music For Everyone: Variations on a Theme*, was presented at the Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019. This video documentation showcases the exhibition opening, which featured a performance by a group of Venetian teenagers using extended techniques on the recorder.

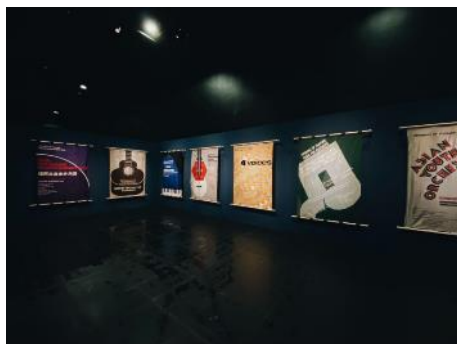
Music For Everyone: A History

This section of the exhibition provides a historical background of this period of public music programming, with reproductions of the Ministry of Culture's *Music for Everyone* concert posters. From the late 1960s to 1980s, a significant part of Singapore's cultural policy centred on using the arts as a nation-building tool. There is also archival material featuring excerpts of news reports, concert reviews and ministerial announcements.

Music For Everyone

2019

Fabric Banners (cotton, polyester, wool)
134 x 180 cm each (series of 7)



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photograph by Renée Ting.



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A prologue to the presentation, this series of textile banners reproduces a selection of original posters for the *Music For Everyone* concerts organised by Singapore's then-Ministry of Culture for free or at a nominal fee in the late '70s. From 1971 to 1985, more than 360 concerts took place under this series, featuring local choral societies, symphony bands, cultural groups performing ethnic music, and Western classical music contributed by foreign orchestras.

Our Songs

2019

Watercolour on paper, framed (Wood, Museum's Glass)

74 x 104 cm each (series of 4)



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photograph by Mizuki Kin.

In the mid-1970s, there were numerous lyric and song writing competitions seeking to galvanise Singaporeans into composing national songs that could contribute to the development of national identity. This series of watercolour paintings is a reproduction of original posters of lyric- and song-writing competitions organised by the then-National Theatre Trust and the former Radio Television Singapore (RTS) from 1976 to 1979.

Music for Everyone: Amateurism and an Art of Rehabilitation

A key theme in Ang's practice is the elevation of amateurism as a critical force in artmaking. By working with untrained performers, or transforming objects into sculptures with simple techniques, what has been perceived to be unskilful becomes a form of resistance to established aesthetic standards. This section contains Ang's exploration of the recorder, of how else music can be made in a more interesting way when it is not learnt through formulaic teaching, where art is presented as a form of rehabilitation from rigidity.



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Recorder Rewrite

2019

3-channel HD video installation



Film still courtesy of Song-Ming Ang.

The anchor work in this exhibition, *Recorder Rewrite*, features primary school students playing the recorder in unconventional ways at the Singapore Conference Hall, a culturally significant building of modern Singapore, and one of the four main venues of the original Music For Everyone series.

The three-channel video installation comprises four movements that extends the musical concepts of chords, triads and harmony. Through uncommon sounds, it builds up from minimal to melodious, tonal to discordant, and concludes with a climax of multiphonics. Citing the influences of composers Glenn Branca and John Cage, ambient music pioneer Brian Eno, multidisciplinary artist Yoko Ono and musique concrète composer Luc Ferrari, Ang draws upon the principles of avant garde artforms in his work. This can also be seen in the choreography of his young performers, whose abstract and unconstrained movements are reminiscent of the postmodern dance gestures pioneered by dancers like Anna Halprin and Simone Forti.

Recorder Sculptures

2019

Stacked recorders (ABS plastic)

Variable dimensions



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photograph by Mizuki Kin.



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Recorder Sculptures features the instruments used in *Recorder Rewrite* in alto, bass, tenor and soprano versions, which have been disassembled into the three sections of mouthpiece, barrel and foot joint. A deceptively simple task, this transformation of a functional object into art relies on the principle that each component, however unlikely a fit, can find balance with the others. Rearranged as sculptures with minimal structural support, they exude a sense of child-like naïveté and wonder while retaining an unexpected elegance in form.

Make Your Own Music

2019

Digital print

59.4 x 84.1 cm each



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Image credit to FACTORY.

Creative Recorder Techniques

2019

Digital print

59.4 x 84.1 cm each



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Image credit to FACTORY.



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These two instruction manuals provide a step-by-step pictorial guide to using the recorder in more stimulating ways, such as to make percussive or beatboxing sounds, as well as composing using creative exercises and improvisation. Instead of conforming to traditional systems and methods, Ang embraces a purposeful playfulness. Ang questions “proper” methodology and conventional benchmarks of excellence, thereby creating an alternative syllabus and inviting the viewer to do the same.

Music For Everyone: Purposeful Play and an Art of Empathy

This section questions “proper” methodology and conventional benchmarks of excellence, thereby creating an alternative syllabus and inviting the viewer to do the same. Instead of conforming to traditional systems and methods, Ang embraces a purposeful playfulness. Ang also introduces three physical works presented together for the first time, reflecting on music and the way it brings people together, and proposing ways of co-creation to bring forth a more empathetic connection in the experience of art.

Music Manuscripts

2019

Mixed techniques on paper

Variable dimensions (series of 21)



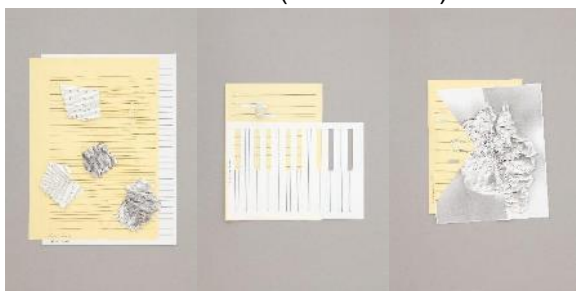
All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photographs by Olivia Kwok.

Music Manuscripts

2018 – 2019

Mixed techniques on paper

Variable dimensions (series of 26)





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All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photographs by Mizuki Kin.

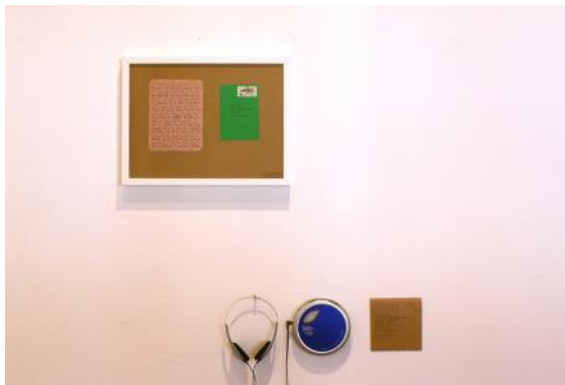
Music Manuscripts (2014 – ongoing) experiments with the staves (the five parallel lines that indicate pitch in Western music) in music manuscript paper. In earlier versions, Ang draws them in different configurations and angles, disrupting what is considered the foundational structure to musical notation. In the more recent ones, he goes into looser and more whimsical territory, folding, crushing and collaging the sheets, creating sculptural pieces. His *Music Manuscripts* are exercises of light-hearted manoeuvres on rules and foundation, playing structure against structure, embodying freestyling and improvisation through the intentionally elementary techniques of cutting, copying and pasting.

You and I (new)

2012 – 2018

Handwritten letters and playlist

Variable dimensions



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photograph by Kunstverein Göttingen, 2012.

This presentation of *You and I* features a selection of seven exchanges, out of over 60 letters Ang had received from friends, colleagues and strangers from 2009 to 2018. Ang had invited art audiences and visitors to his website to write him a letter during that period. In return, he compiled and mailed out a personalised mix tape of songs in the form of an audio CD. In this exchange, written thoughts and feelings were responded to with music, presenting a unique correspondence based on revelation and reciprocation.

**This work is a new addition to “Music for Everyone: Variations on a Theme”*



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Manifesto for Bad Music (new)

2011

Vinyl text and crowdsourced playlist

Variable dimensions



Installation plan of Manifesto for Bad Music. Actual hi-res image to be provided separately.

First presented at the 3rd Singapore Biennale in 2011, *Manifesto for Bad Music* is a tribute to all music forms considered lowbrow, as the artist valiantly defends a range of commercial and mainstream genres – or “bad music”. Although the subject matter is bad music, the use of bold and dramatic language is in the grand style of manifestos written by artists and revolutionaries historically that seek to activate society through new beliefs.

Beyond its irreverent tone is an earnest attempt to highlight the merits of things not considered cultural or intellectual; a response to the symptom of snobbery in the fine arts. The work creates a safe and non-judgemental space where people can share their genuine musical preferences and thereby rewrite the standards of taste in music. The idea of “bad music” is reclaimed and repositioned as something powerful, universally affirmative and even appealing.

In this 2020 presentation of the work, visitors are invited to contribute to a public playlist of “bad music” by scanning a QR code to access the Spotify playlist *Bad Music For Everyone*.

**This work is a new addition to “Music for Everyone: Variations on a Theme”*

Dusk to Dawn Choruses (new)

2017 - present

Instructional and musical scores; live performance

5:07 min, 5:55 min



All artworks courtesy of Song-Ming Ang. Photographs by Julien Grossmann.



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A collaboration with artist Julien Grossmann exploring the various forms and definitions of choruses, *Dusk to Dawn Choruses* is a series of text-based instructional scores that require no music instruments. The work illustrates Ang's belief that good art can be made with the most basic tools everyone already possesses – in this case, the human voice. To be carried out using only vocal elements such as humming, speaking, whistling and other harmonising sounds, the work is realised through workshops and performances with amateur singers, some of whom may be practicing as part of a choir for their first time.

The scores of *Dusk to Dawn Choruses* draws from a spectrum of influences, including ancient Greek tragedies, modern telecommunications and bird calls at dawn. This presentation features a selection of scores performed by students from the Nanyang Technological University in 2018.

**This work is a new addition to "Music for Everyone: Variations on a Theme"*