

EDITORIAL

This issue proves that things of great significance are well worth waiting for. The two monographs by Sukerta and Darsono have been cultivated and developed over several years.

Sukerta wrote the first ever guide to contemporary and experimental composition for gamelan. Enough time has passed that these techniques appear often. In a 1989 interview that queried the vocabulary used to describe new music for gamelan, I asked Balinese composer I Nyoman Windha about the term “kontemporer.” He explained, “Kontemporer means the music is only temporary. We rehearse a new piece, and then perform it. That might be the last time it is played. Or, if we like it, we may play it again.” In observing new music for gamelan in Indonesia from 1988–89, I noticed that innovative ideas in one composer’s work would often start to turn up in other people’s pieces. In a matter of months, the previously experimental idea was used frequently enough to be considered “traditional.” That’s the nature of a living art; something new, when it works, becomes part of everyone’s musical toolbox.

Darsono’s research on and performance of the unique macapat style of Pak Netra of the Kraton Solo is both impressive and inspiring. In Darsono’s astute perception and re-creation, the documentation of classical sung poetry by an established yet innovative artist can now be widely appreciated and studied.

Wayan Sadra exemplified experimental. One of his last projects was an organized music festival called *Bukan Musik Biasa* — “not music as usual” described just about everything he did. For Sadra, being creative was a necessary daily act. He often explained, “It’s like going to the toilet— you feel great when you’re done, but the next day you have to do it all over again.”

2017 saw many centennial celebrations of the global reach of Lou Harrison’s creativity. Harrison loved how gamelan notation stored only the fixed elements of a piece, leaving most of the realization to be created by knowledgeable players. Those who worked directly with him will need to document both process and results—this edition of *A Cornish Lancaran* is an effort in that cause.

Is collaboration the new normal, or a cliché that is misleading at best? The pieces on “Mahambara” were created *in situ* by the faculty of ISI Surakarta—my contribution was not to the music, but in building a far-reaching bridge for it to cross.

Finally, it is with extreme pleasure that I introduce the new associate editor of *Balungan*, Jay Arms. He is a student of cultural musicology, an experienced performer on guitar and, increasingly, gamelan, and—to my great delight—a writer who loves semicolons as much as I do. Let’s hope that his invaluable participation will be anything but “temporary.” — jody diamond, editor

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