



**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HERITAGE**  
**MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE**  
**NATIONAL HERITAGE 2012**



**Category** : Heritage Objects  
**Type** : Intangible Heritage  
**Heritage Object** : Chingay  
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## **Background :**

Chingay is a parade performance that has existed for centuries in Malaysia. Chingay is celebrated annually on the 21st day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar. It is in conjunction with celebrating the birthday of the Chinese Gods. It is also known as the Goddess of Mercy's procession which is the highlight of the Chap Goh Meh festival. This Chingay performance is associated with religious and cultural events of the Chinese ethnic community. Traditionally, Chingay is celebrated every year before the Chinese New Year. Today, Chingay is loved and played by Malaysians of various races and is a symbol of unity.

In Malaysia, Chingay can be seen in the Chingay Parade Festival (Johor Baru Chingay) and Penang Chingay. Chingay in Penang has been around for over 100 years. The Chingay parade first began in 1919 during a parade celebration on the streets of George Town and Butterworth. The second Chingay parade was held in 1926 in celebration of the Anniversary of the Prosperity of the Chinese people. Later, a third parade was held in 1957 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the George Town City Council. In an effort to ensure the safeguarding of the Chingay heritage, the Chinese community, especially the Tionghua community in Malaysia, formed the Penang Chingay Liaison Committee in 1960.

This Chingay is also associated with the art of street performances where there are performers who will perform stunts to balance a giant flag measuring 25 to 32 feet (7.6 to 9.8 meters) with a height of about 60 pounds (27 kilograms). Initially, the Chingay festival in Penang was associated with the practice of rituals to celebrate the Chinese Gods, but later expanded to be more widespread and not only as a traditional performance but also enlivened with modern acrobatics. Among the interesting things is raising the flagpoles using the mouth. The Chingay parade is held every year in December in the city of George Town. The popularity of Chingay in Penang makes it one of the interesting cultural landmarks and can be an important tourist attraction factor.

The Johor Bahru Chingay parade is themed on the worship of five major deities from the five main Tiong-Hua ethnic groups in Johor Bahru, namely Hainan, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien and Teochew. Therefore, the Chingay Procession is also meant as

the 'Procession of the Gods' in the language of the community, as a sign of gratitude to the Gods. The worshipped Gods are taken out of the temples and carried en masse through the streets of the city so that people can receive blessings from the Gods. The Chingay Parade also featured lion and dragon dance troupes, Tiong-Hua opera performances, traditional Chinese dances, kung fu acrobatic performances, wooden leg acrobatics, colourful 'big-head'puppets, 6m tall giant flags, 24 Festivals Drum drum performances, flower-decorated cars and lanterns from various well-known associations and companies.

Generally, Chingay involves several groups, which are also known as Chingay groups. These Chingay groups are also joined by people from various races. The uniqueness of this Chingay parade performance is the prowess of the Chingay groups in performing acrobatics such as carrying flagpoles using limbs such as legs and mouths. The Chingay parade also featured decorated vehicles and was graced with fireworks displays and martial arts.

Chingay is not only performed and practiced by the Chinese community but this Chinese heritage performing art has succeeded in attracting the attention of other ethnicities to participate and subsequently become a unique multi-ethnic performance in Malaysia. Chingay was declared as one of the performance elements in the National Heritage 2012 where the declaration ceremony took place at the Sultan Abdul Samad Building on 10 May 2012.