

# LETTERS

Thank you very much for the enjoyable premier issue of **Balungan**. Congratulations! Of course our institute will subscribe to it. The interview with Harja Susilo is heart-warming and informative. He has many important things to say that are valuable to gamelan students. ... Contrary to what is stated in the Editorial, gamelan is not 'the orchestra of Indonesia'. This statement does injustice to the many other orchestral ensembles that together make up Indonesia's rich and varied musical culture. The word 'gamelan' itself is not even used in Bali, only in Java. I feel a slight discomfort with the term 'American gamelan,' because it doesn't take into account all that is done outside the U.S. Wouldn't the tag 'Western gamelan' be more appropriate?

Ernst Heins  
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

[We agree that the terminology for gamelan activity outside of Indonesia is still somewhat unsettled. Kent Devereaux and others have suggested that 'American gamelan' refers to American-built instruments. As to "Western," what about gamelan activity in Japan and the Phillipines? Others have had various suggestions: new gamelan, para-gamelan, frontier gamelan. What do Indonesians call our music?]

I am pleased to know about **Balungan** and hope it is a beneficial and successful venture for all concerned. I have one strong request about the definition of gamelan. Could you please include shawms in your list of instruments that may be included? The major ensembles on Lombok and Sumbawa, and perhaps in Nusa Tenggara Timor as well, generally include shawms.

David Harnish,  
Honolulu, Hawaii

I applaud what you are doing with your new journal **Balungan** and would like to participate in whatever way I can. I hope that your journal becomes a permanent fixture in the academic world as well as in the world of gamelan lovers. ... I will be going to the field next December to conduct research on the gamelan and calung music of Banyumas. We had Andy Sutton here and gave a lecture-performance of regional gamelan music in Java. Peggy Choy also danced an East Javanese **ngremo**. We played music of Banyumas, Semarang, Yogya, and Surabaya, all of which are the traditions that Andy has been researching lately. This is [part of] what inspired me to move out of the Central Javanese court traditions and look at other gamelan styles. ... Currently, I am directing the University of Michigan gamelan.

Rene T.A. Lysloff,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

You wouldn't have had to tell me that gamelan is a viable art form. I have only to look at your classy publication. Very well done. Our area of focus is with a wide lens. WE are simply trying to encourage new music by making composers aware of the listening public and by making the public aware of the existence of composers. I am excited by **Balungan** and look forward to future issues.

Dwight Winenger  
[Miniscule University Press, Inc.  
66358 Buena Vista Ave.  
Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240]

#### 4. **Balungan**

**Balungan** No.2 was well received. Local people here, being less inclined toward the technical and theoretical, particularly enjoy the Letters and Network sections. I am glad to hear you plan to emphasize concert notes and current repertoires in future issues. This will really increase **Balungan's** influence in connecting the far-flung members of the international gamelan community. Anyone 'in gamelan' who doesn't subscribe simply doesn't understand how important **Balungan** is!

Mr. Han sent me a copy of his Topeng Cerbon tape. The opening shot is Pa Jana's whole group warming up with a Tetalu, the audience is calmly waiting while the dancer puts finishing touches on his costume. The kecrek player (Pa Bulus) is relaxing by reading a magazine with, what is that? A big gong on the cover? That's right, he's looking over the first issue of **Balungan** in Cerbon! See, you really do have an international audience!

Richard North  
Waimanalo, Hawaii

At the University of Leiden I am writing a Ph.D. thesis on the Bedhaya and Srimpi dances of the kratons of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Naturally music is part of the topic, as there cannot be dance without music. I personally feel that Western peoples often separate the various aspects of the performing arts which for the Javanese are actually united.

Our university at the moment has two regularly training gamelan groups, and more enthusiasm from young students seems to justify more courses. There have been a number of concerts during the last two years by the students of Bernard Arps and myself. We were both enrolled in the ASKI and ASTI academies of Central Java.

I intend to teach a course in the performing arts of Java next season, and would like to include some information on gamelan practice. Have you got any ideas for suitable material? Last year I made a video-recording of classical dance that should be quite interesting for those specializing in traditional gamelan playing?

Clara Brakel  
Voorburg, The Netherlands

Let me congratulate you on such a fine publication! I thoroughly enjoyed reading it from cover to cover. I am interested in the Festival of Gamelan and New Music at the '86 World Exposition. I would like to receive a copy of the prospectus for the conference. This festival sounds very exciting and I would like to see it come true.

Maria Omo  
Chicago, Illinois

[The conference and festival will be during August, 1986, in Vancouver. A five page proposal for the conference, written by I Made Bandem of ASTI Bali, is available from this editor.]

Enclosed you will find a check for a subscription to **Balungan** as well as a little bit of a donation. Thank you for the opportunity of exchange and increase in knowledge your publication promises — we look forward to it.

Richard Miller, Jennifer Munger  
Madison, Wisconsin

# INTERVIEW

## I Wayan Sinti:

## Combining the Old with the New

by Jody Diamond

I Wayan Sinti is one of Bali's best known composers, and a member of the faculty at KOKAR (Konservatory Karawitan, a high-school level music conservatory), where he teaches voice, the theory of Balinese gamelan, introduction to ethnomusicology, and several instruments in private instruction. He has taught in the U.S. several times, and received a Master's degree in music from San Diego State University.

In this interview he describes his own musical history, his philosophy of composition and some of his most significant works. Also participating in the interview is Michael Tenzer, an Oakland-based composer and director of Gamelan Sekar Jaya, a group of American musicians specializing in Balinese gamelan.

**JD:** Where were you born?

**IWS:** I was born in the village of Ubung, Banjar Dauh Kutuh, Binoh, in 1943. The name means "West of the Big Trees". I went to elementary school near Den Pasar for six years, then continued to SMP (secondary school) until 1957.

**MT:** That's the year I was born.

**IWS:** After I graduated, I wanted to continue my studies. But, unfortunately I could not. My parents didn't have enough money. I was disappointed but I understood the problem. I stopped studying, and stayed in the village to help my father who was a farmer.

Also in the village I studied voice and music. Actually, even before I went to school my father brought me to the gamelan rehearsal in the banjar. [1] I went to my first rehearsal when I was 4 years old.

In 1958, the banjar invited a teacher, and I really began to study music seriously, particularly with I Wayan Saplug, and I Wayan Sengken, who were both staff musicians at RRI (Radio Republic Indonesia).

[In the Balinese system of names, the "I" denotes that the person is male, whereas "Ni" is for females. The next name signifies the birth order of that person into the family. While the first of these names do differ somewhat with caste, the others are found everywhere. From first-born to fourth, they are: Wayan, Nyoman, Made, and Ketut; the fifth child begins the list again. The third name is a personal name given to the individual.]



I Wayan Sinti and Michael Tenzer

photo: Rucma Ballinger

I studied about four years in Binoh. I started with a small gangsa, kantilan, for maybe a month, then the big pemade, and then after six months I began to be a conductor. [see gamelan diagram]

**JD:** What do you mean be a conductor?

**IWS:** Be the ugal player, who leads by playing the melody and making very visible movements with his mallet. After about a year, I was able to study reong, trompong, and then kendang.

I really loved music so much, both voice and gamelan; I practiced almost every day, in the morning, the afternoon and the evening. I slept with the drum! (Laughs) That was for about three years. During this time I still had to help my father with his farming.

**JD:** So this was instead of high school?

**IWS:** Yes. Then I heard from someone that there was a high school that focused on music and dance, and I thought this would be good for me, so I became a student at KOKAR [Konservatori Karawitan].

**MT:** Where did you get the money to go to KOKAR?

**IWS:** I was able to go there because it's not expensive, it's actually very cheap. So I told my father that I



really wanted to go, and he supported me. Even though in the village many people were poor, he supported me. The main thing was that he understood my feelings about music.

I entered KOKAR in 1961, the second year the school was open. Because I had had so much experience with vocal and instrumental music before I started there, my teacher, I Wayan Berata, always chose me when he needed a drummer to help in class.

**JD:** Who were some of your other teachers?

**IWS:** I must mention Nyoman Kaler, because he helped me so much. He was my mentor, and took me all over Bali to be sure I studied many different styles. He was actually partly responsible for the founding of KOKAR. He had been teaching for twelve years at the high school conservatory in Surakarta, Central Java, called Konser [now SMK]. He thought it would be good to have such a conservatory in Bali. Several other Balinese artists who had been teaching in Surakarta agreed — I Nyoman Rembang, and the late I Gusti Made Gria.

KOKAR began to be famous around Bali, and also many people came to know me. In 1964 I got first prize for having the highest grades. First I was appointed a teaching assistant, then a teacher, by Drs. I Gusti Bagus Nyoman Panji, the director of KOKAR. In 1965 I was given tenure.

KOKAR was a good place for me, it was very "cocok" with my talents [literally, "fitting together like the works of a clock", simpatico]. In 1965 for the first time KOKAR was appointed by the government to perform abroad. So we went to China, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. I toured with that group for about a month and a half.

I wanted a higher degree, since KOKAR was just high school, and ASTI, the college level conservatory, wasn't established until 1967. So I continued my studies at the Institute Hindu Dharma (Institute of Hindu Religions) in Den Pasar. But before my B.A. was done, I left school and went to the villages by myself to study voice and classical gamelan.

I spent a lot of my time just by myself. I had many teachers in the Den Pasar area, but I also went to Gianyar, to Klungkung, to Kamasan. I wanted to know about all the different styles of gamelan.

This experience made me feel that my own knowledge was so incomplete. I didn't want to study only Kebyar, which was the most popular music in the early 1960's, I also wanted to study the old kinds of gamelan and vocal music.

**JD:** What were the older gamelan that you became interested in?

**IWS:** First I studied Pelegongan with I Gusti Putu Made Gria. Then of course because there was a Pelegongan in my village, Binoh, I studied with the older people there. I studied Gamelan Gambuh with I Nyoman Kaler and the musicians from Pedungan, Den Pasar, the original Gambuh group, and Gamelan Gambang with I Ketut Adi. [2]

The government understood it was important to revive the older ensembles and other arts, so we brought the older

ensembles to KOKAR, like Gambang, Slonding, and Gong Luang. We also brought in older musicians from all over Bali to work with the teachers at KOKAR, so the teachers could also continue studying.

We have many gamelan at KOKAR [see list on p. 14], but the students are not required to learn them all. In the first semester, every student takes gamelan, dance, and wayang theory. After that they may choose a major. Every student learns certain gamelan though: Gong Gede, Gong Kebyar, Angklung, Semar Pegulingan, and Gender Wayang. The dance students also learn several styles: Legong Kebyar, Legong Kraton, Arja, Sendratari, Topeng, Baris, Jauk, Barong, Gambuh, Janger.

**JD:** When did you begin composing?

**IWS:** I started composing in 1970. My first piece was just instrumental, "Ratna Wijaya." It was performed in Tunjuk, and also in my own village. In 1966 I had brought together the best musicians from 17 banjar. It was really hard to combine so many people from so many different villages, but I thought the group was very strong. In 1969 I tried to revive this group again, and it worked very well, and so in 1970 I composed my first piece for them.

**MT:** Do you still remember that piece?

**IWS:** Of course.

**MT:** Do you still like it?

**IWS:** Yes, maybe.

**MT:** You've said it was in the style of Kosali Arini, the piece by I Wayan Berata. That was a style very popular in the 60's and 70's, with a gineman and then a drum solo, and then a reong solo, and then at the end, gambangan. That was a popular Kebyar style, but it's not popular any more.

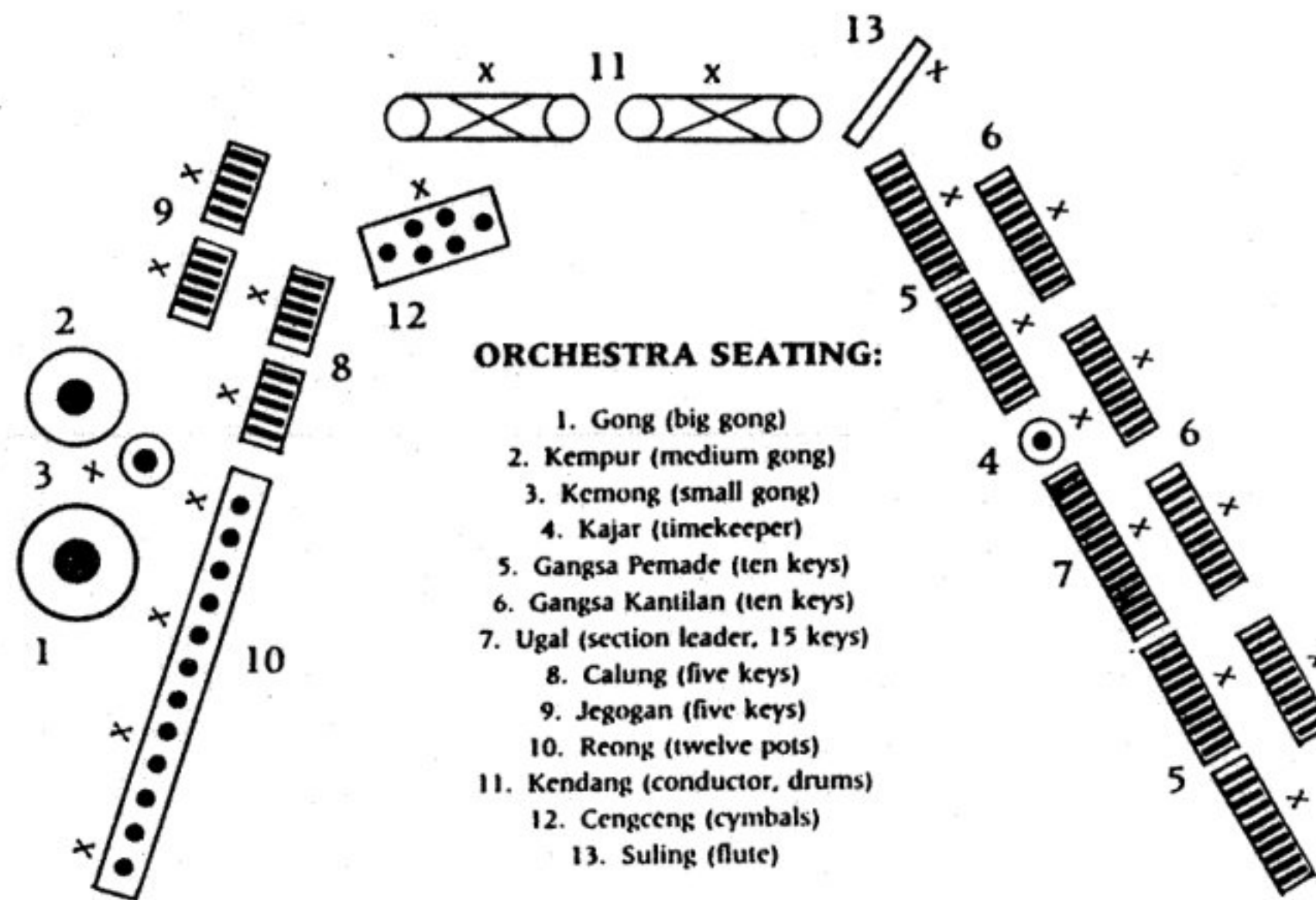
**IWS:** One of my main compositional interests now is developing more vocal music in Balinese gamelan. We began to work on this at KOKAR in 1977. In 1978 I, and some other faculty members at KOKAR, entered a competition for pieces that combined voice and instrumental. This new form was called "Gegitaan," which means "praise for God". Our piece won first prize.

I thought that there was a relationship between Gamelan Gambang and Balinese Kidung (sung poetry), but even McPhee wrote that in the 1930's it was already very difficult to find Balinese who could sing with Gamelan Gambang. So I and my colleagues thought we would revive this. But rather than using the Gamelan Gambang, which was not quite as well known, we decided to compose vocal parts that could be combined with Gamelan Gong Kebyar. We took the original melody from Kidung, sometimes changing the words a little.

**MT:** In Bali there was not a lot of singing with gamelan except maybe Arja and Janger. Most of the big orchestral groups, like Pelegongan, Gong Gede, Semar Pegulingan, and Kebyar, never had voice with them traditionally.

It's hard to find good singers in Bali. Most study informally for religious purposes, to sing in the temple, and some sing in the Arja style which is not so popular anymore and has a very free technique. It's hard to find





someone who can concentrate enough to sing harmony or who knows enough about the technique.

**IWS:** I would like to try some harmony in my compositions. But there is a problem in gamelan because of ngumbang-ngisep [paired tuning]. [3]

**JD:** Which of the notes do you sing?

**IWS:** That's a problem. The voice is not so strong in gamelan. At first I used Arja singers, but it didn't work. The singers could sing very well, but they couldn't follow the gamelan; in Arja the flute player follows the singer. So I used students from KOKAR, like Berata's daughter. She understood the idea of singing in the same tuning as the gamelan.

**MT:** It's interesting because the Kidung is a free melismatic style. So when he takes the Kidung and makes a gamelan composition around it, he has to arrange the Kidung so that the melisma is linked up with the gamelan tones. It's like trying to nail down this free melody, which changes the character of the Kidung, too.

**JD:** Is there more vocal music with gamelan since you started those Gegitaan competitions?

**MT:** That's one of Pak Sinti's biggest contributions.

**IWS:** We want to combine the old and the new, not just compose everything new. If we compose everything new, we will forget and maybe lose the old styles of music, so we must combine the old and the new. The goal of composition is to make a new form; to understand all the available styles and then to make a new piece, one that does not sound like Sunda, like Java, like Bali — but something new.

I'd like to make a new music that is in between Java, so slow and quiet, and Bali, where the now-popular Kebyar is very fast. This new music could be understood by people in Java and Bali. I'd like to use vocal — not an imitation of gerong and pesinden from Java or the Balinese vocal style, but something new.

Lotring is my favorite composer because his pieces are like a human being — they breathe, they combine different feelings of fast and slow.

**JD:** Are many compositions done this way, combining a melody of the old with the new?

**MT:** That's a style that is popular now, to combine classical and new. Every few years the government sponsors a gamelan competition. Each of the eight districts in Bali choose one group, and then that group has to come up with one new vocal piece, one instrumental piece, one male dance, one female dance, and one dance drama, called Sendratari. In 1982, the village in Den Pasar was Angantaka, and they commissioned Pak Sinti to compose a piece as one of their five entries. He did another Gegitaan, and it won first prize again.

**JD:** Is the first prize awarded in each category?

**IWS:** It is a general prize.

**JD:** What was the compositional form of this piece?

**IWS:** We had to make a completely new form for this composition!

**MT:** I observed from analyzing this piece that, even though the form is new, that there are elements of Gong Gede style, of Kebyar, elements of Pelegongan, Gambang, of traditional singing ...

**IWS:** ... and Luangan.

**MT:** Where?

**IWS:** (sings a short phrase)

**MT:** Oh yeah. So there's Gamelan Luang, and I'm sure other things that I can't identify.

**IWS:** Angklung a little bit. (He sings and Michael joins in.)

**MT:** In that one piece is an encyclopedia of Balinese gamelan, and some of the new things are fantastic too. [See a partial transcription and formal diagram of this piece on the following pages.]

**IWS:** The piece begins and ends with a chorus singing prayers.



MT: This is very interesting, because I don't know any other Balinese compositions that start and end with the same thing. The first and last note of the piece is "Om."

IWS: This Om is first for the gods, second for concentration, and third to use an idea from outside Balinese music — in this case, from Western music the idea of harmony, and from Indian music, the drone.

I also tried the idea of harmony in my Semar Pegulingan composition. When I returned from the U.S. to Bali in 1981, I began a composition for seven tone Semar Pegulingan, which hadn't been done for a long time, since most pieces for that gamelan were from Gamelan Gambuh.

I also used ideas from other seven tone ensembles: Slonding, Gambang, Gong Luang. In Gamelan Gambang and Slonding, there are seven different scales. And in Luang there is modulation — switching from one scale to another, but they all feel like pelog. In my composition I use only two: selisir, saih panji, then back to selisir. So the panji feels like slendro.

JD: Is there a seven tone Semar Pegulingan at Kokar?

IWS: Yes, and also at ASTI.

MT: Since Pak Sinti and some of the other composers got interested, you can hear a lot more seven tone Semar Pegulingan.

IWS: Now, whenever we have a Sendratari, we usually use two ensembles, a Gong Kebyar and a seven tone Semar Pegulingan, placed next to each other.

JD: Like the slendro and pelog instruments in a Javanese gamelan? What's the relationship between the tuning of those two gamelan?

IWS: There is no bridge between the tunings. In Javanese there is tumbuk (one tone in each tuning is the same pitch), but originally the separate Balinese gamelan had no relationship. But I suggested that we make a tumbuk so we could play the seven tone Semar Pegulingan with the Gong Kebyar. Fortunately the ensembles at Kokar were already similar, so we retuned them to make tumbuk on ding (the first degree of the scale). Now it's not just for Sendratari. Whenever KOKAR and ASTI have a performance, they use this gamelan, with five tone and seven tone together. It's not an imitation of the Javanese, but a new direction for Bali.

The image shows a musical score for a seven-tone Semar Pegulingan ensemble. The score is written on seven staves, each representing a different instrument. From top to bottom, the instruments are: Gangsa (two staves), Reong (one staff), Trompong (one staff), Calung (one staff), Saron (one staff), Kendang (one staff), and Gong (one staff). The notation is a form of Balinese musical notation, using various note heads and stems to represent pitch and rhythm. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The Gong part at the bottom consists of a single long note with a small circle underneath it, representing a drone.

Notes on the Transcription

This section is the **Pengalihan**, which functions as a large scale upbeat to the following section, the **Pengawak**. It demonstrates the polyphonic complexity of Sinti's compositional style. Also, it exhibits influences from several other styles of gamelan: **Gambuh** in the drumming parts, **Semar Pegulingan** in the trompong part, **Luang** in

the gangsa and reong parts.

The melodic material uses the same system as Colin McPhee, with the notes represented by, but not corresponding to the pitch of, the notes on the Western staff.

Several instruments are not shown in this example, but



**JD:** What's your opinion about people from the West who are composing for gamelan?

**IWS:** I think it's very good. It's also a challenge for the Balinese, to see people from outside who are so interested in music and dance. Perhaps it inspires some people to study more. If someone comes from the West to make a recording or a film, it is a challenge to the group to perform as well as possible.

Of course the composer will mix many different ideas. When I went to New York, I visited Barabara Benary, who composes for Son of Lion. The form and the playing of her music seems Javanese to me, even though she puts different ideas in it.

**MT:** Do you think that Western composers who use gamelan should stay within Indonesian culture?

**IWS:** They don't have to. But sometimes there is a little sign ... If we say "gamelan", in my view, if we say that art and music is a reflection of the culture, and if we use the word "gamelan", I think it may reflect a little of the culture. I would like to teach a course in Balinese composition.

**JD:** Would you require that all of the composition students be very good players first, before they compose?

**IWS:** They don't have to. But it's better if the composer is also a good musician. Because music is a reflection of the soul of the composer. If he can't play the music well, perhaps his music will be weak.

**MT:** What if one of your students wanted to try something very strange, like three gongs at one time?

**IWS:** Well, he can try. But, will anyone like it? Perhaps if it is very strong.

**MT:** In the West, it's not so important if people don't like a composer's music. The composer thinks, maybe in ten years they'll like it. But in Bali, it's important that the public understand the music now!

**IWS:** Yes, because the public is really so deeply involved. When we have a performance, if just one jegogan or calung player makes a mistake, they all know, and everyone laughs.

**MT:** It's as if you went to an orchestra concert and a

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are playing in this section. The **ugal** doubles the **gangsa** part; **suling**, up to six players, have a lot of freedom, and play their own style of variations of the **calung** melody; the **kajar** plays on the half-note pulse; the **ceng-ceng** plays the same rhythm as the **gangsa**.

The **kendang** notation system was designed by Michael Tenzer, who is still refining and revising it. The one

system shows the two drums, **lanang** and **wadon** (male and female, the latter lower pitched than the former).

Each drum part is represented by three lines: the first line for the left hand's non-pitched sound, "pek"; the second line for the left hand's pitched sound "peng"; the third line for the right hand's stroke — "tut" for the **lanang**, and "dag" for the **wadon**.



player made a mistake and the whole audience knew. In Bali, they know. I went to a competition in 1977, when I didn't know the music very well yet. All of a sudden the audience let out a roar! I asked Sumandhi what had happened, and he told me one of the jegogan players had made a mistake.

**JD:** Why do you think that the Balinese audience knows the music so well?

**IWS:** Because the art in Bali is part of daily life, it's like the breath of the religion.

**MT:** In my opinion, there's a big difference between the way that Indonesian and Western composers view composing. In the 20th century in the West you have a wide variety of ways to view your connection to tradition. Basically, you are free to do whatever you want; hence the great variety of compositional styles present.

Indonesian composers must give a lot of thought to the fixed roles of the instruments in the ensemble, and are much more reluctant to change them. For example, Richard Felciano's piece for gamelan and organ: it has no connection with the traditional gamelan style, although he used the gamelan instruments and tuning. [4]

Ethnomusicology and composition are exactly the same thing, because both really consist of looking outside of yourself for ideas. Composers, generally, have a very strong appetite for different kinds of music, and that's what ethnomusicologists are doing too, trying to uncover what some of the other secrets are.

**JD:** What about Michael's compositions for gamelan? They are as Balinese as he can make them. Do they sound like Balinese gamelan to you?

**IWS:** Yes. I love it; it seems like a new form to me, although I'm not sure what to call it.

**JD:** You've been here in Oakland training Sekar Jaya for their tour to Bali this summer. Are they different from other American groups you have taught?

**IWS:** They are more advanced — the best Balinese gamelan group in the U.S. and maybe outside of Indonesia. They practice like a sekha [club, organized group] in Bali. They learn by rote, they practice together; some people take instruments home, which is like Bali because there the instruments are kept in an open building that is near everyone's home. They start on one instrument; when that one is mastered, they move to another instrument.

**MT:** I think the real reason is that, although I am nominally the director, the decisions are made democratically. All non-musical matters are decided and administered by the group — fundraising, concert production, etc. This gives a strong feeling of unity. Whatever Sekar Jaya is, we did it together.

**IWS:** Just like Bali. If someone wants the group to perform, or if someone needs money, everyone discusses it together. Everything is open.

1. A village subdivision connected by social and religious responsibilities. See *Island of Bali*, by Miguel Covarrubias, for more information on Balinese culture
2. For detailed explanations of many kinds of Balinese gamelan, see Colin McPhee's *Music in Bali*.
3. Literally "blower-sucker". Pairs of matched instruments in the gamelan are tuned to produce a certain number of "beats" when each instrument plays the same note. On the kebyar gamelan, the beats are 6-10 per second, on the older Semar Pegulingan, the beats are 4-8 per second
4. This piece recorded on Cambridge 2560; a piece by Lou Harrison is included.

EGITAAN WILET MAYURA (Sinti and Rembang/1982)

Section Name	Duration in Minutes	App. Tempo	Phrase Diagram	Pulses
1) Ginoman (Introduction)	2'20"	Variable	Short phrases linked by trompong	N.A.
2) Pengalihan -- [section shown on previous pages] Pengawak	21" 4'10"	$\downarrow = 72$ $\downarrow = 36$ (plus alterations at beginning and final accel.)	G _____ G P _____ P P _____ P G _____	32 46 48 48 32
3) Kotekan (Instrumental Interlude)	1'04"	$\uparrow = 144$	27 + 71½ + 44 + 20½ = 163 pulses	
4) Pengisep I	1'16"	$\uparrow = 88$	_____ G _____ G	48 48
5) Pengisep II	49"	$\uparrow = 88$	_____ G	16 (Ext) 80
6) Pengecet I	40"	$\uparrow = 112$	_____ G	80
7) Pengecet II	1'00"	$\uparrow = 120$ (plus final rit.)	_____ G	80
Total Time	11'40"			

Notes: Balinese tempos can be very flexible and expressive; therefore the ones indicated above are subject to certain variables (e.g. intensity, dynamic, etc.)  
G indicates the arrival of the large Gong; P indicates the arrival of Kempur (secondary colotomic punctuation). Not all Kempurs are notated towards the end — they occur too frequently.  
In Pengecet II, Gong falls every 8 beats (10 times total).

