

## EDITORIAL

I'm writing from the forest lodge in upstate New York where Bu Jody Diamond lives. My laptop is on a batik table-covering and I'm surrounded by back issues of *Balungan*, gamelan CDs, a gender, a rebab or three, and various manuscripts from diverse Indonesian artists and scholars.

In the past weeks, I joined the Rocky Mountain Balinese Gamelan Festival (RMBGF) in Denver, Colorado, and also attended performances of Gamelan Giri Kedaton in Montréal and Gamelan Galak Tika in Boston. Since moving to North America from Australia in 2020, I've been lapping up all the rich connections to gamelan and Indonesia. Despite being geographically much further away from Indonesia than in my home in Sydney, I feel stronger connections to Indonesia over here on the North American continent.

Despite these strong networks and vibrant on- and off-line activity, the place of a journal where dialogues about Indonesian music can be centralized and cemented in print still feels to be of high importance. At RMBGF, Elizabeth Clendinning and Indra Sadguna highlighted this as they presented a thorough statistical analysis of academic journal articles that revealed a disproportionate number of English-language articles by non-Indonesian scholars about Indonesian music. As I took on the role of guest editor, and as I'm learning the ropes of *Balungan's* style, I find myself reflecting on the ongoing purpose of a journal like *Balungan*. Who is *Balungan's* audience? How can *Balungan* be useful to more people?

Language seems to be perhaps the most important factor in answering these questions. As an initial step towards increasing the reach and accessibility of the material in this issue, we provide abstracts in both English and Indonesian for some of the articles here, and plan to expand translations in future issues.

While publishing translations of Indonesian writing has always been part of *Balungan's* scope, I encourage more artists and scholars to reach out and send us material in Indonesian. We are more committed than ever to developing a bilingual journal, one that may balance some of the issues that Clendinning and Sadguna critiqued in their presentation. We are experimenting with new formats and technologies that may eventually allow most content to be available in both languages.

Maintaining *Balungan's* distinctive mission, the articles published here present various scholarly and artistic dialogues about Indonesian music. A wide variety of authors, contexts, and writing styles continues to set *Balungan* apart from more traditional academic journals, making *Balungan* an excellent place for exploring non-traditional formats that may tackle issues of representation and accessibility.

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Some articles have links to online media (video and a font file) at these gamelan.org links:  
[gamelan.org/balungan/issues/V15/media](https://gamelan.org/balungan/issues/V15/media)

For example, I am delighted to share Leslie Tilley's extensive article on pedagogy, where she dialogues with diverse voices to reflect on the evolution of her personal approach to teaching Balinese gamelan to the "unenculturated" student. She describes a hybrid teaching model intended to foster greater understanding and embodiment of "unspoken" aspects of Balinese gamelan, based on ideas and practices that may be especially useful for instructors of university ensembles outside Bali. While her article features many bibliographical elements typical of academic journal articles, Tilley's detailed dialogue is best suited to a journal with a dedicated focus on Indonesian gamelan music and its transmission, and is thus very much at home here.

Two of the articles focus on instrument building. Gamelan specialists regularly have to explain to initiates that "gamelan" does not map easily onto English terms; gamelan is not just a single instrument, nor is it just an ensemble. Nevertheless, instruments are central to the music, and both of these articles explore the expansive contexts surrounding the development of contemporary instrumental ensembles.

Presenting extended quotations from personal interviews, Sean Hayward focuses on two artists in Surakarta who focus their creativity on the design of new gamelan instruments. Hayward constructs his descriptions by exploring the ideologies behind the instruments' creation, as well as other factors from political to environmental. Sulthoni draws on discarded materials, creating instruments and even puppets from recycled and reclaimed objects as varied as plastic tubs, glass, and toothbrushes; while Pamungkas's instruments experiment with *pamor*, a distinctive layered metalworking technique.

My own article provides details on the construction and tuning of the instruments that comprise Dewa Alit's Gamelan Salukat, along with some cultural background to Alit's ideologies. A discussion of the compositional potential of his new instruments is based on my own experiences composing for them. I hope the information will be useful for the many people I meet who ask detailed technical questions about Alit's instruments and music.

Ed Garcia and Een Herdiani's article provides a detailed timeline of different approaches to Sundanese kendang notation, problematizes the various advantages and disadvantages of the existing methods, and then describes the new computer font that Garcia and Yosep Nurdjaman designed specifically to respond to the inadequacies of each previous notation strategy. We are glad to host the files for the newly-minted KendangFont Sunda in the online library at gamelan.org.

Saptono, a Javanese musician and composer who has spent much of his life in Japan, was moved to write a piece that expressed his desire for an end to the pandemic, and advice for what to do in pursuit of that. He wrote versions in two different paths, allowing performers to choose for themselves. In the vocal text, Saptono drew

on Javanese beliefs by including the incantation "*singgah-singgah*" [Return to where you came from!], and appealed to Japanese ritual sensibilities by inventing a dragon to symbolize the burning of incense as prayer. The vocal text in Javanese was translated to Japanese for his local audience; into Indonesian for his national audience; to extend the reach of the composition even further, he asked Jody Diamond to write verses in English. The notes invite others to add additional languages, extending this music-as-prayer to gamelan groups of all nations.

Elizabeth Macy provides important documentation of the first Rocky Mountain Balinese Gamelan Festival and symposium in Denver (RMBGF). *Balungan's* documentation of the First International Gamelan Festival during Expo '86 in Vancouver (Chalmers 1986, Diamond 1987) has proven to be particularly valuable for people researching the Festival's impact. Perhaps in 40 years Macy's record of the 2022 gathering in Colorado may be equally useful.

In these diverse ways, we hope that *Balungan* responds to the current energies for considering new representational strategies. We will endeavour to continue such efforts with experimentation into bilingual options, and editorial openness to a wide range of materials and approaches. We'd like to add to the growing number of contributors, reviewers, translators, and proofreaders from our global community— please reach out if you wish to participate in the many tasks involved in producing each issue of *Balungan*. ▮

—Oscar Smith, guest editor

## References

- Chalmers, John. "First International Gamelan Festival and Symposium." *Balungan* Vol. II, No. 3, December 1986, pp. 3–16.
- Diamond, Jody. "Indonesian Group EXPO '86." *Balungan* Vol. III, No. 1, November 1987, pp. 21–29.

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## FUTURE FEATURES

### Wayang Beber Metropolitan: Tradition as Inspiration

Marina Pretković and Tea Škrinjarčić

### Pangamelan: upcycling pans into collective music instruments

Marti Ruiz

### Beyond Expo 1986: Gamelan Communities in Canada & Directory of Gamelan in Canada

Laurent Bellemare

### Irwansyah Harahap and Suasasama

Rithaony Hutajulu

### Langgam "Caping Gunung" by Gesang

notation by Steven Tanoto

### "Kantaka" (for three rebab, kecapi, and slendro gender)

Wahyu Thoyyib Pambayun