

PROFILE

Gamelan Town: Sundanese Arts at U.C. Santa Cruz

by Linda Burman-Hall

The Sundanese music program at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) began in 1975 with instruments from Central Java. Dr. David Kilpatrick arranged to transfer from UCLA to UCSC a complete pelog/slendro gamelan that had been given to the UC system by the Republic of Indonesia during the 1960s. Richard North, a percussionist/rock drummer dedicated to the study of Sundanese music, and Beth Anderson, a music student, contributed significantly during this early period.

The UCSC program became one of the few outside of Indonesia to regularly teach music of the Sundanese, the second largest ethnic group in Indonesia. The UCSC Board of Studies in Music now has a master's degree program in western and non-western music performance. Students of dance and theater can enter a graduate certificate program in theater arts with a focus on Indonesia.

Regular instruction in Sundanese music traditions with Undang Sumarna began in 1976 [Pa Nugraha had made some earlier visits]. Undang was a master musician from a traditional Sundanese background who had come to the United States to teach at the Center for World Music. Undang had studied with his grandfather, the renowned Sundanese musician Pa Kayat, and had taught and directed performances at ASTI Bandung, the Indonesian Academy of Performing Arts, and at KOKAR Bandung, the Indonesian Conservatory of Music.

The emphasis on West Java and its arts has also led to presentations of music and dance from Cirebon, a Javanese area of West Java. In addition to instruction in gamelan salendro and pelog, members of the UCSC gamelan have participated in *angklung buncis*, *kacapi suling*, and music for *penca silat*, a form of martial arts. For several years, instruction was offered in Sundanese dance, first by Pamela Rogers Aguiñiga, and later by Bethanie Gilbert through the Recreation Department, while Sumarna taught dance through the music program. Regular dance instruction has been offered through the Theater Arts Board in recent years. Currently, in each quarter there are three beginning sections

of gamelan, and one intermediate and one advanced section, serving approximately 75 students a quarter, or up to 270 per year, and about 15 students take dance or puppetry classes each quarter through the Theater Arts Board.

Interdisciplinary collaboration accelerated when Kathy Foley, a specialist in Sundanese theater traditions, joined the UCSC Theater Arts faculty in 1980. The group participated in many major productions of Sundanese performing arts, such as *topeng babakan* (mask dance of Cirebon), performances at the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles, as well as recitals, open rehearsals, and numerous outreach performances at schools and community centers.

Student-performed dance dramas staged by Kathy Foley using Sundanese dance as the basis for the choreography have included *Arjuna's Meditation* (1982, 1983) and *Damar Wulan* (1989). Major dance dramas performed by gamelan members include *The Death of Nirwatakawaca* (1982), in which Pamela Rogers Aguiñiga directed the choreography by Abay Subarja; *Purbasari* (1986) with choreography by Undang Sumarna; *The Battle to End All Battles (Perang Sanekala)* (1987) with choreography by Abay Subardja; and *Rice Harvest Festival (Pesta Panen)* (1988) choreographed by Irawati Durban Arjo. In Fall 1990 Enoch Atmadibarata choreographed *Si Concorong* using the village dance tradition *ketuk tilu* as the movement base.

Numerous performances of *wayang golek* [rod puppet theater] with Kathy Foley as dalang have been presented. Stories include *Young Sumantri*, *Young Arasoma*, *The Eight-sided Diamond Case*, *Hanoman the Messenger*, *Young Kombayana*, *Gusti Sinuhun*, *Sunun Kalijaga*, *Rama Distraught*, *Brajamusti*, *Arjuna's Meditation*, *The Marriage Contest of Giantipura*, *The Death of Karna*, *The Birth of Gotokaca*, *Sanghyang Rancassan*, and others. Story material is drawn from several epic sources, such as Arjuna Sastra Bahu, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Amir Hamzah stories, as well as from Javanese history and legend. The group performed for the Puppeteers of America National Festival (1981), American Theater Association (1984), and the Cabrillo Music Festival (1981).

In Indonesia, the group's performance was televised when they appeared with Kathy Foley at the *Pekan Wayang*, an Indonesian National Wayang Festival, in Jakarta in 1988, the first time that any foreign dalang were invited to participate in the quadrennial event. Jody Diamond joined

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The UCSC gamelan performing a Sundanese wayang golek with dalang Kathy Foley at the 1988 Pekan Wayang in Jakarta.

the group, then and on several other occasions, as a guest *pasinden* (female singer). After the festival performance the group toured through the Sunda-Cirebon region as guests of the government of West Java.

Some of these events would have been impossible without dedicated gamelan alumni who participate in gamelan activities even after graduation, many of whom studied in Indonesia or outside of the university setting in this country. These include Bernie Assaly, Dena Bjornlie, Michael Ewing, Robin Holcomb, Marcus Kaufman, Dan Kelly, Joan Lieberman, Debra Lurie, Trish Nielsen, Patricia O'Donovan, Carol Panofsky, Bob Petersen, Henry Spiller, Rae Ann Stahl, Suzanne Suwanda, Andrew Weintraub, Elizabeth Yates and many others.

Guest artists have included Herman Suwanda, exponent of the Mande Muda school of peca silat, suling virtuoso Burhan Sukarma, dancer Endo Suanda, Sundanese dance master Abay Subardja, and choreographer Irawati Durban Arjo. Nano S., a leading creative force in Sundanese music, composed the new work *Warna* for the group in 1990 [score and analysis in this issue]. Enoch Atmadibarata, a leader in Sundanese music, dance and cultural preservation, also worked with the group. Modern drama and film director Arifin C. Noer involved the group in a 1991 production of his play *Ozone*.

As a result of the UCSC group's tour to West Java, the efforts of Irawati Durban Arjo, and the close links between Santa Cruz and Bandung, two Sundanese gamelan sets

were donated to UCSC by the Honorable Ateng Wahyudi, mayor of Bandung. The gamelan salendro, *Galuh Pakuan*, was formerly owned by Dalang Safa'at Suwanda of Soreang who inherited it from his father. A gamelan degung was donated and given the name of *Nyi Arum Bandung* by Gugum Gumbira, head of the Jugala Arts Group.

The UCSC Board of Studies in Music program in Indonesian music now include courses in Balinese kecak and gender wayang, taught for two years by I Nyoman Sedana, a dalang, dancer and musician from STSI Denpasar. A Balinese gamelan angklung has also been added. The UCSC interdisciplinary research group "Performance Practice and Context in the Arts" supports faculty research activities in Bali and Sunda.

The UCSC program has many ties to the community. The internationally celebrated composer Lou Harrison, who builds and writes for gamelan, has long been in residence in the Santa Cruz area. A network of gamelan programs and players connects UCSC to Mills College, San Jose State University, UC Berkeley and other institutions. Local non-commercial radio station KUSP-FM was probably the first outside Indonesia with its own "radio station gamelan" of Sundanese and Javanese instruments. A gamelan degung group under Burhan Sukarma's direction has been practicing in Santa Cruz since 1990, an offshoot of his San Jose group *Pusaka Sunda*. With all of this activity, Santa Cruz may truly be characterized as a "gamelan town." ▀