

Indonesian dancers, Hanni Kallberg from Bali, who has lived in Sweden for ten years, and Metty Sri Surbijanti, who came to Sweden from Bandung, Java about a year ago. Metty is a professional dancer and is familiar with Sundanese, Javanese and Balinese dancing traditions. The audience was also treated with Hannis' delicious Balinese cooking and a slide show that Pentti had produced.

In purchasing the gamelan Pentti was helped by I Made Sija from Bona village. I Made Sija, whom Pentti knew from previous visits, together with some friends, also made a few tape recordings to give us a first repertoire. Back in Sweden, Per Arvidsson took the music down on paper from which we have been rehearsing. Pentti has also been corresponding with Han Kuo-Huang at Northern Illinois University and has received some *angklung* pieces from him. Learning the music from paper has of course been a compromise, but by now we have learned a lot of our repertoire by ear.

I Made Sija was in Sweden in November 1987. Unfortunately, we only rehearsed with him for a few hours.

It was a great inspiration and brought new life into our music, which at that time had tended to get rather academic—probably partly due to the notation, but also because of the great difficulties we have encountered in trying to use a cultural/musical language that is so new to us. I Made Sija helped us to get past a point of stagnation. Pentti is going back to Bali this summer, hopefully coming home with enough inspiration to get us past our next hurdle.

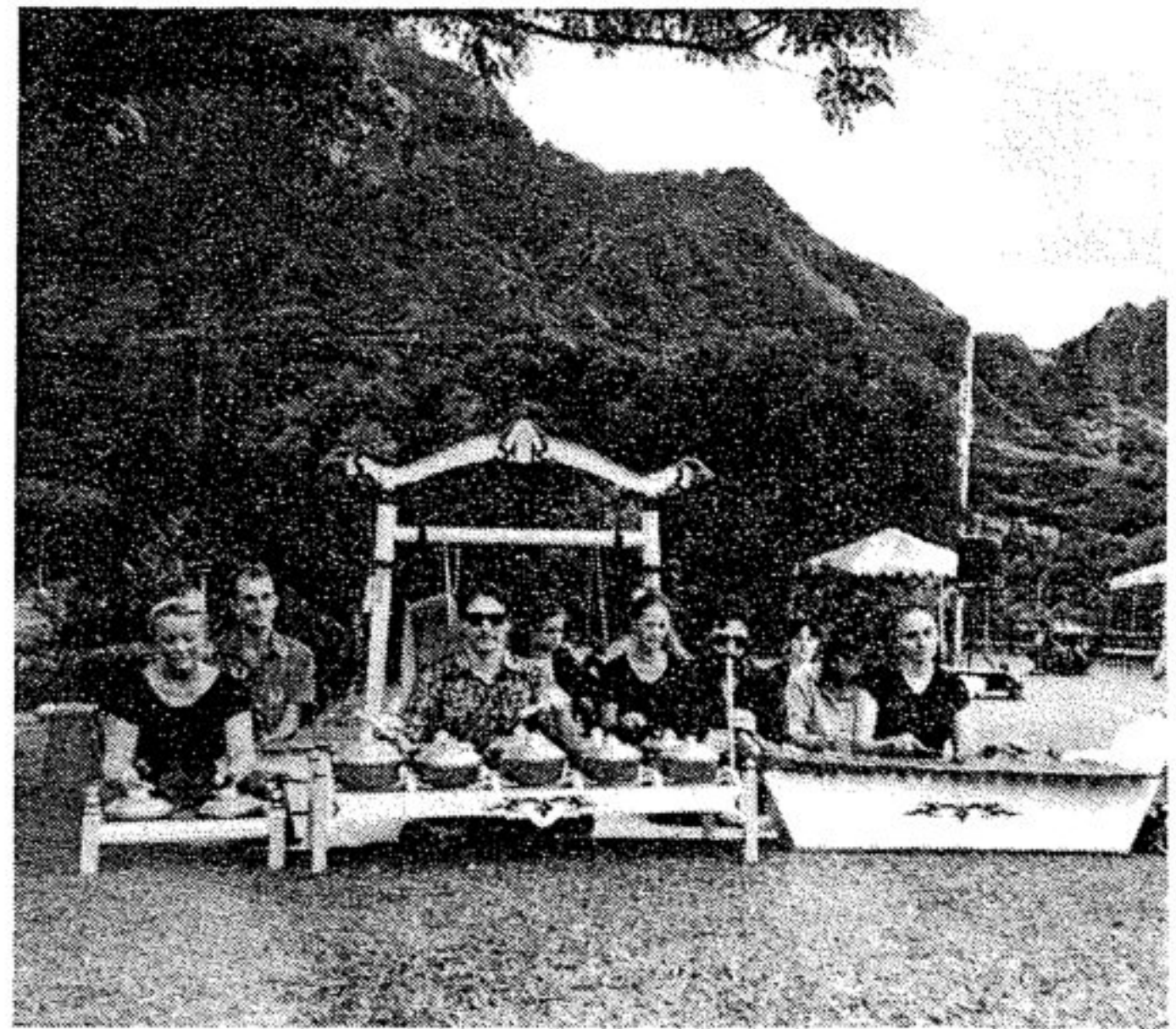
Simultaneously, we also have a group, *Taman Ajun*, which has put together a musical tale, mainly for preschool children. Pentti as Hanuman, Hanni as the princes Sita, Jesper Lundhal and Johan Hogenäs alternating as Celuluk, and myself as prince Rama both act and play on the *angklung* instruments. Hanni, of course, dances. Up until now we have done fifteen to twenty performances in the Gothenburg area, and we have had very good response from the children. They are also very enthusiastic to try the instruments and the group of potential gamelan enthusiasts in Sweden is growing!

## The Hawaii Loa College gamelan ensemble

by Richard North

Of the more than one hundred gamelan groups in the United States today, few have ever focused on the Javanese musical traditions of Cirebon. In the 1970s the Central Javanese gamelan group at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York performed Cirebon dance pieces at the instigation of the ethnomusicologist Michael Wright (who had conducted his doctoral dissertation research on the music of Cirebon) and the noted gamelan teacher, dancer, and author Endo Suanda. Meanwhile, in Berkeley, California, Pamela Rogers-Aguiniga, a teacher and performer of the *topèng* (masked dance) tradition of Cirebon, established a gamelan that actively performed the repertoire of the village style masked dance tradition of Cirebon under the direction of Sundanese master musician Pak Undang Sumarna. Today, however, neither gamelan performs Cirebonese music.

Elsewhere in the United States, other gamelan perform pieces from the Cirebon repertoire from time to time. The gamelan at the University of California at Santa Cruz, under the direction of Pak Undang, concentrates upon the Sundanese gamelan repertoire, but occasionally performs the Javanese *topèng* dances of the villages around Cirebon. In Seattle, Washington, Pak Endo teaches the village *topèng* music to students at the University of Washington. In addition, he has begun teaching Cirebon repertory to Gamelan Pacifica, the resident ensemble at the Cornish College of the Arts under the direction of Jarrad Powell. However, as far as I know, the only gamelan in the



United States focusing on Cirebonese music and dance is in the middle of the Pacific—at Hawaii Loa College in Kane'ohē on the island of O'ahu in Hawaii.

A private, four-year liberal arts college nestled against the breath-taking green cliffs of the Ko'olau mountains, Hawaii Loa College has a special focus on the cultures of Asia and the Pacific. Students from Samoa, Tonga, Ponape, Guam, Truk, and Tahiti mingle with others from Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines,

Thailand, and Indonesia as well as the students from Hawaii and the continental United States. This truly international student community is a microcosm of the increasingly dynamic Pacific Rim region, an area in which Indonesia holds a prominent position both politically and culturally.

In 1982, after having studied, performed, and taught gamelan music on the mainland United States and in Indonesia for ten years, my wife Maggie and I moved to Hawaii with our Cirebonese gamelan. Due to the kind efforts of the highly respected University of Hawaii gamelan director, Bpk. Hardja Susilo (See interview, *Balungan* 1(1): 5-8) a Cirebon gamelan was established at Hawaii Loa College in November of that year.

The instruments, an iron set of the type known in Cirebon as *gamelan prawa*, were commissioned from a gamelan maker in the Cirebon region in 1978 with the assistance of the gamelan teacher, Pak Sukra. It was Pak Sukra who bestowed the honorific name *Budi Daya* upon the gamelan—loosely translated as “the power of enlightenment” or “virtuous work.” Our gamelan Cirebon can accommodate fifteen musicians compared to eight in a typical gamelan Sunda and upwards of twenty in some Central Javanese gamelan. The tuning is similar to that of the gamelan *sléndro* of Central Java and the gamelan *saléndro* of Sunda, although much higher in range. The instruments themselves are considerably smaller in number and in actual size compared to their Central Javanese counterparts.

The Gamelan program, at Hawaii Loa College was initiated by a one month intensive session that provided the core group of the ensemble, some of whom are still playing today. New members have been added from both community gamelan classes as well as from credit courses offered through the regular college curriculum. The international make-up of the group, some not native English speakers, has encouraged a traditional rote teaching approach—that is learning by following and imitating, with a minimum of verbal explanation. Cipher notation is used sparingly, and students are encouraged to play without notation quickly in order to develop the memorization and listening skills which Javanese music requires. Moreover, this cultivates flexibility in performance and encourages a real ensemble feeling among the members that allows them to respond simultaneously to changes and signals from any instrument in the gamelan.

Shortly after its inception, the gamelan was designated the “official college orchestra” by the president of Hawaii Loa College. As a symbol of the institution’s emphasis on the culture of Asia and the Pacific, the ensemble performs at official college functions such as commencement, awards banquets and receptions for visiting dignitaries, in addition to formal concerts of classical Cirebonese music and dance. The group also performs off campus at both public and private events, as well as occasional joint concerts with the University of

Hawaii gamelan under the direction of Pak Susilo. There are very warm relations between the two gamelan ensembles, and a number of musicians are members of both groups.

In the summer of 1986 the Hawaii Loa College gamelan program received a tremendous gift from the mainland United States. Through the kindness and personal generosity of the famous American composer and gamelan enthusiast Lou Harrison we received a second gamelan, this one tuned to the *pélog* scale. In addition to the Cirebon *pélog* repertoire, the new gamelan was designed to be able to play the lively *rèntèng* village music as well as the gentle *denggung* music of the Cirebon palaces. Special palace music taught to me by the arts director of the kraton Kacerbonan, Elang Yusuf Dendabrata, also became part of our repertoire with the arrival of the new instruments. With a little rearrangement we could also play pieces from the lyrical Sundanese *degung* repertoire on the new instruments. After a traditional Hawaiian blessing, a *selamatan* feast was held celebrating the safe arrival of the new instruments. During the festivities, Bapak Susilo bestowed the name *Sekar Parahyangan* on the gamelan. Among the many interpretations of this name are “The song of West Java” and “Flower of Heaven.”

Throughout its activities at Hawaii Loa, the gamelan has kept in close touch with Indonesia, sending photos, program notes and concert recordings back to our teachers for comments and suggestions. In return we have received letters of commendation from the West Java Cultural Office, the kraton Kacerbonan in Cirebon and the Jakarta government recognizing the Hawaii Loa College gamelan as the only group in the United States presenting classical Javanese music in the Cirebon court tradition.

Several of our members have visited the kraton in Cirebon, and more study trips are planned. There is also a tentative plan to bring Elang Yusuf Dendabrata, to Hawaii Loa College to teach for a semester. He is a teacher of rare ability. As well as being the director of gamelan and dance at the palace, he is also accomplished in the arts of wood-carving, glass painting and batik in the Cirebon style—in addition to being a performing *dalang* of wayang kulit. One of his specialties is the sacred *bedhaya* dance of the Cirebon kraton, known as *rimbe*. He has agreed to come as soon as logistical details are worked out. It would be a great honor to have a teacher of Elang Yusuf’s caliber at Hawaii Loa College. ▀