Indonesia: Javanese Gamelan Music

Gamelan Outreach Project
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University of Michigan
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Indonesia

- Consists of a archipelago of several thousand islands of which Java is the largest.
- During colonial times Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies.
- Consists of many diverse languages and cultures.
- The development of a common national language “Indonesian” made it possible to build the unity needed to win the revolution against the Dutch (1945-1949).
- Major religions include: Hindu/Buddhism; Islam; and Christianity.
Gamelan Tuning and Modes

Laras (tuning system)

Slendro: a five-note (pentatonic) tuning
Pélog: a seven-note tuning

Pathet (Modes)*

Slendro Nem      Pélog Nem
Slendro Sanga    Pélog Lima
Slendro Manyura  Pélog Barang

*Modes correspond to Wayang Kulit performance:
  Nem from 9:00 PM to Midnight;
  Sanga from Midnight to 3:00 AM;
  Manyura from 3:00 AM to 6:00 AM.
Gamelan Musical Structure

- Colotomic Structure: based upon a circular perception of time.
- Reflects the persistence of Hindu-Buddhist conceptions of time introduced to Java during the first millennium C.E.
- All instruments in the gamelan must play important structural or “auspicious” notes together. These “coincidences” carry important meaning in Javanese culture.
Gamelan Musical Structure

- The sounding of the *gong agung* with the *kenong* marks the musical instance of the greatest weight or importance. It is at this point that the *gendhing* may begin or end.

- Lesser points of coincidence also exist (listed in order of importance):
  
  *Kenong* stroke
  *kethuk* stroke
  *Kempul* stroke
Gamelan Texture

Three layers:

**Structural**: gong and kenong as well as kethuk/kempyang

**Balungan**: basic melodic content

**Elaboration**: realizes “inner melody”
Sarons: Balungan Instruments

Saron Panarus or “Peking”

Saron Barung

Demung
Punctuating Instruments

Kempul

Gong Agung & Siyem

Kenong
Punctuating and Time Keeping Instruments

Kethuk
Kempyang

Kendhang
(Played by the conductor of the gamelan Orchestra)
Elaborating Instruments: Melodic Leaders of the Gamelan

Bonang Barung and Bonang Panarus

Rebab
“Soft-Style” Elaborating Instruments

Gender (three tunings)

Gambang

Four Sulings (different tunings)
Lancaran bubaran Kembang Pacar, laras pélog pathet nem
Balungan Level: Sarons
Lancaran bubaran Kembang Pacar, **IRAMA Level: Bonang Barung**

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<tr>
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<th>Bonang Playing in <em>Bubaran Kembang Pacar</em>:</th>
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<td>balungan:</td>
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| balungan: | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
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Lancaran bubaran Kembang Pacar,
*IRAMA* Level: *Bonang Panarus*

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