

## PROFILE

# An informal chronology of gamelan in Japan

by Morishige Yukitoshi with Nakagawa Shin (translated by Ueno Michiko)

Studies of gamelan were preceded by the musicological research of Tanabe Hisao and Kurosawa Takatomo during Japan's military expeditions into Southeast Asia prior to World War II. A central Javanese gamelan was brought back to Japan, which remains to this day in the archives of the Takarazuka School of Music. However, it was the late Professor Koizumi Fumio of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music who was the true initiator of the current gamelan interest in Japan. As a visiting scholar at Wesleyan University in 1967 and 1971, Professor Koizumi was inspired by the activities of American gamelan students. When he returned to Japan in 1971, he began workshops in gamelan performance in his home using a slendro Javanese gamelan from his personal collection. This group of enthusiasts met regularly until 1974.

### Tokyo

In 1973, the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music purchased a full central Javanese gamelan for its program in ethnomusicology and began offering beginning and advanced classes in performance. Some of the students attending these classes soon formed a performance group named *Lambang Sari* [lit. essential intercourse]. The Solonese musician Saptana was invited to teach the gamelan classes at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music from 1979 until 1984. In addition, he taught Javanese court dance and techniques of wayang kulit. Saptana also taught intensive courses in gamelan at the Tokyo College of Music, Osaka University, and the Nagoya College of Music, and formed student ensembles at other colleges as well.

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*Lambang Sari, with Tamura Fumiko, dancer.*

In 1984, *Lambang Sari* released an album and cassette, entitled *Wosing Gending Myang Taya Mangastuti—Kagayakeru Oto-tachi no Meiso (Sound Reflections: Javanese Gamelan Music Classic and Modern)*, of their performance commemorating Saptana's return to Java. After Saptana left Tokyo, gamelan courses were taught by Tamura Fumiko at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and the Toho Gakuen College of Music and by Sato Mariko at the Tokyo College of Music.

At the Kunitachi College of Music, under the instruction of Professor Tsuge Gen'ichi (currently Assistant Professor at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music), the group *Sekar Djepun* [lit. flower of Japan] was formed in 1982 to study and perform Balinese *gamelan angklung* and *gong kebyar*.

In November 1985, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the National Children's Castle (*Kodomo No Shiro*) opened in Aoyama, Tokyo. A complete central Javanese gamelan and Balinese gamelan angklung were purchased to teach children gamelan performance. Tamura Fumiko teaches the classes, assisted by members of *Lambang Sari* and *Sekar Djepun*. The National Children's Castle also has sponsored gamelan concerts as benefits for handicapped children and other children's groups.

The facilities of the National Children's Castle include two fully-equipped theaters, computer room, fine arts studio, audio-visual library, swimming pool, childcare, and

**A Festival of Asian Music, August 25-26, 1986**  
 Sponsored by the National Children's Castle  
 Produced by InterMusic  
 Planned and supervised by Tamura Fumiko

*Sendu Arsa* (Balinese gamelan angklung), performed by the NCC Gamelan Ensemble, NCC Percussion Ensemble, and *Sekar Djepun*

*Manyar Sewu* (Javanese), performed by NCC Gamelan Ensemble

*Ladrang Asmarandana* and dance *Menak Koncar* (Javanese), performed by NCC Gamelan Ensemble with dancer Tamura Fumiko

Korean kayageum

Cambodian flute solo

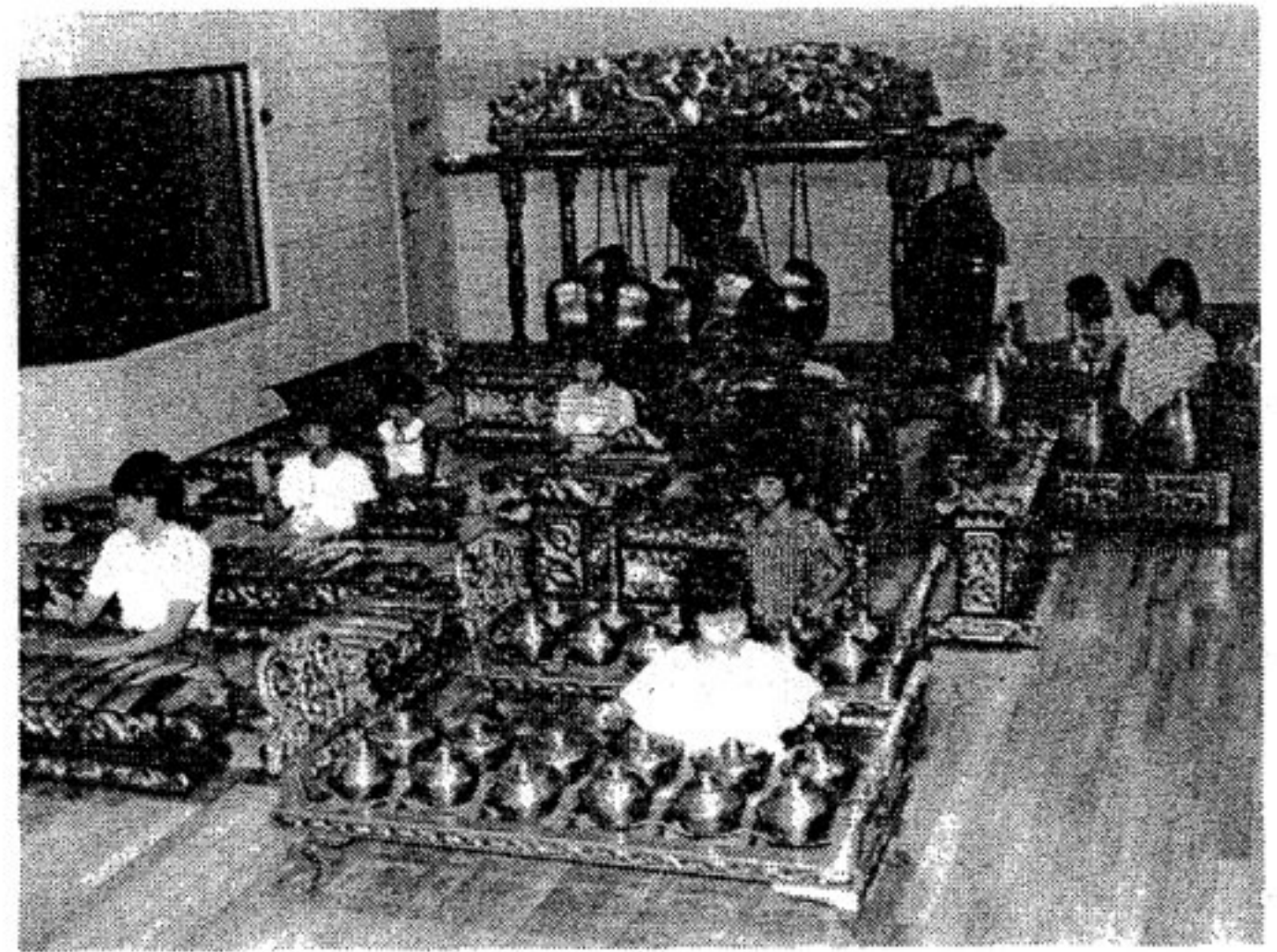
Southern Chinese lion dance

*Manintin-Catrik* (Sundanese degung), performed by *Paraguna Group*

Okinawan dance

*Sinom Ladrang* (Balinese), performed by *Sekar Djepun*

Balinese-style procession, with all performers participating.



*The gamelan of the National Children's Castle.*

*Figure 1. Program of a National Children's Castle concert.*

#### Gamelan performances by Indonesians in Japan

1982 Balinese dance, gambuh, etc. performed by *Dharma Santi*. Sponsored by the Japan Foundation and produced by Tamura Fumiko.

1983 Balinese wayang kulit performed by the dalang Wija. Produced by the Office Asia, a promotion company dedicated to introducing Asian performing arts.

1984 Javanese styles court dance including *srimpi*. performed by dancers from the Kraton Surakarta with gamelan accompaniment by *Lambang Sari*. Co-produced by Tamura Fumiko and Office Asia.

1985 Javanese wayang kulit performed by the dalang Anom Soeroto. Co-produced by Tamura Fumiko and Office Asia.

1985 Balinese dance performed by a company from Peliatan, Bali. Arranged as a commercial event.

1985 The Javanese dance drama "Damar Wulan" performed by the dancers Witaya, etc. with gamelan accompaniment by *Lambang Sari*. Produced by Tamura Fumiko and Office Asia.

1986 Balinese dance performed by a company from Ubud, Bali. Arranged as a commercial event.

1986 Tembang Sunda and gamelan degung performed by the group *Gentra Madya*. Produced by Tamura Fumiko.

1987 Balinese dance performed by companies from Tegas and Peliatan, Bali. Coordinated by the Japan-Indonesia Students Friendship Association.

*Figure 2. Gamelan performances by Indonesians in Japan.*

development center, well-child clinic, and music studios. It provides children with unique after-school programs and an open playground to develop their creativity. Events are intended not only for children but also for young adults and families. The sample program (figure 1) is an example of the programs produced at the theater (seating capacity 1,200) of the National Children's Castle.

While *Lambang Sari* continues its own performance activities in central Javanese style gamelan, some of its members also participate in the Balinese ensemble *Sekar Djepun*. The number of community people interested in participating in gamelan classes has increased steadily with the opening of the National Children's Castle and the Sound Factory Haneda. Performing groups from Indonesia have also been invited quite regularly to Japan as can be seen in the list below of concert events in Tokyo of the past five years (figure 2). Some of these groups performed in the other major cities in Japan as well. Except for the two events indicated, all of the programs were non-commercial. This reflects the difficulties of promoting ethnic arts in Japan today—which seems to be a problem throughout the world. Despite this, these events in Japan have been quite successful, thanks to the support and enthusiasm of the existing gamelan groups, and a growing interest among the general public.

In 1986, Morishige Yukitoshi, Tamura Fumiko, and Torii Makoto, with the assistance of the National Children's Castle, established the company InterMusic. InterMusic coordinates the concert programs of *Lambang Sari* and *Sekar Djepun*, and is responsible for the Sound Factory Haneda, which opened in April of 1987. Formerly an industrial factory, Sound Factory Haneda is a studio space used for rehearsals by the above two groups as well as the newly formed *Paraguna Group*. Workshops in Javanese and Balinese gamelan have been offered at the Sound Factory Haneda since May of 1987 attended by a wide range of enthusiasts from throughout the community.

Under the instruction of Professor Koizumi, an

**For classroom use at colleges:**

1. Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
2. Tokyo College of Music, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
3. Toho Gakuen College of Music, Chofu, Tokyo; Javanese, pelog.
4. Hyogo University of Education, Kato-gun, Hyogo; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
5. Osaka College of Music, Toyonaka, Osaka; Balinese, gong kebyar.

**For extracurricular activities at colleges:**

6. Kunitachi College of Music, Tachikawa, Tokyo; Balinese, gong kebyar.
7. Osaka University, Toyonaka, Osaka; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
8. Nagoya College of Music, Nagoya, Aichi; Balinese, gong kebyar.
9. Shobi Gakuen Junior College, Kawagoe, Saitama; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
10. Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo; Balinese, gong kebyar.

**For activities other than at colleges:**

11. National Children's Castle, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
12. National Children's Castle, Tokyo; Balinese, angklung.
13. Sound Factory Haneda, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
14. Sound Factory Haneda, Tokyo; Balinese, gong kebyar.
15. *Paraguna Group*, Tokyo; Sundanese, degung.

16. *Geino Yamashirogumi*; Balinese, pelegongan.
17. Okinawa Traditional Arts Center; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
18. Okinawa Traditional Arts Center; Balinese, gong kebyar.
19. *Sekar Djepun*, Tokyo; Balinese, gong kebyar.

**For display:**

20. Musashino Academy of Music, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro.
21. National Ethnology Museum, Suita, Osaka; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
22. Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music – Koizumi Fumio Memorial Archives, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro.
23. Takarazuka School of Music, Takarazuka, Hyogo; Javanese, slendro.
24. The Embassy of Indonesia, Tokyo; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
25. The Embassy of Indonesia, Tokyo; Balinese, gong kebyar.
26. Nagoya College of Music, Nagoya, Aichi; Javanese, slendro/pelog.
27. Museum "Little World", Inuyama, Aichi; Balinese, gong kebyar.

**Private collections:**

28. Sato Mariko, Javanese, slendro.
29. Tamura Fumiko, Javanese, pelog.
30. Tsuge Gen'ichi, Balinese, angklung.
31. Tsuge Gen'ichi, Balinese, pelegongan.
32. Shimada Toshio, Balinese, angklung.

Figure 3. Gamelan instruments in Japan.

amateur choral group, *Hato-no-Kai*, has experimented with Balinese *kecak* since 1973. The group, since renamed *Geino Yamashirogumi*, continues its unique choral activities to this day.

Another Tokyo event was a concert on October 4 and 5, 1987, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music. Saptana and several musicians and dancers from Java joined the alumni and students of the school in a gamelan and dance performance. Besides the traditional pieces, the program included the premiere performance of a composition by Kanno Yoshihiro. This was the first public concert in Tokyo in which a modern composition for gamelan was played.

### Osaka

In 1979, the Japan Emba Company, Ltd. donated a complete central Javanese gamelan from Yogyakarta to the Musicology Department of the Faculty of Letters at Osaka University. Students in the ethnomusicology program formed a performance ensemble led by Nakagawa Shin who had studied gamelan music in Indonesia. The group, originally called the Handai Gamelan Ensemble (Handai is an abbreviation of Osaka University), has since performed both traditional Javanese pieces and original works by Japanese composers. This "bi-cultural" aspect, and especially the effort to perform Japanese pieces, characterizes this group as unique in Japan.

While Saptana was in residence in Tokyo (1982-1984),

he and Tamura Fumiko were invited to give intensive workshops at Osaka University in traditional central Javanese gamelan. The group was given its name, *Dharma Budhaya*, by Saptana in 1982. *Dharma Budhaya* [lit. living culture] later participated in the first International Gamelan Festival at the Vancouver EXPO in 1986 [see *Balungan II* (3):3-16].

The leader, Nakagawa, remarks that they wish to "expand gamelan music beyond the Javanese traditional art form, to create a contemporary gamelan musical style which is able to stimulate modern composers and audiences." An excerpt from an introduction by Professor Yamaguchi Osamu, Professor of Musicology at Osaka University and advisor for *Dharma Budhaya*, explains the group's intention:

"... It may be possible for us, to an extent, to create an acoustic environment most suited to gamelan, and to experience the musical structure with the same feelings as those felt by the Javanese, but it is after all no more than mimicry for us. As a matter of fact, the Japanese people have spent a century studying Western music, and have reached a high level of performance; nevertheless, we have not been able to perform the scores of Mozart and Chopin to the complete satisfaction of Western musicians. I am not, however, doubting the validity of an attempt by the Japanese people to learn gamelan and Western music. The question is whether there is any 'cultural significance' in our attempt, and whether we should try to find such significance.

"When Mas Saptana named this group *Dharma Budhaya*, or 'living culture,' I wonder if he meant to raise just such a question. Wouldn't it be more important for us, through the experience of gamelan music, to 'live' our own culture than to simply acquire the sense of 'bi-musicality'? In this light, I believe that the members of *Dharma Budhaya*—who have not only been content with playing the traditional central Javanese music but also in making a special effort to perform new works by Japanese composers—are truly splendid."

It seems important to point out that the enthusiasm of the members of *Dharma Budhaya* in playing original pieces is based on their appreciation of the traditional gamelan repertoire and its cultural background. Its repertoire of original compositions consists of more than ten pieces, all of which were commissioned from composers and professors of music at various colleges; some were created together with original dance choreography. Today, the group's membership of twenty-five consists of seventy percent students and thirty percent people from the community. The group performs an average of ten times per year. ▀

#### Discography

*Wosing Gending Myang Taya Mangastuti—Kagayakeru*

*Oto-tachi no Meiso (Sound Reflections: Javanese Gamelan Music Classic and Modern)* directed by Saptana, performed by Saptana and *Lambang Sari*, produced by *Lambang Sari* 1984 (Tokyo, Japan) LM-1473 stereo.

Side A: *Ladrang Sumirat pelog barang, Gendhing Sinom pelog barang, Gendhing Talu: Ladrang Sri Katon—Ketawang Sukmailang—Ayak-Ayakan—Srepegan—Sampak slendro manyura*

Side B: *Gendhing Lalermengeng—Ketawang Pangkur*

*Dudakasmara slendro sanga, Gendhing Beksan Priyagama: Suluk Mijil Suki—Ketawang Mijil Sukeng Tyas—Ayak-Ayakan Lelasmara—Ladrang Lambangsih—Lancaran Waripurna pelog barang* (arranged by Saptana and sung in the Japanese dialect of Amami and Okinawa.)



*Sekar Djepun.*