

KENONG

jody diamond, 1990

for Pande Made Sukerta, yang selalu baru, gila, aneh

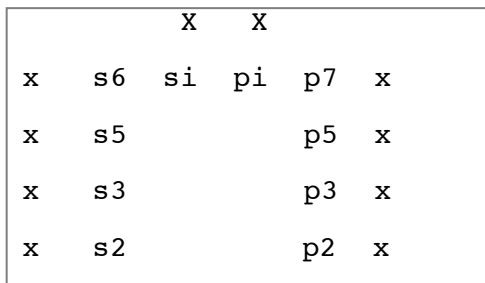
This piece is an exploration by ten players of an instrument that is usually played by one player. I wrote it after returning from 13 months in Indonesia (1988-89), researching contemporary music, and interviewing over 60 artists.

The opening section, with cellphones and vocals, was added and premiered at the Yogya Contemporary Music Festival in 2005.

Set Up

The kenong remains in place as it would be for Javanese *karawitan*, with slendro going up one side, and pelog coming down the other. Ideally, the kenong will be placed so that the audience can see into the "U" made by the cases. (This arrangement is for a gamelan with tumbuk 6.) One player sits behind each kenong, here indicated by an "x," with one kenong tabuh. (If there are not ten players, five would suffice, with one person playing two adjacent kenong.) The players in the corners—slendro 6 and high 1, and pelog 5 and pelog 7—may adjust their positions to be seated evenly all around the kenong.

e.g.



----- audience -----

Sukamso, the musical director for the recording at ISI of the CD "In That Bright World," suggested an alternate arrangement of the kenong to produce a different intervals in the first section. The kenong are arranged starting on the slendro 2, and proceeding counter-clockwise: S2, S6, 3S, 1S, 5S, 2P, 1P, 5P, 3P, 7P.

Process and Performance Sequence

<p>At the beginning of the piece, only the kenong cases are on stage, with the kenong turned on the open end. Inside each kenong is a cell phone. At the beginning of the piece, people off stage call each phone in turn, until a phone is ringing inside each kenong.</p> <p>The players come onto the stage, each kneeling in front of the upturned kenong (two per person with 5 players). They look inside the kenong, remove the phones in a random order, and silence them. Then each person puts their head inside the kenong, and sings an excerpt from a song that they know well. (They might want to determine ahead of time which song will resonate particularly well with a particular kenong.</p> <p>As the mixed chorus draws to a close, each kenong is returned to an upright position. The piece then proceeds as described in the written score.</p>	
<p><i>soft and slow</i></p> <p>e.g.</p> <p>[: s2 . . . s2 . . . :]</p>	<p>One player begins, softly, playing an open tone on beat one of four. This can be any player, or any note. The kenong should not be damped. The player keeps an internal pulse of four with no visual manifestation; the second player will join only when this pulse is felt. A slow tempo is recommended, because the pulse will later be subdivided.</p>
<p><i>soft</i></p> <p>s2 . . . s2 . . .</p> <p>s5 . . . s5 . . .</p> <p>p7 . . . p7 . . .</p> <p>p3 . . . p3 . . .</p> <p>si . . . si . . .</p> <p>etc.</p>	<p>ONE OF FOUR</p> <p>Other players join, one at a time in random order, also playing quietly on beat one of four, until all are playing. Repeat several times; listening carefully to the sound.</p>
<p><i>loud</i></p> <p>s2 s2 s2 s2 s2 s2 s2 s2 s5 s5 s5</p> <p>s5 s5 s5 s5 s5 p7 p7 p7 p7 p7 p7</p> <p>p7 p7 p3 p3 p3 p3 p3 p3 p3 p3</p> <p>etc.</p>	<p>FOUR OF FOUR</p> <p>When all kenong are playing on beat one of four, all change to all four beats, switching at an agreed upon signal (e.g. nod of a certain player's head, slightly raised tabuh). There is still no damping. Repeat several times, listening carefully to each of the sound groups.</p>

<p>s6 si pi p7</p> <p>s5 p5</p> <p>s3 p3</p> <p>s2 p2</p> <p>THREES</p> <p>A: s2, s3, s5</p> <p>B: s6, si, pi, p7</p> <p>C: p5, p3, p2</p> <p>FOURS</p> <p>A: s2, s3, s5</p> <p>B: s6, si</p> <p>C: pi, p7</p> <p>D: p5, p3, p2</p> <p>FIVES</p> <p>A: s2, s3,</p> <p>B: s5, s6,</p> <p>C: si, pi</p> <p>D: p7, p5</p> <p>E: p3, p2</p> <p>ONES</p> <p>s2-s3-s5-s6-si-pi-p7-p5-p3-p2</p>	<p>THREES, FOURS, FIVES, ONES</p> <p>The division process continues, determined by the kenong location. Each group damps on the next group's beat, to make the different tone clusters clear. Each division should be repeated several times; <i>listen</i> to each group. Agreed upon signals, very subtle, tell when to change to each group.</p> <p>All of these groups are played loudly, including the final group, ONES, which will be ten consecutive notes up the slendro side and down the pelog side. [Note: in the Solo recording, Sukamso suggested a re-ordering of the kenong to improve the sound of some of the two- and three-groups. This works very well.]</p> <p>The complete sequence:</p> <p>A . . . (until all are on A)</p> <p>A A A A (all on all four beats)</p> <p>A B (two groups, two beats)</p> <p>A B C (three groups, three beats)</p> <p>A B C D (four groups, four beats)</p> <p>A B C D E (five groups, two kenong in each, five beats)</p> <p>A B C D E F G H I J (one at a time, ten beats)</p> <p>Each division should be played several times, (not a predetermined number of repeats), the players <i>listening</i> to each new group The signal for each change will be indicated by the person playing kenong s2, since, because of its position, it is played first in every varition.</p>
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<p><i>loud</i></p> <p>GROUP A --- GROUP B</p> <p>s6 si --- pi p7</p> <p>s5 p5</p> <p>s3 p3</p> <p>s2 p2</p> <p>A . A . A . A . A .</p> <p>. B . B . B . B . B .</p>	<p>TWO BY TWO</p> <p>At an agreed upon signal, the players change to two alternating groups, one group damping on the other's beat. This division is between slendro and pelog, or at the center of the "U."</p>
<p>s2-s3-B-s6-si-pi-p7-p5-p3-p2</p> <p>s2-s3-B-s6-si-B-p7-p5-p3-p2</p> <p>B-s3-B-s6-si-B-p7-p5-B-p2, etc.</p> <p>the final sequence:</p> <p>B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B</p>	<p>BELLS</p> <p>The kenong being played one-by-one continues for a few cycles; the ten beat tempo is kept steady Then, maintaining the pulse, players turn their kenong over, one at a time, striking on the inside edge like a bell. Each player changes right after playing, to stay on the beat. On each repeat, one or two kenong will change to bells (B), ending finally with ten "bells" playing on the beat.</p>
	<p>QUESTION & ANSWER</p> <p>After all the kenong have been turned over, the tempo slows. As this happens, the kenong drop out in a random order, until only one or two kenong are playing.</p> <p>This becomes an unmetred improvisation: a kenong/bell on one side plays; another answers, (like bells separated by a valley). Players should enjoy and explore the resonance of the over-turned kenong. This section may continue for a while.</p>
<p>B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B</p> <p>B-s3-B-B-B-B-B-B-B-B</p> <p>B-s3-B-B-B-B-B-p5-B-B</p> <p>B-s3-B-s6-B-B-B-p5-B-B,</p> <p>etc .</p>	<p>RETURN & KOTEKAN</p> <p>The change to the next section begins when one player returns a kenong to the regular position. Others continue in "bell-space." The first player chooses a beat to play on, damping on the next beat. Another kenong is turned over; that player chooses a note or motif that uses spaces in the first player's part. The third kenong does the same. Bells continue until all kenong are turned over and a "kotekan" has been created each player adding a note one a time.</p>

	<p>FINAL GROUP</p> <p>As the kotekan gets louder, the kenong on one end returns to the second motif (AAAA), while others continue the kotekan. The next kenong joins the steady beat; others continue the kotekan. This continues until all kenong are playing together, somewhat louder (but not faster) to bring out the overtones of the kenong. At an agreed upon signal, all players stop.</p> <p>Players hold the tabuh over the boss of the kenong until all sound stops, then lower their tabuh together.</p>
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revised, 27 September 2013
Cambridge, Massachusetts