

PROFILE

Gamelan in New Zealand: a chronology

by Allan Thomas



The Wellington Gamelan in performance. Widiyanto plays drum.

The two active gamelan in New Zealand are referred to as the "University gamelan" although performers are often not students. The gamelan are, however, housed in the University, and are primarily involved in the teaching of the Music Department. Most concerts involve traditional Indonesian music, but some contemporary compositions are also performed.

As these are the only gamelan in New Zealand, they must cater to a broad spectrum of interests. They are used in traditional music demonstrations, contemporary composition and improvisation, and an occasional collaboration in dance or puppetry.

1975 Cirebon gamelan arrived in New Zealand.

Allan Thomas teaches at the University of Wellington.

Demonstrations and workshops at Auckland's Epsom Showgrounds (Art Events) and Mt. Eden Prison.

1976 Sonic Circus II (contemporary music festival) Wellington. Performance at South Pacific Festival of the Arts, Rotorua.

1977 Javanese Gamelan arrived in New Zealand. Performance at opening of Symphony House, Wellington, includes first performance of classic Cirebon music.

1978 Jack Body returned from two years in Indonesia. Workshops and performances at Dowse Gallery Puppet exhibition.

1979 Malaysian gamelan repertoire researched by Bee Hoon Tee. Third World Cafe program of gamelan with

dance (Thai, Indian) and Martial Arts (Thai boxing, Tai Chi, Pencak Silat).

1980 "Te iti Kahurangi" for Central Regional Arts Council: workshops and performance in ethnic arts, includes gamelan, Chinese calligraphy, Cambodian dance. Catalogue of Wayang Kulit Cirebon produced.

1981 *Nambassa* Cirebon gamelan appears at five day peace festival.

1982 Country Tour to Wanganui and New Plymouth (Cirebon gamelan music accompanying slides of Cirebon batik.) Concert in *New Directions in New Zealand Music Festival*, including performance of David Farquhar's compositions for Cirebon gamelan, *Ostinato* (1975) and *Palindrome* (1978). Issue of Jack Body's recording *Music for Sale: Street Musicians of Yogyakarta* (HLS-91). Jack Body's recording trip to East Java and Madura.

1983 *Asia in New Zealand*, a program of music and dance from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, and Japan, held at Government House in Wellington (see photo). Visiting Fulbright Scholars composer Lou Harrison and instrument builder William Colvig bring the heady atmosphere of the West Coast American gamelan world to New Zealand; Harrison composes *Ketawang Wellington*, Colvig tunes both the Javanese and Cirebon gamelan and makes suling. National Music Education Conference includes gamelan performance and multi-cultural education workshop. Performance at Indonesian

Exhibition, National Museum, Wellington.

1984 Widiyanto completes two year association with the gamelan as tutor and director in numerous performances and demonstrations. *Asia Pacific Festival and Composers Conference* includes performing groups from India, Japan, Vietnam and China. Gamelan compositions performed include *Gending* by Ton De Leeuw.

1985 "Summer City" children's gamelan workshops. Publication of Festival "Selected Papers" includes contribution from Jennifer Lindsay, "Some Thoughts on Renewal of Javanese Gamelan Music [1].

1986 Summer ensemble plays in *Parks and Peace Festival* (see photo). First performances of Cirebon and Sundanese degung repertoire.

Future plans include workshops in Javanese gamelan with Jennifer Lindsay, study of Thai and Cambodian orchestral music, participation in production of play by W.S. Rendra.

NOTES

1. Publication available from Music Department, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, New Zealand, for US \$8.



An outdoor performance. Allan Thomas plays saron at left.