

INTERVIEW

I Wayan Dibia: the relationship of music and dance in Balinese performing arts

by Wayne Vitale

I Wayan Dibia studied Balinese music and dance since his childhood. He has won the highest acclaim as one of Bali's finest dancers and choreographers, specializing in the forms of topeng [masked dance] and kecak [monkey chant]. He received his B.A. at STSI [Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia, or the Indonesian College of the Arts, formerly ASTI, Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia or Indonesian Academy of Dance] in Denpasar, Bali, and an M.A. in dance from UCLA. He was formerly Assistant Director at STSI, but has taken a leave of absence to complete his Ph.D. in dance and theater at UCLA.

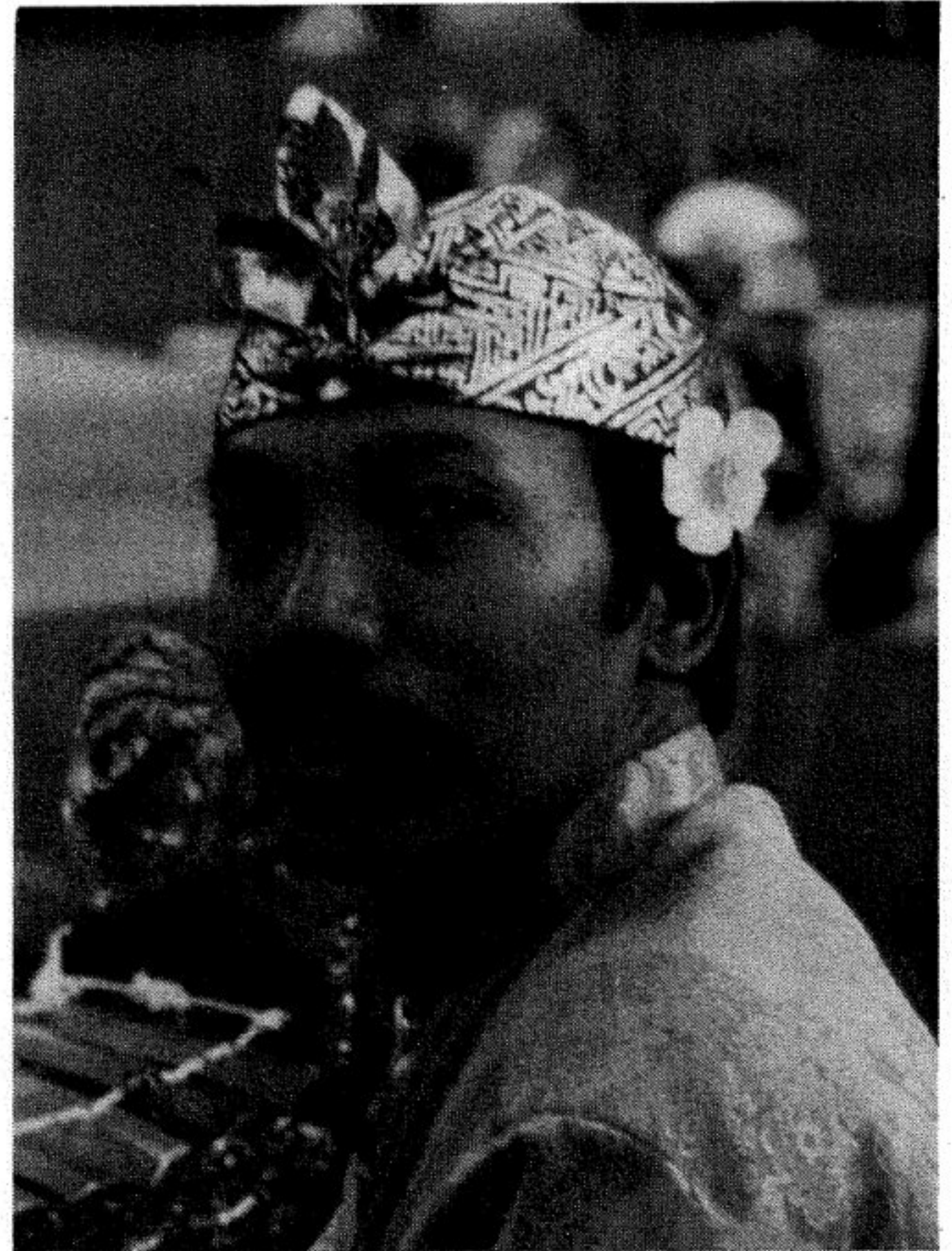
I have known Dibia for many years, and have always been impressed by his commitment to his art, which manifests itself in performances of great power and focus. In masked dance especially Dibia has the ability to make the mask come alive. Aside from his talents as a performer, he is skilled at articulating the essential elements of Balinese arts—those underlying forces that shape an artist's development and perceptions.

Wayne Vitale: Pak Wayan Dibia, tell me a little about yourself and your background.

I Wayan Dibia: I was born in the village of Singapadu to a family of dancers. My father and mother were both well-known dancers in my district. I was first exposed to art through dance, and was of course strongly inspired by my parents. Later, in elementary and then secondary school, I began to think of switching my career to music, and started to devote most of my time to playing gamelan. In fact, I was enjoying my time more sitting behind the gamelan instead of dancing on stage, and was able to develop my playing technique, especially in *gong kebyar*. At that time I was doing most of the organizing activities of the gamelan and dance group of my classmates. One of my teachers was very supportive; even though I was not able to pay the tuition fee, the teacher helped me find a way to continue my studies. The music and dance activities at this school were so strong that the school became well-known all over the district and was eventually taken over as a government school because of its reputation in art activities.

Vitale: Did you continue your training in music through high school as well?

Dibia: In high school I had a mixed training in both music and dance. This gave me a more balanced education and allowed me to experience a little bit more the way that dance and music are integrated. So when I continued my formal education at KOKAR [Konservatori Karawitan or



Conservatory of Music and Dance in Denpasar, now known as SMKI, Sekolah Menengah Karawitan Indonesia, or Indonesian Music High School] I chose to major in both dance and music.

Vitale: A kind of double major.

Dibia: Yes. At that time it was somewhat unique, because the majors offered to the students were fairly separated; they had to make a choice. But in spite of that it was still possible for students to experience the three different majors. I was fortunate to be able to switch a little bit between being a dancer, musician, and puppeteer. This allowed me to become fluent in the use of language which is so important in *wayang kulit*, to understand more classical dance, and to learn classical gamelan pieces. This kind of a mixed training was something that gave me a very strong background in Balinese performing arts. I am happy that I passed through this kind of training,

especially now in my work as a teacher of dance and music at ASTI in Denpasar.

Vitale: I have two related questions. When you were a young member of the village gamelan group, you started off in dance, but later switched to music in school. Then, through your experience in high school, you switched back again. The first question is, do you think that what you did is fairly common for an artist? In other words, is it fairly normal that a dancer in Bali can play music, or do you think that dancers and musicians specialize?

Dibia: I think it's common, even though nowadays such mixed training is no longer as thorough, because of the specialty chosen by artists now. They never, or rarely, think that training in another field would be very important for them. In my childhood, to switch to music from dance was very common. It depended on the inspiration or on the "touch" on oneself at a certain moment. I first started with dance because I was inspired by seeing beautiful movements, dignified movements from great artists in the area. I felt I wanted to be like them.

Vitale: You were inspired by great artists in your own village?

Dibia: Yes. But then I realized I would like to break from the tradition of my parents, who were both dancers. I felt at that time that I would never be able to be as good a dancer as they, not to mention their abilities in the ancient Kawi language and the beautiful vocal style used in singing it. I was struggling in my mind about changing my focus from dance to music. I guess I was partly swayed because as a musician I had more friends to play with, so I didn't have to be nervous being alone in front of the audience.

Vitale: Why is it that in the Balinese performing arts tradition it is common for an artist to switch back and forth between those two?

Dibia: I guess because of the nature of the art there, where music and dance are two important elements that are never separated. In the performing arts, music and dance are treated almost equally. For dancers, it is essential to know the music very intimately. They should understand not only the feeling, but also the sequence and structure of music that is used to accompany them.

Likewise as a musician, one should understand the structure of the choreography, the phrasing of the movement, in order to underline and reinforce certain gestures within it. This kind of close feeling and integration is the most important reason why Balinese dancers and musicians commonly change their activities. My father for example sometimes sat in the gamelan, and sometimes led the dancers.

Vitale: So he was considered a master in dance, but in music as well he was considered a completely competent musician.

Dibia: Yes. In fact he was a good drummer in the style called *baleganjuran*. And of course he was a great singer. So the nature of our art allows a lot of flexibility; it

makes the change of focus between dance and music for one artist very common.

Vitale: That leads to my second question. You said that in your village it was normal, for all these reasons, for dancers and musicians to at least understand the other side very well, and often even be fluent in both forms. However at KOKAR the program was more specialized, and a student could be just a dancer or just a musician. Is that a tendency that you feel is going in the wrong direction within the performing arts tradition in Bali? Does too much specialization harm the integration between music and dance?

Dibia: I would say yes. The focus on one major harms the integrity and the flexibility of the artist himself to do many different things that are very important in everyday activities, especially if he intends to work in the villages. In the village an artist is often required to switch gears, performing many different roles as needed. For example, at a performance of *topèng* [masked dance] or another classical dance, we might have too many dancers, but on the other hand need somebody who can play the drum and lead the gamelan. Often, among the dancers we can pull somebody out to play drum, this is very common, and not too difficult for a dancer if he is trained in both disciplines. By having the two separated, with the focus on one subject, I would say that in the future we will have less flexible artists in Bali, even though we will have artists strong in one field.

Vitale: In addition to the practical side of rehearsals and performances, is it true that specializing has artistic disadvantages as well? For example, if we imagine a dancer who learns the movements of a particular dance quite well, but is a little shaky with the music, is he that much behind a dancer who is equally familiar with the music?

Dibia: Yes, I think so, because in Balinese dance almost every sequence of movement carries a certain quality of melody, with a certain accentuation given by the music. For example, if you do a certain movement or series of movements that don't exactly fit with the phrases of the gamelan—especially the placement of the *kemong* or gong within the music—the dance will not be well-timed. In a sense, if you try to do that movement sequence without understanding and listening to the sequence of the music itself, you will miss the square phrasing of music and dance. I would say that there is no breath there. The breath of the dance is something you can feel if it fits well with the music: when a phrase is finished, the gong comes. This kind of relationship makes the dance alive.

Also, it helps to know the music that is most suited to a particular character. If a dancer is given very refined or sweet music but just dances a strong character without any adjustment to meet the needs of musical expression of the gamelan, it will contrast. If on the other hand the music is refined while the movement is very strong and staccato, a dancer who understands the music might be able to adjust the quality of his movements so the music would somehow not conflict with his movement.

Vitale: In this I'm kind of curious. You say the music might be sweet at a particular moment. Would this occur in a piece where the dancer already knows a set choreography—for example, at a particular moment when the gamelan plays sweeter than usual and the dancer doesn't have the spontaneity to adjust?

Dibia: In fact I'm not talking about set choreography, like *lègong* [dance play performed by two or three young girls]. But if, for example, we look at masked dance performance, we have a different situation. There are several introductory characters, like *topèng keras* [bold, masculine]. Instead of playing the *gilak* [strong ostinato] melody on the lower tones, the musicians might decide to shift the melody one step up to the middle tones. By changing the tune in this way it somehow changes the mood of the music, because it falls in a different place in the scale. If the dancer is sensitive and understands the mood, he might be able to change the strong movement used for the lower tune to the more refined movements that fit with the changed musical expression.

But if you are talking about set choreography, of course there is no such opportunity for him or her to change the choreography because the music as well is already in a set structure. For example in the *pengawak* [slow] section of *lègong keraton* [palace *lègong*], the structure is already there. But in *topèng* or *wayang wong* [masked dance drama], where is it supposed to be? The servant character who appears in the middle might find that the musicians have chosen a different tune or arrangement than he expected. So, if he understands music, he will be able to change the quality of his movement, or maybe change the vocal expression of the song.

Vitale: Then it matters most in those pieces that have a choice of different tunes, and a degree of freedom in the choreography. But does it matter at all in set choreography? Say, for example, there's a dancer who knows a set piece like *lègong*, but she is not clear about exact placement of the accents. Don't you think that would affect her dance?

Dibia: Well, it does affect the performance of a dancer. But it's not as critical as knowing the change of mood of the gamelan. If a *lègong* dancer really understands the choreography, she will be able to remember all of its structure from her own memory. But it does affect the accentuations of certain movements.

Vitale: Is it a matter of the synchronization between the dance and the music?

Dibia: Yes. She must understand the *kadjar*, for example, the instrument that keeps the beat and the tempo of the music. If she understands all of this, she might be able to adjust how fast she must walk, or how slow a phrase or sequence of movements should be taken.

Vitale: When you're dancing, what aspects of the music do you pay most attention to? Do you always hear all of the instruments of the gamelan, or are there particular instruments that you focus on?

Dibia: Well, first of all, I always pay attention to the

basic *pokok* melody that accompanies me. After the melody I have to find the sequence of important gong strokes. When is the gong and the *kempul*, where is the kemong, and where is the *kadjar*? Kemong, *kempul*, gong. These are important for me to know because they will help lead me through a certain sequence in the choreography, so that I will be able to phrase my movement correctly. And as I said the *kadjar* is very important because it gives me an idea about the beat and tempo of the music.

Knowing this fundamental structure makes it a lot easier for me to dance. After that, as an elaboration, I can anticipate or respond to the drumming pattern or maybe the accentuation given by the *ceng-ceng* [cymbal] player. And, of course, there is the ornamentation of the other gamelan players like the *gangsa* [metallophone] or *réong* [row of kettle-shaped gongs] players—whoever plays in the gamelan. But these—kemong, *kempul*, gong, *kadjar*, and melody—are certainly the most important to me.

Vitale: Once everything else is stable in your mind, or once you're oriented to the melody and the gong strokes, then the drum is what gives the accents

Dibia: Yes.

Vitale: It seems to me that there are different kinds of dance music, depending partly on the relationship of the choreography to the music, and the freedom that each may have. There are pieces in which both are completely set, as we've mentioned with *lègong*. In another category there's the strong male dance pieces, where the music is basically set but the placement of the *angsel* [the sudden accents and breaks] is free. I have always been intrigued as to how they're coordinated: sometimes it seems that the drummer will simply wait for a signal from the dancer and then he'll give the cue to the group. But other times it might go the other way, when the drummer feels that the *angsel* should happen at a certain moment and, even if the dancer is in a slightly different place, he might go ahead and give the cue anyhow. Could you talk a little bit about this? Where should the *angsel* happen and where does it really happen in performance?

Dibia: Well, in general, if you are talking about improvised dance, free choreography like *Jauk* or *topèng*, it shouldn't be directed by the drummer. It should come from the dancer. The dancer will give the signals to the drummer to make whatever transitions are needed—to change tempo, or to give a certain accentuation to reinforce the movement.

Vitale: Are those signals a real part of the choreography, or can it happen that a dancer has a secret movement or cue that the drummer already knows?

Dibia: Well, yes. That's only a cue for the drummer to see and understand. But these kind of signals will vary from dancer to dancer.

Vitale: If they didn't know each other they might have some kind of problem.

Dibia: It takes some time for the drummer to adjust, and to know what kind of signal this dancer uses to call certain cues, such as to speed up or to slow down the music.



I Wayan Dibia, dancing Topeng Arsawijaya.

This goes back to the first question which you brought up: yes, there are cases where the drummer sometimes leads the dancers. This usually happens to a young or inexperienced dancer who doesn't understand how to make certain *angsel*, so the drummer will sense this and take the lead. Also this might happen in a case where the dancer's teacher is himself the drummer. So he knows the whole pattern of the choreography in detail. In that case it's often easier for him to lead his dancer in a transition or to change from sequence to sequence.

Vitale: As the teacher he obviously knows what he had shown his dance students.

Dibia: Yes. But if the drummer has little experience or no understanding of the choreography it will be very difficult for him to give these kinds of signals. A number of good drummers can do it very easily, just by following his pulse, his own experience. If the long *angsel* of the *Jauk* should be 'here', the drummer will already be anticipating a cue from the *Jauk* dancer, and he will be ready to call the cue right away.

Vitale: From what you are saying it seems that on the drummer's part there's a great deal of intuition involved. Even if he's not completely sure, he has a feeling that there is a certain kind of *angsel* about to happen and he'll lead the group that way.

Dibia: Yes. In this kind of relationship the function of the drummer is absolute. A good drummer can even make a

dancer's performance stronger and come across so nicely to the spectator, because he will be able to accentuate and reinforce certain movements, even though they may be simple ones. This often happens in *Jauk*, where the dancer just shakes his hand in this kind of simple movement and the drummer will give him very elaborate ornamentation. That simple shaking movement comes across very artistically and beautifully to the audience because of the elaboration given by the drummer.

Vitale: So he can magnify or amplify the movements of the dancer, by underlining certain movements.

Dibia: Yes. I would say, to artistically reinforce the movement.

Vitale: What about the other direction? For example, if a gamelan plays only fairly well, but they accompany a dancer who's particularly talented and experienced, do you feel that the dancer can bring the musicians up to his level and make them play better?

Dibia: Yes, in one way. By letting himself somehow follow whatever kind of *angsel* pattern the group is comfortable with. A good dancer, who's concerned about the whole performance and not only his individual appearance on stage, will try to switch his own style to whatever the musicians can play with. He will somehow adjust, and will tell himself, "Okay, I'm a part of this performance. I have to be able to follow a group of people and the style they are accustomed to." In this case, of course, the gamelan players will feel more comfortable playing with him. Whatever *angsel* are chosen, they will be followed by the dancer, even though the relationship should be the opposite.

Vitale: Does this happen spontaneously within the performance, or is it worked out in the rehearsals beforehand?

Dibia: If there are rehearsals with the dancer, of course this will be prepared from the beginning. But if the dancer has no time to prepare, he will anticipate it. I myself, whenever I dance *Jauk* or *Barong*, will first try a couple of different *angsel*. Whatever is comfortable for the musicians to play, I will use.

Vitale: In other words, at the beginning of the dance you might try a few different kinds to see how the gamelan reacts, and then from that experience you can gauge your movements for the rest of the dance. Do you think people watching would perceive that?

Dibia: If it was done obviously they will of course understand "Oh, the dancer is adjusting." But if we keep the success of the whole production in mind we have to find a way to hide all of that adjustment.

Vitale: So that it looks like it belongs to the performance

Dibia: Right. This kind of understanding and attitude is very important, if we consider the integrity of the whole performance, not just the dancer's own ambition to be considered a star. In the past I have heard many different stories about self-centered dancers. Their main concern was

to be stars on stage, and they would just do their own thing without paying any attention to the musicians. Musicians can barely follow that kind of dancer. But nowadays more and more dancers are willing to adjust their style of choreography or expression in order to save the piece.

Vitale: Why is it different now?

Dibia: I guess now young dancers are concerned that we are working together, that we know each other. In the past, competition from village to village was still very strong. If a dancer from one village was invited to dance with a group from another village, the feeling of competition might create problems.

Vitale: That dancer might want to show off and make himself seem the better performer, to win in a way.

Dibia: Yes, to put the musicians down and make them lose face in front of the audience.

Vitale: Do you think these elements of challenge or competition can have any good qualities, if it's done right?

Dibia: Well, if you're talking about competition to help each other, this is good. But if it is competition to kill the other, this is ugly.

In the past competition was often just trying to put each other down. But now competition is more for playing around, to allow a chance for a certain spontaneity of movement in the dance. And it's a good time for the drummer to demonstrate his technique a bit, to show off—right? The kind of competition with this sense of understanding really makes both sides look good on stage. In the past, a dancer would even try to dig, to discern the weakness of a drummer. The minute he found it, he would keep harping on it to bring the drummer down.

Vitale: Like a boxing match: go for the weakness of your opponent.

Dibia: Yes! Until 1965 or the later 60s it was still like that. I once witnessed a performance where the guest performer, in this case a Jauk dancer, was really trying to bring the musicians down.

Vitale: Can you relate that story?

Dibia: The Jauk performance was in the Denpasar area, during a temple celebration in the village of Sadmerta, where I was frequently invited to dance. At that time we performed part of the *Ramayana*, with four or five different dances before the actual *Sendra Tari* dance drama began. One of those dances was Jauk; the dancer was invited from the village of Batubulan a few kilometers to the north. Apparently this dancer was also a good drummer in his village, aside from being one of the most famous dancers from that area, especially of the strong Jauk keras character. The drummer, though not well known, was certainly no beginner. . . in other words he had some experience, and should have been able to play well enough. To make the story short, in the beginning the Jauk dancer was trying to move in a dignified way. I had a feeling that he wanted to start very slowly and settle in, and then develop the character to the end of the performance. He created very simple *angsel* and simple elaborations in his movements.

But meanwhile, the drummer was playing very complicated variations. Even simple movements he accompanied with rather elaborate patterns.

Vitale: What was his intent?

Dibia: He just wanted to show off, prove that he was a good drummer, with lots of flashy variations. And I felt, at that time, that he was trying to push the dancer to make the *angsel* where he wanted them, instead of trying to follow the dancer's style. And of course this created a bad feeling with the dancer. I began to see that the dancer was aware of being forced that way; slowly he realized that this was a challenge. Having a lot of experience as a drummer he knew exactly how to treat this kind of emotional drummer. For about three minutes after his entrance the dancer tried to control his emotion and not follow the drummer. But then the Jauk dancer took over and started to make all sorts of *angsel* in awkward, difficult to follow places. Finally he made an *angsel lantang* [long *angsel*], and in that extended *angsel* he made about five turns.

Vitale: Perhaps you can explain this a bit—what does that mean for the music when the dancer makes so many turns?

Dibia: Well, five turns means that the drummer should play five sub-cues in a row [sings drum strokes and melody of cues]. It could be awkward for the music. Besides, it requires a lot of energy. And either it will just stop there, or he has to maintain that energy if the *angsel lantang* is going to continue.

Vitale: In this kind of *angsel* the music speeds up a bit from a tempo which is already quite fast, and it gets louder as well. At that point the drummer has to wait for the final cue from the dancer before he makes the break. So that means that the music has reached the most tense and animated point.

Dibia: Yes. The dancer picks up the pace, and brings the musicians into high energy, in the loud and fast part. This makes it very tiring for the musicians, especially for the drummer. Everything is up to the dancer at this point. The thing is, though, after the turns the Jauk's movements aren't that strenuous: he just has to keep his hands in motion and the proper posture to his body to maintain the character, or maybe a few steps. So he can go a long time like this, while the musicians are doing all the work.

Vitale: The drummer started pushing him, but the dancer had a few tricks of his own!

Dibia: The drummer was so exhausted at the end. He was sweating all over. His shirt was all wet just because of this fifteen minute Jauk, with its non-stop and long *angsel* and very awkward cues for the musicians. The drummer was caught in a bad situation.

Vitale: Who came out looking worse in the end?

Dibia: Finally it was the drummer. What he played simply didn't fit with the movement. It's was an example of a dancer who really understood the drumming patterns and knew how to deal with a drummer like that. But I must say that for me, as an audience member, I didn't like it, even

though the dancer looked so strong. Because there was no harmonization, it made the whole performance look bad.

Vitale: From what you've been telling me, it's very clear that the drummer is the most important one in these free-style dances, connecting the movements of the dancers with the rest of the gamelan musicians. Let's imagine for a moment that the drummer and the dancer are both very skilled, but the gamelan musicians are not that good. If they weren't very familiar with the dance, what would happen then?

Dibia: In that case as well, it is the drummer himself who has the function of helping the other musicians to play well. If he knows that these particular musicians can't play fast, for example, he should be able to negotiate with the dancer through his drumming patterns, to let the dancer know that his buddies are not ready to play fast. Of course, the understanding of every musician is very important in understanding angsel patterns, melody, tempo... But in terms of cueing all of this, and keeping the quality of the music high and suitable with the dance, the responsibility falls upon the drummer.

Vitale: In the two music and dance institutes in Bali, KOKAR and ASTI, there are a lot of new dance compositions being created, of course with new music as well. Do you think people are starting to deliberately change the relationship between the dancer and the musician in some way? Are there examples of a very different connection or orientation between the two, or do you think they basically carry along that tradition unchanged?

Dibia: I feel there is some change now in certain respects. Because of specialization, or the separation of majors between music and dance, there is a strong tendency on both sides to show off a bit, to demonstrate their own technique without enough regard to an integrated piece. This isn't so much a matter of competition, as I talked about before, but just too much focus on one side.

One way I see this is in the actual process of putting together a new piece. Most of the music for new dance creations is recorded onto audio cassette, so there is tendency for the composer to think only about making attractive music, even though the beauty of the music does not fit with the beauty of the dance. As a result, I've seen several new choreographies that were dead on stage but had really beautiful music.

Vitale: Could you give examples?

Dibia: There were several performances given by our students at ASTI, created during their final exams for their thesis concert. During the concert, if I closed my eyes I could taste the beauty of the gamelan so nicely. But if I looked at the choreography, the movement sequence and the floor design wasn't very interesting.

Another example is the sendratari performed at the Bali Art Festival. There's so much good music played there. If I just listen to the music and focus on it, it's so beautiful, but the choreography itself is not too good. There are other aspects too, such as the domination of the *dalang* [shadow

puppeteer and/or narrator] which doesn't allow the dancer to move because of the use of too much dialogue. As a result a dancer might stand for ten minutes just doing a simple gesture, while the *dalang* is narrating and the music is playing a very elaborate melody. The whole thing becomes dominated by music.

Vitale: In your own work as a choreographer and a composer, what are the specific things that concern you the most in the relationship of dance to music in the process of creating a new piece?

Dibia: When I choreograph a new piece, I am always concerned with the theme of the dance whether it is a warrior dance, or a refined character or whatever. Then I have to find a melody that will fit with it. With this melody I can start to phrase my movement. As the piece develops, I can polish the melody a little bit, and add many different ornamentations. So my first concern is the content and character of the dance itself.

Vitale: Even before there is any melody in your mind?

Dibia: Yes. I just start with a certain movement and then count it to discover the length of the phrases. If the dance will present a story, I might create sequences of movement to link one part of the story to the other, and then play music that might be suitable to that.

Vitale: After you have the character and some movements in your mind certain themes will occur to you?

Dibia: Yes.

Vitale: From that point do you work on both at the same time, so that they are developed together?

Dibia: Yes, but I always ask the musicians I'm working with to help refine my music, and I remind them not to dominate the choreography itself. I prefer to have music that is simple but good enough to reinforce the theme and character of my dance. That's the reason I prefer to compose my own music. When I can feel the sequence of the movement, I put that into the music, and ask the musicians just to try it and see what happens. If later I have to change some part of the music it will basically be only a small change in the accentuation or other details of the melody.

Vitale: Do you think that you're unusual in working in that way? Do some choreographers prefer to take a pre-set piece from a composer and then choreograph it, or on the other hand create a complete movement and then have someone put music to it?

Dibia: Since there are so many talented composers in Bali now, there's beginning to be a tendency to compose music after the basic choreography has been done. The choreographer will invite a composer to look at what he has, and take it from there.

Vitale: Does it ever happen that a choreographer says to a musician, "Okay, I have an idea for a piece: I want it to have a strong character, in Jauk style," for example, and then the composer writes the whole piece before the choreography is created?

Dibia: No, not as far as I know. But a choreographer inspired by a piece of music that already exists is quite common.

When I choreographed the piece *Manuk Rawa* in 1982, I was first inspired by Pak Beratha's music in part of the *Mahabharata* dance drama. At that time I was working with Pak Beratha for a sendra tari called *Bale Gala-gala*, part of the *Mahabharata*. The story was about the burning of the wax house of the Pandawa family by the Kurawas. When Bima, the second son of Kunti, tries to escape from that house, he finds a flock of birds flying over a forest. Seeing that, he is convinced that there must be a fresh-water spring nearby. He follows the birds, and finally finds a pond where he is able to get something to drink, to revive himself from the exhaustion which almost all of the Pandawa family at that time was experiencing. Pak Beratha created very beautiful music to accompany the scene, and it was very inspiring.

Almost every night after the performance I continued to think about his music. It came to my ears again and again. It was so alive in my thoughts. One day I went to bathe in the river behind my house and I saw a flock of water birds. I observed their movement, and this same music was in my mind. The idea to develop a dance came to me combining the movement of the birds with Pak Beratha's music. So I recomposed and rearranged the music, adding some new elements, re-choreographed and extended the dance that I did for the original sendratari, and it became the dance piece called *Manuk Rawa* [which became perhaps the most popular dance composition in Bali for a period of a few years—WV]. So this is an example of a new piece that was inspired, or based on, the earlier music by Pak Beratha. This kind of process happens quite often. But I should make it clear, it's not a process of starting with completely composed music and then letting the choreographer dance to it.

We often feel that a piece of music already sets a certain kind of dramatic mood. So if we choreograph the dance using music that's already composed we feel like the dramatic mood of the dance must be made to fit with the dramatic mood of the music. It's a difficult task. For me, and also for my other colleagues at KOKAR and ASTI, whenever we choreograph a new piece we have to compose new music as well. I feel strongly that the momentum of creating somehow gives a certain expression of the time. If you listen to a certain piece it will remind you of a certain period of time. For example, in 1968, if I remember correctly, Pak Beratha created a kebyar piece called *Kosala Arini*. I believed at that time he was inspired by the destruction of Karangasem after the eruption of Agung Mountain in 1963. Whenever I hear the piece it reminds me of a certain time in 1968. If I used this 1968 piece to accompany my dance of 1980 there would be a conflicting expression which we wouldn't want. This is one of the reasons that whenever we choreograph a new piece, the music should be newly composed even though it may be simple. But at least it expresses the feelings of a certain

period that existed at the same time that the dance was choreographed.

Vitale: What advice could you give to those who aren't interested in studying dance themselves, but want to understand enough in the dance to be able to play well?

Dibia: At least two things should always be kept in mind whenever the time comes to play music for dance. One is the content and character of the dance. What is the theme? Is it a love dance or heroic dance, or does it portray dignified and refined characters? It's important for Western musicians to understand the kind of character that is presented, to play the music that fits with the dance.

The second thing to keep in mind is that whenever the time comes to play music for dance, dance should be accompanied, not the music accompanied by dance. The players have to be able to reinforce or to underline certain movements of the dancer to make his movements and expression stronger. Sometimes I feel that Western [gamelan] musicians are just so deeply involved with the excitement of playing music itself. They enjoy playing music without looking at what the music is intended for. If it's instrumental music of course it's okay to play that way. But in music that's supposed to accompany dance, this is the time for the musicians to try to forget their individual involvement so that the musical expression doesn't become the dominant aspect of the performance and overshadow the performance of the dancer onstage. They have to become. . . I'm not saying secondary, but at least concerned with reinforcing the performance of the dancer.

Of course, another aspect that should be understood by Western musicians is the function of the music as it is played in Bali. Is it supposed to be ritual music or entertainment music? This kind of thing is important for them to understand in order not to misuse the music, for example by playing ritual music for entertainment. We should always remember that, to play music and dance from another culture, we must take into account the original purpose and context of the music. ▀