

Gamelan Kyai Singaputra

The name of a gamelan refers not to the players, but to the set of instruments, for in Java every set has a personal name and no two sets sound quite alike. This gamelan was constructed by Barbara Benary in 1974 based on designs by Dennis Murphy. In essence it is a typical village-style iron-key gamelan, though a few uniquely American substitutions may be noticed. It is in fact a double set of instruments. Half the instruments are tuned to the seven-tone pelog scale (brown cases) and half to the five-tone slendro scale (red painted cases). It is the pelog instruments which are used for the majority of pieces in this production.

Livingston music department has maintained an ongoing performing ensemble since the time of the instruments' construction. The repertoire includes classical music of the courts of central Java, Angklung music from Bali, and a variety of contemporary pieces, many of which were composed for the group by composers around the country. The gamelan has performed in New York City on several occasions and has appeared at many other universities, including Princeton, Amherst, Wesleyan, Temple and others.

The core of the gamelan ensemble is its student enrollment. Its members are drawn from several different classes: Ethnic music of Indonesia, Gamelan Ensemble and Composition and Performing. These courses are open to non-majors as well as music majors; anyone with musical interest is invited to inquire.

I should like to give special thanks to artist James Walsh (Livingston class of 1976) for his untiring work on this production. He has also been a strong musical support through the many years he has played in the gamelan.

B.B.

Gonggaren-Srepagan Sampak
Ktu Widaningtyas Tjuntang
Monggar
Udan Mas
DNA

Gong. Circular Thought
Circles
Gamelan II
Sound of Rain Drying
Phases of the moon
Suyut
Gamelan Songs
Yankee Doodle Angklung

Program Notes

Throughout Java and Bali a favorite form of popular entertainment is the wayang kulit or shadow puppet play, accompanied by gamelan orchestra. Tonight the Livingston Gamelan Ensemble is presenting an American adaptation of this theatre form.

The overture will begin at 7:00, half an hour before the play opens. Feel free to circulate quietly and enjoy the art exhibit at this time. Traditionally the wayang plays are quite long, running from evening to dawn. Ours is about two hours in length. It is divided into three acts (named, incidentally, after the musical modes of central Java). There will be no formal intermissions. But we endorse the Javanese policy of not nailing the audience to their chairs. Take your intermissions as you like.

The story in a wayang kulit play is never a surprise. The dalang or puppeteer always weaves his story on a situation or theme well known to his audience. In Java these would be taken from the epics Ramayana or Mahabharata. In our case we have retained certain traditional Javanese characters, such as the King, young Arjuna, and General Fang (Tjakil). But we use instead an American story which we trust is sufficiently familiar to us all via our own folk media: the story of King Kong. Gong (Kong) runs amok in Java rather than New York and the play is structured in the traditional lakon form.

Our music also represents a cross-cultural variety. It represents the joint efforts of our two gamelan groups, one of which has been working on traditional Central Javanese music, the other of which specializes in contemporary American music written for gamelan instruments. A third variety of pieces are also involved, written in Javanese style with English text specifically for use in this play.