

## Out of Indonesia: Global Gamelan

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- A Celebration of Gongs. GAMELAN LAKE OF THE SILVER BEAR. Directed by MICHAEL ZINN. Independently produced cassette. [Instruments built by Michael Zinn. Compositions by William Naylor, Christopher Venaccio, Zinn, and pieces from Sunda and Central Java.]
- Akira. GEINOH YAMASHIROGUMI. Compositions and conducting by YAMASHIRO SHOJI. Notes by Katsuhiro Otomo, Shoji Yamashiro [sic], and Kayoko Ohinata. JVC JMI1001. [Japan. Large chorus and instrumental samples, including gamelan. Soundtrack for the animated sci-fi film *Akira*.]
- American Works for Balinese Gamelan Orchestra. Produced by EVAN ZIPORYN, MICHAEL TENZER, WAYNE VITALE. Performed by GAMELAN SEKAR JAYA, SEKA GONG ABDI BUDAYA, and students at STSI Den pasar. Notes by MARC PERLMAN. New World Records 80430-2. [Compositions by Ziporyn, I Nyoman Windha, Tenzer, and Vitale.]
- **B.A.N.G.** (Bay Area New Gamelan). Directed by JODY DIAMOND and DANIEL SCHMIDT. American Gamelan Institute cassette, AGI01, 1986. [Instruments built by Daniel Schmidt. Compositions by Schmidt, Diamond and Ingram Marshall.]
- Balinese Music in America. GAMELAN SEKAR JAYA. Directed by WAYNE VITALE (gong kebyar) and CARLA FABRIZIO (angklung). Notes by MARC PERLMAN. GSJ-011. [Compositions by I Wayan Beratha, I Nyoman Windha, I Ketut Partha, Dewa Putu Berata, and Vitale.]
- **Beauty in the Beast.** WENDY CARLOS. Sync 2000 cassette, soon to be reissued on CD. [Includes "Poem for Bali." Gamelan samples played on synthesizer.]
- Complete Gamelan. Lars Stroschen. Propellor Island, Berlin. 100 samples of instruments and ambient sounds from Indonesia. Audio CD and CD-ROM.
- **Craggvale Gamelan.** Craggvale Gamelan. Directed by MICK WILSON. Independently produced cassette. [England. Handmade steel instruments

- in equal temperament, supplemented by tuned iron/brass gongs made by Suhirdjan of Yogyakarta, Central Java. Compositions by Wilson and Dave Nelson.]
- East Coast-West Coast: American Music for Gamelan. Venerable Showers of Beauty/A Different Song, directed by Vincent McDermott and Widiyanto S. Putro, and Gamelan Son of Lion directed by Barbara Benary. Independently produced casssette. [Compositions by McDermott and Benary.]
- Gamelan as a Second Language. Gamelan Son of Lion. Directed by Bar-Bara Benary. GSOL CD-2. 1995. [Iron instruments built by Benary. Compositions by David Demnitz.]
- Hati-Hati. HATI-HATI. Produced by HATI-HATI. XOPF NR. 17. [Joged Bumbung with voice, pakhawaj, and percussion. Compositions by Thomas Weiss, Andreas Gerber, Urs Weisner, Lisa Sokolov, Prakassh Shejwal.]
- In Celebration of Golden Rain. KYAI UDAN MAS, the Scripps Javanese Gamelan of the University of California. Gamelan directed by JODY DIAMOND and DANIEL SCHMIDT. LAURENCE MOE, organ. Opus One 155. [Composition by Richard Felciano for organ and Javanese gamelan.]
- Intergalactic Gamelan. Gamelan Galak Tika. Directed by Evan Ziporyn. Independently produced cassette. [Compositions for gong kebyar by Evan Ziporyn, I Gede Manik, and Desak Made Suarti.]
- **Ketu.** Directed by REINHARD FLATISCHLER. World Language Rhythm vBr 2117 2. 1993. [Includes collaborations with Balinese Jegog group Suar Agung as well as Zakir Hussain (India), Leonard Ito (Japan), Hiedrun Hoffman (Germany), Wolfgang Pusching and Flatischler (Austria).]
- **Lilin Dewa.** Composed and produced by LOREN NERRELL. Side Effects DFX 26. 1996. [Field recordings, instruments from Java and Bali, samplers and synthesizers.]
- Lolongkrang. Pusaka Sunda. Founded by Burhan Sukarma and Rae Ann Stahl. With guest artist Undang Sumarna. Sakti Records, SAKTI 33. 1994. [Gamelan degung. Compositions by Sukarma, Gugum Gumbira, and classical degung pieces.]
- Lou Harrison: Gamelan Music. Gamelan SI BETTY. Directed by TRISH NEILSEN and JODY DIAMOND. Music Masters 01612-67091-2. 1992. [Instruments by Lou Harrison and William Colvig. Compositions by Lou Harrison.]

- Metalworks. Metalworks. Produced by Mark Lockett and Janet Sherbourne. Practical Music. Practical 6. 1990. [England. Aluminum instruments built by Mark Lockett. Compositions by Lockett, Sherbourne, Luke Steele, Mus Mulyadi, Howard Skempton, and Lou Harrison.]
- Music from Java and Ameria. VENERABLE SHOWERS OF BEAUTY/A DIFFERENT SONG, directed by VINCENT McDermott and WIDYANTO S. PUTRO. Independently produced casssette. [Compositions by McDermott and Widiyanto.]
- Music of Bali, Indonesia. Gamelan Tunas Mekar. Musical director, JILL FREDERICKSEN. Artist in Residence, I Made Lesmawan. Notes by David Harnish. Prolific Records. 1995. [Balinese gamelan angklung. Compositions by I Wayan Beratha, I Ketut Partha, I Ketut Marya, I Nyoman Windha, and Lesmawan.]
- New Gamelan/New York. GAMELAN SON OF LION. Directed by BARBARA BENARY. GSOL CD-1. 1995. [Compositions by Jody Kruskal, Laura Liben, David Demnitz, Mark Steven Brooks, David Simons, Daniel Goode, and Benary.
- Palace. EVERGREEN CLUB. Directed by BLAIR MACKAY. Artifact Music ART-012. 1996. [Canada. Compositions for Sundanese gamelan degung and other instruments, by Mark Duggan, Lou Harrison, John Wyre, Jon Siddal, and Alain Thibault.]
- Parrot Soup. METALWORKS. Produced by MARK LOCKETT and JANET SHERBOURNE. Keda Records KEDCD25. 1994. [England. Aluminum instruments built by Mark Lockett. Compositions by Lockett, Wiroso, Rachel Hewitt, Michael Parsons, Ki Nartosabdho, Nick Gray, and arrangements of Balinese, Sundanese and Madurese pieces.]
- **Suite for Javanese Gamelan and Synthesizer.** Composed and recorded by ROBERT MACHT. MACH0001CD. [Javanese and Balinese instruments with synthesizer.]
- Tabuh Pacific: new compositions for gamelan. Gamelan Padhang Moncar, Victoria University of Wellington. Directed by Joko Sutrisno. Notes by Jack Body. Ode Record Company CD MANU 1514. 1996. [New Zealand. Compositions by Gareth Farr, Mark Fletcher, Megan Collins, Judith Exley, Ross Carey, Di Fairly and Michal Norris.]
- **Trance Gong.** GAMELAN PACIFICA. Directed by JARRAD POWELL. ¿What Next? Recordings WN0016, 1994. [Iron/brass instruments by Suhirdjan (Cen-

tral Java) and aluminum instruments by Schmidt/Dresher/Devereaux/ Powell. Compositions by Powell, Jeff Morris, John Cage (arr. Powell), and other group members.]<sup>1</sup>

Is composition a way of knowing a music? Mantle Hood felt he had to choose between composition and ethnomusicology when he first went to Java, leaving a large stack of manuscript paper blank for many years (pers. com.) and composing "on the side" in a life dedicated to scholarship. John Blacking once quipped in a lecture that he would have been a composer instead of an ethnomusicologist if he thought he could have made a living at it. Perhaps Hood and Blacking, and possibly others, felt that they had to set aside a certain kind of creativity in order to study the "distant music" that was the focus of their careers.

The composers discussed in this review use composition to explore, understand, and honor the gamelan music that most of them began to know as students and ethnomusicologists. Perhaps years of studying a performing art makes one want to be a performing artist. Indeed, much of the work reviewed here shows the result of what composer Philip Corner called the "creative approach—seeking knowledge . . . for the sake of appreciation and personal enrichment, and ultimately creative vitality and integrity" (Diamond 1996:31). Many of the composers whose work is discussed here turned to composition as a step in their continual involvement with Indonesian music, or as an expression of who they are as artists. Through their work, they have addressed and answered questions about what gamelan is and what it can become when it takes root in a new land.

Most of the groups and individuals I discuss use the word "gamelan" to describe their music or their instruments, but different aspects of that term are emphasized in the definitions of "gamelan" that appear in the notes accompanying the recordings. Some invoke the kind of instruments (i.e., gong-chime orchestra, percussive ensemble), others the instruments' national or geographical origin (Java, Bali, Indonesia, or made by a local builder), and in some cases, the number of musicians who usually play ("4" to 40 musicians"; "12-20 musicians"). And while almost all explanations refer to the gamelan as an ensemble or orchestra, there is considerable variation in the way that the various groups perceive their relation to Indonesian sources. For some, it is musical material or instrument design, while for others it is learning process or artistic leadership. Each has confronted the task of integrating their Indonesian inspiration with their own social environment and the background of the group's members. Some, like Gamelan Pacifica, see their music as defining an international style of gamelan. Others, like Sekar Jaya, feel that the "American performers have . . . become participants in the ongoing creation of Balinese culture."<sup>2</sup>

The national origins of the composers and instruments play mixed roles in the way the groups label their work. When Tunas Mekar calls their CD Music from Bali, they are referring both to the instruments and to the composers. When Venerable Showers of Beauty/A Different Song titles their recording Music from Java and America, they have in mind the nationality of the two composers, Vincent McDermott and Widiyanto S. Putro, since all of their instruments are Javanese. This group gave new meaning to the cliché "East vs. West" with their release East Coast-West Coast: American Music for Gamelan, which pairs works by McDermott and Son of Lion director Barbara Benary. On American Works for Balinese Gamelan, half the pieces are played by Balinese and half by Americans; here it is the nationality of both the composers and the instruments that is the basis of the CD title. On the other hand, Robert Macht invokes his instruments' national origin but not his own in Suite for Javanese Gamelan and Synthesizer. Gamelan Padhang Moncar of the University of Wellington in New Zealand keeps it simple: "new compositions for gamelan."

Most of the music in these recordings is performed by non-Indonesian musicians playing their own compositions for gamelan. For these artists, the process of composition satisfies a compelling urge to interact with the instruments. Several of the groups perform on instruments built in their own country, others perform on instruments built in Indonesia; many combine their gamelan instruments with musical instruments from other locales and traditions. Composers such as Harrison, Powell, Benary, Farr, and Ziporyn all make a case for gamelan as a flexible orchestra for composers.

Of the recordings listed above, eleven feature gamelan groups that perform music by composer-members. Only two of the groups recorded music solely by Indonesian composers or drawn solely from Indonesian traditions. Gamelan Tunas Mekar, based in Denver, Colorado, admirably lists all the Balinese composers of their pieces, including their artistic director, Made Lesmawan, who composed "Kreteg Layang." Pusaka Sunda, from San Jose, California, also sticks to the repertory of West Java, which includes "Lolongkrang," by the group's director Burhan Sukarma. The other groups have chosen, or at least have recorded, a mixed repertory that contains certain common elements.

All recordings include pieces by composers who are members of the group, whether Indonesian or local. These pieces tend to draw on both Indonesian practices and the musical backgrounds of composers and group members. The Evergreen Club, a highly skilled *degung* group with several professional percussionists, is particularly famous for commissioning new works, including the only works for gamelan by John Cage ("Haikai") and James Tenney ("Road to Ubud"). Gamelan Son of Lion, founded by Barbara Benary, Daniel Goode and Philip Corner, is one of the oldest American

gamelan groups to function as a composers' collective. Many of the pieces on David Demnitz's CD, for example, "Grafitti Removal," speaks to the members' strong background in process music.

Combinations of different tunings and musical styles are evident in many of these pieces. The Venerable Shower of Beauty/A Different Song recorded "Guruh-Suci Dewa," in which Javanese composer Widiyanto S. Putro makes good use of both his American students' abilities and his knowledge of new music practices in Java, as he beautifully combines *slendro* and *pelog* tunings. Another example of successful tuning combinations is in Barbara Benary's "Mostly Slendro Passacaglia," a work from her impressive *Karna: A Shadow Puppet Opera*, in which a clever combination of her own slendro and pelog tunings allows the vocal parts to be sung and harmonized in a diatonic tuning (with slight adjustments). The Craggvale Gamelan goes straight to this option, tuning all their instruments, including gongs ordered from Java, in a Western pentatonic scale.

Western instruments were combined with Javanese gamelan in Java many years ago to provide military motifs in ceremonial dances. The pieces in the recordings reviewed here that use Western instruments have a different goal: to forge a relationship between the varied instrumental traditions of the composers and performers. Lou Harrison is particularly well known for this practice, and the compact disc *Lou Harrison: Gamelan Music* partly documents this repertory—one that is increasingly performed by gamelan groups other than Harrison's own. Jarrad Powell's "Gending Erhu," on the Pacifica CD *Trance Gong*, is an exquisite example of how instruments from different parts of the world can sound like they were made to be played together. Evan Ziporyn is one of the few composers to take on integrating entire ensembles of Western instruments with the gamelan instead of single instruments, as in his metrically vigorous "Tire Fire" for Balinese gamelan and electric guitars and keyboards on the Galak Tika cassette *Intergalactic Gamelan*.

Most groups include some repertory of Central Java or Bali, labeled as "traditional," as well as music credited to an Indonesian composer. This repertory was, after all, the training ground for many gamelan musicians, and is still the primary focus for many groups who study gamelan music but do not release recordings of their own performances. The Metalworks CD *Parrot Soup*, for example, includes an arrangement of the Balinese dance music for "Baris," as well as several pieces that draw on a wider range of the players' talents.

Sekar Jaya is an example of a group that has passed through different stages of performing and recording new compositions. While they have a strong identity as a Balinese gamelan group, over time they have integrated compositions by American members of the group (e.g. Vitale, Tenzer, and 180

Ziporyn) into their repertory. Every piece on *American Works for Balinese Gamelan* is thrilling, and distinctions of nationality of the performers and composers seem unimportant next to the well-constructed intensity of the music.

The sound of gamelan in the world's music comes not only from groups of people with instruments from Indonesia or built on Indonesian models. Samplers have also expanded the reach of "gamelan" music, allowing MIDI instruments to use timbres associated with Indonesian instruments. This technology has also allowed the sounds of gamelan to become separated from the instruments themselves, so that the sounds no longer necessarily invoke a connection to Indonesia, although sometimes this connection is part of the image of the sample libraries. Propeller Islands' CD and CD ROM Complete Gamelan offers "Sounds from the edge of the world allowing you to create liquid metallic textures and intricate rhythms which produce a hypnotic effect on the listener." The nearly 100 samples of bonang, saron, suling, jengglong and environmental atmospheres, however, is far from "complete." The instruments are played by someone with little knowledge of Indonesian techniques (the drum sounds are painfully flat), and the samples include an unaccredited excerpt of an outdoor performance in Bali. The instrument maker is referred to as "famous," but is not named. This approach contrasts with the ethical and collaborative work with Indonesian artists that is characteristic of virtually every other group mentioned in this review.

All the recordings that use samples show a familiarity with the musical as well as the timbral vocabulary that "gamelan" has come to represent. The soundtrack for Akira, which combines a large chorus performing kecak with carefully tuned and structured references to both bamboo and metal ensembles of Indonesia, gives the impression that the sampler is just another of the energetic performers. In the animated movie Akira, the music is in the background; one has to play the soundtrack CD at a robust volume to catch the layers of references to various Indonesian, Japanese and European practices. Some of the multi-tracked pieces performed by Robert Macht on Suite for Javanese Gamelan and Synthesizer are impressively reflective of Javanese musical structure. Working alone in his studio, Macht makes extensive use of Javanese instruments as well as a sampler. The soundscapes and layers created by Loren Nerell on the CD Lilin Dewa contain only one track with live instruments, and the high-speed orchestrations of Wendy Carlos in "Poem for Bali" evoke a powerful Balinese ensemble through melody and texture alone. Evoking gamelan textures or techniques through sampling still seems to be based on understanding established practices.

Some of the recordings feature a different kind of cross-cultural collaboration whose goal is not so much to learn what one's Indonesian partners

are doing, but to find creative ways to share the same musical space and time. For example, the performers on *Hati-Hati* took some lessons in Bali, and then took their instruments into a recording studio in Switzerland. When Reinhard Flatischer plays his saxophone with the Balinese group Suar Agung, what results may not be exactly gamelan music, but it is certainly an example of the increasing interest on the part of performers and composers in using gamelan sounds to enrich the timbral possibilities of contemporary music.

Jack Body's notes to the Tabub Pacific CD speak pointedly to the synthesis of resources that composers must confront when composing for gamelan. "Although the players dedicate much of their time to learning the techniques and repertory of traditional Javanese music, they also enjoy the challenge of creating new compositions. They are attracted to the possibility of exploring this marvelously integrated and harmonious percussion ensemble... The fact that all the composers have played gamelan means that they have an understanding of how the instrument best sounds. In some ways this knowledge can be an impediment, since one of the challenges for a . . . composer writing for gamelan [may be] to create a personal, individual expression, and to escape the forms and structure of traditional gamelan music which are so strongly associated with the instruments themselves." Composition for gamelan can also be the opposite of escape. Wayne Vitale says, "composing an idiomatic piece is . . . a way of figuring out how the music works,"4 and his "Byomantara" (on Balinese Music in America) makes a good case for this approach. Richard Felciano did not turn to Indonesia as a primary musical resource when he was commissioned to write for gamelan and organ. He purposely avoided imitation of Javanese form or performance practice, approaching the instruments purely on acoustic terms and playing with differences in tunings and timbres. In his CD notes, Felciano describes his "In Celebration of Golden Rain" as balancing ". . . the gamelan and the organ . . . [as] opposites, the one being many instruments conceived as one; the other being one enormous instruments capable of almost infinite subdivision and synthesis into smaller 'instruments.'"

The myriad approaches to creating, defining and recording gamelan music make it easy to agree with Gamelan Pacifica that "the diversity of gamelan styles in Indonesia as well as other countries proves [gamelan] to be a vital and constantly changing form of musical expression." The recordings discussed here indicate some of the paths that can be taken when a music is opened to direct participation (playing, composing, instrument building) in addition to passive consumption (listening, observing). What are the ramifications of the bi-musicality proposed and still advocated by Mantle Hood? Should we expand the concept of bi-musicality to include creativity as well as performance? Those who begin by imitating their teach-

ers will often become teachers themselves. Those who study with creative artists may be moved to follow their lead. Those who are open to artistic inspiration can be inspired by anything. Henry Cowell said "Hybrids are good." Lou Harrison said "Hybrids are all we have."

I have often contended that ethnomusicology and composition have much in common. In a sense, they are both based on the urge to seek out new musical worlds, to create ways of understanding and explaining new sounds, and to articulate the processes and structures by which these sounds are made and perceived. Composers who become involved in a music that is at first "other" and then becomes "ours" might feel an affinity for ethnomusicologists. Both feel a strong personal connection to the musics to which they are most committed. Both are explorers and explainers. These days, the roles of composer and ethnomusicologist seem increasingly to overlap—witness the number of artists' bios that describe someone as a "composer/ethnomusicologist." And whether or not one thinks these labels are appropriately applied, the overlapping is bound to affect both fields. Ethnomusicology can inform and enrich the composition of new music that is being stimulated by increasing global interaction. Composition can in turn enrich the scope and applications of ethnomusicology. The recordings discussed here show that composition has taken a place alongside performance, analysis, and listening as a way to understand a music. That composition has assumed this role has implications for the teaching of music in the classroom as well as in the gamelan room.

Indonesian artists also play an important role in the evolution of gamelan in international settings, and have a great influence on the transmission and development of both classical and new gamelan practices. Virtually every group listed here has had contact to some extent with Indonesian artists. Serving as cultural representatives and master teachers, these artists sometimes function also as collaborators and artistic partners. For example, Gamelan Pacifica's shadow theater work Visible Religion, is an inspiring example of collaboration across genres as well as nations. Michael Tenzer's first composition for gamelan was a collaboration with his teacher, I Wayan Tembres. Observers of new composition for gamelan in Indonesia also see an interaction between traditional skills and innovative inclinations. As Wayan Sadra noted, "Developments that occur in karawitan [classical music], whether rapidly or slowly, show the presence of creative activity. . . . Komposisi baru [new composition] refers to music as a medium of communication, in which the composers' feelings and ideas—whether traditional or experimental—are conveyed through the form, the instrumentation, or the presentation of the composition" (Sadra and Diamond 1991:20).

When Barbara Benary compiled the first North American gamelan directory for *Ear Magazine* in 1993, she listed ninety-eight sets of instruments, and that number has increased steadily. Her recent update of active ensembles (rather than instruments) in North America lists seventy-five active groups.<sup>5</sup> Besides the robust development of gamelan music in the United States and Canada, there are at least fifteen countries other than Indonesia that have some kind of gamelan ensemble. Worldwide interest in this ensemble seems likely to continue.

While the global gamelan phenomena may always be considered to have roots in Indonesia, it will develop and bear fruit in many different locales. Or do new hybrids eventually develop their own roots? Will the gamelan and its music, ever be, as Jarrad Powell once mused, "liberated from Indonesia" so that it would be played without cultural reference to its origin?

Musicians and composers everywhere—including Indonesia—will continue to invent and re-invent their relationship to the instruments, the music, and the construct "gamelan," as the term is used to encompass groups, instruments, timbres, musical styles, social processes, and cultural alliances. The composers, performers, artists, and scholars who created these recordings of gamelan music ably demonstrate how eclectic musical and cultural resources can be combined to develop and nurture a music that, while it began as a distant study, has become a local art.

Jody Diamond

American Gamelan Institute

## **Notes**

- 1. In the interest of full disclosure, I want to point out that I was involved in the production of two of these recordings, (B.A.N.G. and Lou Harrison: Gamelan Music) and that I am the director of The American Gamelan Institute, a not-for-profit organization that distributes some of them.
  - 2. From the notes by Marc Perlman to the compact disc, Balinese Gamelan in America.
- 3. This piece includes a new instrument of tuned lengths of pipe. It is credited to Lesmawan, but is actually based on an instrument invented by A. L. Suwardi in 1988.
  - 4. Marc Perlman, liner notes to American Works for Balinese Gamelan.
- 5. There are directories of gamelan groups in North America, The Netherlands, and Australasia posted on the World Wide Web. A list of these is on the Links page at the website of the American Gamelan Institute (http://www.sover.net/~frogpeak/agi.html).

## References

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