

RECORDING

MAHAMBARA: new music from ISI Surakarta

Introduction by Rahayu Supanggah

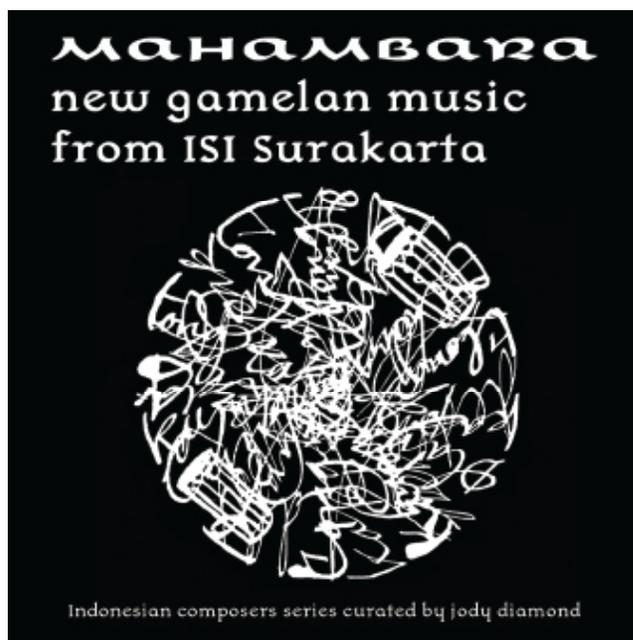
Mahambara is a compilation of recordings of ten compositions by lecturers from the Karawitan Department at ISI Surakarta. Mahambara reflects the musical journeys and explorations undertaken by these composers. From a variety of cultural backgrounds and interests, they have travelled far and wide across the ocean of musical life, including serving as teachers and artists.

This compilation covers a range of styles and genres of compositions, including music with a religious (Islamic or Christian) nuance; music with a folk influence; music influenced by the regional traditions of Sunda, Bali, and Java; diatonic music; music based on classical karawitan developed in new ways; and experimental works resulting from “wild” musical explorations. Perhaps this collection of compositions will show the potential of karawitan as a source of new and creative musical compositions, while maintaining its connection to the situations and conditions of society today. Globalization and the creative industry—currently important issues—provide challenges and opportunities for creative artists to do more for both their own community and for the rest of the world.

These recordings were intended to be a single CD. The Karawitan Department at ISI Surakarta decided to give priority to compositions that have not yet been heard by a wide audience. Longer compositions would have limited the opportunity for shorter works by other composers to appear, and so are not included. Many longer works have already been presented, in live performances, or as audio and video recordings; and have been published and discussed on both national and international levels.

Finally, invoking the word “Mahambara” itself, which can be translated as travelling or moving upward, we hope that this compilation will encourage the life of karawitan, in particular new karawitan, or new Indonesian music, to grow and develop in the general community. I believe that essentially karawitan can only live and thrive if it constantly undergoes a process of progression and actualization in various ways, including the composition of new works and new styles of treatment, in accordance with the needs and demands of the community and the current era.

Rahayu Supanggah
Music Advisor



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Composers' Notes

Shalawat Rambu by Waluyo
This composition is intended as a reflection of a prayer, in the form of an Islamic invocation known as *shalawat*, sung to a melody based on the *seleh* notes of the *balungan* from *Gendhing Ladrang Rambu*. The text—*Sesungguhnya Allah dan malaikat-Nya bershawat untuk Nabi. Hai orang-orang*

yang beriman, bershalawatlah kamu kepadanya, dan ucapkanlah salam penghormatan yang sempurna (QS. Al-Ahzab 5)—means “In truth, God and his angels pray only for the prophet Mohammad. All who have faith, pray only to Him, and utter a perfect greeting of honour and respect.”

Shalawat, a form of worship that every Muslim is encouraged to perform, is a declaration of love for the prophet Mohammad that will guide His followers to behave as the prophet behaved, so that in the hereafter they will receive His eternal blessings. By praying diligently in this way, Muslims are able to free themselves of all their sins and wrongdoings.

The musical treatment in this composition aims to recreate gendhing Sekaten in a new way, particularly Gendhing Rambu, which has a clear function as a medium for preaching the Islamic religion. Based on this idea, the composer decided to write a melody using gerongan technique, which is based on the *seleh* notes of the *balungan* for Gendhing Ladrang Rambu. The vocal melody combines male and female singers who sing in two parts in *irama dadi*, interspersed with Santiswara-Larasmadya style, accompanied by the sound of tambourines, *kendhang*, and *kemanak*, returning to *Shalawat Rambu* accompanied by the gamelan. The final section of this composition, based on Ladrang Rambu, is in gendhing *soran* [loud] style.

Supporting Artists: Suraji, Kuwat, Slamet Riyadi, Sarno, Joko Purwanto, Waluyo, Heny Savitri, Sri Mulyani, Singgih, Aris Setiawan, Bambang Sosodoro, Bondhet Wrahatnala, Joko Daryanto, Sigit Setiawan, Gunawan, Rossyid, Ari Purno, Putri, Nur Handayani Mutiara Dewi, Sri Joko Raharjo, Darsono.

Kothekan Lesung by Sri Harta

A *lesung* is a large mortar used for pounding rice. At harvest time, the sound of the rice being pounded with wooden sticks, called *kothekan lesung*, can be heard all over the village. The rhythmic patterns of the *kothekan lesung*, heard from a long distance, create a picture of the beauty of nature and of village life. The activity of pounding the rice in this way produces a variety of sounds and patterns, resulting in lively interlocking rhythms that can be played in different tempos to create a variety of characters.

The sounds produced are *thok*, *thek*, *dhong*, and *dhung*, played within the framework of a particular tempo to create a musical composition. In addition to the patterns of the *lesung*, this composition also includes a vocal part with a text describing the situation and conditions in the village.

Supporting Artists: Supardi, I Nyoman Sukerna, Hadi Boediono, Rusdiyantoro, I Nengah Muliana, Rasita Satriana, Agus Prasetya, Nur Handayani, Sriyati, I Ketut Saba, I Wayan Sadra, Sri Harta.

Ler-leran by Sugimin

The composition *Ler-leran* is a reinterpretation of the musical treatment of the popular Javanese children's song, “*Ilir-ilir*.” The melody and words of “*Ilir-ilir*” are explored and developed to create a number of new instrumental and vocal pieces with various characters. The development of

the melody is based on the *seleh* notes in “*Ilir-ilir*,” while the original texts are developed by adding new songs.

Supporting Artists: Suraji, Kuwat, Slamet Riyadi, Sarno, Joko Purwanto, Waluyo, Heny Savitri, Sri Mulyani, Singgih, Aris Setiawan, Bambang Sosodoro, Bondhet Wrahatnala, Adhi.

Lurojinem by Supardi

In Javanese karawitan, a *thingthingan* is a short phrase to determine the *pathet* and the orientation of notes used in a particular gendhing, played before it is performed. In *pathet nem*, the notes used for *thingthingan* are 6532, in *pathet sanga*, the notes are 2165; *pathet manyura* uses the notes 3216, or “*lurojinem*” [from the second syllable of the Javanese words for those numbers: *telu*, *loro*, *siji*, *enem*].

The main material for this composition is the *thingthingan* 3216. These notes are treated using the musical vocabulary of Javanese karawitan but not in the style of a traditional Javanese gendhing, nor restricted to this phrase alone. This composition uses vocabulary from Javanese karawitan as well as Sundanese and Balinese karawitan; the influence of these latter two areas can be heard throughout. The composer intended to show that the *thingthingan* has spread to a wider area by expressing the Sundanese and Balinese styles of karawitan in the techniques typical of those musics.

The composition *Lurojinem* uses the following Javanese *slendro gamelan* instruments: *gender barung*; four kettles of the *bonang barung* and *bonang panerus* tuned to 3, 2, 1, 6; *slenthem*; *kempul* 6 and 3; *gong suwukan* 2, 1, 6; *gong ageng*; *kenong* 3, 2, 1, 6; and four Sundanese *kendhang ketipung* [small drums] tuned to 3, 2, 1, 6.

Supporting artists: Supardi, I Nyoman Sukerna, Danis Sugiyanto, Hadi Boediono, Rusdiyantoro, I Nengah Muliana, Rasita Satriana, Agus Prasetya.

Buka Sembarangan by I Wayan Sadra

The original idea of this composition for Javanese *pelog gamelan* was to create an impression of Semarang style karawitan, or “*Semarangan*.” This existing style is a musical reference that has always been in the composer's mind, and which has fascinated and stimulated his imagination, ultimately leading to the desire to imitate this style. The composer believes that the end result is not in original Semarang style karawitan, which is why the composition is titled “*Buka Sembarangan*,” a pun on the word *Semarangan*. [The instruments are *bonang barung*, *bonang panerus*, *peking*, *saron*, *demung*, *slenthem*, *kenong*, *gong*, *kempul*, two *kendhang*, and saxophone. —Ed.]

Supporting artists: Supardi, I Nyoman Sukerna, Danis Sugiyanto, Hadi Boediono, Rusdiyantoro, I Nengah Muliana, Rasita Satriana, Agus Prasetya, Nanik, Sriyati, Gunarto, Doni, Sapto, I Ketut Saba, Prasadiyanto, Rasita Satriana, Cucup Cahripin, I Wayan Sadra.

Pak Tung Blang by Cucup Cahripin

Pak-tung-blang is the name of a Sundanese *kendang* pattern used in traditional gamelan. This onomatopoeic name

describes the three different sounds made on the kendang and ketipung, although in practice, the pattern includes a number of other sounds as well.

Inspired by the variety of sounds and motifs of *pak-tung-blang*, the composer explores new sounds that can be produced by the kendang. The result of these explorations of drum patterns is not simply a series of sounds but rather a musical story, with a plot, a structure, and other complexities.

Supporting Artists: Supardi, I Nyoman Sukerna, Danis Sugiyanto, Hadi Boediono, Rusdiyantoro, I Nengah Muliána, Rasita Sat Riana, Agus Prasetya, Gendot, Oman, I Ketut Saba, Cucup Cahripin, I Wayan Sadra.

Damai by Sigit Astono

This composition includes two songs, “Ana Apa” and “Damai.” “Ana Apa” was composed based on an observation of the behavior of a number of animals, in particular frogs during the rainy season, as well as pigeons, doves, goats, and so on. The sounds of these animals seem to represent a kind of ancient music which still exists and can be heard all around us. The beauty of the sound of this “natural music,” in the form of a personal song or symphony played by all the different animals, inspired the composer to arrange these sounds in the form of a musical composition. The song “Damai” was composed after the composer witnessed a strange occurrence while at church, where the congregation did not greet one another but simply looked at each other with suspicion and unfriendly faces. It was as if there was no love or compassion left in the hearts and minds of the congregation, only coldness and hard-heartedness.

The song “Ana Apa” tells about a person’s emotional intelligence which allows him to capture the true essence of life. People often feel that they are God’s most noble creation, the best, greatest, and highest of all creatures. So great is the superego of man, that he often regards all of God’s other creations as inferior to him; plants, shrubs, trees, and all kinds of animals which creep, crawl, climb, or fly, must all be the slaves or food of man. People often forget and break God’s teachings, trust, and commands that they learned from the holy book when they first came to know “The Transcendent.” They forget that man was the last of God’s creations! They look at animals as moving objects, with flesh, that are waiting to be killed and eaten. There are people—perhaps many—who can respect the existence of animals while at the same time honouring The Creator.

Animals should be allowed to live as they were destined to live. Birds should be left to chirp, sing, and whistle as long as they can. A person who manages to reach this level is only able to “talk” to the animals around him, but also has a greater sense of awe and admiration for the greatness of God and all His creations!

The song “Damai” portrays the mood of a person who feels “at odds” while in church. There is a sense of isolation in the crowd, a feeling of emptiness in the message

of love and compassion. Everyone should greet one another with love and a happy face, but instead their faces show the burden of their personal problems and they forget that they are worshipping in the church. This composition is a criticism and reminder to those who are starting to lose their faith and goodwill to others.

The instruments in this work are those usually used in a keroncong ensemble, including: cuk, cak, guitar, and bass. To enhance the melody, a number of gamelan instruments are added: two saron barung pelog, slenthem pelog, three gambang (all tunings), three kempul pelog (notes 3, 5, and 1), gong suwukan (pitch 1), gong ageng, and gender barung pelog nem.

Supporting Artists: Ary Purno, Heny, Putri, Drs. Sumardi, Ibu Suparni, Midang, Eko, Adhi Andantino, Veronika, Ahmad, Puruhito, Oki, Sigit Astono.

Arus Monggang by Danis Sugiyanto

“Arus Monggang” is a musical expression from the composer’s imagination of a meeting between the King of Surakarta and Queen Wilhelmina as they sailed along the Solo River, or Bengawan Solo. This meeting is said to have involved numerous troops of guards and several boats that carried musicians and various musical instruments.

The composer imagines this event to be the synergy between two music cultures, East and West. Gamelan Monggang represents the Eastern music; Western music is represented by a group of wind instruments, an ensemble often used for state functions. The choice of these two musical ensembles was based on practical reasons, as they are readily available and easy to carry around from place to place. These two music cultures are reinterpreted according to the ideas and wishes of the composer, in a piece with a duration of 6 minutes and 30 seconds.

Supporting artists: Danis Sugiyanto, Nurwanta Triwibowo, Supardi, Hadi Budiono, Sri Harta, I Wayan Sadra, I Nengah Muliána, Rusdiyantoro, Agus Prasetyo, Sapto Haryono, Y. Dony Hermawan, Gendot Dekanipa, Bagus TWU.

Minulya by Darsono

This work, a revised version of the composition *Sulaya*, is based on the complex love story of Rama and Sinta. It consists of several short pieces in laras pelog, joined together to form a single composition: *Pathetan Mobahe, Si Sinta, Kemuda Genjek, Parikena, and Pathetan Kloning.*

Pathetan Mobahe portrays Rama remembering the time when he was with Sinta, who never let him down, and who is now being kept prisoner by Rahwana. The piece *Si Sinta* describes Rama’s disappointment at losing Sinta, and as he contemplates his fate, he wonders who is to blame for what has happened. *Kemuda Genjek* portrays Rama’s combined feelings of uncertainty, sadness, anger, love, and compassion. The piece *Parikena* describes the character of Sinta, who will always remain loyal to her husband but who in her loneliness was tempted by a man from a different race [sic], for whom she has no affection at all. *Pathetan*

Kloning portrays Rama's submission, and his belief that he and his beloved wife Dewi Sinta will one day be reunited, even if it involves a long and complicated process. When he and Sinta are reunited, Rama believes that he will find a life that is noble, or "minulya."

Supporting Artists: Suraji, Kuwat, Slamet Riyadi, Sarno, Joko Purwanto, Waluyo, Heny Savitri, Sri Mulyani, Singgih, Aris Setiawan, Bambang Sosodoro, Bondhet Wrahatnala, Joko Daryanto, Sigit Setiawan, Gunawan, Rossyid, Ari Purno, Putri, Nur Handayani Mutiara Dewi, Sri Joko Raharjo, Darsono.

Barang Miring by Bambang Sosodoro

This traditional musical composition was inspired by the ancient gamelan Sekaten ensembles named Kyai Guntur Madu and Kyai Guntur Sari, which are played every year by musicians from the Surakarta Keraton during the Grebeg Maulud (Sekatenan) festival. The two gendhing *Rambu* and *Rangkung* were composed especially for gamelan Sekaten; considered sacred, they are always played at the beginning of each session of the gamelan Sekaten ensembles.

In this composition, *Gendhing Barang Miring*, which is always played after the afternoon call to prayer (*adzan ahar*), is interpreted in a way different from the traditional Sekaten repertoire. Here it is performed on a Javanese gamelan ageng, with the "front" instruments (rebab, kendhang, gender, bonang), the "back" instruments (gambang, siter, suling, gender penerus, suling), and a vocal part. This composition is in traditional Surakarta style, in terms of its tuning, interpretation of pathet, form, irama, tempo, playing techniques, and musical and rhythmic patterns (*cengkok* and *wiledan*).

By using a variety of approaches, such as a reinterpretation of musical treatment and a development of traditional resources, the practices, tendencies, norms, or "rules" found in the traditional performance practice of sekaten gendhing are presented with a different form and character. The treatment of the instrumentation, the vocal melodies, the dynamics, and tempo all create a fresh and unique character.

Supporting artists: Suraji, Kuwat, Slamet Riyadi, Sarno, Joko Purwanto, Waluyo, Heny Savitri, Sri Mulyani, Singgih, Aris Setiawan, Bambang Sosodoro, Bondhet Wrahatnala, Joko Daryanto, Sigit Setiawan, Gunawan, Rossyid, Ari Purno, Putri, Nur Handayani Mutiara Dewi, Sri Joko Raharjo, Darsono.

Participants, with degrees held by each

The composers and musicians on this recording are all lecturers in the Karawitan (traditional music) Department at ISI Surakarta. Many of them have advanced degrees, earned in conservatories and universities in Indonesia and abroad. This is a list of everyone involved in the Mahambara project, showing the degrees earned by each individual.

Adhi Andantino
Agus Prasetya
Ahmad
Ari Purno

Aris Setiawan, S.Sn.
Ary Purno
Bagus TWU.
Bambang Sosodoro, S.Sn. M.Sn.
Bondhet Wrahatnala, S.Sos. M.Sn.
Cucup Cahripin, S.Kar. M.Sn.
Danis Sugiyanto, S.Sn. M.Hum.
Darsono, S.Kar. M.Hum.
Doni
Eko
Gendot Dekanipa
Gunarto
Gunawan
Hadi Boediono, S.Kar. M.Sn.
Heny Savitri
I Ketut Saba, S.Kar. M.Si.
I Nengah Muliana, S.Kar. M.Hum.
I Nyoman Sukerna, S.Kar. M.Hum.
I Wayan Sadra, S.Kar. M.Sn.
Joko Daryanto, S.Sn. M.Sn.
Joko Purwanto, S.Kar. M.A.
Kuwat, S.Kar. M.Hum.
Midang
Mutiara Dewi
Nanik
Nur Handayani
Nurwanta Triwibowo, S.Kar.
Oki
Oman
Prasadiyanto, S.Kar. M.A.
Puruhito
Putri
Rasita Satriana, S.Kar. M.Sn.
Rossyid
Rusdiyantoro, S. Kar.
Sapto Haryono
Sarno, S.Sen.
Sigit Astono S.Kar. M.Hum.
Sigit Setiawan
Singgih, S.Sn.
Slamet Riyadi, S.Kar.
Sri Harta, S.Kar. M.Sn.
Sri Joko Raharjo, S.Sn.
Sri Mulyani
Sriyati
Sumardi
Supardi, S.Kar. M.Hum
Suparni
Suraji, S.Kar. M.Hum.
Veronika
Waluyo, S.Kar. M.Sn.
Y. Dony Hermawan

A note from the American Gamelan Institute

It is a great honor and privilege for the American Gamelan Institute to be entrusted with the production and dissemination of this musical compilation. The abiding mission of the American Gamelan Institute, since its founding in 1981, has been to respect, support, and explore all forms of gamelan, both traditional and experimental. In recent decades, many Indonesian composers of new music for gamelan have gained much-deserved recognition and appreciation throughout the international gamelan community. Thus the world continues to be enriched and amazed by all that is possible with a gamelan in the hands of those who have mastered it, within a culture committed to growth and change as well as to maintaining a precious heritage. I hope this is one of many collaborations to come that will support these ideas.

There is, however, one particularly sad note. I Wayan Sadra, one of Indonesia's most experimental composers, and a close friend to many, passed away before this CD was finished. His presence in and contribution to innovative performance and arts education will never be forgotten. Wayan Sadra contributed to Mahambara as both musician and composer—as we listen, perhaps we might imagine a gong played just for him.

jody diamond, director, AGI

ISI Surakarta

<<http://isi-ska.ac.id>>

A website with videos:

<<http://tvkampus.isi-ska.ac.id>>

Mahambara

<<http://www.gamelan.org/mahambara>>

The cover art is from the score for *Terus dan Terus* by I Wayan Sadra.

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CD.AGI01

Mahambara, new music from ISI Surakarta. CD.AGI02