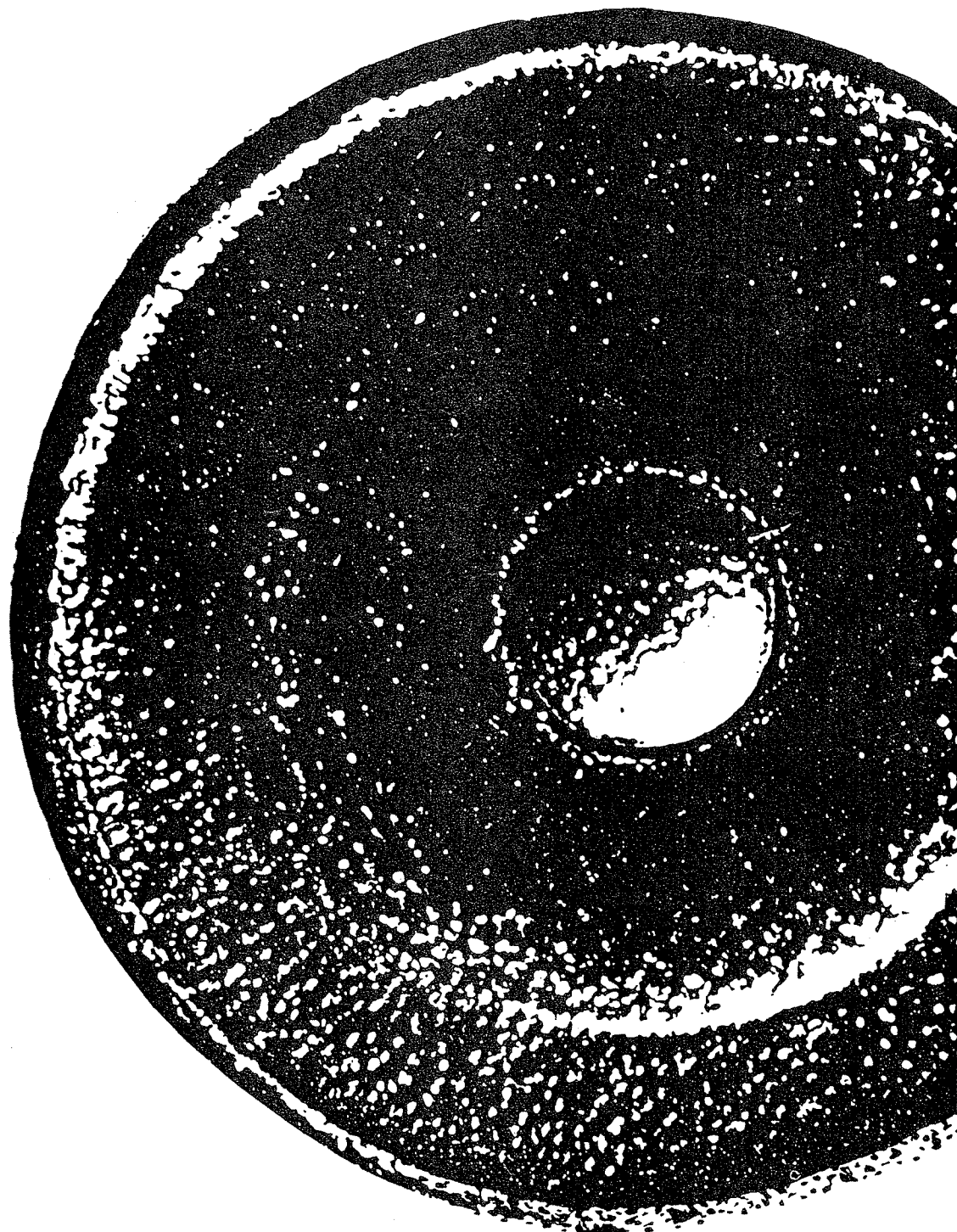


# BALUNGAN

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## EDITORIAL

This issue concentrates on the closely related countries of Cambodia and Thailand. I hope *Balungan* readers will want to explore the music of the mainland after reading this issue, and I offer this hope for two reasons.

The newly arrived immigrants from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam offer unique opportunities to explore Southeast Asian music in the U.S. Also, mainland Southeast Asia is beginning to open up again to foreign researchers after many years of war and political upheaval: the governments of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are once again allowing outsiders to enter those countries.

The following interviews and articles share a focus on the role of individuals in their musical traditions. Jarrad Powell's interview with Sam-Ang Sam and Pamela Myers-Moro's article each address traditional relationships between teachers and students and the changes being introduced into the old system of one-on-one transmission. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fundamental importance of the teacher-disciple bond in the Thai-Khmer tradition, certain innovative musicians have continually come up with influential ideas that have left strong marks on their traditions. My own article addresses the shifting relationships between tradition, transmission, and innovation in the Thai classical court tradition.

Sam-Ang Sam himself represents both tradition and innovation, and is aware of this. As a classically-trained Khmer musician and a composer trained in Western music, he is particularly qualified to talk about these forces. Yet he is only one musician (though prominent) out of many Southeast Asian immigrant musicians now living in the U.S. I urge you to seek them out.

*Deborah Wong*

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## TRADITIONS

# Across Three Generations: A Solo Piece for Thai Gong Circle

by Deborah Wong

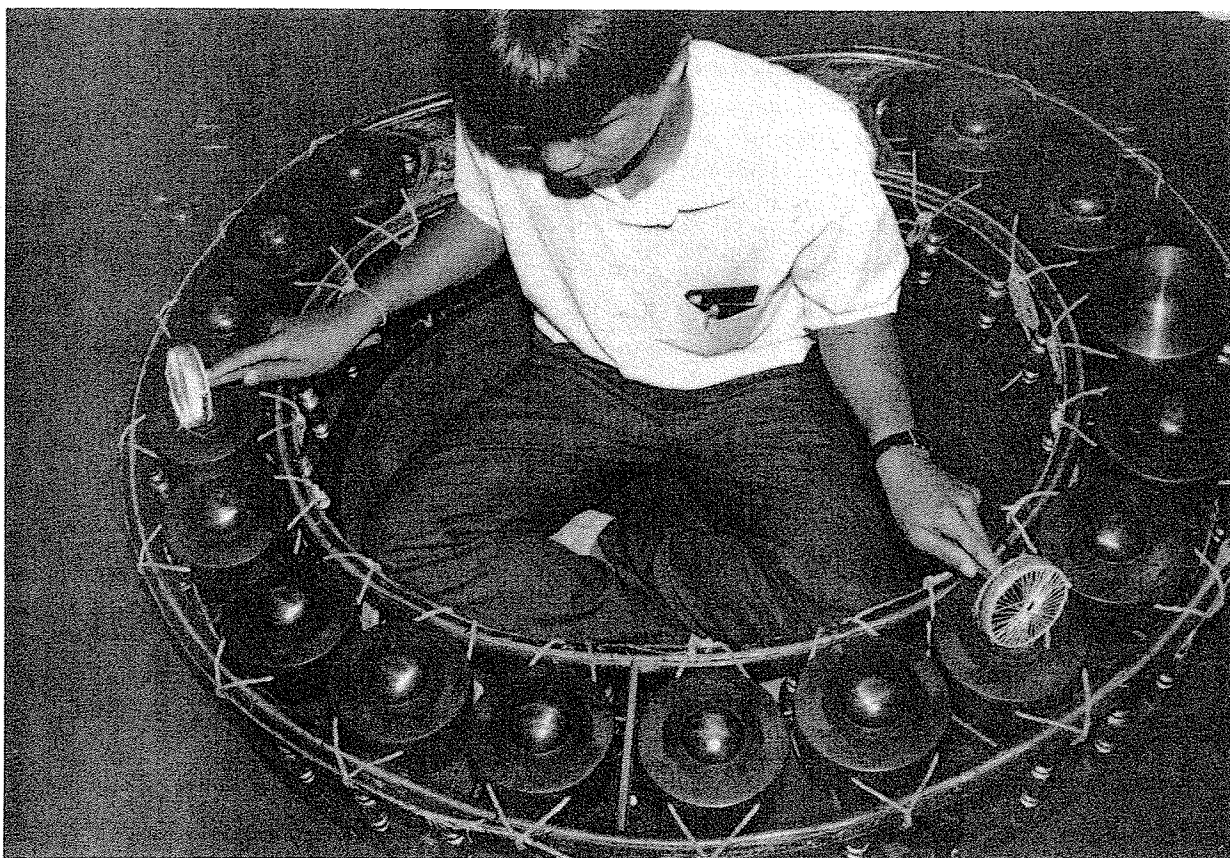
Teacher-student relationships are at the heart of the Thai classical music tradition. A teacher's decision to pass on certain solo pieces to a student indicates a deep commitment between them, and the inheritance of a teacher's repertoire of solo pieces is a matter of great pride. Solo pieces (called *phleng dieo lak*)<sup>1</sup> are not simply pieces played by a single performer. They are special virtuosic renditions of pieces that show off the skill of the performer, the style of the performer's teacher, and the techniques possible on the chosen instrument. There are a group of nine great solo

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*Deborah Wong has twice conducted fieldwork in Thailand and has written on popular and classical musics of contemporary Thailand. She is currently an assistant professor of music at Pomona College.*

pieces that are said to have been handed down over time, referred to as the *phleng dieo lak*, or the basic solo pieces.<sup>2</sup> They are generally learned in a certain order, and last from two to over forty minutes.

*Phya Sok* is usually the first solo piece learned because it is short (only one section), and *Krao nai* is generally the last because it is very long and technically demanding.<sup>3</sup> *Phya* is an honorific noble title, and *sok* means sad or mournful. The oldest form of *Phya sok* is in *song chan*,<sup>4</sup> the second metric level. It is said to be over two hundred years old, dating to the Ayuthya period (14th-18th centuries); in this form, the piece can be performed by a *mahori* ensemble, a mixture of string and percussion instruments. It is also sometimes used in *khon* [masked dance drama] and various



*The khong wong seen from above: the student musician is playing an octave. Note his hand position and the thongs tying the gong kettles to the frame.*

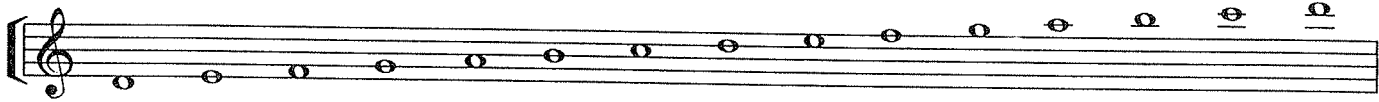


Figure 1. The range of the *khong wong yai*.

kinds of *lakhon* [a general word for many kinds of drama] in sorrowful contexts, usually for high-ranking or noble characters. Sometime toward the end of the reign of Rama IV (1851-1868), Phra Pradit Phairo (Mi Duriyangkun, commonly known as Khru Mi Khaek),<sup>5</sup> one of the most famous musicians of the early nineteenth century, composed a *sam chan*, or expanded third metric level form of *Phya sok*, that could be performed by a singer alternating with a *mahori* or *piphat*<sup>6</sup> ensemble. He also created a solo version in *song chan* that is still basic for all melodic instruments (Montri 2523/1980:559-560). A special solo version of *Phya sok* is also played on the *pi chanai* (a quadruple-reed instrument) at royal and aristocratic funerals.

The solo style probably dates from the court of Rama III (r. 1824-1851). A work for solo *pi nai* (a quadruple-reed instrument used in the *piphat* ensemble), created by Khru Mi Khaek (the pre-eminent musician of this period), is generally considered the first real solo work. Sangat Phukhaothong (1989:220) suggests that Khru Mi Khaek "cleared the way" for the solo style as it is known today;<sup>7</sup> if there were others before him, their names have been lost.

A basic concept behind solo pieces is *thang*, literally "way" or "path." For musicians, *thang* has two special, related meanings: the style of a particular kind of instrument, and the style of a particular teacher. A disciple generally studies a single instrument in depth (usually the teacher's specialty), in order to absorb the *thang* of both the instrument and the teacher.<sup>8</sup> A teacher can have many students; among these, only a few will achieve the technical ability or make the commitments of time and loyalty that are the mark of true disciples (*luk sit thae*).

What is the solo style? The late Dr. Uthit Naksawat (1987:47-48) wrote that the solo style is possible only on melodic instruments<sup>9</sup> and not on metric or colotomic instruments like *ching* or *ching-chap* [small hand-held cymbals] or drums. Sangat (1989:221-23) says that solo pieces fall into two groups, those for bowed and blown instruments and those for struck or strummed instruments.

Bowed and blown instruments are capable of producing a continuous stream of sound (all blown instruments use circular breathing) that makes their style similar to that of singing (although there are no *phleng dieo* solo pieces for voice). This style is melismatic and sustained and is known as the "sweet way" (*thang wan*) of realizing a part. Struck instruments like the *ranat* [xylophone with 21 or 22 keys that often leads the ensemble] are particularly suited for a second style, called *thang kep* or the "picking-up

style," which consists of rapid notes. This style is considered very exciting and can embroider a basic melody until only experienced musicians can pick it out of the stream of notes.

Each section of a solo piece is usually played twice, first using the "sweet style" and then the "picking-up style." Ending with a very fast section of *thang kep* is an exciting way to conclude a piece. In solo pieces for *ranat ek* (xylophone), however, each section of the piece is played four times to allow more variations.

Pieces appropriate for "solo-izing" (*kan dieo phleng*) have certain qualities. Their melodies usually include all seven pitches of the scale. Ideally, pieces will have repeated sections, giving the performer a chance to play variations of the same material. Finally, their basic melodies should be "impressive" and "deeply moving" (Uthit 2530/1987:50-51). Uthit (op. cit.:47-48) says that these pieces "show off" three characteristics: the ways different instruments realize melodies (i.e., their *thang*), the technical skill of the performer and the performer's memory and confidence.

Since classical musicians rarely use notation when performing, and the systematic use of notation to collect and preserve pieces is a recent development, memory is the cornerstone of the tradition. A musician is only as good as his or her ability to recall pieces. While playing a solo piece, a musician thinks of two melodic lines at once: the "basic melody" (the Thai equivalent of the Javanese *balungan*, usually played by the *khong wong yai* [great or large gong circle] in ensembles), and the solo version that is being performed. The confidence that comes from being cognizant of both parts at once can be attained only by playing a piece over and over again, until the performer no longer has to think or to look at the instrument. This can mean playing the part hundreds of times, to the point that the musician no longer even finds it interesting. Only then, some teachers say, will the performance sound confident and beautiful to a listener.

Luang Pradit Phairo (1881-1954) was one of the most famous classical musicians of the twentieth century. His birthname, Son Silapabanleng, was superseded by various titles as he progressed through the ranks of court positions for musicians, ending with the title Luang Pradit and the name Phairo ("Beautiful Sound"). One of his students remembered learning the master's solo pieces for *khong wong yai* (Subin 1987:59):

"Khru Luang Pradit Phairo didn't teach his solo pieces the same way to each student—he took each student's individual ability into consideration. If a student



Figure 2. Two ways of ornamenting the same melody: sabat (top) and khwai mu (bottom).



Figure 3. Section of acrobatic khwai mu.

had the skill to play a part as soon as it was taught to him, the master would modify it in order to show off the student's special skills. But if a student tried two or three times and still didn't get it, the master would change the part and make it easier. Likewise, if a student couldn't remember a part and had to ask the master to show him again, it usually wasn't exactly the same as before. It was like this because the master was always thinking up new ways to do his solo pieces. Sometimes he'd think of a new version in the middle of the night; at dawn, when it was still dark, he'd come up to where we [young] disciples stayed and raise our mosquito nets and wake us up so he could teach it to us right away."

Theoretically, a master musician should be able to solo-ize a piece on demand. Accounts from the early years of the century (regarded by many contemporary musicians as the golden age of classical music) mention musicians who could improvise brilliantly in musical competitions, sometimes spontaneously borrowing from and improving on rival versions. Today there are few musicians who can actually do this, and the contemporary emphasis is on playing pieces exactly as a teacher hands them down.

### The *khong wong yai*

Straight racks of gong kettles are found in nearly every part of Southeast Asia, and include the Javanese *bonang*, the Sundanese *degung*, the Balinese *trompong* and *reong* and the Philippine *kulintang*. The Thai version is called the *khong rang* and has eight kettles, but is no longer played (Morton 1976:46-47; Dhanit 1987:30). Circular gong racks now appear only on mainland Southeast Asia, although there are old models of the Javanese *bonang* in the shape of an arc (Morton 1976:46, citing Jaap Kunst). The earliest evidence for knobbed gong kettles on a curved frame comes from the twelfth century at Angkor Wat Hindu-Buddhist temple (Morton 1976:4,6,10), where a frieze of musicians in procession includes two representations of

gong racks, one with eight gong kettles and the other nine, set in arch-shaped frames and played by single musicians using two mallets. In Thailand, the earliest pictorial evidence of the circular gong rack is from the mid-eighteenth century (Morton 1976:46-48), but no known instruments survive.

The contemporary Thai *khong wong yai* has sixteen gong kettles and a range of just over two octaves (Figure 1). Although the Thai scale contains theoretically equidistant steps, pitches 3 and 4, and 7 and 8, are in practice slightly closer, though not as close as a Western half-step. The instrument is played by a single musician who sits inside the circular frame holding a mallet in each hand. The mallet heads are made of circular pieces of water buffalo or elephant hide that can be padded around the perimeter with layered strips of cloth; rice paste glues the cloth to the hide. The frame of the *khong wong* is usually made of rattan that has been heated and bent into a circular shape. The bronze gong kettles are forged by first casting them in saucer-shaped molds and then reheating and hammering the resulting plates into their final shape, like the Javanese *bonang*, but the resulting sound is generally more resonant. The *khong wong* kettles are tied onto their frame with thongs and are fine-tuned with a mixture of wax and lead shavings stuck inside the kettle knob. In Bangkok, a *khong wong yai* costs US\$400-700 depending on its quality and decoration (extra carving, painting, gold leaf, etc.).

The *khong wong yai* is essential in both of the two major kinds of percussive ensembles (*mahori* and *piphat*) because it plays the "basic melody" (*thammong lak*).<sup>10</sup> If available, it can be joined by the *khong wong lek*, small gong circle that plays an octave higher but in a slightly different style. A number of playing techniques are possible on the *khong wong yai*, but octaves (both simultaneous and broken), fourths, and fifths are the most common in ensemble playing.

Solo playing requires considerable skill because it uses a much wider array of playing techniques. There are, for instance, several ways of damping, shorter and longer ways of inserting *glissandi*, and a specialized vocabulary for many techniques. The exact alternation of the right and left hands (the equivalent of fingering on the piano) is a matter of much concern and a teacher's exclamation "*Phit mu!*" (Your hands are wrong!) is common in *khong wong* lessons.

*Phya sok* has only one section (called a *thon*), making it short for a solo piece and thus a good one to start with. The solo version for *khong wong yai* always repeats the one section.<sup>11</sup> The first time through is in the *sabat* style, which literally means "to flutter" and involves adding a lot of grace notes to the basic pitches. The second time through must (at some point) include a rather acrobatic technique called *khwai mu* (*khwai*, to cross or twist; *mu*, hand) in which one hand plays repeated ostinato notes while the other moves around striking different pitches. Figure 2 compares the same bars from the first and second times through of *Phya sok*: the top staff illustrates the *sabat* style, and the bottom staff shows the same measures in the *khwai mu* style. The *khwai mu* technique can sometimes require near contortions by the performer. In Figure 3 the right hand plays repeated C's and B's at about 11 o'clock if the gong circle is seen as a clockface; the left hand has to reach a full octave across to about 4 o'clock, resulting in a strait-jacket effect for the performer.

### Three generations of khong wong yai teachers

My teacher, Professor Nikorn Chantasorn once told me that although he had studied how to "compose" solo versions of pieces, he had no desire to do so—who is he to change his teacher's *thang*? Yet he admitted in a different conversation that he had changed his teacher's pieces "a little, here and there." The value of preserving a teacher's *thang* and a musician's pride in individual skill and imagination can lead to contradictions. The past is sometimes regarded as better than the present: musicians were "more skillful", pupils were "more loyal", and there were "more pieces" that have since been forgotten. Pride in receiving solo pieces from a teacher derives in part from their arrival into the present out of a glorious past.

I began to receive Professor Nikorn's heritage of solo pieces during my second year of study with him. My technical ability was in many ways not yet up to the task, but my relationship with Professor Nikorn approached that of a traditional disciple. He not only taught me completely free of charge, but also put aside time to teach me every morning despite his many responsibilities. I would go to his university music department and practice until he arrived; our lessons (on *khong wong yai* and *ranat ek*) often lasted two or three hours, and frequently extended into lunch together at the school cafeteria. Sustained one-on-one daily contact of this kind is fairly unusual in contemporary Thai music departments; most music majors learn pieces in class or group settings, but since I learned more slowly, Professor Nikorn generously spent extra time with me. Every year, Professor Nikorn has two or three students (usually male, usually from musical families) who spend much of their free time with him in order to learn more, but traditional pupils like these are a minority.

Nikorn was born into a musical family but left his

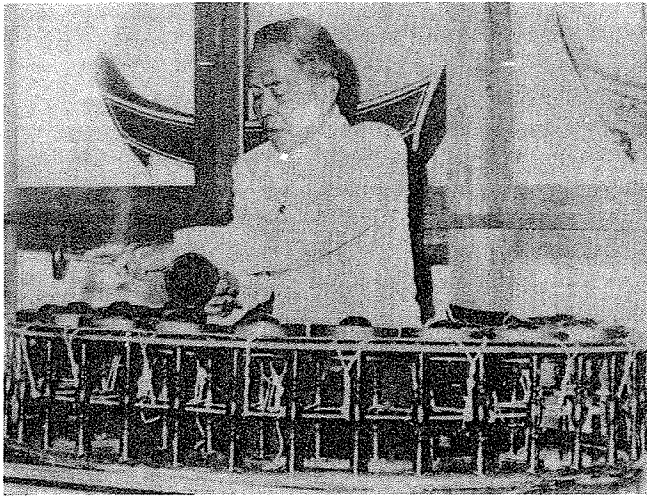
hometown of Nakhon Pathom at an early age to study at the Fine Arts Department School of Dramatic Arts in Bangkok.<sup>12</sup> As a teenager, he sought out Khru Son Wongkhong, one of the old court musicians and a master teacher of the *khong wong*. Professor Nikorn became one of Khru Son's disciples in the traditional manner, going to his teacher's house for lessons every day as well as helping out by doing yardwork and running errands.

As a young man, Nikorn was active in some of Bangkok's most renowned ensembles. By then he was leading a double life, working at a bank by day and performing at night. Eventually he decided that another degree might turn his life around and he entered the music education program at Srinakharinwirot University at the age of thirty-eight. His knowledge of traditional repertoire and his extensive performance background quickly made him indispensable and when he finished his bachelor's degree at age forty-two in 1987, he was immediately hired by the department. On a typical day, Professor Nikorn arrives at the department around 8 a.m. and then gives individual and group lessons all day long. Seven nights a week, he leads the musical ensemble at a large outdoor restaurant in north Bangkok; on Saturdays, he gives lessons to children at the Thailand Cultural Center. To call him a



Professor Nikorn Chantasorn (right) teaching at Srinakharinwirot University. As is customary in a *khong wong* lesson, he plays the *khong wong part* on the *ranat thum* and the student follows.





*Khru Son Wongkhong playing a solo piece on the khong wong yai.*

full-time musician is almost an understatement.

Professor Nikorn's relationship to Khru Son is clearly an important part of his musical identity. He vividly remembers asking Khru Son to be his teacher:

"When I was fifteen or sixteen I decided to ask Khru Son if I could be his disciple. I wanted to learn his solo pieces—I *really* wanted to learn them! I saw him at school every day, but I went to look for him at his house. I remember it was raining really hard, but I went to his house anyway, and bought some fruit on the way.<sup>13</sup> I asked if I could be his disciple, and he said yes.

"After that I went to his house in the afternoon every day after school was over. I'd practice for awhile and then sweep the yard or whatever. We'd all eat dinner together—there were several other students too—and then Khru Son would teach us for a few hours after that. I'd get home at nine or ten. Sometimes Khru Son would take us along when he was playing somewhere at night."

Khru Son Wongkhong (1902-1975) is one of the great teachers and performers from the final generation of court musicians. The bloodless coup of 1932 ended the absolute monarchy and the era of court patronage. During the reign of Rama VI (r. 1910-1925) he was a principal *khong wong* player in the palace; he later performed with the Royal Department of *Piphat* and *Khon*, and eventually taught in the Fine Arts Department until his retirement. His last name, Wongkhong, is testimony to his fame on his principal instrument, the *khong wong yai*.

Khru Son's renown was also due to the fact that he was one of the preeminent disciples of Phraya Sano Duriyang (1866-1949), a great court musician of the previous generation. Although Phraya Sano was especially acknowledged as a great singer, he was skilled on many other instruments as well and passed on his body of solo *khong wong* pieces to Khru Son. He is commonly regarded as the composer of these solo pieces, but may well have

inherited them from his own teacher(s). Unlike many other musicians of his skill and status, Phraya Sano apparently preferred to arrange existing pieces as solos rather than compose. Poonpit (1986:128) quotes him exhorting his disciples to "study and preserve the things of old—the things that went before—and only then gradually compose anew."

Phraya Sano's legacy is these solo pieces and his many famous disciples. His mark on twentieth-century Thai music is profound. His style continues to form one of the two or three major *thang* or schools of contemporary classical music (Myers-Moro 1988a:215-18). Phraya Sano's career spanned the reigns of the last three absolute monarchs of Thailand (Rama V-VII). He performed and taught in several of the most renowned court ensembles, including the Inner Palace of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, r. 1868-1910) where he taught a number of the King's wives and concubines and advised the King on his compositions for dance-drama (Poonpit 1986:126-27). Poonpit (1989) has discovered several very early recordings attributed to Phraya Sano, and believes that he was the first Thai musician to record solo pieces.<sup>14</sup>

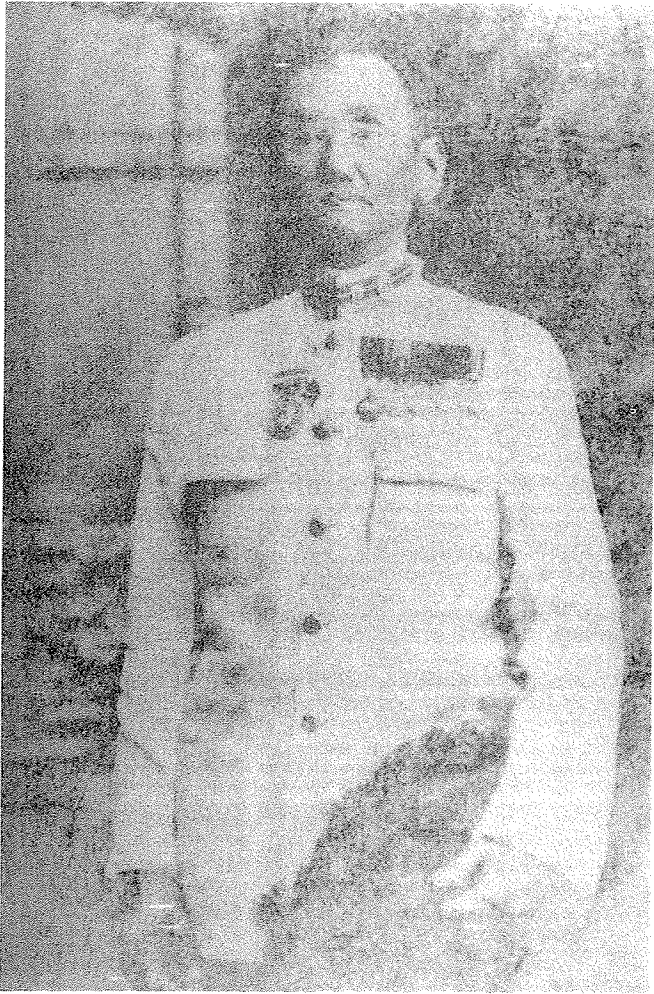
Khru Son is said to have received Phraya Sano's four famous solo pieces for *khong wong*, but he also arranged many pieces himself,<sup>15</sup> including a short virtuosic version of *Sarasoen Phra Barami*, the King's Royal Anthem (played before movies and at the end of concerts). The most famous and demanding piece he inherited for solo *khong wong* is undoubtedly *Krao nai*, used in the *Ramakien* (Ramayana) dance drama for the mustering of the demon troops. In 1975, the Fine Arts Department invited Khru Son to record Phraya Sano's solo *khong wong* pieces. *Krao nai*, over forty minutes long, proved to be too much for his heart. Khru Son actually died during the performance.

Professor Nikorn is thus a repository of at least two generations' worth of solo works for *khong wong yai*. He has inherited not only Khru Son's works but Phraya Sano's as well, and the pieces attributed to Phraya Sano were possibly passed down from earlier generations. Professor Nikorn is justifiably proud of this inheritance, and has won several important competitions performing these works. Passing on the pieces, as he sees it, is his duty. He says:<sup>16</sup>

"Many Thai musicians are tightfisted with their knowledge. They're afraid that someone might steal their important pieces. But if a piece dies with you, what's the point? Passing on a piece does honor to your teacher."

*Phya sok* is now alive in the memories of Professor Nikorn's students, who represent at least a fourth generation in a long line of teachers and disciples. But the role and influence of teachers doesn't necessarily end with their death. One morning in the middle of my lesson, Professor Nikorn suddenly said he'd dreamt about Khru Son the night before. I asked what he was doing in the dream, and Professor Nikorn said, "We were just sitting





*Phraya Sano Duriyang.*

and talking." I asked what they were talking about. "I can't remember," he said, and laughed. "But I know I was sitting there asking him questions just like you are now." ▮

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"Thailand: Solo Works for *Khaung Wong Yai*," a record with notes, featuring Nikorn Chantasorn, will appear in 1992 as part of the series *An Anthology of South-East Asian Music*, published by Barenreiter-Musicaphon and the Institute for Musicology of the University of Basle. This recording contains many of the pieces described here, including *Phya sok* and *Krao nai*.

## Notes

1. I have used the Library of Congress system for transliterating Thai into the Roman alphabet.

2. As a group, these nine pieces are referred to as the *phleng dieo lak*, or the basic solo pieces. Most performers would agree that these pieces are *Phleng Thayoi*, *Phleng Thayae dieo*, *Phleng Nok khamin*, *Phleng Lao phaen*, *Phleng Choet nok*, *Phleng Phya sok*, *Phleng Sarathi*, *Phleng Khaek mon*, and *Phleng Krao nai*.

3. *Krao nai* is rendered in all three *chan* or metric levels as a solo piece. See Becker 1980 for a discussion of Thai metric levels and their similarities to Javanese concepts of *irama*.

4. *chan*: Literally "level," the special musical meaning of this word refers to metric level or the expansion or contraction of a melody [cf. Javanese *irama*]. The core or most basic version of most pieces is the *song chan* or second metric level version. The *sam chan* or "third level" version expands the second level so that two "measures" become four, and so forth. *Chan dieo*, or the "single level," contracts the second level in half (two measures become foreshortened to one). A special musical form called *thao* is built around the concept of *chan*, realizing a melody first in *sam chan* and then proceeding through *song chan* and *chan dieo* (see Becker 1980).

5. Noteworthy court musicians were often given non-hereditary titles of noble rank. The Thai convention is to give a musician's conferred name first and his birth name in parentheses. The titles *Phraya*, *Phra*, and *Luang* appear in this essay. See Myers-Moro 1988b for more information. Teachers of every kind are always addressed by the honorific titles of *khru* (teacher) or *achan* (professor).

6. *Piphat* is a percussive ensemble with a core of five instruments: *ranat ek*, *khong wong yai*, *taphon*, *klong that*, and *pi nai*. Accompanied by the *ching chap*. This core can be expanded by adding the *khong wong lek* and the *ranat thum*, a lower-pitched xylophone. Used to accompany *khon* and ritual dance drama.

7. All translations of Thai source materials are my own, including comments from interviews.

8. In practice these two meanings of *thang* are virtually the same, because every teacher has a personal idea of what the *thang* of an instrument should be.

9. That is, *ranat ek*, *ranat thum*, *khong wong yai*, *khong wong lek*, the various kinds of *pi* and *khluai*, and all the stringed instruments.

10. This is the Thai equivalent of the Javanese concept of *balungan*, and has several names in Thai including the "mother text" (*mae bot*), the "flesh of the piece" (*nua phleng*), and simply the "khong pitches" (*luk khong*). Although the *khong wong yai* part is commonly regarded as playing the skeletal melody, most musicians will acknowledge (if pressed) that in practice the *khong wong* always adorns and elaborates this melody. The basic melody can thus be

written out but is almost never actually played. In other words, the most basic version of the melody exists only as an abstraction of the *khong wong yai* part. My thanks to Manop Wisuttipat for several long conversations on this complex subject.

11. In the notation at the end of this article, the repeat begins at m. 132.

12. The Fine Arts Department School and College of Dramatic Arts was established in 1934 as the National Dance and Music School in Bangkok (two years after the end of the absolute monarchy and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy). This government conservatory of music and dance reassembled the teachers and performers formerly in the Ministry of the Royal Household and the Royal Department of *Piphat* and *Khon*. It was given its present name at the end of World War II. Extremely competitive, it awards degrees equivalent to middle school, high school and college. Its official aims are "(1) To serve as a government institution for teaching music and dance, (2) to preserve and popularize the music and drama of the Thai Nation, and (3) to make the musicians and actors of Thailand as honorable as those in others" [sic] (Department of Fine Arts 1949).

13. When students ask to become a teacher's disciple, they usually bring a small gift of fruit or flowers.

14. Phraya Sano apparently made an Edison wax cylinder recording of solo *ranat ek* sometime before 1915, but it does not survive. He also made a German Odeon record (ca. 1903-1909), and a Parlophon record (ca. 1918-25) of solo *pi nai*, though Poonpit suspects that the performance on the Parlophon record may be a re-release (or a pirate) of the earlier Odeon recording (Poonpit 2532/1989).

15. Khru Son himself solo-ized the pieces *Nok khamin*, *Toi rup*, *Dok mai sai*, *A hia*, *Thayoi dieo*, *Sut sanguan*, and *Narai plaeng rup*. He received four pieces (*Phya Sok*, *Sarathi*, *Khaek mon*, and *Krao nai*) from Phraya Sano.

16. It is said that some teachers choose to teach the "true" form of solo pieces to only their closest pupils, and may even "close the way" (*pit thang*) or change a piece when teaching them to lesser pupils so that they don't receive its deepest, truest form.

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# TRANSCRIPTION

## Phya Sok for solo *khong wong yai* (great gong circle)

as taught by Nikorn Chantasorn

R's and L's above the notes indicate whether to use the right or left hand.  
X-shaped note heads indicate a damped stroke.

1  $\text{♩} = 70$

8 *rit.*

16

24

31

40

48

Musical staff 48-55: Treble clef, 8 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, R, RR, R, RR, R, R. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

56

Musical staff 56-63: Treble clef, 8 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, R, RR, R, RR, R, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

64

Musical staff 64-70: Treble clef, 7 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, R, RR, RR, RR, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

71

Musical staff 71-77: Treble clef, 7 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, R, RR, RR, RR, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

78

Musical staff 78-82: Treble clef, 5 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

83

Musical staff 83-88: Treble clef, 6 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

90

Musical staff 90-97: Treble clef, 8 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

98

Musical staff 98-105: Treble clef, 8 measures. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4. Rhythmic markings: RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR, RR. Some notes have an 'x' over them.

105

113

120

128

136

143

150

158



167

176

184

192

200

207

215

223

231

R R R R RR RR RR R R RR R R R L R R R L R R

239

R R

248

R R

3

257

RR R

263

R R

*rit.*

# Teachers on Tape: Innovation and Experimentation in Teaching Thai Music

by Pamela Myers-Moro

*Thip and I met at the Central Post Office, then walked a couple blocks to Suriwong Road where her teacher is living at the Trocadero Hotel. Thip brought a big basket of food: barbecued chicken, rice, fried noodles, salted beef, fruit, and sweet desserts, which she served with utmost politeness, hardly taking any food for herself. Her teacher is an old fellow, wearing short pants and a sleeveless shirt, delighted by the apparent wonders of the world—the television (which remained on with the sound up all evening), the tape recorder, all the good foods and even the foreign visitor. Later in the evening, three female students arrived for lessons, all young adults, and played together as a khruang saay [stringed instrument] ensemble. The aged teacher had been a student of the renowned Luang Phairau Siangsau, and insisted on playing for me a cassette tape copy of an old, distorted record of the master playing. The tape's quality was so poor that the students could hardly contain their giggles, but the old gentleman insisted on playing it. When the tape was over, he bent over to way [make a respectful gesture toward] the tape machine, because his great teacher's music was inside. (Based on field notes, June 11, 1986.)<sup>1</sup>*

Here a Thai musician quickly—almost as a reflexive response—pays respect to his teacher. This is nothing remarkable—rites for showing homage to teachers, including deceased ones, are an integral and enduring part of the cultural system of Thai music. The twist here is that the teacher is corporeally absent, and the recorded sound of his performance comes from a machine, a tangible object sitting on the floor with us, issuing music as once did the fiddle of Luang Phairau Siangsau.

In his provocative book *The Recording Angel*, Evan Eisenberg playfully wrestles with the effects of recording upon musical meaning, and on our consumption and experience of music. At one point he suggests that when listening to a musical recording, “. . . unless one turns out the lights or follows the score, one confronts the deep embarrassment of listening to musicians who aren't there” (1987:72). Yet the man who appears to salute the tape player may not be experiencing recorded sound as Eisenberg suggests, but as music that comes from a teacher and is not entirely disengaged from the human producer.

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There is a sense of experimentation and flexibility in the current teaching of music in Bangkok. Thai musicians employ strategies to satisfy different types of students in varying contexts of learning. While many musicians distinguish between the traditional and the new (a contrast often phrased as the past versus the present), virtually all teaching of Thai music today makes use of some innovation and experimentation, particularly regarding technology for sound reproduction: tape recording, computer-generated sound, and notation in various media. Although the introduction of new technology does not necessarily turn a musical system topsy-turvy, it must be reckoned with, and may mesh with long-held socio-musical values in surprising ways.

## Thai Music

Classical Thai music is one of the art traditions long associated with the palaces of Siamese royalty and nobles.<sup>2</sup> The musical repertoire serves both entertainment and ritual purposes, and includes accompaniment for various genres of dance-drama. Music has been officially fostered by government offices, most notably the Department of Fine Arts, the Department of Public Relations, and the military, as well as the royal family, since Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932. Most universities have an academic program and/or club for Thai music, and instruction in Thai music is required in the nation's school curriculum for children. Thai music and dance is an essential part of the cultural material presented to foreign visitors, and many musicians augment their income by performing in shows for tourists. Classical music is, however, but one of many musical forms enjoyed by the Thai people, along with a multitude of commercially disseminated pop styles (from Thailand and abroad), folk musics and classical European music.

As in Java, Bali and other parts of Southeast Asia, the musical ensembles of Thailand include tuned gongs, wooden- and metal-keyed xylophones, vertically-held flutes and reed instruments, bowed string instruments—held upright upon the leg or resting upon a peg on the floor—drums and often a vocalist or two. Thai music is also similar to other Southeast Asian musics in structure, with its polyphonic stratification (many versions of a melody at once). A small pair of hand-cymbals (*ching*), shaped like inverted bowls or small bells and connected with a length of

string, sounds on metrically important pitches. This outlines the skeleton of a composition that is played by all instrumentalists and filled in according to the idiom of each instrument, the taste of the individual musician, and other factors that might shape a given performance.

### Teachers and Music Lessons

Being a musician is often practically synonymous with being a music teacher in Thailand. While prospective teachers must be granted approval ritually—to insure that their teaching will be successful—there appear to be few actual restrictions upon who may become a teacher, at least in the modern context. Virtually every musician is a teacher. The only musicians I encountered who did not yet teach were either students who were not accomplished enough or amateur players. One reason for this is pragmatic: today, the best way for a musician to earn a living is to teach, either at a school, through a government department or bureau of some sort, or private. Almost universally, the word *khruu*—teacher—is used as a term of address for musicians. The term is derived from the Sanskrit *guru*.<sup>3</sup>

Traditionally, a student learns Thai music by rote. Teacher and student sit facing one another, either at two instruments turned back to back, or on opposite sides of a single instrument, with the teacher playing backwards (in

the case of stringed instruments, teacher and student may sit side by side, each on their own instrument). Over and over, the teacher plays phrases from the piece being learned, at first small fragments and then longer and longer segments as the student commits the song to memory. Learning to play a composition is essentially learning the song by heart; most technical difficulties in playing are worked out through the many repetitions. The precocious or the advanced may memorize a song more quickly than others, but still the learning occurs one-on-one with the help of a teacher, and until recently there were no short cuts. The traditional teaching of music in Thailand requires an intimate connection between teacher and student, if for no other reason than the amount of time and social contact involved.

The word “traditional” is, of course, problematic. Yet the musical instruction of the past contrasts with the conditions of today in the minds of musicians. It is the amount of actual contact between teacher and student that constitutes, in my estimation, the greatest contrast between the instruction of Thai music today and in the past, or at least as the past is recalled. Although even in the past instruction could not have occurred strictly one-on-one, for the master musicians ran “houses” with large numbers of performers and students, it appears that only in recent years



*Mr. Phichit Chayseri playing ranaat thum.*

have actual classes in music been taught. Today, a child may attend an institute and sit in a classroom studying the *khim* (hammered zither) alongside a dozen other *khim* students, while a teacher stands in front of the group, writing numerical notation (a 20th century invention) on a blackboard. A young adult may choose to study for a degree in music at a university, gaining knowledge through a standardized, formalized, and necessarily segmented curriculum. These situations involve a fundamentally altered social experience of learning; one of the most obvious alterations is the amount of time spent together by teacher and student, and the manner in which that time is arranged, scheduled and counted.

### Use of New Technology

The cassette tape player/radio is surely one of the most sought-after material acquisitions, particularly in Bangkok. The machines are essential to the enjoyment of pop music, which can be heard on a crowded radio dial and on relatively inexpensive cassette tapes. Not surprisingly, the tape player has been incorporated into the study of classical music as well.

I discussed the use of tape recordings in music teaching with Mr. Phichit Chayseri, a professor of music at Chulalongkorn University. He explained that among his "formal students," those who come to his home for lessons and study by what he feels are relatively traditional methods, the tape recorder is indispensable. Phichit stressed that virtually no students in Bangkok, even the most serious ones, have time to come for daily lessons as in the past. He likened the tape recorder to a "teacher at home," since the student could listen over and over to the correct way to play a composition, reinforcing her own memory. I observed the tape recorder used in lessons at Phichit's home on at least two occasions.

*The young woman is in her late teens, and has studied piano for a number of years; she can play several Beethoven sonatas. She only began studying the khaung wong yay [gong-circle] a year ago, but evidently has progressed very quickly. Her mother is a professor of medicine at Chulalongkorn University, and plays the ranaat eek [wood-keyed xylophone] as a hobby. The lesson was held on a breezy outdoor patio, on which an entire ensemble of instruments was set up, though no other students were present. The student sits at the khaung wong, while the teacher plays the ranaat thum [a lower-pitched xylophone]. When I asked how the student learns the correct style characteristic of khaung, Phichit relied, "I play khaung [on the xylophone]." The student brought a small tape recorder with her, and taped portions of her lesson. She did not use any written notation. Generally she and Phichit played simultaneously, he calling out certain words to her now and then as they went along. It was a light-hearted, snappy lesson. They did not "drill" small passages. The student said hardly a word the entire afternoon but laughed, giggled, smiled frequently. She is learning the phleeng*

*ruang [suites] repertoire, and she kept paper and pen near nearby, checking off titles on a list of compositions. (Field notes, February 15, 1986.)*

*Three young men came by with a rammanaa and a new thoon, the pair of small drums which are generally played at the same time by a single person. One of the students had made the thoon (a "goblet drum"). He'd bought the ceramic body and then put on a leather head, lacing it up with twine. Phichit said to me, "Isn't he smart? He made it himself." He gave the young man an out-of-commission drum body he'd had lying around, and asked if he'd make one for him, too. The students had come to learn the standard naa thap or rhythmic patterns for the thoon and rammanaa. They set up their portable Sony tape recorder, then Phichit sat down and chanted out the syllabic rendition of naa thap,<sup>4</sup> sometimes playing along on the drums, sometimes not. Occasionally the students added ching to clarify difficult patterns. The naa thap for these drums are very standardized: there is one for each chan [metric level] of each given category of songs (for example, all "Lao"-derived songs). Time is saved: the students will go home and play the tape over and over until they have memorized all the patterns. (Field notes, March 8, 1986.)*

It seemed that the only students who make use of the tape recorder during lessons were those who studied more or less traditionally, that is, through one-on-one contact with a teacher rather than in a classroom. Students and amateurs who learned with written notation apparently did not feel the need to record lessons. So the tape recorder serves only as a practical extension of the teacher, and is not in itself altering the relationship between teachers and students very much. Furthermore, the machine allows a certain amount of instruction to occur that otherwise might not be possible in the context of modern life—by context I refer vaguely to the "lack of time" that seems to be on the tip of many at least middle-class Thai tongues, a lack caused by everything from the lengthy white-collar work day to demanding educational programs for the young to the notorious Bangkok traffic jams. Both the *khaung wong* student and the three young men would learn far more slowly if they studied with a teacher only once or twice a week, and even more slowly than they might have in the traditional context where a student lived with the teacher.

While it would seem possible for musicians to learn new repertoire by listening to commercially available cassette recordings, I met no one who admitted to having done so. Some even seemed puzzled when I suggested the possibility. As an outsider, I could see little difference between learning from a tape recording made at one's own lesson, and learning from a commercial recording. This suggests that learning still involves an actual social relationship between a teacher and student. One musician, who is intensely aware of *thang* (stylistic school or lineage) affiliations and the protection of knowledge they involve, complained of the commercial recording of a composition which he felt was so supernaturally powerful that it should

have remained secretively guarded. He specifically complained that since it had been recorded, "just anyone" could learn the composition from the tape. Dissemination of music via commercial tapes appears at this point to be esoterically denied, exoterically feared, and may exceed the bounds of acceptable music learning.

One amateur musician described for me, however, how she enjoys playing her *sau duang* (a two-stringed fiddle) along with tape recordings she has purchased, so long as the tape is of songs for which she has notation. She acknowledged the difficulty of playing along with a *thang* or rendition different from that given to her by her teacher, yet advised me: "If you try it and you find you're playing something different than the recording, just keep going and it will come out okay eventually."

Compared to tape, an even more efficient means of transmitting music from teacher to student is written notation. Written notation is used as the primary means of transmitting music solely with students who are very young, beginning level, or amateur musicians (Myers-Moro 1990). Notation allows students to receive a new song from their teacher at every lesson, and yet not memorize any material (though some students may work hard to memorize a song even if they initially learn it from notation). I witnessed some amateurs who rarely practiced their instruments, yet who enjoyed playing from collections of notated songs at weekly sessions with a teacher. Highly motivated students are quickly weaned away from written notation, and will use it only as a mnemonic device. In the transmission of music, the use of tape recordings and written notation contrast strongly. The choice of which medium to use corresponds with how teachers perceive and label the intent and accomplishments of students.

Skillful teachers adapt their teaching styles to serve students of various ages, capabilities and levels of motivation even within a single teaching session. One example is what might be called the family music lesson, for which a teacher may be hired to visit the family home once a week to instruct various family members individually and/or lead the family together as a musical ensemble. Sometimes such groups include a family's servants as well as children. Accompanying my *sau duang* teacher, Mr. Niphaan Thanarak of the government's Department of Public Relations, I visited lessons in the homes of several upper-middle-class families. At one, female members of the extended family were present (they did not all live in the same house but came together for music study) as were two of their children.

*I spent three hours this morning at the comfortable home of an affluent family on Soi 31.<sup>5</sup> Niphaan teaches several women there every Wednesday morning, and today he also gave first lessons to a little boy and girl. The women all play the khim, though there was another teacher giving a lesson on the ranaat in another room. A black grand piano stood in one corner. The*

*women played from large notebooks of notation. I played along with them on the songs I knew, while Niphaan took the boy, about 12 or 13 years old, outside for his first lesson on the sau duang. His mother told me proudly, ". . . he already studies khon [masked dance-drama]." The lesson had to occur outside because the sound was offensive to the other players: the boy's initial attempts to pull the bow across the unfingered strings were scratchy and awkward. Later, Niphaan gave the girl her first lesson on the khim; he did not use notation but taught her note by note until she'd memorized a few phrases. Because Niphaan is often dour and shy during my own lessons, I was surprised to find him energetic and good-humored with the children. He eventually joined the group of adult women, and we played through a few songs, Niphaan correcting the students when they lost their place. (Based on field notes, March 12, 1986.)*

One can imagine that the teacher's adjustments to the needs and desires of the various students might be similar to those of the master teachers of the past, with their households of students. The major difference would be the relative infrequency and shorter duration of the family lesson today.

Besides the use of tape cassettes and written notation in lessons, the newest pedagogical technologies are those used in classroom, rather than individual, instruction. Group instruction in itself is a radical change. This is now the primary style of teaching at some private institutes for the study of Thai music, created in part as responses to Yamaha and other popular schools which teach Western instruments such as electronic keyboards. Classroom instruction is also used at the Wittayalay Natasin—an arts school for young people—run by the government's Department of Fine Arts. At least at the level of beginning students, there is little one-on-one contact between teacher and student. The staff at the Foundation of Luang Pradit Phayrau, a music school run by the descendants of renowned composer Luang Pradit, not only teach students in groups but also seem driven to use the newest technologies to invigorate the study of traditional music.

*Ch. was busy consulting with a colleague on a new personal computer program which will help teach students how to read musical notation. The computer produces a series of numerals, grouped in sets of four (as in some forms of Thai musical notation); as each successive numeral appears, the pitch it represents is sounded by the computer. A student observing such a program would learn to associate the appearance of a numeral with the sound of a particular pitch. Ch. explained that currently he teaches by singing into a microphone while writing the notation on a chalkboard, but he thinks that the computer will make this job more efficient and possibly more interesting for the students. He is also excited about plans to store notation on computer, to create a "library of notes" that will "eliminate human error." He pointed out that cumulative errors on the part of teachers have gradually altered many songs in the Thai repertoire, but computer storage will prevent this from occurring*





Siri Wichaweet with *krap seephaa*.

in the future. Ch. also envisions students taking music software home in order to learn new songs.

Another device of Ch.'s is the "electric board" which is used to teach classes of *khim* students. The instructor sits off to one side, holding a control panel covered with buttons. When pushed, the buttons cause lights to appear on a board in front of the class. The board has lines painted on it to represent the strings of the *khim*, and the lights show where and when the strings should be struck in order to play a song. (Field notes, May 22 and 27, 1986.)

For the most part, the adaptations used at the Foundation are simply modernizations of earlier innovations such as written notation that are designed to meet the needs of large group instruction. Computerized notation is merely a change of medium (from paper to software disk), though the computer's ability to generate sound potentially eliminates the human teacher who might sing or play an instrument to bring notation to life. The electric board is actually a magnified representation of the instrument it is designed to teach. It is necessary because an entire classroom of students could not see the teacher demonstrating upon a real *khim*, and the teacher would not have time to demonstrate in front of each student.

The real change that motivates and necessitates these experiments with technology is the shift from individual or

small-group instruction (such as the family lesson) to classroom learning. Technology in itself does not change society, but rather fills needs created by social changes. This becomes the primary question: why do music students of the 1980s and '90s study in groups? On the surface, at least, the explanations are economic and, as alluded to earlier, always tied to notions of *time* in the sense of pace of life, the fullness of days. It is economical—less expensive, less time-consuming—for one instructor to transmit music to many students at once. This is accomplished more rapidly if all the students are studying the same instrument than if each is learning the idiomatic melodies characteristic of different instruments in an accomplished ensemble. To the extent that such instruction truly is economical, group learning may today be making what was once an elite tradition accessible to a broader population. In the last decade and a half or so, vastly more Bangkokians study Thai music as amateurs, hobbyists, and beginning level students than in many decades past. Classical music and dance, with their royal associations and deep ties to national identity, have become activities which the urban middle-class, in particular, wants to claim. Changes in pedagogy and the instruments of teaching imply changes in who shall play music, who shall listen, and why.

Were classrooms and groups the only contexts for learning Thai music, the tradition would be poised for radical change. The notion that computer storage of notation will "eliminate human error" denies the creativity and flexibility of generations of musicians trained at the side of master teachers. The heavy reliance upon recording of any sort, be it computer software, written notation, or even the cassette tape, could possibly impede a student's leap to improvisation, a skill which all accomplished musicians must learn.

A classroom student does not gain the religious or supernatural knowledge central to the musical tradition—the key to relationships with other musicians, with implications for the entire cultural place of both teachers and music. As long as students labeled by their teachers as "serious" are drawn away from their notation and tapes, or use them only in certain situations, the Thai musical craft (repertoire and performance practice) may not be so swiftly altered.

Not all experimentation in teaching is confined to using new technology or teaching large numbers of students simultaneously. Siri Wichaweet is a musician who takes pride in developing new ways of *explaining* how to play a musical instrument. He is a specialist in *krap seephaa*, one of the very few musicians alive who can perform the recitation genre that is accompanied by rhythmic patterns on pairs of wooden sticks, held in each hand. He described himself as an academic rather than performing musician, and he teaches every summer at workshops for school music instructors sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

He claimed that though he had only studied with his own teacher for one month (a rarity, if true), he has taken ten years to figure out new techniques with which he can teach others efficiently. He joked to me that he could teach Phichit Chayseri—the musician described earlier who used the tape player in lessons—to *krap* [play the sticks] in five minutes—within two Phichit could produce a good loud crack. This reminds us that even among those Thai musicians who value tradition and traditional teaching most highly, some individuals delight in experimentation and creative innovation. ▀

### Notes

1. This essay is based upon excerpts from my doctoral thesis in anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, 1988. Most of the introductory and concluding ideas, however, were added in July 1991. I conducted field research in Bangkok in 1985-86, funded by Fulbright IIE.

2. The foreign name of the Thai nation was officially changed in 1939 from Siam to Thailand.

3. The reciprocal of *khruu* is the term *luuk sit*, meaning "disciple."

4. The syllables serve as a code, indicating exactly what kinds of strokes are used, and where the strokes are placed on the drum heads to produce a particular rhythmic pattern. It is possible to chant or sing all the information a drummer needs to know in order to play properly; similar syllabization of drum patterns occurs in India and throughout Southeast Asia.

A similar pedagogical shorthand is used for the *khaung wong* or gong-circle. A teacher may sing or call out certain syllables that indicate the gong(s) to be hit, with which mallet, brief rhythmic patterns, etc. This system is called *nauy paak*, *nauy* being the most common syllable on which melodies are sung (equivalent to "la" in English), and *paak* translates as "mouth."

5. A *soi* is a lane or road, often numbered, which branches off of a main thoroughfare.

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# INTERVIEW

## Sam-Ang Sam: We Live Through Changes

by Jarrad Powell

*Sam-Ang Sam is a Cambodian composer, performer, and ethnomusicologist who has lived in the U.S. since 1977. He is presently an instructor at the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle and a visiting artist in the ethnomusicology program at the University of Washington. He and his wife Chan Moly Sam teach traditional Cambodian music and dance at the Cambodian Studies Center in Seattle.*

*This interview took place in Seattle on three occasions: March 14, April 28 and August 11, 1989.*

**Jarrad Powell:** How did you become a musician? Do you come from a family of performers?

**Sam-Ang Sam:** When I finished elementary school in Cambodia my parents just put me into music school. I guess at the time I was really too young to decide what I wanted to be. They must have seen something in me because when I was young I liked singing and things like that. So they put me into the Ecole Nationale de Musique, which was the national school of music, and I actually studied western music before I studied traditional music.

**Powell:** Is there no formal place to study traditional music?

**Sam:** There is the University of Fine Arts, but it was not established until 1965, and I went to music school in 1964.

**Powell:** So you ended up studying western music. How did you begin? Did you start by studying a particular instrument?

**Sam:** The first year I studied harmony and theory, then picked violin during the second year and studied it for two years . . . and then traditional music.

**Powell:** Was this something that many children did?

**Sam:** No. I was a little unusual. I think for you to understand better I should say a little about the history of the University of Fine Arts. Before its establishment there was a national school of music, a national school of theater, and so on. But when the University was established these schools were incorporated into it and became what in French we call Faculté de Musique and Faculté des Arts Chorégraphiques, in which there are four sections: theater, occidental ballet, chorale, and folklore. I transferred from

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the Faculté de Musique to the Faculté des Arts Chorégraphiques, where I studied traditional music. This was unusual.

**Powell:** How many years were you involved in this program?

**Sam:** At first you enter a four year program. At the end of the fourth or senior year you take an examination and the degree you receive is called Diplôme des Arts. This is like an artist's certificate. After that, if you passed the examination, you could become a teacher. But I did not want to become a teacher then. I continued on to another three-year program and got my Baccalauréat des Arts.

**Powell:** What age were you then?

**Sam:** I got the Diplôme des Arts at twenty and the Baccalauréat des Arts at twenty-three. I was like . . . a bad boy . . . I played a lot. Sometimes I did not go to school for three months at a time. So I passed and then I stayed back, I passed then stayed back . . . you know. I was almost the only one who did that. Usually they were supposed to kick you out of school if you did that, but they kept me there. That's why it took me so long. It took me six years.

**Powell:** So when you finished there you already had a background in western music . . .

**Sam:** Yes, harmony and all of that . . .

**Powell:** . . . but at that point you also had training in traditional music as well?

**Sam:** 1966 was the first time I had training in traditional music.

**Powell:** And how did that begin? With what instrument?

**Sam:** With the fiddle, the two-string fiddle.

**Powell:** Is it common in the traditional ensembles for one person to play different instruments?

**Sam:** Usually a musician specializes in an instrument. For example, I am a wind player. But I play other instruments. Most traditional musicians in Cambodia know how to play several instruments. This is for practical reasons. If you can play many instruments then you have more flexibility in joining groups and you have more opportunities to earn money. At the University you don't have to do that because you are on a salary. However it is useful for the University musicians too, particularly when they go abroad to perform. If you know only one instrument sometimes it is very difficult, because the school or host country usually cannot bring thirty musicians. They bring ten. You have to be versatile enough to play different instruments as the performances require.

**Powell:** Is being a musician a bonafide profession outside of the University? Can people make a good living or a living as a musician?

**Sam:** Very few people can. Musicians in Cambodia do not have very high status. The establishment of the University of Fine Arts changed that perception a little bit and musicians and dancers became more respected. But traditionally music was associated with drinking and entertainments that were not so serious. But aside from that, spiritually, people respect musicians very much. Still, musicians do not have a good standard of living at all.

**Powell:** Yet music must have many functions within the culture.

**Sam:** Definitely. It depends on what type of music and what ensemble. Each ensemble has a certain function.

**Powell:** Would you describe the types of traditional ensembles?

**Sam:** The main one is Pin Peat, the court ensemble, which is used to accompany the masked dance, the shadow play, court dance, and also religious ceremonies. Then we have Mahori, which is like entertainment music. It is usually played as background music, like at a banquet. Another function of this ensemble is to accompany folk dances or plays. Then there's the Arak, the oldest Khmer ensemble. It is used for the worship of spirits. The old Khmer believe in animism and worship nature gods and invisible spirits and things like that. When people in the village get sick they play that music to put the medium into trance to reveal the cause of the illness. Then you have the wedding ensemble called Phleng Kar or Phleng Khmer,

which obviously accompanies wedding ceremonies. There are also a lot of other small ensembles, like Ayai, which is duet singing, and music for plays, such as Bassac or Yike theater. Then there is an ensemble for funerals, an ensemble for boxing matches, and still others.

**Powell:** Are some of these ensembles considered court ensembles and others folk ensembles?

**Sam:** It's a little difficult to define that. Previous scholars did not believe that there is a clear difference between court and village, but I do believe that there is a clear distinction. We have to look at the style, we have to look at where the ensemble exists and its history. I personally would categorize the Pin Peat ensemble as court music because of its origin and history — it was first used to accompany court dance. The earliest inscription that mentions musical and dance activity dates to 611 A.D., so it is very old. It came from the court, but now it also exists in the village. So should we call it a folk ensemble? It depends on how we define *folk*. The wedding ensemble also exists in the palace, but should we call it a court ensemble? I would not call it a court ensemble, because of its function. To define an ensemble I would trace its origins and its original function, where it came from and what it was used for, because later on you could play Pin Peat for a wedding . . . we haven't done that yet . . . then do we call it wedding music? No. You wouldn't call it wedding music just because it might be used like that.

**Powell:** I notice with gamelan music that the court ensembles forms tend to be larger and the playing more refined, while the village style is a little more raucous . . .

**Sam:** It's true . . . in Cambodia too . . .

**Powell:** . . . but they do use a lot of the same repertoire.

**Sam:** It's true with the Pin Peat ensemble too.

**Powell:** So how did you end up in the United States?

**Sam:** When I got my Baccalauréat degree in 1973 I got a scholarship from the government to study music in the Philippines. There I studied composition, not traditional music.

**Powell:** You studied western composition? What did that entail?

**Sam:** To write nocturnes, fugues, theme and variations . . . all the small forms, because it was an undergraduate program.

**Powell:** . . . so basically European classical music, 18th and 19th century music?

**Sam:** Yes, European classical music. I studied for three years. Then in 1977 I came to this country as a refugee.

**Powell:** Was that a direct result of the political situation in Cambodia?

**Sam:** Yes.

**Powell:** So you came directly to the U.S. from the Philippines?

**Sam:** Yes.

**Powell:** We hear a lot about how the political situation affected the arts and culture in Cambodia. What is your perception of that?

**Sam:** One thing we all know is that there are changes all the time. We live through changes. For example, when a political regime is changed, music, in a way, is changed . . . not the form, but the emphasis and its implications . . . the themes that are used in music are changed. During the monarchy, which we see as a peaceful period, the creation of art usually was recreational and artistic. The themes emphasized nature, the environment in which the Khmer live. When the republican regime took over in 1970, themes changed a little. Political overtones were added. Pure artistic themes did not really exist anymore. This has since become even more obvious because the period from 1975 to 1979 was a terrible time for the Cambodians. It was a real revolutionary period. Now, as a result of that, song texts and poems are all political, talking about solidarity, or the Vietnamese saviour, or the revolution of January 7th, and so on. They do not write about the sky being beautiful or the rice field being beautiful, but rather about how they have to fight for the revolution or how socialism is great. But the forms are still the same . . . the instrumentation of the Pin Peat ensemble is still the same, the dance forms are still the same.

**Powell:** What was the period of the Khmer Rouge occupation like?

**Sam:** It was a very difficult time for all Cambodians. It was a political and revolutionary period. A lot of people died and there was very little artistic activity, because that wasn't the forte of that regime. People were more concerned with fighting and surviving. Any musical activity at all was organized by the regime and was designed to convey the political ideology.

**Powell:** When were you last in Cambodia?

**Sam:** 1974.

**Powell:** Now you are about to go there this spring for the first time in many years. Do you still have many connections in the music world over there?

**Sam:** Yes, I still exchange letters from time to time with a few friends there, and also with my teacher at the University of Fine Arts. My old teacher is now the minister of information and culture.

**Powell:** Apparently many of the artists and intellectuals were killed during the Khmer Rouge time period. Did some survive? Who became the teachers at the University?

**Sam:** Very few survived. If you listen to recordings from before 1975 you will see that the artistic quality was very good. Now a lot of younger musicians are being taught by those old teachers, but there are only a few of them left. It is generally estimated that eighty percent were killed, so there are very few people who can teach now.

**Powell:** Do you feel that you still have a role to play

in Cambodia's cultural life?

**Sam:** Yes . . . from outside. I think there may be resentment among my colleagues and friends at the University because I did not fight the revolution like they did. They might see me as an opportunist, since during the revolution I escaped. But I did not really escape. I was sent by the University to study in the Philippines. Then in the U.S. I've had the opportunity to go to school and they haven't. Plus they have gone through considerable hardship. But in my heart I want to help my country as much as I can. That is why I have been doing research and publication on Khmer music. This is also the reason I switched from composition to ethnomusicology after I got my M.A., so I could pay more attention to Cambodian music. I'm making this trip to discover what kind of help I can provide from here, and to bring back some documents.

**Powell:** Are there new forms of artistic expression emerging now in Cambodia, or is it pretty much just the dichotomy of the traditional combined with whatever remnants of the western classical tradition?

**Sam:** It is difficult to say, since I haven't been back to Cambodia for fifteen years. As I understand it, Western classical music is not heard at all now, as it was before 1975. New pieces based on the traditional forms are now being created. There are quite a few new pieces that have been created since 1979. But to me they are still the same forms. They may have new lyrics or new choreography, but the classical forms are still the same. Cambodian pop music still exists too, and has been there all the time; and American pop music too, because they have Madonna tapes and Michael Jackson tapes and that sort of thing.

**Powell:** But is there any kind of atmosphere of experimentation? For example, the Indonesian dancer and choreographer Sardono Kusomo talks about how at some point he realized that he was free to try new things, and how liberating that was for him [*Balungan* III(1):3-10]. Or in Japan there was the development of *Bhuto*, a new dance form that grew out of the nuclear holocaust of World War II. Is there anything comparable to that happening in Cambodia?

**Sam:** Sure, some new things are happening in Cambodia now too. Our University has experimented all along. For example, the shadow performance from Siem Reap, one of the Cambodian provinces, used torches or burned coconut shells to cast a shadow. When the University brought that to the concert hall, a projector was used instead, so that was a change. The production has been getting larger too. The staging is more grandiose, and they are experimenting with technical things like lighting. But Cambodia is different from countries like Japan or Indonesia, because we have been in a state of warfare, and at this point the main thing is preservation, conservation, and restoration, and not going ahead just yet. I believe that when things must become a little more solid, then we will

go on to do something else.

**Powell:** I'm curious about how you see your own musical role in the West. You are trained in western composition; you also have a grounding in the traditional music. How do those two things relate for you in your own work?

**Sam:** I think it is very helpful. Over here I learned technique and the scientific way to do things. That is why underdeveloped countries send students outside . . . to learn technique, to learn new ideas, to learn how to use technology that will be helpful to the country. I combine all of this. I know I have the traditional resources and I just put that to work, using what I learned here as a system, as a process to digest my traditional material to come up with something. For example, in research I am writing differently from my colleagues in Cambodia. I have a lot more access to facilities here to be able to do that. Those of us on the outside have published a lot more than people inside. Over there their role is to preserve, to teach students. Over here it is very difficult to teach students. First of all, we don't have committed students to be taught. Therefore, our role is different . . . to do documentation. If you look for the history of Cambodian music there is none. The tradition exists, the music exists, but no one has written about it, because Cambodia has no ethnomusicologists and no music historians; and if there were any writing it would be political, because art is always a low priority.

**Powell:** So you see this kind of documentation as an important thing for you to participate in?

**Sam:** Yes. We have made quite a few recordings and publications here, and we send material back to Cambodia all the time. During the war, 1975 to 1979, a lot of documents were lost, burned by the Khmer Rouge, so they need documents.

**Powell:** You recently had some of your own pieces performed in Seattle. Having heard one of those performances I feel that there is definitely a connection between the traditional music and what you do in this other idiom, though it is hard for me to describe it. Does it operate for you on a conscious level?

**Sam:** Yes. There are at least two stages for a composer. The first is the student stage. Next you go out and tell the world what you are. During the student stage any student must try many things as an exercise or drill. When you are no longer in a situation where you have to follow certain requirements or do what a teacher tells you, you are free to do what you want to do. You must choose a way, an avenue to walk; and for me the important thing is the point of departure. In my piece, for example, I used Asian material as a point of departure. It sounds very oriental, because the mode is Asian and that mode occurs throughout the piece. I used the idea of a temple atmosphere . . . that's my inspiration, the idea that I wanted to convey to the audience. Then I used western instruments

and techniques, like playing inside the piano, or a concern with timbre . . . these are all western ideas that I incorporated into my composition. But the point of departure, or the ingredients that I used to cook that food are really Asian ingredients, while the way that I cook it is really a western way to cook.

**Powell:** A lot of Asian composers, like Takemitsu for example, studied western classical music and contemporary music, then later returned to the traditional music of their culture, allowing that music to influence their own composing in a subtle yet discernible way.

**Sam:** A lot of Japanese composers did that. They started with western music and then they came back. That has something to do with your consciousness as you grow older, and then the idea of nationalism comes to you. It is very difficult to neglect or not to look back at our own tradition. We have to pay attention to our culture and utilize that as much as we can in our work. We cannot compose like John Cage, or Milton Babbitt, or Davidovsky. We have to be original, to be ourselves, and to add another kind of beauty to the West. If we were to compose just like John Cage it would not be too interesting. We add something different.

**Powell:** Cage himself said, I believe in the essay called "The Future of Music," that it is in the so-called third world, particularly Africa, India, and Indonesia, that modern music now belongs, that it is there that the future of music lies. It seems that a kind of paradigm shift has occurred, especially on the West coast, where more and more we find musical influences coming from Asian and African cultures, rather than Europe . . . and not just in the cultural realm, but in the economic and political realms as well. It is hard to know where this will lead. You have two roles to play. You are a composer who is interested in creating new works, while at the same time you are an ethnomusicologist who wants to preserve and document the traditions of your native culture. Do these interests conflict at all? Do you feel any remorse as you see things changing?

**Sam:** I like these two fields. The difficulty for me is finding enough time to spend on both areas. Plus, if I were to go to Cambodia, it would be very difficult to teach students composition now. It is already difficult for them to accept classical music, and for them to accept contemporary music would be even more difficult. I am not saying that composition is not important, but they need time to grow. Therefore, ethnomusicology is an immediate need for Cambodia and I feel I have a role to play there.

**Powell:** So now you find yourself writing a piece of music for gamelan combined with Cambodian instruments. Is this the first time that you have written something that is sort of tri-cultural?

**Sam:** When I was in the Philippines, during my student years, I tried to mix my instruments with piano and western flute and so on . . . I have tried before, but the



purists did not like it and I was criticized, so I stopped. But here other people are doing it and it is more acceptable. I don't think it is wrong, because we don't call it traditional music. I still worry though. Sometimes the insiders or practitioners are very sensitive about how the outsiders use or even write about the traditional stuff. But I do what I do with only good intentions. I like contemporary music very much and I believe in doing new things. Yet to a certain extent you could also look at me as a traditionalist, that I like to conserve things. What I plan to do with the gamelan and my oboe is a new development, not a traditional one. It is not traditional music, it is experimentation. Sometimes we have to preserve, other times we have to do something new, otherwise it would be the same thing all the time.

**Powell:** Since you play the role of scholar and artist, there is often a conflict. The artist tends to want to take whatever material is available and use it, make something from it. The scholar tends to reflect more on the purity of the form or on delineating boundaries in order to codify or classify things. Do you feel a stronger inclination in one direction than the other?

**Sam:** No, I think one thing helps the other. I think I have an advantage as both a performer and a scholar. I see some people who are only scholars, and when they write about the performance in a culture in which they are not a performer, they often interpret things wrong because they lack understanding. And sometimes, as you say, they try to codify, they try to theorize, and I don't know how useful it is when the practitioners don't think that way. It is a pure perception from the scholars themselves.

**Powell:** When I read interviews with Javanese artists, I am often struck by how innovative their thinking is. One expects a traditional mentality that would somehow be limited in scope, but they have very expansive ideas, and I think in a way people in the West get the wrong notion of how people think and create in those cultures.

**Sam:** The advantage I have when I write is that I can stand on the scholars side and look from that point of view, and then I can jump across the boundary as a practitioner and question that scholarly point of view, whether it is legitimate or right.

**Powell:** Is there a role for the composer in the traditional music?

**Sam:** We say that the performer is a composer, in the sense that, while performing, he or she makes choices about the particular pitches to use at a certain point, but not in the sense of creating a new piece. To get the artist's diploma in Cambodia, you must master your instrument and also be able to answer historical questions, but composing is not emphasized.

**Powell:** In Cambodia they use a heptatonic scale, usually described in the literature as seven equal divisions of the octave. Is it in fact that?

**Sam:** I wrote about this in my dissertation. We have

two types of scales that are used, depending on the type of music. The seven tones represent the maximum available pitches in the tuning system. But the main pitches that we use, in Pin Peat for example, are only five, an anhemitonic pentatonic scale. We use the fourth degree and seventh degree mainly as passing tones. The intervals are not really equidistant. The B to C is smaller than A to B, the E to F is smaller than D to E. We say that our whole tone is about 171 cents, rather than 200, but the consecutive whole tones are not really all equal. If they were equidistant then you could start a piece on any tone and it would sound the same. But in fact if you start on a different key of the xylophone it is a different mode, so the intervals cannot all be equal.

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**Powell:** In Javanese music you can transpose a piece to a different mode. It does not sound the same as if you transpose in equal temperament, but it is still the same piece. Is this possible in Cambodian music?

**Sam:** Yes, but you cannot do that with every piece. Sometimes we play a piece and after one cycle we shift to a different level. In the West you might call that transposition, but with our tuning it becomes a different mode because we do not have the accidentals to make the adjustment at the new level.

**Powell:** How many identifiable modes do you have? Are there seven, corresponding to the number of steps in your scale?

**Sam:** We have more than that. When we create modes we use a lot of combinations. For example we could use five pitches. If we start on pitch one it might be one mode. But we could use the same pitches and start on pitch three instead and it would be a different mode. Most of the pieces use five tones, but it depends on the type of music. The wedding music uses a seven-tone scale more than pentatonic, while the Mahori and Pin Peat use pentatonic more than heptatonic.

**Powell:** What does the future hold for you and your music? What comes next?

**Sam:** First of all, returning to live in Cambodia is not

realistic. I could not leave my children here and go to earn ten dollars a month for teaching. How could I support my family? Also my children cannot go to Cambodia and study because they do not read Cambodian and there is no school for them. So I find that my home is here in the U.S., where I will continue my work with ethnomusicology and composing.

**Powell:** You have an important role here in the Cambodian community too.

**Sam:** Yes, that's right. Here we have quite a few musicians. But there are only two musicians who went to school and got degrees, Chinary Ung and myself. The system in this country emphasizes academic achievement, which makes it even more difficult for traditional musicians.

**Powell:** So most of the musicians in the community here don't play professionally anymore?

**Sam:** No. They play weekends, most of the time at weddings. They have to work at regular jobs and practice in their spare time. They are not sophisticated enough to arrange concerts, so we do that, and then they come to play for us. We want to keep something to show the young people what is Cambodian.

**Powell:** I recently went to the Cambodian New Year celebration here. I saw a lot of Cambodian young people there and was struck by the interesting juxtaposition of the traditional arts with the contemporary American dress, cars, and customs that they seem to have adopted. What do the traditional arts really mean to them? Is it something they welcome or is it something that they would rather forget about?

**Sam:** That is a difficult question. These young people look to American culture as superior to their own, because they lack understanding and appreciation of their own culture. What we are trying to do is show them that we have our own culture. Of course they don't appreciate it as much as the old people, because the old people grew up with the tradition and have seen it for a long time, so they value it more. Some of the young people are very committed to the arts, particularly the performers who work with us and come to the lessons every Sunday. They enjoy doing it and it is very important to them. Another thing that is very overwhelming is western music, like rock music. A lot of the young people who came to the New Year's performance probably went afterwards to a social gathering with rock bands. So it is very difficult to conserve the traditional arts. The performers are not professionals. To attain high quality like the performers in Cambodia today is very difficult, because over there they practice every day, many hours a day, so they can maintain the quality. Over here that is not possible. We are doing this just so the young generation will not forget, so they will know that they have something. Also a lot of these people don't know what professional quality really is, so in their eyes it was a very

good production and they appreciated that.

**Powell:** It seems important that it connects with them on more than just on a quality level . . .

**Sam:** Yes . . . we needed a celebration and we provided them with entertainment and for them that was very joyful. Even in traditional contexts in Cambodia, in the countryside in particular, you would find that people come for the entertainment and never judge the quality either — as long as it makes them laugh or smile that is what counts.

**Powell:** Is this a new thing for the community here or has this type of celebration been going on for some time?

**Sam:** The Seattle community celebrates the Cambodian New Year every year.

**Powell:** How has your influence affected or changed things?

**Sam:** In the past I came only as a guest. Now I am also the teacher and producer. I don't really know what it was like before I became involved so I can't make a comparison.

**Powell:** What is your hope for this performing group now that you are director?

**Sam:** This year we received a grant from the N.E.A. for the school of music. When I come back from Cambodia I will continue teaching, hoping to train more students to be musicians. Also we hope to find a way to get more money so we can keep the dance class running as well. Other Cambodian organizations have also asked us for help. There are twenty-three of them in Washington state. They want us to provide teachers, or to borrow our costumes. We hope to convince them to send their students to our school here, so later on they can have performers in their own community.

**Powell:** How do you feel about your trip to Cambodia? You are leaving in less than a week. Are you apprehensive or fearful about it? Do you have a sense of how you might be received over there?

**Sam:** I have some fears, but not great ones. I appreciate this opportunity to go back to my country after fifteen years. My main concern is how my colleagues and friends will react. In fifteen years things may have changed a lot and I have to think about what I have done for them or for my school. I got a letter today from a very close friend of mine who is now director of the national troupe in Cambodia. He sent me his photo. He looks older now. I thought to myself, if I am not allowed to come back from Cambodia, maybe that would be okay too. I mean it wouldn't be okay, because I am leaving my children here, but I still have quite a few friends alive there, so maybe it would be okay for me to live there too. I do not want things to happen that way. I hope to come back as scheduled. But I am more concerned for my children here than for myself. So I have mixed feelings, but I see this trip as a positive one and I am optimistic. If I had a strong feeling that there was definitely going to be a problem, then I wouldn't go.

**Powell:** Both you and your wife lost many family members and friends during the Khmer Rouge period . . .

**Sam:** Oh yes . . . I lost my parents, two brothers, and two sisters, plus many friends . . . my wife the same.

**Powell:** It seems like it must be a part of your grieving process to return now.

**Sam:** Yes, I have a lot of friends that I want to see. But also I want to see the artistic situation and activities in my country.

**Powell:** We'll have to have another interview when you come back to find out what new insights you have.

**Sam:** I expect to see a lot that I don't know about now. Sometimes when you read newspapers or see movies it is only part of the reality, you see only what people want you to see, not the actual activities as they happen in that country. So I am going to see those now.

*The following brief conversation took place on August 11, 1989 in Seattle, following Sam-Ang Sam's return from his two week visit to Cambodia.*

**Powell:** I would like to get some of your impressions of your trip to Cambodia. You got to see your former teacher, some of your friends and former classmates. What was the reaction?

**Sam:** During my stay there I had official meetings with the people at the ministry of culture three times. The minister remarked that ninety percent of the artists were gone . . . and it was very surprising to me how few people are alive. The friends and teachers who survived are very glad to see people come back. In a way they admire my destiny I guess . . . my luck . . . that I was able to go out of the country and am safe. They have asked me to do a lot of things for them to help upgrade their lives. Every day friends and teachers came to my hotel and waited for me there . . . and we talked until night. So there was happiness. But for me it was very emotional, I think much more than for them, because the problems of poverty and hygiene touched me very deeply.

**Powell:** Were you impressed with what they were doing culturally?

**Sam:** The school has more students now than in the pre-war time. They are beginning to train new students. But there is a generation gap. The old musicians who were very good died. Now there are only young students. It takes a long time to practice to become a good musician, so it will take awhile for the quality to come back. But I am impressed that despite the situation people are struggling to bring the arts back. There are more performing troupes than before. Many members of the University were evacuated to different provinces during the Pol Pot time. They have remained there and formed performing groups. Therefore, there are many professional quality performing groups outside of the University. During the pre-war time only the

University offered formal training. Now there are other groups as well which are led by former members of the University of Fine Arts.

**Powell:** What did you experience that was unexpected?

**Sam:** I was surprised by the amount of research. Right now they are doing a lot of documentation, because the University has become aware of the danger that people will get old and die and what they know would be lost. They are recording a lot and writing and publishing much more compared to the pre-war time.

**Powell:** Did you make recordings there?

**Sam:** Yes. I am planning to release one recording of my teachers . . . three of my remaining teachers. I told them that I would bring it back to the States and release it and that I will send any proceeds to them. They are very sensitive now . . . you can't just go and record like before. A lot of people have done that . . . gone to Cambodia and recorded, then come back here and released the recording without proper credit or copyright or whatever . . . so they are very sensitive about it.

**Powell:** It's a curious criticism that is sometimes leveled against scholars, isn't it . . . how they go to a country and do their research and make recordings, then come back and publish the results, maybe land a well-paying position at a University because of it, without ever really considering proper compensation for the informants, the people whose ideas or work they are in a sense only borrowing.

**Sam:** Yes. This has often been in the back of my mind. I go to Cambodia and do interviews and gather information, then I come back here and I publish and perhaps build a reputation which could lead to a position somewhere . . . and for them . . . nothing. Yet one doesn't know how to compensate . . . it is definitely a question that should be asked. Yet, at the same time, if you don't do it, it's not so good either, because otherwise the knowledge could be lost. Scholars must find a way to compensate performers and informants. In Cambodia now anything that you give is a lot.

**Powell:** Were you able to see performances while you were there?

**Sam:** Yes. The day after we arrived I saw a performance organized for a delegation from Laos. I saw a shadow performance, folk dance, and also court dance. It was beautiful. It was in the theater where I used to perform.

**Powell:** Did your two weeks there seem to pass too quickly?

**Sam:** It was very short in terms of doing things that I wanted to do, but it felt long because it was so emotional . . . it is too much to take, to see that your friends, your teachers, your family are so poor . . . and I mean so poor. I didn't have a lot of money, but I gave it all away. It seemed like a long time, because every day was intense. ▀

## The Term *Karawitan*

by Marc Perlman

Javanese music has become known in this country (and others) by the name of the instruments that play it.

*Gamelan*—the name of an ensemble—has become in many cases synonymous with Javanese music.

This can be misleading, since there are other kinds of traditional Javanese music which do not use gamelan instruments, and there are composers in many countries producing distinctly non-Javanese music for gamelan ensembles. Meanwhile, the word used by the Javanese themselves for traditional gamelan music—*karawitan* or *krawitan*—is little known here.

This odd situation (our familiarity with the one term, and ignorance of the other) has been noted by Indonesian scholars. Sri Hastanto pointed it out in 1985, though he felt the phrase “gamelan music” was a sufficiently good English equivalent for *karawitan* [1985:1].

In fact, the development of new gamelan-like ensembles in the West makes “gamelan music” an ambiguous phrase. My intent in this note is to offer *karawitan* as a convenient term to convey what we now express by the phrase “traditional gamelan music.”

The word seems to have originally had a broader meaning. In Old Javanese *ararawitan* means “to amuse oneself with beautiful things” (Zoetmulder's (1982) examples of usage mention music and wayang). In Modern Javanese, the root *rawit* means “fine”, as in “finely chopped”; also: detailed, meticulous craftsmanship. Gericke-Roorda's dictionary of 1901 associates *karawitan* with words for fine substances (such as silk) and mental discernment or sagacity.

The modern sense of the word had already been foreshadowed, however, in the early-nineteenth-century *Serat Centhini*, where *olah rawit* (“to practice *rawit*”) refers to gamelan-playing. In Tondhokusuma's *Serat Gulang Yarya* of 1870 (Canto IV: *Pocung*) both *olah rawit* and *karawitan* are used, and seem to encompass the arts of sung poetry (*tembang*), gamelan music (*gendhing*), dance, wayang, and gamelan-making and wayang-carving. Poerwadarminta's dictionary of 1939 defines *karawitan* as “refined arts.” By 1964, when the Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia (ASKI) was founded in Surakarta, it already had the more restricted sense it now bears; thus ASKI's name is probably best translated as the “Traditional Music Academy of Indonesia.”

*Karawitan* has also entered the national language

(Indonesian) with the meaning “music for voice or gamelan using the slendro and pelog scales” [*Kamus Besar*]. Thus it is sometimes also used for Balinese music. Such is the (numerical) dominance of Indonesia by speakers of Javanese, however, and such are the ways of the nationally standardized education system, that we find this term used even of Minangkabau music in West Sumatra, where it seems inappropriate. Is the word *karawitan* broadening in meaning; is it becoming the “general word for any indigenous music in any part of Indonesia,” as Sutton (1991:5, 253) suggests? Perhaps not: in 1990 a seminar at the University of North Sumatra made headlines when it questioned the presence of this reputedly Java-centric term in Indonesia's Copyright Act of 1987.

The meaning of “*karawitan*” may or may not change in its Indonesian context; for now, however, gamelan communities around the world would do well to add this Javanese term to their vocabularies. With it, performers, composers, and audiences can speak more precisely about the musics they create, perform and enjoy. ▀

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# SCORE

## Gelas 1091

by Pande Made Sukerta

### Performance Instructions

#### Group I

- Kenong* Invert on stand, strike inside rim with kenong mallet to produce a clear, bell-like tone.  
*Gong* Hit repeatedly on face (not on knob) with one gong mallet.  
*Singer* Sing a sad song, in any language. Stop when Group II enters.  
*Speaker* Speak slowly and softly about something sad. Stop when Group II enters.  
*Piano* Play slowly, interact with other sounds. Use any technique.

#### Group II

- Suling gambuh (long bamboo flute)*  
*Gentorak (bell tree)* (or wooden frame hung with many kinds of bells)  
*10 people with 2 drinking glasses each* (of glass or plastic)

**Group I:** Enter in the above order. Each player enter loudly; then fade back with the others. After a while, gong becomes louder, other instruments become softer.

**Group II:** Begin after all the instruments in group I are playing softly. All members of group II squat down and duck walk. The suling plays frèely, the bell tree is shaken, and the 10 people with the glasses tap the bottom of each glass on the floor as they walk. The group moves in a cluster, but not in a line, and not in step with each other. In the process of walking, some people may get ahead of others. Start off stage, enter, and cross slowly in front of the stage. Exit the theater or performance space, and return through another entrance, finally entering the stage. Move across the stage, eventually go behind the gong. Stand there and continue to play.

**All players:** When group II is behind the gong, play louder, then softer, and stop together.

### Notes

*Gelas 1091* [drinking glass; numbers indicate date of composition], for approximately 17 players, is 8–9 minutes in duration and may be performed outside.

While Group II is moving, the sounds of the suling, bell tree and glasses should be heard from different perspectives. Other movement sequences are possible: the group might begin by sitting in front of the stage, then exit through the audience and reenter onto the stage, etc.

*Gelas 1091* was composed while the New Music Indonesia group, sponsored by the Festival of Indonesia in Performance, was in residence at Rutgers University in New Jersey on October 2-3, 1991. It was performed there by a joint group of Indonesians and Americans in an evening presentation "Gamelan: a composer's orchestra," a dialogue in words and music between the composers of the New Music Indonesia group (R. Supanggih, A. Suwardi, A. Sunardi, P.M. Sukerta, Waluyo, J. Purwanto, W. Sadra, A.

Sutrisno), four American composers for gamelan (B. Benary, P. Corner, D. Goode, and J. Diamond), and a varied audience of students, musicians and community members.

Pande Made Sukerta was born in Bali in 1953. He graduated from the high school music conservatory in Denpasar (SMKI) and from ASKI (now STSI) Surakarta, where he now teaches composition. He has written on Balinese music and composition, and frequently toured both in Indonesia and abroad. (For a more extensive biography, see *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, eighth edition.)

The composer and this piece are registered with BMI. Please report any performances to the publisher, American Gamelan Institute, Box A-36, Hanover, NH 03755. ♪

# SCORE

## Yokaze

by Harry Roesli

The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 1-21) features vocal parts A, B, C, and D, and percussion parts A, B, C, and D. The vocal parts have lyrics: YO!!! (measures 1-4), ulang 2x (measures 5-8), KA!!! (measures 9-12), ZE!!! (measures 13-16), RA!!! (measures 17-20), and E MM A (measure 21). Dynamic markings include pp, p, mf, f, and ff. The second system (measures 1-21) shows percussion parts A, B, C, and D starting at measure 5, with the instruction "musik masuk pada ulangan ke II" above measure 2. This system includes various dynamic markings and articulation marks like accents and slurs.

### Performance Instructions

In this notation, the numbered boxes represent units of time. Each unit may be of any duration. A conductor indicates the beginning of each unit. The composer says that "amateurs should play as fast as possible; professionals may decide for themselves." Each performance of the piece may be quite different, with many elements being determined by the players, the conductor and the situation.

Vocal parts are shown in the top system and unspecified percussion instruments in the bottom system. In both systems, parts A - D are arranged from high to low. The text, written below the vocal system, may be changed as long as the vowels stay the same. The voices begin alone with the first four time units, which are then repeated (*ulang*). The instruments enter on the repeat (*musik masuk pada ulangan ke II*, lit. music enters on the second repeat).

### Notes

Harry Roesli was born September 10, 1951, in Bandung, West Java. He was exposed to traditional Sundanese arts in childhood, studied Western music in Bandung and Jakarta and graduated from the Rotterdam Conservatory in Holland. He is known for innovative works that combine traditional Indonesian instruments, Western instruments and electronics, like *Titik Api* for rock band and gamelan, as well as the rock opera *Ken Arok*, multi-media pieces and music for theater. He writes a music column for the popular magazine *Mode* and teaches music at IKIP Bandung.

These notes were compiled by Jody Diamond and Larry Polansky from a conversation with the composer in Surakarta in 1989. This score and others are in *DKSB: Depot Kreasi Seni Bandung* (Bandung Creative Arts Center), distributed by the American Gamelan Institute, Box A-36, Hanover NH 03755. The composer and this piece are registered with BMI; please notify AGI of any performances.



# Thai Music at Kent State University

by Terry Miller

Kent State University was first introduced to Thai music when Professor Kovit Kantasiri, a well-known Bangkok *saw* (fiddle) player, arrived to earn a masters degree in 1978. With his help, and money from Max T. Miller, my father, we ordered an extensive set of instruments. When they arrived only five weeks before our first concert, in May of 1979, our excitement was overwhelmed by our feelings of inexperience! The ensemble was then directed by Professor Kovit or Professor Jarernchai Chonpairot, Ph.D. students at Kent. Since 1982, I have kept the ensemble going, sometimes with help from Thai musicians in the area, sometimes without.

The ensemble includes all Thai classical instruments except for the large drums (*glawng tut*). Sometimes using transcriptions supplied by musicians at Payap University in Chiang-mai, we are able to play most of the well-known *sepah*-type compositions, such as "Kamen sai yok," "Lao siang tian," and "Nok kao kamae", including the tri-partite (*pleng-tao*) form. We have also played some overtures (*hom rong*). When we have singers, we include them, but the tonal inflections of the Thai language, realized in subtle ornaments and melismas, make singing extremely difficult for non-Thai speakers.

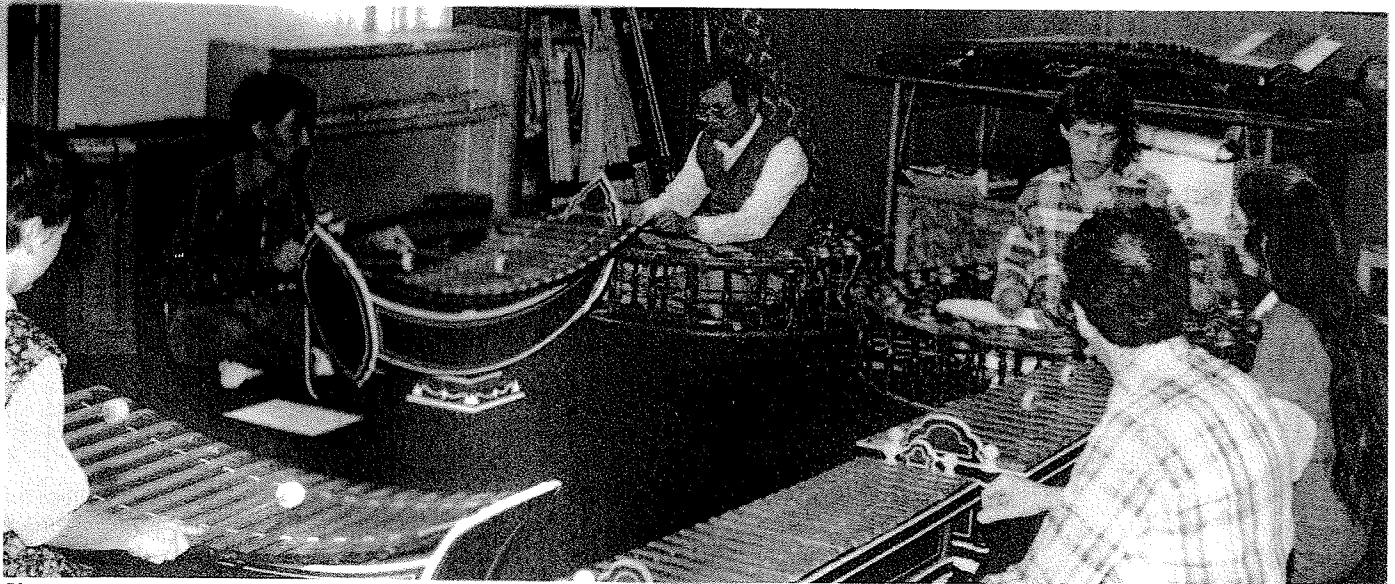
Instrument maintenance is a major challenge for us.

The Thai xylophones and gong circles are tuned with lumps of wax and lead shavings, but fine tuning with this material is difficult. In cold or dry weather, the lumps can easily fall off. I purchased a set of metallophones in 1988, and used them as a tuning standard for the rest of the ensemble. Our bamboo flutes suffer from low humidity in the winter, and drum heads change with the weather.

The ensemble is staffed by undergraduate and graduate students, mostly from the School of Music, but few stay with the ensemble for longer than two years, making it difficult to improve. We play one public concert each spring, and sometimes perform for special events such as Thai Nights, exhibition concerts, or workshops.

We added Northeast Thai village instruments in 1987, including *bong lang* (vertical xylophone), *pin* (lute), *wot* (panpipes), *kaen* (mouth organ), and *glawng yao* (drums). These are especially useful at folk festivals and school workshops because anyone can play simple music on them immediately, whereas the classical instruments require considerable expertise.

Although presently we continue to play without expert guidance, we hope that one of these days another Thai musician will enter a graduate program here and lead the ensemble. ▀



Kent State Thai Ensemble (counterclockwise from right): Terry Miller, Sara Miller, David Binh, Chia Chun Chu, Dahru Veino, Anne Prescott.

## PROFILE

# Gods, Giants and Monkeys: Thai Music at Southwestern University

by Ellsworth Peterson

Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, has offered a program in Thai music for the past few years. In October of 1988 we hosted a symposium called *Gods, Giants and Monkeys: the Ramakian in the Arts and Culture of Thailand*, at which a group of twenty musicians and dancers from Thailand presented excerpts from the great Thai epic. Dr. Chalermpon Ngamsutti, a professor of music at Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok who was then in residence at Southwestern University, organized a Thai music ensemble of students from various disciplines.

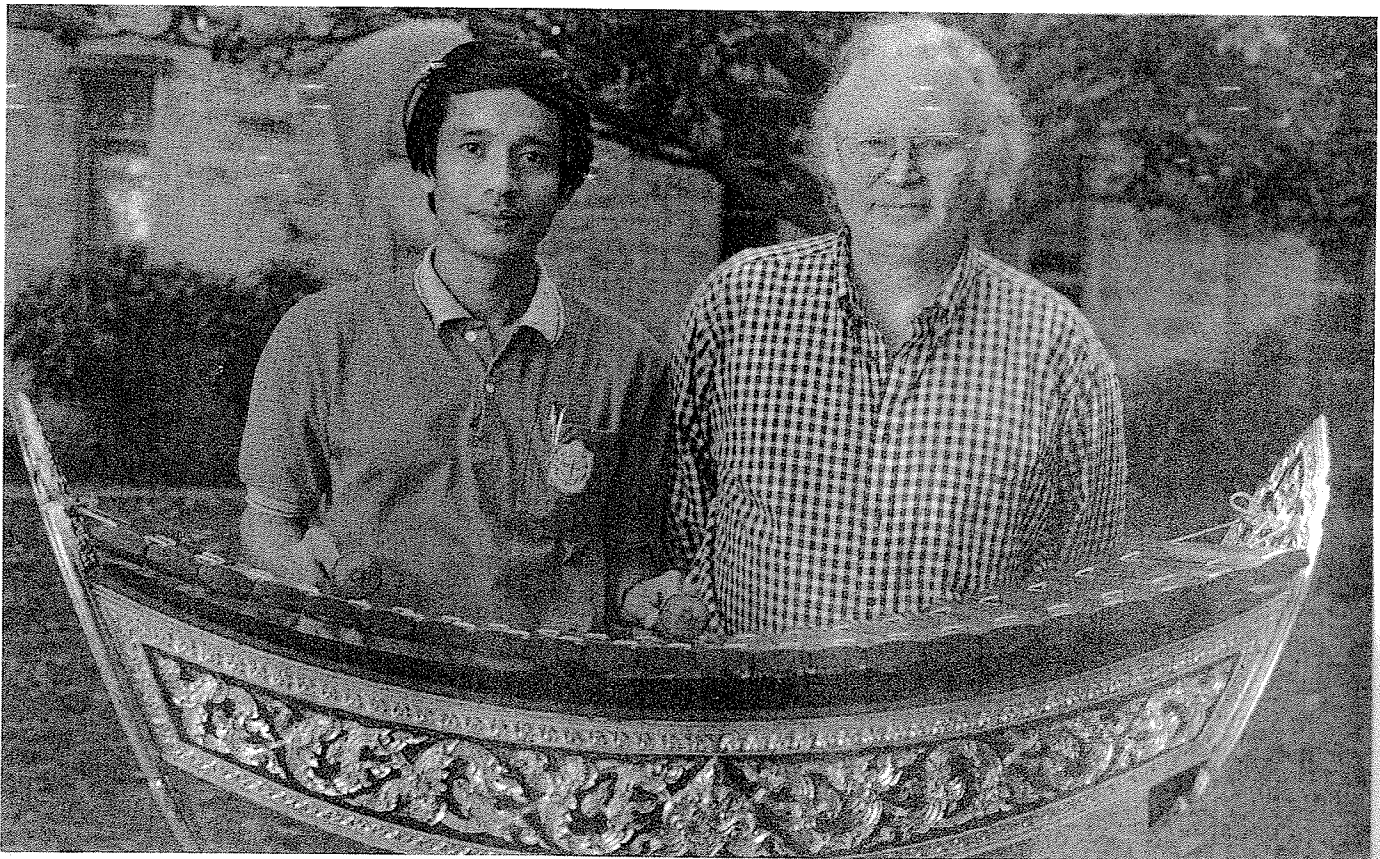
The program continued under the tutelage of Rangsee Kasemsuk (1989) and Manop Wisuttipaet (1990), also from the faculty of Srinakharinwirot University. Dr. Somsak Keukkaenchaen was the Thai musician in residence in 1991.

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*Dr. Ellsworth Peterson is founder of the Thai music program and Professor of Music at Southwestern University.*

The ensemble has proven to be very popular with the Southwestern students. During the 1990-91 academic year, 40 students studied Thai musical instruments, and most also played in an ensemble. The students performed for local universities, public schools, ethnic festivals, Thai temple celebrations, and for a local television network.

Many of the students who play in the group are not music majors; in fact, some have no experience performing Western music. Within a period of approximately two months, however, most of these students are able to play relatively simple Thai music, and some who have participated in the group for two or three years have become very proficient. The university owns a complete set of Thai instruments, making possible *piphat*, *mahori*, and *kruang sai* ensembles of various sizes. ▀



*On campus: Manop Wisuttipaet and Ellsworth Peterson.*

## RESOURCES & REVIEWS

*Colin McPhee: composer in two worlds.* Carol J. Oja.  
Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990, pp. 353.

In this superb chronicle of the life of the Canadian expatriate composer and ethnomusicological pioneer Colin McPhee, Carol Oja has contributed substantially to a reevaluation of the contributions of this remarkable man. She has presented a well-organized, lucid, and sympathetic account of McPhee's often troubled life, including his boyhood in Canada, his formative years in Paris and New York, his marriage to anthropologist Jane Belo and their subsequent trips to Bali in the 1930's, and his final difficult years in New York and Los Angeles in the 1940's and 50's.

McPhee is probably best known for his posthumously published work *Music in Bali* (Yale University Press, 1966), which remains the definitive book on the subject. Oja covers McPhee's ethnomusicological contribution—a project that consumed him, intermittently, for nearly thirty years, and she also brings to life his attempts as a composer to forge a musical language out of two traditions far removed from one another. The only other work to deal with McPhee's musical contribution is Richard Mueller's doctoral dissertation "Stylization and Imitation in the Music of Colin McPhee" (University of Chicago, 1983), a situation partially explained by McPhee's scant compositional legacy (thirteen compositions of various orchestration and three short films scores, several never released) as well as the precarious historical situation in which McPhee found himself, and to which Oja refers:

*McPhee was caught between historical currents... preparing gamelan transcriptions long before the arrival of the minimalists, with their similarly conceived 'pattern' music; composing large orchestral works such as 'Tabuh-Tabuhan' when American symphonies were reluctant to perform such fare; and returning in the 1950s to a musical language that seemed conservative, even old-fashioned, but that twenty years later was coming back in vogue.*

Oja compiled correspondence, scores, transcriptions, journals, interviews, and ephemeral matter into a coherent whole. Of particular interest are appendices cataloging McPhee's musical output, critical writing, and gamelan transcriptions for both Western and indigenous instrumentation.

McPhee's creative output ranged from his personal reminiscences of Bali in *A House in Bali* and *A Club of Small Men* to his monumental ethnomusicological work *Music in Bali*. Oja also brings to light his interest in American jazz spawned by his introduction to the Harlem renaissance through acquaintances Carl Van Vechten and Zora Neale Hurston, a fascination that would persist into later years when he continued to write critical reviews on jazz for *Modern Music* under the assumed name Mercure. Oja is

careful to point out that McPhee reformulated traditional distinctions between traditional sources and compositional invention, his verbatim transcriptions of Balinese compositions and his own reorchestrations, interpretations, and adaptations for Western instruments. For McPhee, the two languages became inseparable, and, moreover, he identified with an aspect of Balinese culture he felt sorely lacking in his own:

*I feel that the artist must strive more and more for anonymous expression, to be first of all a good craftsman, and try and negate all that cries from within for self-conscious and egotistical declaration... What a marvellous thing would be a program made up of new works by composers whose names were not included in the program.*

Such sentiment was not easily achieved in real life. Caught between opposing worlds, and prevented by political conflict, war, and financial difficulties from traveling freely between them, McPhee became despondent and embittered. Oja succeeds, however, in admirably in drawing out his life—a man at once victim and cause of unfortunate circumstances, an inspired composer, meticulous scholar, flamboyant cook, at times insecure, in short, fully human. Perhaps the book's greatest success will be to inspire others to continue the cross-cultural explorations that McPhee began, fully aware of the pitfalls that await a person caught between two worlds.

Kent Devereaux  
California Institute of the Arts

### *Some thoughts on reading Carol Oja's biography of Colin McPhee.*

If there is a case to be made for Colin McPhee this book surely makes it. To those, like myself, who find his quality as a composer problematic, it is a pleasure to see revealed his strong contribution, indeed pioneering role, to the development of the coming world culture. This significance is in no way dependent on an ethnomusicological evaluation of his work on Balinese music: no less an authority than Dr. I Made Bandem has remarked on McPhee's positive role in fostering the preservation and rebirth of traditional culture for the Balinese themselves.

McPhee, however, begs to be accepted as an important composer. In this regard I recall the embarrassing evening in Vancouver in 1986 when, in the context of the international Gamelan Conference at Expo, "Tabuh-tabuhan" was juxtaposed with both Balinese and Javanese gamelan and the "Two Nocturnes for Orchestra" by Debussy. I overheard comments by Indonesians and others who were fascinated by Debussy's intuitive insight but

puzzled by the *raison d'être* of McPhee's mere reworking of the elements of the Balinese tradition.

Ms. Oja conscientiously gives all the evidence that we need, including detailed analyses of works that many of us have never heard—or heard of. Biographical details set the context of his life, including a fascinating revelation of the “backside” of his trips to Bali—mechanics of daily life which escaped the somewhat mythologized account in his book *A House in Bali*. In learning about the surprising extent to which McPhee intentionally maintained his identity as a modern Western musician, I gained some insights into the questions raised by his work itself. To this extent, the book is, I think, as good as possible.

Nevertheless, I do not think that it is only personal preference which leads me to take issue with Ms. Oja's unconvincing presentation of McPhee as even a “good” composer. My reading of the examples shows an essentially typical neo-classical modernist, i.e. a “wrong-note” conservative, another “petit Stravinsky.” Oja should not be criticized for her opinion, but the case is so unusual, and his failure so revealing that I regret the absence of attention to certain important issues.

These are, as I see it, basically two: that of East-West influence, or the assimilation of “exotic” elements from non-Western cultures into ours (with the point being to render them *non-exotic*); and the problem of the genius in the 20th century. The latter first: This biography shows that McPhee was indeed one of those super-precocious youngsters who in another century might have been a Mozart, etc. What becomes of their talent in our times? Every year seems to produce a new pre-teen star who, with violin or piano, is off to a career of repeating the standard classics, a path with little place for creativity—whether their own or others'. The ones who are imaginative enough to resist such seduction and do become composers are likely to be led by their very facility into a superficiality that denies them the possibility of significant invention. Who are the exceptions? The innovators, the great ones, have been forced by the nature of their gifts to make great efforts. Debussy himself might be cited as an example, which brings us back again to the other concern, that of successfully integrating aspects of other traditions into the “progress” of our own.

The career of McPhee is a useful object lesson since the failure of his compositions is, it seems to me, due not only to the factor of talent as to an actual wrong choice of approach. Practically all of the composers who have been profoundly influenced by extra-European traditions have not been experts in the musics they internalized. It almost seems as if the expected advantage of travel to and study of particular “other” cultures would be the most dangerous of all paths. I ask certain questions of Colin McPhee:

Why, given his proximity to the instruments in action, didn't he play music with the Balinese?

Why didn't he write any new music for them? (Thus anticipating Lou Harrison by a quarter century.)

Why, if he had to make piano transcriptions, did they end up sounding like pallid little Impressionist poems? Just the job of being faithful to the originals could have led to expanded piano resources: unique touch and pedal effects, new harmonies derived from harmonics, direct play on the strings, preparations (!), alternative tunings. . .

What an inspiration it would have been to have used such techniques, that knowledge, in the service of a vision which transcends “Bali Hai”: to have *composed!*

Philip Corner  
New York/Denpasar

*Hasil Pendokumentasian Notasi Gending-Gending Lelambatan Klasik Pegongan Daerah Bali*. I Nyoman Rembang. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Jendral Kebudayaan, Proyek Pengembangan Kesenian Bali. 1984/85.

This invaluable and long awaited collection of scores comprises part of the life's work of the preeminent scholar of Balinese gamelan, I Nyoman Rembang. It presents 48 transcriptions in Balinese notation of Lelambatan compositions — the slow works in extended forms that are the core of the Balinese orchestral repertoire and must be performed at all temple ceremonies. Most of the works are from the village of Geladag, not far from where Rembang himself lives. Since Geladag's gamelan, repertoire and performance are renowned throughout the island, it is highly significant that these works have been notated for posterity. Most of them have been recorded on the Bali Stereo label.

Rembang's pithy introduction in Indonesian summarizes the theory of the music. He presents a system of formal classifications for the compositions, as well as the notation that he has devised for representing them. This is all crucial information for students of Balinese music.

Michael Tenzer  
Yale University

*Metalworks: New Gamelan*. Practical Music, Practical 6 (CD).

One of the most refreshing aspects of the international gamelan community is that it does not merely replicate the styles and sounds of traditional Javanese or Balinese gamelan music. Many groups include new pieces in their repertoire, and some, including the English group Metalworks, play exclusively new music. The ten pieces on their new CD *Metalworks: New Gamelan* are all recent compositions, most of which mix Javanese performance practices to varying degrees with European and American styles, including jazz and pop. Most of the pieces on the CD

were composed by members of the group, and only one performer does not also have a composition on the disc. In the brief notes, the group emphasizes that its members are primarily composers: the act of composing is an integral part of their creative approach.

Metalworks plays on a set of brass and aluminum instruments designed and built by group member Mark Lockett. The instruments have a very nice sound: the saron in particular have the bright sound characteristic of aluminum instruments. Metalworks approaches the gamelan not as a fixed set of instruments, but as a basis on which they develop their own sound. The set of instruments focuses mainly on the percussion instruments of a Javanese-style gamelan; there is no rebab, siter or suling. When the group wants an instrument to play a prominent melody line, it tends to use a soprano saxophone, which pierces the gamelan texture in much the same way as rebab or voice. The gamelan also includes a synthesizer on several tracks and a trap set on one.

The combination of Javanese and Western influences extends into the group's music: all of the pieces incorporate different elements of the two traditions. This is perhaps most perceptible in *Little Blue*, the first of Janet Sherbourne's *Three Pieces for Gamelan*, where Javanese drumming styles and decorative patterns are superimposed over a blues progression. In another piece, Mus Mulyadi's *Emplek-emplek ketepu*, a trap set plays a disco beat in the place of the kendhang. While these are perhaps the most obvious examples, the other pieces all exhibit strong cross influences in the melodic and formal structures. Metalwork's particular combination of traditional and popular influences creates a sound distinct from other gamelan groups that focus more on experimental music, such as New York's Son of Lion.

Metalworks seems to prefer to allow its music to speak for itself: its liner notes give only a brief description of the group and its activities. Notes for each piece would have better clarified the composers' intentions. For more information, contact: Metalworks, 59B The Dale, Wirksworth, Derbyshire DE4 4EH, United Kingdom. The CD is distributed by Practical Music, 13 Salegate Lane, Oxford OX4 2HQ, United Kingdom.

David Fuqua  
Hanover

**The New International Trio.** Atomic Theory Records, Inc. 1988. ATD 1102 (CD).

The New International Trio—Bun Loeung, Barb Weiss, and Dick Hensold—combine elements of Cambodian and European-American folk and traditional musics. On this disc they play a collection of folk, classical, and pop pieces from both traditions on a combination of Cambodian and Western instruments, including *khim*, *tro chhe*,

harpichord, recorder, and Northumbrian small pipes. Several of the pieces mix performing styles as well, and one, *Sarai Ondaet/Blue Monk*, combines a Cambodian wedding song with a Thelonius Monk tune.

*Aspara: The Feminine in Cambodia Art*, Amy Catlin, ed. and *From Angkor to America*, a video tape of the Cambodian Dance and Music Project of Van Nuys, California.

These two new items offer valuable new information and insight into Cambodia arts. The book contains essays, oral histories and photos of women artists. The video is narrated by Pinthang Ouk, a 15 year old Khmer dance student, who tells her family's history in classical dance, from her great-grandmother's training in the Royal Palace to her ten-month-old niece learning movements from a videotape. The video also shows how her refugee family revived their classical tradition in California. Both video and book are available from **Aspara Media**, 13659 Victoria Blvd. #577, Van Nuys CA 91401. A cassette tape of Cambodian festival music described in one of the book's essays is available for \$10 from Amy Catlin, Bagh e Ashraf, 6539 Greenbush Ave., Van Nuys, CA 90401.

**"A Retrospect on a Century of Gamelan Tone Measurements."** Roger Vetter. In *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Spring/Summer 1989, pp. 217-228.

This article provides an overview of the ways that scholars have examined and analyzed tunings of Central Javanese gamelan. Vetter observes that many of these methods, largely based on scientific examination of the *result* of the tuning — the pitches of the instruments themselves — with little attention to the *process* of the tuning — the thoughts and intentions of the gamelan maker and tuner.

**Centre of Southeast Asian Studies** at Monash University, Wellington Road, Clayton, Victoria 3168, Australia.

The CSEAS publishes more than 50 "Papers on Southeast Asia." Many are on political and social topics, with some on the arts, such as "Ketoprak Theatre and the Wayang Tradition," by Barbara Hatley; "Five Essays on the Indonesian Arts—Music, Theatre, Textiles, Painting and Literature," and "Studies in Indonesian Music" (photocopy only), edited by Margaret Kartomi. Inquiries and orders, which can be paid by credit card, may be directed to Linda Syme. ▀



# ARCHIVES

Monographs and theses focused on a particular gamelan instrument are often a useful and practical resource for a musician, composer or musicologist. Each of the following three Archives items examines one instrument in depth, and includes extensive transcriptions of actual performances by master musicians. These provide both a model for the beginner and variations for the experienced player. We are grateful to all these authors for giving permission for their work to be distributed to a wider, appreciative audience.

For other excellent works on specific instruments, such as R. Anderson Sutton's *The Javanese Gambang and Its Music*, check the Monographs and Notation sections of the Archives Distribution Catalog.

**Solonese Gendhing Bonang: The Repertoire and Playing Style.** Molly Ann McNamara, M.A. Thesis at Wesleyan University, 1980, 374 pp.

This thesis explores the instrumental tradition of gendhing bonang, considering the size, structure, pathet and range of the pieces, as well as the history and traditional uses of the music. An extensive analysis of the *garapan*, or "working out" of the bonang part shows some differences in style between Yogya and Solo and various players. The Appendices include balungan notation for 32 gendhing bonang and complete transcriptions of fourteen pieces as played by R.M. Soekanto Sastrodarsono. (Recordings of these performances are in the World Music Archives at Wesleyan University.)

**Clempungan/Siteran.** Marsono and Sri Hendarto. ASTI Yogyakarta, 1983, 63 pp.

This paper covers the playing of the plucked zithers *siter* and *celempung* with full gamelan, using examples from pieces in ketawang and ladrang forms in slendro manyura.

The authors note that the *cengkok* (patterns) and notation for pieces given here are intended to be only a "bridge" to the study of these elaborating instruments. Two techniques of playing are described: *imbal*, where the hands alternate on each note, and *ngracik*, where consecutive notes are played by each hand. The *cengkok* are organized in two styles: *slah balungan*, where there is a short phrase to each balungan tone, and *seleh gatra*, where longer *cengkok* coincide with every fourth beat, i.e. the end of the *gatra*. The *seleh gatra* *cengkok* are given the same names as those used for gender *cengkok* by R.L. Martopangrawit. There is complete notation for several pieces, including two versions of *Ladrang Wilujeng*.

**The Javanese Gender Panerus: An Analysis of the Performance of Pak Minarno.** Gina Carol Beck, M.A. Thesis at the University of Maryland, 1990, 378 pp.

Minarno, a Solonese artist who worked for many years at the Indonesian embassy in Washington D.C., is an enthusiastic advocate of gender panerus. For this thesis, his performance of 18 slendro pieces in several forms was recorded and transcribed. Several repetitions of each piece are presented, so variations can be compared. The analysis considers pathet, irama, balungan, musical phrase position, form, group empathy and musical function as factors in the choice of *cengkok* (patterns). The background information describes many basic gamelan terms and concepts, and players will find the clear transcriptions and pathet analysis extremely useful.

Materials in Indonesian are becoming more easily available, in Indonesia through the wide availability of photocopy services, and in other countries in library or personal collections. While a knowledge of the Indonesian language is required to read texts, there are many works on music

|      |      |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 5    | 3    | 2         | 1         | 3         | 2         | 1         | (6)       |           |
| .3.1 | .1.5 | .5.5 .5.3 | .561 23.2 | .165 61.1 | .3.1 23.3 | 33.1 .3.2 | .1.5 61.1 | 11.1 .1.6 |
| 2.2. | 6.6. | 6.65 3.3. | 6.6. 2.2. | 2.6. 2.2. | 2.6. 2.2. | 2.2. 212. | 6.21 6.21 | ..21 6.6. |
| 5    | 3    | 2         | 1         | 3         | 2         | 1         | (6)       |           |
| 535. | .356 | 535. .653 | 6.61 612. | .56. 6..1 | .6.2 .1.6 | .1.. 61.. | 22.2 .2.. | 33.. .1.6 |
| ...1 | 2... | ...1 2... | .3... ..6 | 3..3 .321 | 6.6. 6.6. | 6.12 ..12 | ..3. 1.23 | ..21 6.6. |

From *Clempungan/Siteran* by Marsono and Sri Hendarto. *Slah balungan* style (top) for last *kenongan* of *Ladrang Pangkur laras slendro pathet manyura* and *seleh gatra* style (bottom) for the fourth *kenongan* of *Ladrang Asmaradana laras slendro pathet manyura*.

and dance that consist largely of notation or diagrams, and can thus be useful to people who do not read Indonesian.

The Archives collection of materials by Indonesian authors and artists has increased dramatically in the last two years. Some items are for research only, others are available for distribution. The research collection now contains copies of many papers, theses, scores and recordings from arts institutions in Indonesia, particularly STSI Surakarta, ISI Yogyakarta, ASTI Bandung, ASKI Padang Panjang, USU (University of North Sumatra), and collected newspaper clippings from the *Dewan Kesenian Jakarta* (Jakarta Arts Council).

Described below are two books on Balinese arts. These are available through the generosity of Dr. I Made Bandem, and are reviewed here by Michael Tenzer.

***Prakempa: Sebuah Lontar Gambelan Bali.*** I Made Bandem. Denpasar: Akademi Seni Tari Denpasar. 1986. In Kawi and Indonesian.

*Prakempa* is a palm-leaf manuscript of unsure but considerable age, offered here in book form by I Made Bandem, director of the arts college Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (STSI) in Denpasar. The manuscript is presented in Kawi transliterated into the Roman alphabet on the left side of the page, with translation into Indonesian on the right. The text is prefaced by a lengthy and useful introduction by Bandem, and followed by a little photographic essay on Balinese instruments that bears nothing by the most tangential relation to the content of the manuscript.

To those without an extremely intimate knowledge of Balinese religion and cosmology, the content of *Prakempa* is inscrutable at best. Bandem enumerates its four main elements at the start: *Tatwa* (philosophy and logic of gamelan), *Susila* (ethics), *Lango* (aesthetics), and *Gagebug* (technique of playing). But, at least for this student, this hint and its subsequent explanation do little to alleviate the problem of understanding the work itself.

*Prakempa* appears to be a system of symbols, connections and mappings between the tones of the Balinese scalar systems (pelog and slendro) and note-names (*ding, dong, deng, dung* and *dang*) with the various directions, colors and forces in the Balinese cosmology, all of which are ultimately identified with deities. Beyond that, and without the benefit of much more extensive research, it is difficult to say more. Nevertheless, the content of this work is of formidable significance for a scholarly understanding of the role of music in Balinese life.

***Ensiklopedi Tari Bali.*** I Made Bandem. Denpasar: Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia, 1982. In Indonesian.

It might be better to call this useful work an "abridged" encyclopedia, for it is not as complete as its name would suggest. But its contents are thorough enough,

and were written by one of the most distinguished scholars in the field. It is well cross-referenced and gives ample space to most of the major forms, including separate descriptions of characters from important stories, names of costume parts and props, movement terminology, and terms for facial and body expression or posture. One wonders, though, at omissions such as *Jegog*, the martial arts inflected form of West Bali, or *Teruna Jaya*, the influential Kebyar dance form. The *Ensiklopedi* works well in conjunction with Bandem and DeBoer's *Kaja and Kelod: Balinese Dance in Transition* (Oxford Press, 1981).

***Kreasi Baru (New Compositions) '88-'90.*** Gamelan Sekar Jaya.

Sekar Jaya, the community-based Balinese gamelan group in El Cerrito, California, has a new cassette tape. Excellently played and recorded, the pieces are new compositions for gamelan gong kebyar and gamelan angklung created especially for the group by their guest teachers from Bali, I Nyoman Windha and I Ketut Partha. Sekar Jaya is well known for its dedication to Balinese arts, and has paved new ground by commissioning works from these excellent composers. They also encouraged collaboration between American and Balinese composers by performing and recording *Kekembangan*, for gong kebyar and saxophone quartet, by I Nyoman Windha and Evan Ziporyn.

All Archives sales support the production of *Balungan* and free subscriptions for Indonesian artists and scholars. For a complete catalog and price list, or information on the research collection, write to Box A-36, Hanover, NH 03755, USA. ▀

# NETWORK

## Canada

*L'atelier de gamelan* (gamelan workshop) of the University of Montreal has just recorded a CD (UMM104) called "Bali in Montreal," which includes compositions by **Colin McPhee**, **José Evangelista** and **I Wayan Suweca** of Batubulan, Bali (the group's current resident artist, along with dancer **Ni Ketut Mariatni**). The group has been playing both gamelan gong kebyar and angklung since 1987, and performs Balinese ceremonial, dance and theater music as well as contemporary compositions.

The 1992 Contemporary Arts Summer Institute will include a course called "Worlds of Music: studies in Indonesian gamelan, interactive performance computer and South Indian rhythm" taught by **Daniel Scheidt**, **George Lewis**, **I Nyoman Wenten**, **Rusdiantoro** and **Trichy Sankaran**. Apply by April 3 to: School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC Canada V5A 1S6.

## China

**K.H. Han** taught Javanese gamelan in Beijing in December 1990 to students from the Central Conservatory of Music and members of the Orient Dance and Song Company. He was also the chairperson of a joint meeting of the Midwest SEM and CMS chapters in the U.S.

## England

A recent issue of PELOG, published by **Bill** and **Sandra Martin**, gives news of no less than 17 groups. The South Bank Centre program expanded, and other groups are thriving, including Cambridge, Cragg Vale, and Oxford. **Adrian Lee** and **John Pawson** taught gamelan to over 1000 children in Norfolk, where there is also a community group. At York, **Neil Sorrell** gave a workshop for the UK Orff Society, and will host a gamelan festival in 1993.

## France

**Michel Faligand** reports that the Indonesian Embassy Gamelan is playing occasionally under the direction of **Putra Diasa**, but that activities at the Musée de l'Homme are uncertain.

## Germany

There are several groups in Germany, reports **Andras Varsanyi** in the latest issue of PELOG, all working cooperatively with one another. This includes a Balinese group in Freiburg called **Cara Bali**, directed by **Dieter Mack**. They will have a Balinese dalang visiting in the fall, **Ida Bagus Made Geria**, to perform for the International Festival of Puppets. He will be accompanied by **Andras** and **Ursula Haydl**.

## Indonesia

**Sutanto**, a composer working in both Magelang and his arts center at Candi Mendut, reports that in January of 1991 he performed "Borobodur's Appeal for Peace: a prayer for a wise solution to the Gulf Crisis." Many young people from his group participated in wrapping the center with black plastic and posters against the leaders of both sides.

The gamelan at **Jakarta International School**, *Sasana Budaya*, is doing well. **Barb Ellis** taught grades 4-6 and the lower grades have been taught by **Helen Hughes**. Several staff groups have also formed. Music instructor **Alec Bien** coordinated a concert of Western classical music that was a first-time collaboration between JIS students and Indonesian groups from Jakarta.

**Rizaldi Siagian** has been named Vice President of the *Dewan Kesenian Sumatera Utara* (North Sumatra Arts Council), which sponsors programs to develop the arts of that region. He also directed the North Sumatra Performance Ensemble on a European tour.

**Slamet Syukur** has founded a new music organization in Jakarta, *Yayasan Maha Svava*, located at Jalan Cut Mutia 5, Jakarta 10330. It includes a music school, a music information center, and an Indonesian Society for Contemporary Music. The founding committee has already met, and discussed future projects such as a television program on the variety of musics found in Indonesia. Syukur's *Ji-lala-ji* for flute and percussion was performed in Germany in 1989, and *Svava* for piano was performed in Amsterdam.

## Netherlands

A "Performing Arts of Asia" seminar was held in Leiden, according to **Clara Brakel**. In Utrecht, the group **Stichting Symbiosis**, directed by **Jurrien Slijter**, gave a concert of contemporary works for gamelan, including John Cage's *Hakai*.

## New Zealand

Gamelan on the South Island is thriving. A new iron slendro gamelan from **Suhirjan** of Yogyakarta arrived the same week as director **Miranda Adams'** new baby **Ursula**. The gamelan was first used in a concert on November 23, 1989, that included *Ln. Ricik-ricik*, *Ld. Asmaradana*, *Ln. Manyar Sewu* and dance. Guest artists were **Tri** and **Joko Sutrisno** from Wellington. Ms. Adams writes: "The Nelson School of Music is running two Community Courses for beginners. . . . I see great potential for community involvement rather than gamelan being forever stuck in the Western institutional ivory tower, after all, this is hardly the case in Java."



## Scotland

There are now two Javanese gamelan in Scotland, or rather, one gamelan in two places. The slendro half is held by the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**, and based at Motherwell College. It will be used for a community project in world music, high school puppet productions, and special education classes. Contact **Eona Craig**, 27 Elmbank St. Glasgow G2 4PB. The pelog set is housed at Hanson Street College and used by **Strathclyde Orchestral Productions**. Contact **Gordon Dougall**, 18Albion St. Glasgow G1. Both groups are also interested in studying Indonesian arts as well as developing special education programs.

## United States

**Dennis Murphy** of the **Plainfield Village Gamelan** (PVG) taught a workshop in Javanese music for high school students as part of Vermont's "Governor's Institution on the Arts." The students learned *Pangkur*, *Manyar Sewu* and a composition by Mr. Murphy. The PVG also performed Mr. Murphy's pieces in a Festival of New Music sponsored by the Consortium of Vermont Composers in November of 1990.

The **San Jose State University Gamelan** and **Gamelan Si Aptos**, directed by Trish Neilsen, presented a concert in May 1991 titled "The Music and Puppets of Indonesian Wayang." Guest artists were **Kathy Foley**, *dalang*, and **Undang Sumarna**, musical director. Many of that group's members also participated in recordings for a CD series to be produced by Music Masters. The first disk will feature the music of **Lou Harrison**, the second will include compositions by **Ki Mantle Hood**, **Virgil Thomson**, **Alan Hovanes**, **Jody Diamond** and **K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat**.

The **Charlottesville Gamelan**, directed by Cindy Benton-Groner, held a *selamatan* to raise money for new instruments, particularly a big gong built by **Tentrem Sarwanto** of Solo.

The **City College of San Francisco** now offers an International Education Program to Sumatra, Java and Bali. The 1991 session was scheduled to be led by Cecelia Levin. Contact: International Education, CCSF, 50 Phelan Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94112.

The gamelan **Kyai Jati Mulya**, newly located at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, presented an Inaugural Concert on April 28, 1991. The instruments, built in the mid-19th century, were restored to playing condition under the supervision of the museum's Keeper of the Instruments **Sam Quigley**. Many guests participated in this concert, including **I.M. Harjito**, **Sumarsam**, **Minarno** and 18 Americans whose gamelan experience totaled about 250 years of study.

For his work on a paper about the "role of tradition in new music in contemporary society from a European American composers' point of view," **Sheldon Atovsky** is requesting statements and other materials from composers

using traditional Western or non-Western music in their work. Send c/o School of Music, DePaul University, 804 W. Belden, Chicago IL, 60614.

The University of California Pacific Rim Research Team—**Elaine Barkin**, **Linda Burman-Hall**, **David Cope**, and **Sue DeVale**—commissioned several composers in Bali. New pieces by **I Wayan Rai**, **I Wayan Suweca** and **I Nyoman Astita** were recorded by **Wayne Vitale**, and will be released later on CD and cassette.

The **Fine Stream Gamelan**, constructed and directed by **Matt Finstrom**, performed at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona on April 13, 1991. The program included *Ld. Rangkung*, *Swara Suling*, *Gd. Rimong* and *Ayak-ayakan Pamungkas*, as well as pieces for *Calung* ensemble and Balinese *bebonangan*. Matt has been very active as an instrument builder, and is currently constructing a Balinese style *kebyar*.

Sante Fe has a new group, **Gamelan Encantada**. The iron instruments were built **Barbara Benary**. Gamelan Encantada plays primarily new music, some in Central Javanese style, and welcomes scores from *Balungan* readers. Contact director **Jenny DeBouzek** at Box 16467, Sante Fe NM 87506.

A joint concert was given by the **Northern Illinois University Gamelan Ensemble**, directed by **K. H. Han**, and the **Friends of the Gamelan** from Chicago, directed by **Maria Omo**. The NIU group played the Sundanese *Overture* by **Nugraha Sudiredja**, *Puspanjala*, *Embat-Embat Penjalina*, and *Encore* by **Elaine Barkin**. Pieces played by FROG were *Gonjang-Ganjing*, *Gleyong*, *Serayu* and *Shimmering Water* by Omo. The Chicago Angklung ensemble also performed, including *Jakarta-Jakarta* and *Home on the Range*.

The Washington D.C. area's long time teacher and gender panerus virtuoso, **Minarno**, has returned to Indonesia. He will be replaced by **Suatmadi**, who is also from Solo.

**Joan Bell Cowan** of Vallejo, California, is combining Javanese gamelan ideas with Orff Schulwerk in music, dance and improvisation, and using Gamelan Range of Light, which she built while at Mills College.

The **Bali Arts and Culture News (BACN) #28** has an annotated bibliography of articles on Bali. Anyone interested in Bali should receive this publication. Contact the editor, **Fritz DeBoer**, at Theater Department, Wesleyan University, Middletown CN 06457. **Michael Tenzer** of Yale University wrote a fascinating report on his recent compositional work in Bali, and announced the arrival of his new gamelan, which has an innovative seven-tone tuning designed by **Wayan Beratha** of Denpasar.

The **U.C.L.A. Contemporary Gamelan Ensemble** gave a concert in 1989 of works for gamelan as part of the Festival of American Music, presenting: *Quartet for Angklungs* by Philip Corner, *Bubaran Robert* by Lou Harrison, *A Rag for Deena* by Barbara Benary, *Encore No More* by Elaine Barkin, *Slendrone* by Robert Lombardo and *Machine Shop* by Dika Newlin.

**Gino Forlin** reports on a performance at the Bay Area Improvised Music Festival in 1991. "Widiyanto brought his screen and seven puppets, and I had my drumset and Javanese gender. We did a miniature improvised wayang kulit. . . and an improvised duet for drumset with Widiyanto on gender and voice."

The Hopkins Center of Dartmouth College will host an **International New England Gamelan Festival** on May 15-16, 1992 on the theme "Indonesian Gamelan: An International Composer's Orchestra." Performances are scheduled by **Giri Mekar** from Woodstock Percussion in New York; *L'atelier de gamelan* from the University of Montreal; Dennis Murphy and the **Plainfield Village Gamelan**; classical and new music for Javanese gamelan played by members of the **Boston Village Gamelan** and the **Dartmouth Gamelan Orchestra**, respectively; and music for gamelan angklung played by the newly formed **Lila Muni** of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. The one-day symposium will consist of papers, videos of new works for gamelan from Indonesia, Canada and the U.S., and a composition panel and workshop. For information, or to submit proposals or videos, contact **Jody Diamond**, Box A-36, Hanover NH 03755.

**SEA\_music** is a new electronic network for anyone interested in Southeast Asian music. Contributions are welcome from any perspective, whether from a scholar, musician or music-lover. To log on, contact coordinator **Tom Braden** by e-mail at [braden@athena.mit.edu](mailto:braden@athena.mit.edu).


### Festival Of Indonesia

A Batak group toured in November of 1991, led by **Rizaldi Siagian**, and performed in five cities. Scheduled also was **Putu Wijaya** with Teater Mandiri's *Yel*, a "visual piece with wild dream images of modern Indonesian life."

The "New Music Indonesia" group had a successful tour in the fall of 1991. Several of the artists attended a symposium on "Indonesian Music in the Twentieth Century," at U.C. Berkeley. The group also participated in a residency at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

Three of the Indonesian composers stayed on in the U.S. for creative residencies jointly sponsored by the Festival of Indonesia and the N.E.A. International Activities Office, and coordinated by the American Gamelan Institute. Each composer created a new work for his host group. **Rahayu Supanggah** worked with **Gamelan Son of Lion** and members of the **Downtown Ensemble** in New York City, **Antonius Wahyudi Sutrisno (Dedek)** resided with **Gamelan Pacifica** in Seattle, and **I Wayan Sadra** worked with the **Dartmouth Gamelan Orchestra** and composed in the **Bregman Electronic Music Studio** at Dartmouth College.

The Festival, which closed at the end of 1991, sponsored 10 groups and many special events as part of the performance program. **Rachel Cooper** and her staff, along with **Amna S. Kusumo** and the Indonesian committee, did an excellent job of bringing many exceptional Indonesian arts and artists to the American public. ▸



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## FUTURE ISSUES

Volume 5, Number 2: Sunda, Kathy Foley, guest editor.  
Volume 6, Number 1: New Zealand, Alan Thomas and Jack Body, guest editors.

Holland, Clara Brakel, guest editor. Australia, Kathy Falk, guest editor.  
Women and Indonesian Arts, Jody Diamond, editor. Gamelan in Education, Barbara Benary, guest editor.

Suggestions for future issues and special publications are welcome.

## SUBMISSIONS

**Submissions** in any category are welcome. Articles should be typed and double-spaced; photos may be in color or black and white. Material may be submitted on a Macintosh disk, on other computer media, or via modem. Books, tapes, and records will be considered for review. All submissions will be placed in the Archives of the American Gamelan Institute unless return is requested and a self-addressed stamped envelope included. Manuscripts should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th Edition Revised (1982).

## THANKS

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## EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC PUBLICATIONS

**Balungan**, a publication of the American Gamelan Institute. Information on all forms of gamelan, Indonesian performing arts, and related developments worldwide. Subscription (two issues) \$15 individual, \$20 foreign, \$30 institution. Archives Distribution Catalog, listing tapes, monographs, scores, and videos, \$2. Box A36, Hanover NH 03755.

**Frog Peak Music** (A Composers' Collective). Publishes scores and books on speculative theory and distributes experimental artist-produced books, recordings, and innovative music software. Catalog on request. Box A36, Hanover NH 03755.

**Musicworks**: The Canadian Journal of Sound Explorations. Journalistic and audio perspectives on all aspects of music and music-making. Subscription (3 issues annually) \$26, includes cassettes. Sample issue (28 pages) with 60 min. cassette, \$8.75. 1087 Queen St. West, Toronto, Canada M6J 1H3.

**1/1**: The Quarterly Journal of the Just Intonation Network, David B. Doty, editor. Serves composers, musicians, instrument designers and theorists working with tunings in Just Intonation. One year membership includes subscription. Individual, \$15 US, \$17.50 foreign; institution \$25. 535 Stevenson, San Francisco CA 94103. (415) 864-8123.

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