

Das **Institut für Musikwissenschaft** an der Universität Wien lädt ein
zum Gastvortrag von

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University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur

Islam and the Performing Arts in Southeast Asia

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Prof. Dr. Mohd Anis Bin Md Nor is Professor of Ethnochoreology and Ethnomusicology at the Cultural Center (School of Performing Arts) of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He earned his PhD in Southeast Asia Studies and Musicology from the University of Michigan and has pioneered the study of Zapin dance and music in Southeast Asia. Although his foremost research area is Malay dance and music in Southeast Asia, his current studies are on the interface between dance traditions among the Malayo-Polynesian societies in Southeast Asia and Polynesia together with the making of new traditions through contemporary performances. Prof. Anis has been visiting professor and lecturer at several academic institutions in the USA, Europe and Asia and is President of the World Dance Alliance – Asia Pacific (WDA-AP).

Abstract

As the most widely practiced religion in Southeast Asia, Islam has approximately 240 million adherents, which forms about 40% of the entire population of approximately 600 million Southeast Asian. Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia are Muslim majority nations, while significant minorities are located in other Southeast Asian states. Southeast Asian music and dance of Islamic communities are a fusion of many influences through the creative inventions by the indigenous population. The selective processes of fusing these different performance styles into performance repertoires, however, have been on-going from centuries past up to the present time. Syncretic fusion in Southeast Asian Islamic music and dance could also be partly attributed to a conscious process of adapting new ideas into existing performance styles to enhance and popularise them to contemporary taste and expectations, which have always been accessible to new improvisations in spite of keeping to the form and structure that govern each of these genres. This lecture provides a general introduction to Southeast Asian Islam and its related performing arts with a focus on music and dance. Case studies on specific performance genres in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and Southern Philippines will be highlighted to demonstrate commonalities in the usage and construction of indigenous curvilinear designs and Islamic arabesques, which echo similar virtues of infinite designs that seemingly continue and multiply in space and time from a single point of beginning forming musical forms and dance motifs. It underlines the artistic perimeters of infinity of God and the ideal Islamic notion of *tawhid* in Islamic arts, which is anchored in the sanctified notion of transcendence of God through the abstractions of arabesque motifs and curvilinear constructs of music and dance.