Weraspati Gong, Sweden

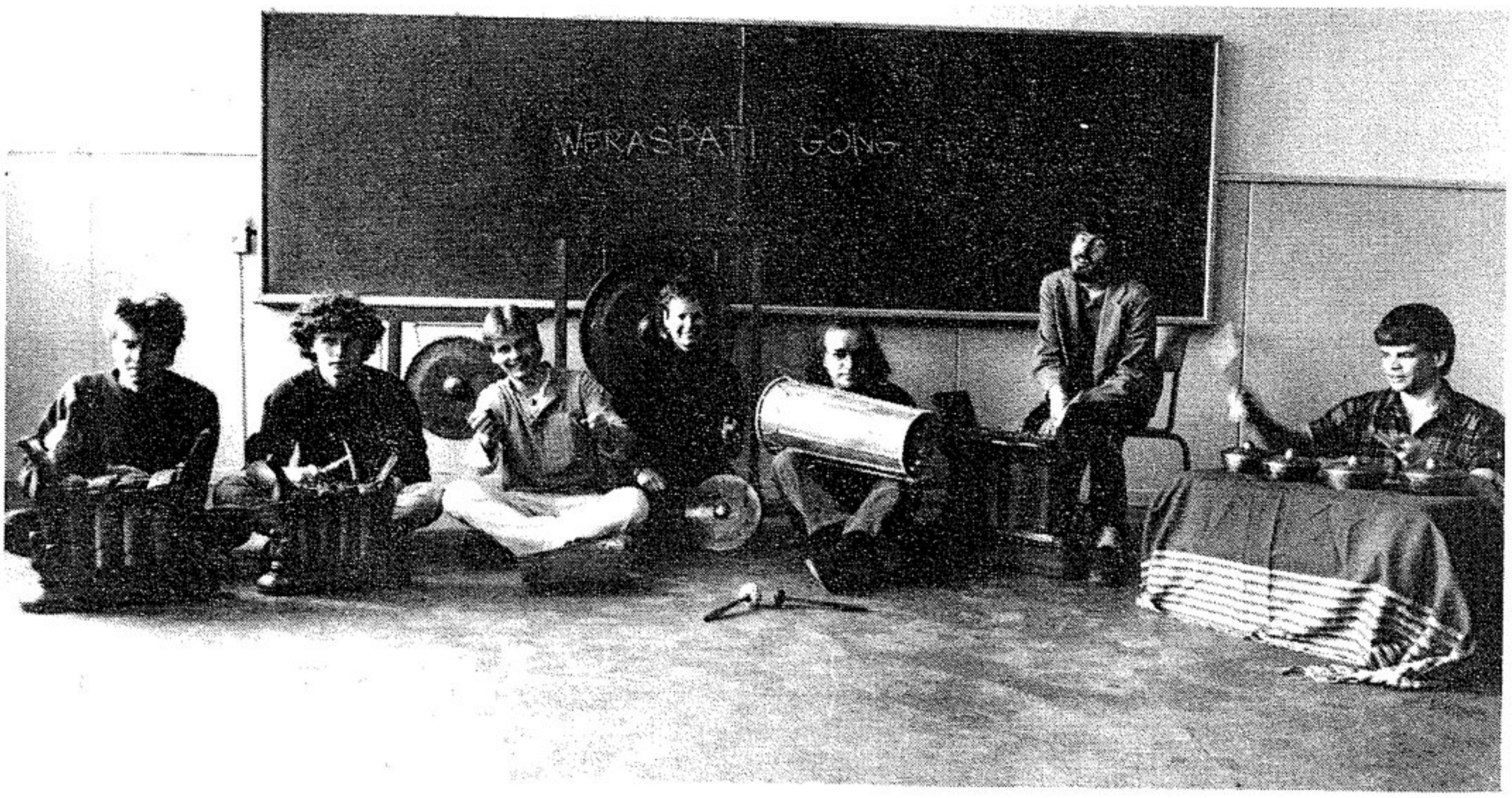
by Peter Hogenäs

My first contact with gamelan music was on Bali in April, 1984. I returned to Sweden completely filled with the impressions of long nights of gamelan at the temple festivals. I was searching for an outlet for my inspiration when, at a concert in Gothenburg, I was confronted with a Swedish group playing Indonesian music. The leader of the group was Pentti Niemi, and since our first meeting then I have played with him in a few different groups.

Pentti's first group playing Indonesian music was formed at the music college in Framnäs in northern Sweden. At that time the group played gamelan gong music on Orff instruments. In 1983-1984 he formed a group consisting of Gothenburg jazz musicians who played Sundanese music on European instruments. The next group—that's when I joined—was a small Javanese gamelan purchased from a group from Bandung that toured Sweden in 1985. Carolin Stockfeldt, who had studied Javanese culture at Cornell University, taught us to play on the Bandung instruments.

The current group has been playing for about a year on a gamelan angklung that Pentti brought back from Bali in the Spring of 1987. The name of the group, *Weraspati Gong* or Thursday in Balinese, was chosen so we wouldn't forget our rehearsal night. Our gamelan has only a single set of instruments, so with two *gendèr, jegogan, kendhang,* gong, *cèng-cèng* and an occasional *suling* we need about eight players. *Weraspati Gong* consists mainly of musicians and music teachers from Gothenburg.

The first time we played in public was at a Christmas party of the Indonesian club of Gothenburg. Since the music was appreciated by native Indonesians, we became encouraged to present it to a Swedish audience. As far as we know we are the only active gamelan group in Sweden, so for most of our audiences it has been a totally new experience. The music has been well received though, and many have been curious to know more about Bali and its music and culture. During this Winter and Spring we have had about seven concerts. We have played at a folk music festival in Gothenburg and in December we arranged a "Balinese cultural afternoon" at Backa Culture Center. In Backa, a Gothenburg suburb, we also performed with two



Left to right: Jan Weejs, Michsel Andersson, Johan Hogenäs, Inger Olevik, Pentti Niemi, Magnus Lindstrom, Peter Hogenäs.

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.

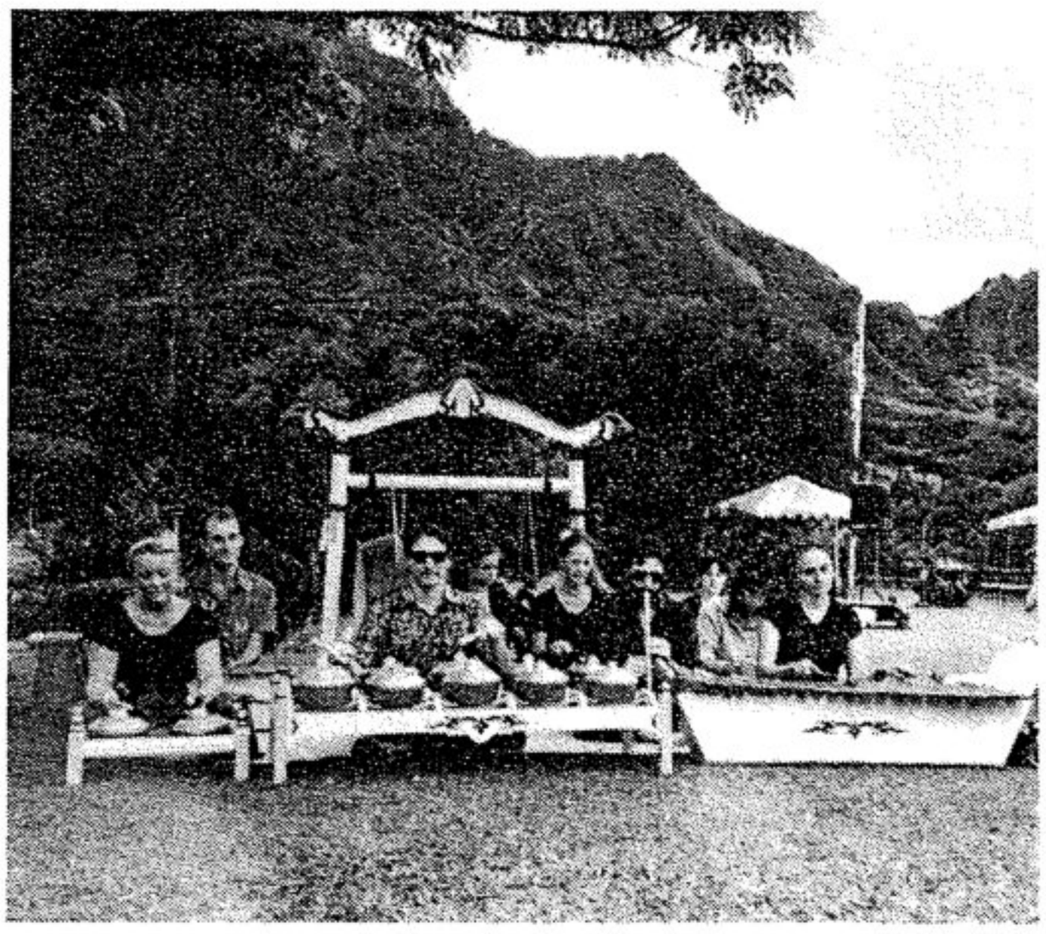
Simultaneously, we also have a group, *Taman Ajun*, which has put together a musical tale, mainly for preschool children. Pentti as Hanuman, Hanni as the princes Sita, Jesper Lundhal and Johan Hogenäs alternating as Celuluk, and myself as prince Rama both act and play on the angklung instruments. Hanni, 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'ohe 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,