

**Department of National Heritage**  
**Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia**

**INVENTORY**

**ELEMENT: Dondang Sayang**

**Background**

Dondang Sayang is a traditional Malay art that combines elements of music (violins, gongs and tambourines or tambor), songs and chants. It is also known as Dendang Sayang or love ballads used by communities, to convey feelings of love and to give advice to audiences about special themes such as love, kindness, metaphorically-like and others. Dondang Sayang is very well known in the Malay archipelago, particularly in the state of Melaka, Malaysia. During the Melaka Sultanate era back in the 15th Century, Dondang Sayang was often performed at the Royal Palace ceremonies and events. Subsequently, the performance was widespread and became popular among the Malay, Baba Nyonya, Chitty and Portugese communities. Dondang Sayang was later spread to Penang and Singapore by the Baba Nyonya community.

The most distinct feature of Dondang Sayang is its chants and poetry. This art is a genre of entertainment with beautiful melodious strains of poetry. The uniqueness of the performance is in terms of its grandeur and skills in delivering the songs where the singer recites the poem/ poetry (it is called "Pantun" in Malay language) spontaneously and naturally with full sonority.

By tradition, Dondang Sayang performance is accompanied by music and sung by two singers of the opposite sex who delivers singing a quatrain. Typically, Dondang Sayang singer comprises of individuals who are competent and highly skilled in poetry. The greatness of a singer will prevail with his ability to deliver beautiful words and lyrics composed and contain specific purposes when replying the poem. This reflects the intellectual, the politeness and courtesy of the rich culture of the Malay community.

**Community**

There are four communities mostly in Melaka which are synonym with Dondang Sayang namely the Malay, Baba Nyonya, Chitty and Portuguese community. From these communities, there are 313 registered members from 7 groups which are still active under the Dondang Sayang Associations of Melaka namely Dondang Sayang Hiasan Budaya, Dondang Sayang Seri Melaka, Dondang Sayang Seri Klebang, Dondang Sayang Seri Mawar, Dondang Sayang Sinar Harapan Tebong, Dondang Sayang Dendang Irama, Dondang Sayang Kenangan Mawar Biru, and Dondang Sayang Seni Warisan Baruh Alai. Among the popular artists are Hj. Idriss bin Hj. Shariff (62 years), Haji Abu Bakar Bin Haji Ali (82 years), Mr. Mohd Baharim bin Sharip (73 years), Mr. Hassan (70 years old) and Mr. Kassim bin Jamal (44 years).

However, there are 10 Dondang Sayang singers who are still active, namely Mr. Mohd Baharim bin Sharip, Madam Norsiah Binti Mohd Amin, Madam Halimah Binti Daud, Madam Syima Binti Salleh, Madam Saidatul Sahrom daughter Nadira, Madam Firdausiah Binti Rosli, Mr. Yasir Fikri Bin Abu, Madam Norshafarina Binti Mohd Fahmi, Mr. Mohd Firdaus Bin Mohd Amran, Madam. Haslinawati Binti Zainuddin and several other singers from the Baba Nyonya

(namely Mr. Koh Kim Bock and Mr. Tan Bun), among Portuguese (Mr. Noel) and the Chitty (Madam G Menachi A/P Genasamy and Mr. K. Nadarajan Raja).

The Arts Institute of Malaysia Melaka, the Department of National Heritage, National Department for Culture and Arts, Melaka Museum Corporation, Malaysia Handicraft Development Corporation, the musicians and related NGOs are also responsible for the safeguarding and promotion of Dondang Sayang in Malaysia.

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### **Published Material**

In Malay Language:

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